



# Islamabad POST

Thursday, April 28, 2022

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**EU Chief pledges 'united' response to Russia's gas cut**

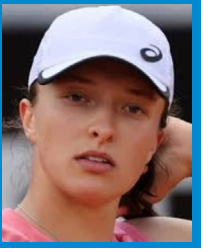
Detailed News On Page-06

**COAS visits forward areas along LoC**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Iga Swiatek pulls out of Madrid Open**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Karachi terrorist attack

# China demands thorough probe

"The Chinese Embassy in Pakistan and Consulate-General in Karachi are working with the Pakistani side to deal with the follow-up matters of the casualties," the spokesperson said

NEWS DESK/DNA

BEIJING: China has expressed its strong condemnation of the Karachi suicide attack and extended deep condolences to the victims and sympathies to the families of the injured and bereaved.

"The Chinese side expresses strong condemnation and indignation over this major terrorist attack and extends deep condolences to the victims and sympathies to the injured and bereaved families," a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Wednesday.

"On the afternoon of April 26, a van of the Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi was hit by a suicide terrorist attack. So far, the incident has left three Chinese teachers dead and one injured. There are also casualties on the Pakistani side," he said in a statement issued here.

The spokesperson said that the Chinese Foreign Ministry and diplomatic missions in Pakistan had activated the emergency response mechanism im-

## FM Bilawal visits Chinese embassy

ISLAMABAD: Chairman PPP and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, accompanied by Minister of State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hina Rabbani Khar, also paid a visit to the Chinese Embassy. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari expressed grief over the loss of precious lives in the terrorist attack in Karachi. The relationship between Pakistan and China was a series of loyalty across generations, the foreign minister, on the occasion, said. He said that the terrorists made a failed attempt to strike on the basis of the Pak-China friendship. The malicious intentions of terrorists could

not sabotage Pak-China friendship. He added. The foreign minister also recorded his impressions in a guest book at the Chinese embassy. Chairman Bilawal also had the honour of becoming the youngest foreign minister in the history of the country as he was sworn in at the age of 33 years, seven months and six days. Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was 35 years, five months and ten days old when he was sworn in as the foreign minister while Hina Rabbani Khar was 33 years, eight months and one day old. - APP

Picture on Page-3

mediately after the incident. call to the Pakistani Ambassador to Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Wu Jianghao made an urgent phone

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ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi administering the oath to Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as Federal Minister at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad. - DNA

**Bilawal takes charge as FM President administered the oath**

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday administered the oath of office to Chairperson of Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as the federal minister. Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari became the 37th foreign minister of the country. His grandfather, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had served the country as the 12th foreign minister of Pakistan. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif witnessed the oath-taking ceremony here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, which was attended by former president Asif Ali Zardari, ex-prime ministers Yousuf Raza Gilani and Raja Pervez Ashraf, and a large number of parliamentarians, party workers, and government officials. The close family members of Bilawal Bhutto including his sister Aseefa Bhutto and maternal aunt Sanam Bhutto - the sister of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, also attended the ceremony. Bilawal Bhutto joined the cabinet in the third phase of its formation as the earlier swearing-in ceremonies were taken place on April 19 and April 22.

Mariyum says...

# No chances of early elections

Says Shehbaz has done in two weeks what Imran could not even think of in 4 years; PTI govt political victimized opponents



SHUJAAT HAMZA/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyum Aurangzeb says a process has been started to bring down

Continued on Page 06

## PM's visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

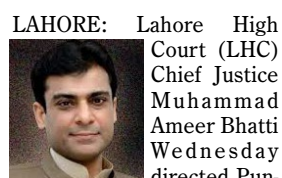
ISLAMABAD: On the invitation of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 28-30 April 2022. This would be the Prime Minister's first visit abroad after assuming Office earlier this month. The Prime Minister will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, including key members of the Cabinet. During the visit, the Prime Minister will have bilateral interaction with the Saudi leadership, with particular focus on advancing economic, trade and

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

**LHC orders Hamza oath today**

STAFF REPORT



LAHORE: High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Muhammad Ameer Bhatti Wednesday directed Punjab Governor Omar Sarfaraz Cheema to administer the oath to CM-elect Hamza Shehbaz himself or appoint a nominee for the constitutional duty by Thursday. The directive comes as the LHC announced the verdict on chief minister-elect Hamza Shehbaz's petition against the delay of his oath-taking, which the court ruled as "unconstitutional". Hamza was elected as Punjab's chief minister on April 16. However, he hasn't sworn in yet as his oath-taking was deferred twice despite the LHC's directives for not delaying the matter any further.

## Asim Ahmad new FBR chairman

ISLAMABAD: The federal government Wednesday appointed Asim Ahmad - who is an Inland Revenue Officer (IRS) of Grade 21 - as chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

A notification to this effect was issued today after the cabinet approved the summary to remove Ashfaq Ahmed Khan from the post appointing Asim as the new chairman of the tax collection authority. Asim had served as the FBR chairman in 2021 for a few months but was replaced after a data-hacking incident occurred in the FBR. He is number three on the seniority list of IRS officers. "With the approval of the federal government, Mr Asim Ahmad, a BS-21 officer of Inland Revenue Service (IRS), is appointed as chairman, Federal Board of Revenue under Section 10 of the Civil Servants Act, 1970, with immediate effect. - APP

# CEC PML-N's agent: Imran

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan, while addressing his party's Workers' Convention in Lahore on Wednesday, said that the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja is "PML-N's agent." He said that CEC Raja doesn't have the right to serve the post, therefore, he should resign. "He [CEC] alone makes the decisions and all of his decisions are against the PTI," he said. "We demand that

Continued on Page 06

## 'Lota' symbol suits all govt parties: Fawad

ISLAMABAD: Former Information minister Fawad Chaudhry has demanded the ECP allocate a single electoral symbol of 'lota' to all government parties, media reported. The symbol will be consistent with their political style, he said. In a press talk on Wednesday, Fawad Chaudhry said that the only solution to the political crisis in Pakistan is fresh elections. An imported government does not have the mandate to make any long term decisions. They shake to the core at the thought of increasing fuel and electricity prices: how can they make any long-term decisions? Fawad said that it is a disgrace that the Prime Minister of a country is facing money laundering charges of around Rs40 billion. He said the courts' conduct in cases on the Shareef family is questionable, to say the least. Decisions

Continued on Page 06

# West always offered biased solutions of Palestine issue

Iranian ambassador Mohammad Ali Hosseini's message on Al Quds Day

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan Mohammad Ali Hosseini has issued a message on the occasion of World Quds Day. He said Quds Day is not just Palestine Day; rather, it is the day of the Islamic Ummah. (Ayatollah Khamenei; May Allah grant him longevity) Quds Day on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramazan, a reminiscent and legacy of Imam Khomeini (may God have mercy on him), is the day for the awakening and vigilance of the Muslim Ummah and the day of determining the fate of Muslim nations by themselves and the day of cutting off foreigners' hands from Islamic lands. Ambassador said, supporting the oppressed people of Palestine and liberating the occupied territories is the principled policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In all the years that Western governments and important international organizations neglected the settlement of Palestinian issue and offered biased and unjust solutions, and some regional and trans-regional governments made open and secret compromises with the enemies of Palestine and Islam; the Islamic Republic of Iran has pursued its principled policy and paid a heavy price for it.



The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a permanent supporter of the liberation of Holy Quds, has suggested a few years back a comprehensive, fair and democratic solution based on returning of all Palestinian refugees and holding a referendum with the participation of original Palestinian people, including Muslims, Christians and Jews, in the Occupied Palestinian territories and formation of an independent Palestinian government with Jerusalem as its capital. 'In a situation where the global banner-holders of human rights keep silence on the daily crimes of occupiers of the occupied territories; unity of the Islamic Ummah in supporting the Islamic resistance against global

arrogance and Zionist occupation, is the only way to liberate the occupied territories and return peace and dignity to the whole Islamic world'. Some countries in the region by signing an agreement under the pretext of bringing peace for Palestine has taken steps to recognize children-killer regime of Israel and normalize the relations with this occupying entity. But as we witness, this agreement not only did not bring any peace to Palestine, but also increased the level of assaults, occupation and crimes in the Palestinian land. Unfortunately, in recent days, in the shadow of news blackout, the occupying Zionist regime has increased attacks on Palestinian territories. Al-Quds Day is a great opportunity to emphasize to the world that freedom of Palestine remains the main issue in the Islamic world. Muslims will never abandon their principles and ideals including liberation of Palestine and will continue to promise the Palestinian fighters that in this way they are not alone and all the Muslims of the world will always stand by them. While congratulating all Muslims and free thinkers in the world, especially the two brave nations of Iran and Pakistan the ambassador called on them to unite with all Muslims in the world on this day and shout the hatred of the enemies of Islam and the occupiers of the holy land of Palestine.

Estd. 1860

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## KP gov't support to Hindko Academy assured

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's Higher Education Department has assured full support to the Gandhara Hindko Academy in carrying out research pursuits, publication and all other work.

"The assurance was given when the Higher Education Department Secretary Daud Khan visited the academy along with other senior officers and received a briefing on the work done and activities undertaken so far in the last seven years", said Muhammad Ziauddin, chief of the Executive Committee of the academy on Wednesday. He said Secretary Daud Khan was accompanied by Additional Secretary Nasir Khan, Additional Director Dr Qasim Khan and Chief Planning Officer Higher Education Commission Islam Afridi. The delegation was apprised of the performance of the academy which was being run on a public-private partnership basis since the year 2015. Academy Director Dr Muhammad Adil, board's Executive Committee members Khalid Sultan Khwaja and Muhammad Faheem Siddiqui, research officers and other staff members of the academy were present. Ziauddin gave a presentation to the delegation members along with the screening of a documentary to enumerate the work to date by the academy funded by the KP government and managed by the Gandhara Hindko Board that had been working for the promotion of the Hindko language since 1993. - APP

## Dacoit killed in encounter

FAISALABAD: An alleged dacoit was killed in a police encounter in the area of Batala Colony police station.

Police spokesman said on Wednesday that 28-year-old Zaheer Ahmad resident of Elahi Abad was trying to escape after looting a family when he was intercepted by a police team. The accused opened fire on the police party whereas the police also returned fire in self defense. During this encounter, the outlaw received serious bullet injuries and died on the spot. The accused was wanted to police in a number of dacoity, robbery and other cases. His body was dispatched to mortuary for postmortem while further investigation was under progress, spokesman added. - APP

## 98 kg charas seized, 3 car-riders arrested

FAISALABAD: Thikriwala police claimed to have arrested three drug traffickers and recovered 98 kilogram (kg) charas from a car. According to police spokesman, SHO Thikriwala police station Rana Asim on a tip-off erected picket near Landa Bridge Bypass Chak 66-JB and signaled a suspected car (AVJ-107). During search, the police recovered 98 kg charas hidden in secret areas of the four-wheeler after packing it in 82 packets. The police arrested three car-riders including Sher Abbas resident of Chak 204-JB Chiniot, Farooq Javid resident of Baghban Pura Faisalabad and Rizwan Shafi resident of Jhang. During initial investigation, the accused were carrying narcotics to supply it at various dens when they were caught. A case has been registered against them while further investigation was under progress. - APP

# NAB made an effective organization, says Chairman

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Justice Javed Iqbal presided over the review meeting of NAB's collective performance. Chairman appreciated NAB's excellent performance.

A meeting of NAB was held under the chairmanship of NAB Chairman Justice Javed Iqbal. The meeting reviewed the overall performance of NAB over the last four years. Lauding the performance of NAB, NAB Chairman said that various reforms have been introduced in NAB the NAB has been made an active institute. All resources are being utilized to eradicate corruption from the country. Chairman expressed these views while presiding over a review meeting on the overall performance of all NAB regional bureaus at NAB headquarters. The meeting was attended by Deputy Chairman NAB Zahir Shah, Prosecutor General Accountability Syed Asghar Haider, DG Operations Masood Alam Khan and other senior officers of NAB while Direc-



tor Generals of all Regional Bureaus attended the meeting through video link. NAB Chairman commended the performance of all NAB regional bureaus in their efforts to bring corrupt elements to justice. As many as 1405 accused have been

convicted due to effective prosecution of NAB's Operations and Prosecution Division along with all NAB regional bureaus. It was informed during the meeting that from October 2017 to December 2021, under the competent leadership of NAB Chairman Justice Javed Iqbal, NAB has recovered a total of Rs. 584 billion directly and indirectly. In addition to awareness, prevention and enforcement, the NAB has taken several steps in formulating an effective and comprehensive anti-corruption strategy based on the slogan of "Accountability for All".

Transparency International Pakistan, World Economic Forum, Global Peace Canada, PILDAT, Mashal Pakistan have also appreciated NAB's efforts whereas as

per Gilani & Gallup survey, 59 percent people have expressed confidence in the NAB. The Government of Pakistan appreciated the efforts made to improve Pakistan's ranking among FATF / APG members, especially in the preparation of periodic follow-up reports. This helped the FATF Coordinating Committee Pakistan to complete its work on time. It should be noted that under the wise leadership of Chairman NAB Justice Javed Iqbal, for the first time in the history of Pakistan, those whom no one could touch were brought to justice. At present 1237 references of corruption are being heard in accountability courts across the country, valued at approximately Rs. 1335 billion. The total conviction rate of NAB in accountability courts is 66.8%. The meeting was further informed that NAB has set up a combined investigation team system to further improve the quality of inquiry and investigation based on solid evidence, documentary evidence and witnesses and to benefit from the collective wisdom of senior NAB supervisory officers.

## Resolving problems of people; priority of gov't: Durrani

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Akram Durani Wednesday said that resolving outstanding issues faced by common people at their doorstep is priority of the government. He said that elevating the living standards of common people is the priority of the incumbent government. He said that the provision of uninterrupted gas and electricity to far-flung areas would ameliorate the suffering of the common people. He expressed these views during his meeting with Managing Director SNGPL Ali Javid Hamdani and General Manager SNGPL Peshawar in Parliament House on Wednesday. Deputy Speaker National Assembly said that provision of uninterrupted gas supply especially to South Districts of Peshawar e.g. Tanak, Bannu, D.I Khan, Hangu and Kohat. He said that people of these areas are suffering due to low pressure of gas and this was severely affecting the industrial sector of these areas. He said that the areas that fall under NA-35 Bannu are facing a lot of issues regarding the Sui gas issue. -APP

# Azerbaijan envoy vows to extend ties with Pakistan

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Ambassador of Azerbaijan in Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov on Wednesday said Pakistan and Azerbaijan enjoyed cordial relations and his country desired to further expand bilateral economic relations for mutual benefits of people of both countries.

Addressing to the 'Khyber Union of Journalists' meet the press program at Peshawar Press Club, he said people to people contacts and exchange of delegations including business community, investors, media and academicians would bring people of both the countries further closer. The ambassador said that his country highly valued its bilateral relations with the brotherly country of Pakistan and wanted to explore further avenues to further bolster economic ties.

He said the two countries have always supported each other at all regional and international forums and urged Pakistani investors to take full advantage of the investment opportunities especially in oil, gas and LNG sectors in his country. He said PIA and Azerbaijan avia-



tions have started direct flight operation between Karachi, Lahore and Baku for the facilitation of tourists, investors, business community, media professionals and people. He said Pakistan's has a lot of expertise in food manufacturing, pharmaceutical, textile, leather garments, agriculture products, surgical

equipment and producing quality rice while Azerbaijan is blessed in oil, gas and LNG resources, offering great opportunities for investors. Farhadov said that both the countries have agreed to establish joint working groups in different fields including IT, health, agriculture, energy, tourism and transport to

further bolster economic cooperation for benefits of people of the two nations. He said Pakistan was the most beautiful country having beautiful green landscapes and tall mountains treasures carrying huge potential for tourism and adventure sports. Regarding Peshawar, he said it was a historical city being the gateway between Central Asians Republics and Subcontinent and tourists of his country can come here to explore Ghandhara civilization, archeological and tourism rich Pakistan. To a question about inclusion of Azerbaijan in CPEC, Ambassador Farhadov said that it was an important project and the proposal might be considered if invited by Pakistan. To another question about Kashmir dispute and Modi Govt's human rights abuses in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the Azerbaijan ambassador said that his country has principle stand on this core issue and wanted it solution as per the resolutions of UN Security Council. To a question about Russia and Ukraine conflict, he clarified that Azerbaijan enjoyed cordial relations with neighboring countries and world powers and has no threat from any country.

# A distinction for AC Gujrat Umar Draz Gondal

YOOSUF BHUTTA

GUJRAT: An honor to Assistant Commissioner Gujrat Umar Draz Gondal; the AC Gujrat was awarded Certificate of Appreciation by the Commissioner Gujranwala Division for his professionalism and excellent performance throughout the division. According to details, the performance of all the administrative officers of Gujranwala division was reviewed under the chairmanship of Commissioner Gujranwala Mr. Ehsan Bhutta in which Assistant Commissioner Gujrat secured the first position. It is worth mentioning that AC Gujrat Umar Draz Gondal is considered as one of the shining stars of Punjab's best administrative officers among PMS Officers. He is a capable, hardworking, dutiful and people-friendly officer. Earlier, Umar Draz Gondal was posted in Sargodha district where he was awarded certificates of appreciation by the Commissioner Sargodha for excellence in Sargodha division and Chief Secretary Punjab for best performance in the province respectively. Umar Draz Gondal hails from Sira village in Phalia tehsil of Mandi Bahauddin, where Chaudhry Sultan Sira (the late), a prominent Punjab police officer from the same family, has rendered valuable services to Gujrat police.



# 'Do not delay the delivery of justice'

SAQIB MUSHTAQ

LODHAN: Additional Inspector General of Police South Punjab Dr. Ehsan Sadiq visited Lodhran, RPO Multan Javed Akbar Riaz was also present. He was received by DPO Lodhran Abdul Rauf Babar. Addressing the police court at the DPO office, Additional Inspector General of Police South Punjab said that the purpose of holding the court was to hear and solve the problems of officers and men. Do your duty as a worshiper and do not delay the delivery of justice to the oppressed. Protection of life and prop-

erty of the people, provision of justice is the main duty of the police. Adopt good morals. He said that community policing is an effective means of curbing crime. Addressing the police court, RPO Multan said that all the resources should be utilized to curb drug trafficking. The welfare of police personnel is a top priority. Later, Additional Inspector General of Police, South Punjab, Dr. Ehsan Sadiq presided over a meeting at the DPO office. The meeting also reviewed the performance of officers. DPO Abdul Rauf Babar briefed the meeting. DSPs and SHOs from across the district attended the meeting. Additional Inspec-

tor General of Police South Punjab directed that with the forensic report Complete the challan. Investigate serious crimes. Hurry up to the facts. No concessions should be made to those who sabotage the peace of the society. Reach out to the poor and helpless. Additional Inspector General of Police along with RPO Multan Police Station City Lodhran inspected the references, front desk, warehouse of the police station. He said that the police station is the basic unit of justice in the police department and modern policing measures will be continued to further improve the performance of the police station.

# Consul General of Malaysia calls on Chief Secretary Sindh



NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: His Excellency Consul General of Malaysia in Karachi, Mr. Khairul Nazran Abdul Rahman, paid a courtesy call on Dr. Muhammad Sohail Rajput, the Chief Secretary Sindh here on Wednesday at Sindh Secretariat.

The Chief Secretary Dr Muhammad Sohail Rajput stated that there is a strong and potential relations between both the countries, for further development and expansion of bilateral economic cooperation and partnership between Malaysia and Sindh Province of Pakistan. The Chief Secretary assured the Consul-General that the Sindh Government would provide every possible facility to the Malaysian investors, to invest in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the

province, while regarding tourism, Malaysia is a no stranger to the people of Pakistan and the large number of Pakistani nationals visiting Malaysia every year, that speaks volume for the enhanced ties in the tourism sector between two countries. The Consul-General apprised the Chief Secretary that Malaysia and Pakistan enjoy warm and friendly relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations. Malaysia's presence in Karachi comes with high commitment to further promote bilateral relations between Malaysia and Sindh Province. Bilateral cooperation between the two countries, in general is not only confined to political and economic spheres but also on other areas such as education, tourism and technical assistance.

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Scaled tenders are hereby invited on percentage basis for the following works from contractors / firms duly enlisted with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in appropriate category & Codes having validity / renewal of PEC license, Electric Inspector License, NTN & GST registration with FBR.

S. No	Name of work	N.I.T Cost	Earnest Money	Tender Cost	Date & Time of receiving of Tenders	Date & time of opening of tenders
1	Providing / Replacement of Hydraulic Road Blocker and Providing / Laying of New Sui Gas Pipe Line at C-Block Building (EX-USAID) Senate Sect. Islamabad (EE-02)	Rs. 4,107,208/-	Rs. 123,217/-	Rs. 2000/-	12-05-2022 11.30 AM	12-05-2022 12.00 Noon

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Tender forms/ documents can be purchased on cash payment (Non - Refundable) for the work mentioned above from the office of Deputy Director E&M P/ House, CDA and also will be available at reception of Parliament House Building, Islamabad from 09:00 AM to 1:00 PM upto 09-05-2022. No tender will be sold/issued on the day of opening of tenders.
- Application duly addressed to Deputy Director (E&M) P/ House for issuance of tender documents shall accompany the name, address(es), signature of contractor and valid enlisted/ renewal of firm with PEC, and that no such application be entertained without valid PEC license. Original PEC License, Professional Tax Certificate and Electric Inspector License valid for the year 2021-2022 will be seen before issuance of tender form.
- The owner of the firm should submit the application and collect the tender by himself. In case of authorized person, power of attorney is essential.
- Earnest Money in the shape of deposit at call bearing Name of Firm in favour of Deputy Director (E&M) Parliament House, CDA from scheduled Bank of Islamabad must accompany with the application. Without call deposit no application for issuance of tender will be entertained. Cash/ Cheque will not be accepted, and that of call/ Earnest Money should be generated only from firm's accounts.
- If any contractor wants to participate in tender opening process through their representative, then they should issue power of attorney.
- Tender for the work mentioned above will be received and opened by the Director Coord (PH) on due date and time in presence of contractors or their representative who care to attend with power of attorney.
- The contractor will submit the documents as per item No. 16 of instructions of tender documents along with their tender, without which tender will be liable for rejection.
- In case the total bid amount is less than 10% below the NIT amount, the bidder shall submit call deposit as performance security equal to the difference between NIT amount and total quoted amount less 10% of NIT amount. This call deposit shall be in addition to the earnest money for the work and shall be deposited at the time of submission of bids. Bids not carrying the performance security shall be rejected. The performance security of the successful bidder shall be released after completion of the project.
- CDA may reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to acceptance of bid or proposal. The CDA shall upon request communicate, to any supplier or contractor who submitted a bid or proposal, but is not required to justify those grounds.
- General/ Special power of attorney may be attested through respective court.
- The attorney holder may not be the employee of any Government/ semi Government institute.
- Only legitimate attorney holder may be allowed to get tender documents and participate in tender process.
- Relative of tendering authority may not be entertained for participation in the tenders.
- Bid security of all bidders would be deposited in the CDA Bank account and same may be returned after the acceptance of the contract with the successful bidder.
- Firms with the similar / relevant experience i.e. at least three number of work in last two financial years eligible for obtaining tenders.
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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	Birthdays of His Majesty
April 30 / Netherlands	Birthdays of Queen



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Rawal Town.....	5773343

## Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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# Business Community shows solidarity with Armed Forces

Muhammad Shakeel Munir said that Pakistan Army was a neutral institution and Pakistani nation including the business community have full faith in the unbiased role of Pakistan Army as it is focused on protecting the borders of the country from aggressive elements and has no role in political matters, which should be left to the politicians

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The business community in a meeting at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) expressed full solidarity with the Pakistan Armed Forces as their role was very vital in maintaining national sovereignty and protecting the borders from any aggression. Addressing the meeting, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that the business community has full confidence in Pakistan Army and Chief of Army Staff, therefore, he stressed that army should not be dragged into unnecessary controversies as it would be harmful for the national integrity.



He said that Pakistan needed to promote trade and exports with all potential markets of the world to improve its economy and conspiracy theory narrative should be

avoided as it would damage the business and economic interests of Pakistan in the international market. Muhammad Shakeel Munir said that Pakistan Army was

a neutral institution and Pakistani nation including the business community have full faith in the unbiased role of Pakistan Army as it is focused on protecting the borders of the

country from aggressive elements and has no role in political matters, which should be left to the politicians. He strongly condemned the malicious campaign against

the Pakistan Army and the Chief of Army Staff on social media after the recent developments on the political front and urged that strong action should be taken against those who were making efforts to malign the Pakistan Army, which was the most respectful and trustworthy institution of the country. Jamsheed Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President and Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI also condemned all efforts, which were being made against Pakistan Army and the Chief of Army Staff and demanded of the government to take strong actions against such elements as Pakistani nation would not tolerate any attempts to drag the Pakistan Army into controversies.

# CDA to spend over Rs 80m for street lights

Tender will be floated soon in national news papers before the commencement of work

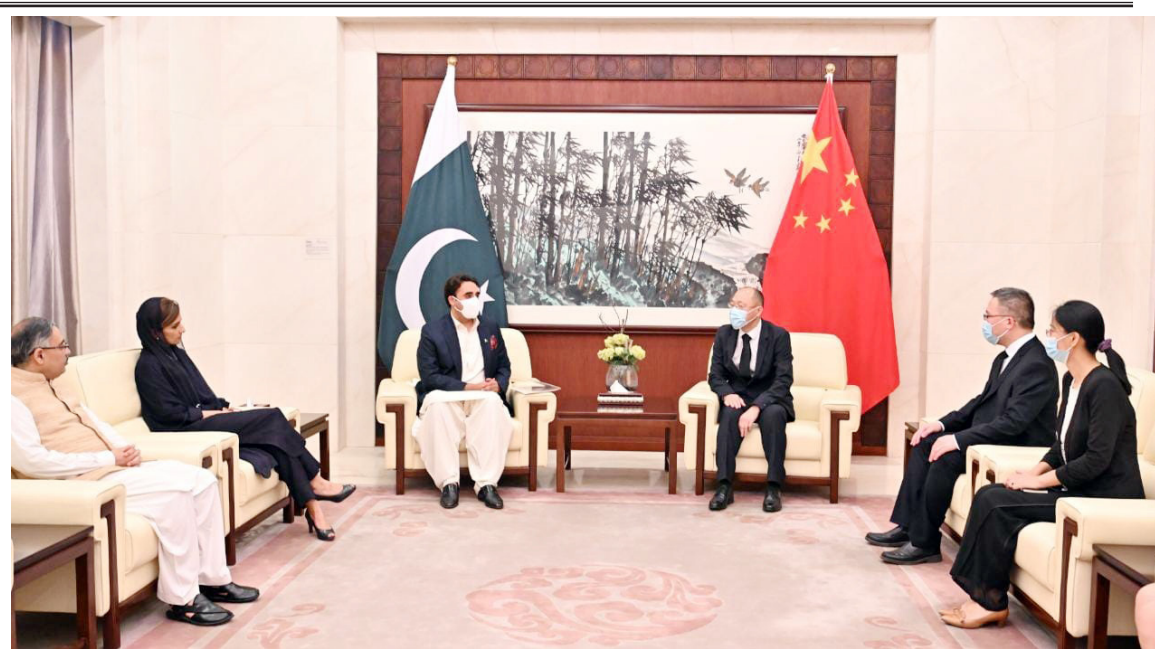
ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) will spend over Rs80 million for rehabilitation and maintenance of street lights to keep the city illuminated during night times. The Street Light Department of the Authority will install new street lights and repair faulty street lights and transformers on various major highways, intersections, link roads, markets, and streets of Islamabad, said spokesman of CDA on Wednesday. Tender will be floated soon in national news papers before the commencement of work, he added. He said the department under the guidance of CDA Chairman Aamer Ali Ahmed was committed to provide all required resources to street lights division in best interest of the capital city and its residents. The uninterrupted functioning of street lights was imperative to provide the citizens with comfortable commuting, besides security of the city during night times, the spokesman added.

According to details, a budget of over Rs20 million was set aside for installation of new street lights in various main highways and connecting roads of GT Road to Hajj Complex and Sector I-14/2/3. Similarly, a budget of over Rs19 million was earmarked for the installation of new and modern street lights in the main highways, link roads and markets of sector I-11/2 and maintenance of faulty street lights. Likewise, Rs16 million were allocated for sector I-16 to ensure proper lighting system on main highways, service roads and markets. Moreover, Rs11 million will be utilized for lighting arrangement from sector I-10, Faqir Appi Road to Victory Pipe Industrial Area. The authority had decided to install new and modern street lights for ensuring proper lighting system in Sector I-14-1, I-14/3 and I-14/4 for which Rs11 million were set aside whereas Rs7 million for installation of new street lights in sector H-11 from NUST University Gate No 1 to Srinagar Highway. - APP

# Capital's air quality recorded healthy

ISLAMABAD: The air quality of the federal capital on Wednesday was recorded healthy as hazardous air pollutants were far below the permissible limits in the atmosphere due to reduced vehicular traffic. The air quality data has been collected by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) that monitors air pollutants ratio for 24 hours based on three intervals of eight hours data collection from different locations. The Pak-EPA data revealed that the air quality throughout the three intervals of data monitoring remained low as the pollutants were far less

than the permissible limits of national environmental quality standards (NEQS). The hazardous air pollutant particulate matter of 2.5 microns (PM2.5) which was a lethal atmospheric contaminant remained 17.63 micro grammes per cubic meter on average which is below the NEQS of 35 micro grammes per cubic meter and denotes the air quality healthy. The PM2.5 is generated through combustion of an engine, industrial emissions, burning garbage or inflammable material, and dust blown up by fast moving cars plying on non-cemented patches of the roads. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visits Chinese Embassy and meets Ambassador Nong Rong to express sympathies over Karachi blast. - DNA

# AIOU to admissions till May 09 with late fee charges

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The admissions for various teacher training programs offered in Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Semester Spring 2022 are continuing till May 9 with late fee charges.

These programs include Associate Degree in Education, MA Education, one year M.Ed, one and a half / two and four year B.Ed. It should be noted that the last date for these admissions was April 18, however, the university has extended the last date on the request of students. According to the Home Department, enrollment of pre-enrolled (continuing students) will continue till May 16.

It is worth mentioning here that Allama Iqbal Open University is the highest and unique institution for training of teachers. Millions of graduates of PTC, CT, B.Ed and M.Ed programs of this institute are rendering teaching services in public and private schools, colleges and universities in every corner of the country.

# Pak earns \$360 million from travel exports

## STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$360.034 million by providing different travel services in various countries during the first eight months of the current financial year 2021-22. This shows the growth of 10.05 percent as compared to the US \$327.152 million same services were provided during the corresponding period of the last fiscal year 2020-21, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During the month under review, the personal travel services increased by 10.05 per-

cent, from the US \$325.802 million last year to the US \$358.544 million during July-February 2021-22. Among these personal services, the exports of health-related expenditure rose by 92.66 percent while the education-related expenditure decreased by 4.95 percent. In addition, the other personal services witnessed an increase of 10.16 percent. Meanwhile, the exports of business services also grew by 10.37 percent, from the US \$ 1.350 million to the US \$ 1.490 million, the PBS data revealed. It is pertinent to mention here that the exports of

services from the country witnessed an increase of 18.17 percent during the first eight months of current financial year (2021-22) as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The exports of services during July-February (2021-22) were recorded at \$4492.02 million against the exports of \$3801.18 million in July-February (2020-21), showing growth of 18.17 percent. The imports also rose by 39.20 percent by growing from \$5089.31 million last year to \$7084.40 million during the period under review.

# UPaisa Ramzan Offer' - Exciting rewards for donors

ISLAMABAD: This Ramzan, UPaisa is offering exciting rewards to Ufone 4G prepaid customers for extending financial aid to donation companies and public welfare organizations in Pakistan. In order to express gratitude to donors, UPaisa will offer rewards on donations done through the UPaisa application. Ufone 4G prepaid customers donating Rs 50 or higher will receive 1000MBs, 1000 on-net minutes, and 1000 SMS with 24-hours validity. Making donations through the UPaisa app is extremely convenient and hassle-free due to its user-friendly interface.

For consumer ease, the app lists all the leading donation companies for contributions as per the donor's choosing. Each of these donor organizations and public welfare projects listed on the UPaisa app solely depends on our generosity and altruism to make a difference for millions of deserving people. Edhi Foundation, Akhuwat, Jabir Bin Hayyan, Shaikat Khanum Memorial Trust, Shifa Foundation, Shifa Eye Trust, Health and Nutrition Development Society, Rashid Khan Trust, The SCP and PM of Pak Diar Bhasha and Mohmand Dams Fund, Saylani Welfare International Trust, Pink Ribbon, Alkhidmat Foundation Pakistan, Vision Forty Seven Foundation, PM COVID 19 Pandemic Relief Fund, Bait us Salam Welfare Trust, Sundas Foundation, Rizq Trust, Idara Tul Mustafa Trust, and Dawat e Islami Trust await our support via UPaisa app. - APP

# Admin continues crackdown against overcharging

RAWALPINDI: Administration conducted 1,700 raids in different areas of Rawalpindi city and imposed Rs 436,000 fines on shopkeepers for overcharging the customers during April. According to a spokesman, the authorities concerned took action in accordance with the law against 228 violations checked during raids. He informed that 46 violators were also sent behind the bars while 55 shops were also sealed during the period. He said the shopkeepers of various markets were imposed fines during surprise raids conducted by the magistrates. The officers concerned had been directed to visit different markets on daily basis and take strict action in accordance with the law against profiteers to provide relief to the citizens. The administration was ensuring strict adherence to rate list of food items in markets particularly during Ramadan ul Mubarak, he added. Cases were also being registered against the lawbreakers on the spot for overcharging and they were being sent behind the bars. He said daily price-checking would continue unabated to provide relief to the citizens. - APP

# 200 students participated in road safety workshop

ISLAMABAD: The education wing of Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) Wednesday organized a road safety workshop at Islamabad model school G-7/4 to sensitize students on traffic laws. Around 200 students and staff members participated in the workshop addressed by Inspector traffic Rana Ishtiaq Ahmed. The special message of SSP (Traffic) Mazhar Iqbal was also quoted on the occasion that valuable lives of citizen can be saved by obeying traffic rules. Addressing to concluding ceremony the traffic inspector said ITP was striving to minimize the road accidents ratio by educating road users and ensuring strict implementation of traffic rules. He said the workshops were aimed at holding such programs is to create traffic sense and sense of responsibility among the students and citizens, advising them to avoid underage driving, yielding right of ways on junctions and roundabouts and pedestrians while crossing roads. Students in the workshop were also urged to avoid using mobile phones while driving, fastening seat belts for safety in case of road crash. He said that a minor negligence of a driver can cause severe road accident and endanger the lives of many road users. At the end, gifts were distributed among the participants. Rana Ishtiaq said ITP had become a model of excellence through its service-oriented policies and endeavoring to come up to the expectations of the general public by ensuring traffic discipline in the city. - APP

# Agha Baloch expresses grief over Karachi blast

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Agha Hassan Baloch expressed grief over the loss of precious lives in the heinous blast incident that occurred in Karachi. In a statement, the federal minister said, "I am deeply saddened by the loss of precious lives including our Chinese friends in the attack". Expressing heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families, he said, "I strongly condemn this cowardly act of terrorism. The culprits will definitely be brought to justice". The federal minister stated that enemies of Pak-China Strategic Partnership have once again attacked the Chinese working in Pakistan by carrying out terrorist attack on Chinese teachers of Karachi University. This reprehensible act of terrorism against innocent people is part of a specific agenda that must be exposed, Agha Hassan Baloch said. - APP

# Thar Coal Project sets benchmark for all projects

"Thar Coal Mining Project has the potential to run and light up Pakistan for 50 years. It's an honor for me to work for this project in my country. In the future, I would love to continue to work for it," Shah concluded with confidence

## KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: "Thar Coal Mining Project has set the benchmark for all other projects in Pakistan regarding local people's development in terms of economy, skills, and facilities. It enables them to think and live with this world of the 21st century. Today, I feel this coal mine is the most beautiful mine in the world," Syed Abdul Ghafoor Shah, Deputy Manager (HSE) of Thar Coal Mine Block II, said proudly. Having worked for Pakistan's energy and construction industry since 2013, he is quite experienced in the field of Health, Safety

and Environment after working for many major companies. But for him, Thar Coal Mining Project is always the special one.

"Since I was in school, Thar coal has been the main highlight of students and teachers' everyday discussions. As I started my professional career in February, 2013, it was always my wish to work on a project that I may proudly tell our coming generations that I was part of the team who worked from the beginning, and my wish has come true since I joined Thar Coal Mining Project. Today, eyeing this project with potential to lighten our country every minute is unbelievable." Shah said.

In May, 2016, Shah started to work for Thar Coal Mining Project that he always dreamed about, and arrived in the desert area of Tharparkar for the first time in his life.

"When I entered the mining site, the conditions were tough and the environment was harsh. As time passed I spent time with China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC), and my thoughts turned confident that companies like CMEC can do this, and we together made it," Shah recalled. So far, Thar Coal Mining Project has achieved over 21 million safe man-hours, to which Shah contributed a lot. "Mr. Shah works diligently to ensure all the work

ongoing is safely executed, and all welfare facilities including clean drinking water, neat rooms, good food, etc. are provided to workers. He always manages the project with up to date HSE standards in the world," CMEC official appraised Shah.

Besides bringing energy security to Pakistan, the project also has boosted local people's development. According to Shah, currently about 1,800 local people are working in this project. "Almost all family members who are in age of earning are having some good money at the end of each month. It has done a lot of help for local families in making their lives pleasant and safe," he said.

"Today, Tharparkar District is having quality road network, hospitals, international standard schools, good business in the town and many more due to this Project," Shah said. It's also noted that in the environment field he is specialized in, he acted a major role as EPC contractor representative in Thar Million Trees Project, in which one million trees have been planted, sustainably improving the local environment.

"Thar Coal Mining Project has the potential to run and light up Pakistan for 50 years. It's an honor for me to work for this project in my country. In the future, I would love to continue to work for it," Shah concluded with confidence.



## Briefs

## Tobacco Taxes: Potential source of large revenue

ISLAMABAD: The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) organized a discussion to highlight tobacco taxation as a potential remedy to Pakistan's ailing economy on Wednesday at a local hotel in Islamabad.

Khail Ahmed Dogar, Program Manager SPARC, said that Pakistan was at the crossroads where sound decision-making was required. He said that the deficit faced by national exchequer required immediate attention of the policymakers however it should be pro-people. "Randomly increasing the prices of essential items is not going to help the country in longer run. Government should increase taxes on nonessential and hazardous items such as tobacco products as this will generate revenues and reduce health costs as well," he said. He added that in theory the decision of imposing higher taxes on tobacco products should be straight forward however due to misinformation spread by extensive campaigns by the tobacco industry, Pakistan's policymakers haven't taken any serious interest in this regard and tobacco products were being sold at lower rates compared to other countries in the region. "Due to easy and cheap affordability, number of smokers has reached up to 29 million, alluring non-communicable diseases like cancer, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and chronic lung diseases," he said adding that in Pakistan, 170,000 people die yearly due to tobacco consumption. - APP

## PM directs re inclusion of BISP beneficiaries

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the re-inclusion of eligible persons into Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), who were struck out of the beneficiary list by the previous government without any reason. He gave the direction in a meeting held with Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation Shazia Atta Marri. The prime minister welcomed devising a procedure about making an appeal for re-inclusion of the persons expelled from BISP.

PM Shehbaz Sharif was briefed on the proposed procedure of the appeal for such 820,000 people who were dropped from the BISP by the previous government without any investigation. ShaziaMarri also updated the prime minister regarding the working of her ministry. She paid tribute to PM Sharif for announcing assistance for the deserving people of Balochistan under BISP and offering scholarships to students besides extending financial support to the parents of female students. - APP

## Stalls of 'Bangles' attract women ahead of Eid

ISLAMABAD: With the festivity of Eid-ul-Fitr, a number of eye-catching illuminated stalls carrying multi-color 'Bangles' are attracting women buyers as traditional bangles are considered as the most glamorous fashion accessory which is specifically worn on special occasions like Eid. Buying matching dress bangles is an essential part of the Eid preparations for all the women especially young girls and they consider their eid incomplete without wearing bangles, said a report aired by a private news channel. Whatever the value or tradition, matching color bangles are a passion of women and they let no opportunity to adorn their arms with wearing matching bangles on every special occasions, said a vendor.

A seller said that the number of women customers is gradually picking up after iftar and hopefully it will go further up as Eid-ul-Fitr approaches nearer. Eid shopping remains incomplete without Bangles, said a women. - Agencies

## Terrorist attacks can't sabotage Pak-China ties

ISLAMABAD: While strongly condemning the terrorist attack on a shuttle passenger van of the Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi, Pakistani political leaders said such terrorist acts can't undermine the strategic relations between the two brotherly neighboring countries.

According to Gwadar Pro, leaders of different political parties expressed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and offered prayers for the deceased souls. "I am deeply grieved on the loss of precious lives including our Chinese friends in the heinous attack in Karachi today. My heart-

felt condolences go to the bereaved families. I strongly condemn this cowardly act of terrorism. The perpetrators will surely be brought to justice," wrote Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a message posted on his official Twitter account. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar said she was "shocked and saddened at the loss of innocent lives in a cowardly terrorist attack in Karachi." "I offer my deepest condolences to the Chinese government, people and families of the victims," she added.

Maleha Lodhi, Pakistani diplomat and political scientist, tweeted, "terrible attack in Ka-

rachi claimed the lives of Pakistani and Chinese nationals. Condolences and Dues for the families who lost their loved ones. This effort to sabotage Pak-China relations is doomed to fail". PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari strongly condemned the blast and expressed condolences on behalf of the people of Pakistan to the people of China.

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Faisal Subzwari while expressing grief over the death of the Chinese nationals said that it was testing times as "enemies of Pakistan are targeting our Forces & Friends from Borders to Karachi. We must continue to

work for a peaceful and prosperous Pakistan in order to defeat them". Maulana Fazlur Rehman strongly condemned the suicide attack and expressed sympathies with the victims and their families. "The Government should make full preparations for the safety of foreigners, especially the Chinese people," he said.

Senator Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that there was a need for a national narrative on counter insurgency in Balochistan. "If such a narrative is not formulated, then we will not be able to win against terror groups," Mr. Bugti stated. - DNA

## PM's Saudi Arabia visit to boost bilateral ties: Tahira Aurangzeb

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-N senior leader Tahira Aurangzeb Wednesday hoped that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Saudi Arabia will further improve the bilateral ties between the two brotherly Muslim countries.

"The visit to Saudi Arabia is of strategic importance as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoy deep rooted and brotherly relations and Riyadh has always helped Islamabad in all times of difficulty", she said while speaking to Radio Pakistan's current Affairs programme. Some people are making baseless propaganda against this visit, she mentioned.

She further said that current government was paying special attention on resolving the energy crisis being faced by the nation, adding, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is very much committed to improve the economy.

## Report traffic violations, overcharging on 130: IG

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General National Highways and Motorway Police InamGhani on Wednesday urged people to report over-speeding, overloading and overcharging on 130 Help Line during Eid-ul-Fitr rush-days.

In a video message on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr, he said that in case of violation strict action will be taken under National Highway Safety Ordinance 2000. InamGhani said that such vehicles can be fined Rs 5000 and will also face one month jail. He also urged the road users to exercise extra precaution during the upcoming weekend on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. He said that it was very important to practice safe driving behaviors during Eid rush days. Inspector General called on everyone planning to travel for the holiday to follow safe driving tips to ensure their own safety and of others. He said that drivers should drive slowly and avoid reckless driving. - APP

## Sanaullah vows to arrest perpetrators of blast

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior RanaSanaullah on Wednesday expressed resolve to arrest perpetrators of Karachi blast and set a precedent. He said that on the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he was going to Karachi today, said a press release. He said the entire country expressed solidarity with Chinese brothers and it was our common grief. We will deal with it with full force as it is attack on Pak-China friendship, he added. He said that he would find out the facts in meeting with the concerned authorities. Our great friend China will be kept fully informed in progress about investigation into the incident, he added.

## Islamic exhibition attracts audience

ISLAMABAD: An exhibition of Islamic calligraphy to mark the holy month of Ramadan, which will continue till end of Ramadan, was attracting a large number of people from different parts of the country specially foreign tourists at the National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage LokVirsa. LokVirsa is a specialized institute dealing with research, collection, documentation, preservation and dissemination of Pakistan's traditional culture and folk heritage, a senior official Anwar ulHaq told on Wednesday.

Interested bonafide calligraphers are invited to send copy of their work along with their brief profile to LokVirsa. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Newly appointed Federal Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari calls on President Dr Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad. - DNA

## Coordinator General COMSTECH briefs media on milestones achieved

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary briefed media persons on Tuesday at COMSTECH Secretariat. Prof. Choudhary gave a comprehensive briefing to the media persons on the milestones achieved by COMSTECH during the last two years. He informed the media on the flagship programmes of COMSTECH research grants programme with International Foundation for Science, Sweden, The World Academy of Sciences, Italy, and International Center of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, Italy.

Prof. Choudhary said that COMSTECH has established Consortium of Excellence comprising upon key academic, science, technology and engineering research institutions of OIC member states. He said that the objec-

tive of this consortium is to build capacity in key areas of S&T, build linkages, provide enabling environment to increase investment, and trade through technology-based projects and build an ecosystem of collaboration and enable knowledge-based economic growth in OIC region. He said that during the last two years COMSTECH has started fellowship programme in collaboration with the World Academy of Sciences for scientists in exile, fellowship programme in virology and vaccine technologies, scholarships for Palestine nationals, and fellowships for Yemen. This is by far the largest fellowship program in OIC for capacity building in science and technology.

Prof. Choudhary said that COMSTECH has started compiling science, technology and innovation profiles of OIC member states. He said that COMSTECH has launched OIC technology and innovation portal to pro-

vide a digital platform to innovators and scientists of Muslim countries to showcase their innovative products. Prof. Choudhary said that COMSTECH has started Africa Programme in health sciences and technology innovation. He said under this programme COMSTECH in collaboration with LRBT has conducted eye camps in Gambia and Niger and performed more than 500 cataract surgeries and fixed the out of order medical equipment, along with holding training workshops to train eye surgeons. Similar programs now planned for Chad, Uganda, Benin, and Nigeria.

Prof. Choudhary mentioned that COMSTECH is working in collaboration with the ministry of science and technology, Pakistan for the capacity building of research and development organizations of MoST and facilitating towards indigenous human vaccine production.

## Aqeela Aziz to represent Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Athlete Aqeela Aziz to represent Pakistan in World University Games to be held in China in August, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday.

Aqeela, from Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB), has been selected for the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Judo team in the 52-kilogram-weight category, on the basis of her previous year's achievements.

Chancellor Engineer

Professor Dr. Athar Mahboob congratulated Aqeela, Director Sports Amjad Farooq Waraich and Director Women Sports Ambreen Maqsood on this achievement of bringing IUB to the international horizon.

The World University Games is scheduled to be held every two years. They were pushed back from 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. China is scheduled to hold the Asian Games from September 10-25 in Hangzhou.

## IRC Empowering Communities Through client-responsive programming, we aim to put clients at the center of all our efforts

ISLAMABAD: The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has been working in Pakistan since 1980, managing and delivering large, complex programs to meet the needs of health, education, protection, environmental health, and livelihoods for displaced, underprivileged, and disaster-affected communities.

In a bid to highlight IRC's contributions to Pakistan's development and humanitarian sector during the previous year, the organization hosted the launch of its Annual Report 2021 at Serena Hotel here in Islamabad. Government representatives, members of the civil society, representatives of the development sector, and the organization's clients were in attendance.

While speaking at the event, Kumaria, one of IRC's clients who had benefited from its interventions mentioned, "We were always aware that when we work together the results are multiplied. However, it was not until IRC started implementation in our

area and gathered us all in one group that we actually started taking joint actions. They called us WASH Jirga, for us it felt great since women are not normally part of jirgas in our communities. We are now working together to resolve issues in our areas - we have a collective voice that has more impact. The areas that we are working on primarily involve WASH governance, but the way we have been empowered has gone a long way in enabling us to take actions for ourselves."

Ms. Shabnam Baloch, Country Director at IRC Pakistan while shedding light on the organization's work said, "At the IRC, meaningful participation of clients receiving relief and services is a prerequisite for principled, effective programming. People's empowerment is enhanced by participation, as is mutual trust between clients and assistance and service providers. Through client-responsive programming, we aim to put clients at the center of all our efforts." - APP

## Riaz Hussain assumes charge as Minister HR



ISLAMABAD: MianRiazHussain-Pirzada here on Wednesday assumed charge as Federal Minister for Human Rights. On arriving office, Secretary Human Rights and other senior officers of the ministry welcomed the federal minister. - APP

## NEPRA finishes hearing into FCA for March

ISLAMABAD: National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Wednesday concluded public hearing into monthly fuel cost adjustment (FCA) for March 2022.

The hearing was presided over by NEPRA Chairman Tauseef H Farooqi. Other members including Rafique Ahmed Sheikh and Engineer Maqsood Anwar were also present. The Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA-G) has sought Rs 3.16 per unit increase in power tariff for March. However, as per the authority calculation of data, the increase stood at Rs 2.87 per unit for the said period. The FCA for February was calculated as Rs 4.84 per unit which was only for one month. The

FCA for March is Rs 1.98 per unit less than February. The FCA would be applicable for only one month and its impact would be pass on all consumers except life line and K-Electric.

The possible impact has been calculated as Rs 28.9 billion. The Authority would announce its decision after reviewing the data.

According to the petition, the CPPA-G maintained that actual cost remained Rs 9,3869 per unit against the reference fuel charges of Rs 6,2295 per unit during March. A total of 10,418.42 GWh electricity was generated worth Rs 96,032 billion during the said period while 10,078.73 GWh net electricity was supplied to the power distribution companies (DISCOs). - APP



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi exchanging views with Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Faisal Ali Subzwari at Naval Headquarters. - DNA

## Expert calls for enhanced Pak-China cooperation in smart plant protection

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Experts called for enhanced Pak-China cooperation in smart plant protection, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Wednesday.

"Pakistan and China can build joint insect forecasting and monitoring labs and smart plant protection technology groups for sustainable pest management of field crops in particular in both countries.

A scientific research Journal on Smart Plant Protection can also be started to serve as an esteemed platform to strengthen the research cooperation bilaterally and with other countries along the Belt and Road", said Dr. Abid Ali, Assistant Professor, De-

partment of Entomology, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad (UAF) in an interview. Overall speaking, smart plant protection is a step forward to green control technology to achieve maximum output with an integration of different control methods, rational use of synthetic insecticides and labor, and reduced impact on the environment and nontarget organisms.

"Conservation of biocontrol agents and use of yellow sticky and pheromone traps, artificial intelligence like drones with rotary nozzles and sensors, genetic modification of plants and insects, these are all smart plant protection practices", Dr. Abid Ali introduced. Take cotton as an example. In Pakistan, more than 80% of total imported pesticides are used in cotton fields only. "It

means there are a lot of opportunities for Chinese companies to launch their manufacturing units in Pakistan for biopesticides in Pakistan", Dr. Abid Ali analysed.

He also recommended Chinese companies to invest in the mass production of biocontrol agents like predators and parasitoids in addition to mass disruption lures. "As people's livelihood standards are rising, they prefer food that are organic", he added. Insect pests that are rapidly adapting to genetically engineered crops with changing climate poses a great threat for agriculture in Pakistan as well as other countries.

Dr. Abid Ali holds that the ingenious strategy used in China entails growing of Bt cotton mixed with non-Bt cotton as a refuge crop can also be promoted in Pakistan to reduce

resistance in the pink bollworm, a monophagous pest that feeds only on cotton.

Other crops, too, are facing emerging entomological challenges. In 2021, Pakistan started pest scouting in maize, sorghum, and millets following the Fall Armyworm (FAW) invasion in Sindh province, Pakistan. Among the pest controlling methods, chemical control is still prevalent.

"We need insect radar systems to detect the cross-border movement of the insects. In China, there are already such models that predicted the first adult entrance of FAW in its territory.

We can also do that in Pakistan, to see how insects are traveling with winds from the Himalayas to Pakistan in the monsoon season", said Dr. Abid Ali.



## Attack on Chinese nationals; we need to do more

**T**HE gruesome attack on Chinese nationals in the Karachi University has once again challenged the security apparatus of Pakistan. This is not the first time that the Chinese nationals have been attacked. Even in the past such incidents had taken many precious lives. Every time when such an incident takes place the authorities invariably vow to put in place strict security measures but unfortunately after some time all such vows evaporate in the air. The Chinese government has rightly taken a very serious view of the incident and asked the Pakistani authorities to take immediate steps for the arrest of the handlers and the masterminds. Police and other law enforcing agencies claim to have come by important clues, which is quite encouraging.

After the explosion, the Balochistan Liberation Army, which is identified as a terrorist organization by many countries, claimed responsibility for the attack and released a photo of a woman, claiming she was the first female suicide bomber of the group.

The Chinese embassy and consulate in Pakistan strongly condemned this terrorist act and asked Pakistan to make every effort to treat the wounded, conduct a thorough investigation of the attack and severely punish the perpetrators. It also asked all levels of relevant Pakistani departments to take practical measures to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens, institutions and projects in Pakistan, and ensure that similar incidents do not happen again. Was this attack initiated by a single organization or was it supported and manipulated by larger forces behind? We want to say that no matter who the perpetrators are and whom they are targeting, they must be severely punished. The Pakistani side must conduct a comprehensive and detailed investigation and give the Chinese side an explanation.

The China-Pakistan relations are as solid as rocks. The Chinese people call Pakistan its "iron brother." Both Pakistan's government and people also highly value their friendship with China. China-Pakistan practical cooperation has yielded fruitful results. It has brought about many jobs and driven local development. However, some terrorist forces take the sabotage of China-Pakistan cooperation as a means to blackmail and attack the Pakistani government, resulting in occasional attacks on Chinese nationals in the country in recent years. Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, strongly condemned Tuesday's terrorist attack calling it a "cowardly act of terrorism" and said that a thorough investigation will be conducted to bring the perpetrators to justice. He also went to the Chinese embassy in Pakistan to express his condolences for the assault on the Chinese nationals. Another view is that Baloch people have not got a due share in the CPEC project. They believe those executing the project have made their fortunes but the locals have got nothing. According to them poverty is still rampant in the province and even basic amenities of life are out of reach of the majority of people.

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## Twitter belongs to Elon Musk

**E**LON Musk is buying Twitter. A scary thought, isn't it? Yes. Every way one thinks about it, the move by the richest man in the world to control a powerful media outlet, with nearly 220 million users, doesn't sound a good idea. Since its launch in 2006, Twitter's user numbers have been growing steadily. Today, the social media platform is one of the most influential mediums of global communication; many argue that the nature of its open instant messaging characteristic indeed makes it the most powerful of them all.

The war in Ukraine is a case in point. Using Twitter as his main tool of reaching out, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has so far been successful in rallying his people and the Western world to fend off the Russian offensive. Many other landmark events have been witnessed live by the entire world. That makes Twitter an essential global resource that no single person should have absolute control over it.

Musk is a successful entrepreneur and a brilliant innovator who revolutionised the electric transportation industry and is in the process of doing the same with space travel and exploration. But that doesn't qualify him or anyone else to be in total control of the planet's most important communication medium. Taking the company private will naturally make it under the personal biases of one person (who has displayed questionable judgement at times). Will Musk use the platform to advance his own personal, and business interests, at the expense of its credibility? Will he shut the company if it starts to lose money, denying the world a critical communication tool? These important, legitimate questions need to be answered unequivocally by him.

On the other hand, Musk believes that "free speech is the bedrock of a functioning democracy, and Twitter is the digital town square where matters vital to the future of humanity are debated," according to a statement he issued on Monday. Musk, who called himself once a "free-speech absolutist" says he wants to change Twitter's 'overzealous' content moderation, which again questions his judgement.

Free speech is a universal human right. But not hate speech. Content moderation today has become crucial in all social media outlets. Terrorists, racists, and violent demagogues cannot be allowed to spread their venom unchecked. Thousands of innocent lives have been lost across the world as a result of extremist speech allowed by Twitter, Facebook and others. That needs to stop. Removing the moderation will only lead to more conflicts instigated by those who will use this free medium to stoke hate and fear.

# Saudi Arabia and Pakistan's unique, profound and durable relationship

Dr. Ali Awadh Asseri

Perhaps the most important takeaway from the crown prince's 2019 visit was the conclusion of the biggest Saudi investment in Pakistan, with deals worth \$20 billion – including a \$10 billion Aramco oil refinery and petrochemical complex in the strategic port city of Gwadar. "I am your ambassador in Saudi Arabia," the crown prince cheerfully told Imran Khan

**T**HE Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have an exceptional relationship, rooted in the love between the two peoples, making it immune to changes in leadership. This bond has continued to strengthen over the past several decades in the political, security, economic and cultural spheres. It will be boosted further under the charismatic leadership of Mian Mohammed Shehbaz Sharif, the newly elected prime minister of Pakistan. Sharif will soon visit the Kingdom to perform Umrah and seek the blessings of Allah and Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, in the holy month of Ramadan. On this occasion, he may also meet the Saudi leadership to boost the bonds of brotherhood. Pakistan is my second home. I spent the prime of my diplomatic career as an ambassador in Islamabad between 2001 and 2009. For some years, I also served as the dean of its diplomatic corps. I am well aware of Sharif's administrative skills as the former chief minister of Punjab for three tenures, during which he changed the face of Lahore and the rest of the province. Nawaz Sharif, his elder brother who has thrice served as prime minister, was instrumental in developing the parliamentary institutions of Pakistan and enabling it to become the only nuclear state in the Muslim world.

Pakistan is at a critical juncture today. Externally, it faces a precarious situation on its western border with Afghanistan after the US exit, while, across the eastern frontier, India's Hindu nationalist wave endangers the fate of the Kashmiri Muslims. Internally,

the serious deterioration in economic conditions not only derails political stability but also limits the country's ability to tackle external challenges. But I am sure that Prime Minister Sharif has the ability, courage and will to take Pakistan forward meaningfully. I also have no doubt that he can count on unwavering Saudi support for this purpose. Saudi Arabia has always contributed to Pakistan's economy, stability and the well-being of its people – a proud tradition that dates back to well before independence. In 1940, the year the Pakistan resolution was passed, then-Crown Prince Saud bin Abdulaziz visited Karachi and was warmly welcomed by All-India Muslim League leaders, including Mirza Abul Hassan Ispahani. In 1943, when famine hit Bengal, King Abdulaziz responded to Mohammed Ali Jinnah's appeal with a handsome donation. In 1946, when a Muslim League delegation led by Ispahani visited the UN headquarters in New York, Prince Faisal bin Abdulaziz hosted a reception to lobby for the cause of Pakistan.

Saudi Arabia was among the first UN member states to recognize Pakistan. In 1951, it also concluded a Treaty of Friendship with Islamabad. In 1954, King Saud laid the foundation stone for a housing scheme in Karachi, the former capital, which was named after him as Saudabad. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan worked closely during the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. In 1969, Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz, then-Saudi Arabia's minister of defense and aviation, visited Pakistan to conclude the protocol for bilateral defense cooperation. A glorious chapter in Saudi-Pakistani ties unfolded in the 1970s under the leadership of King Faisal and Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Its highlight was the 1974 Lahore Islamic Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, whose symbolic value continues to live in the collective memory of the two nations. The Pakistani people loved King Faisal. The Faisal Masjid in Islamabad, the city of Faisalabad and the Shahra-e-Faisal in Karachi are all named after him. This was the time when Saudi Arabia opened its doors to Pakistani workers and provided financial aid to the Bhutto regime in order to thwart India's nuclear ambitions. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan were leading members of anti-communist Cold War alliances. Therefore, in the 1980s, they joined hands to support the international fight against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, which ultimately liberated the world from the scourge of communism. In 1982, they also concluded a bilateral security cooperation agreement, under which Pakistan assists Saudi Arabia in military training and defense production capabilities. In 1989, when the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait threatened the territorial integrity of the Kingdom, Pakistan participated in the international coalition by dispatching an army division to act as the first line of defense in the Saudi border regions. In the 1990s, as the Afghan Mujahideen factions fought among themselves, both nations were on the forefront

of international global peace efforts. In 1997, Pakistan organized an extraordinary summit of the OIC to mark the golden jubilee of its independence. Then-Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz graced the occasion. As Pakistan came under heavy Western sanctions after its 1998 nuclear tests, the Kingdom met the bulk of its oil needs for a year on deferred payment, most of which was later converted into grants.

Having served as the Saudi ambassador to Pakistan during a tumultuous period, I vividly remember the gravity of terrorism that our two nations faced post-9/11 and how we confronted this danger together in the heyday of the War on Terror. With the instructions and guidance of my leadership, I maintained close interaction with Pakistan's civilian and military leaderships to help ensure the country's stability and security. When a devastating earthquake hit Azad Jammu and Kashmir in 2005, Saudi Arabia was the first country to establish an air corridor to provide emergency relief to victims, with two state-of-the-art field hospitals fully equipped and operated by professional Saudi doctors. Through the OIC, we tackled this natural disaster together, as well as championing the cause of Islamic peace at the UN and other global platforms.

A decade after leaving Pakistan, in January 2019, I returned to Islamabad after performing my ambassadorial duties in Lebanon and retiring from the diplomatic service. I was happy to learn that Pakistan had successfully defeated the menace of terrorism through the National Action Plan. Interaction with the intelligentsia revealed that the Pakistani people were excited about Saudi Arabia's modernization drive under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030. A month later, the young Saudi leader landed in Islamabad to announce a major shift in the Kingdom's economic relations with Pakistan.

The conspiracy became apparent when consecutive attempts were made to create a rival Muslim bloc to undermine the OIC's position as the largest representative organization of 57 Muslim countries, while questioning its credibility as a standard bearer of the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri Muslims. Luckily, the inherent resilience in Saudi-Pakistan ties defeated this conspiracy. Over the past two years, the relationship has gotten back on track. In December last year, Pakistan received \$3 billion in financial support from Saudi Arabia. The ongoing diversification of the Kingdom's economy offers enormous opportunities for Pakistan's skilled workforce in the IT, tourism and financial services sectors. Saudi Arabia is home to more than 2 million Pakistani workers and is Pakistan's single largest remittance source (\$4.4 billion between July 2019 and April 2020 as per the state bank's figures). But most of these fall into the category of unskilled or semi-skilled labor. This leads me to remind the new government to focus on creating vocational institutes to train skilled manpower so that Pakistan can succeed in the increasingly

competitive Saudi labor market.

Vision 2030 aims to make Saudi Arabia a global economic hub, with mega-development projects such as the \$500 billion NEOM city. Pakistan has ample skillful youths to contribute to Saudi Arabia's post-industrial development and, in turn, shore up its forex reserves through enhanced remittances.

The city of Sialkot is known globally as a hub of sports goods and surgical instruments and would be an ideal place for Saudi investment. The industrial zones in Karachi and Faisalabad could be additional choices for this purpose. The already-agreed refinery and petrochemical projects align Saudi public sector investment with CPEC. The planned development of several special economic zones along the economic corridor, which runs from Xinjiang in China and ends at Gwadar, can also attract Saudi private investment. Unfortunately, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have extremely low levels of bilateral trade, despite being so close politically and culturally. Currently estimated to be \$3 billion annually, bilateral trade must expand by fast-tracking the negotiating process to sign a free trade agreement. Talks on the FTA began in 2018. Thereafter, representatives from the two respective chambers of commerce and industries have exchanged visits. There is an urgent need for official sponsorship of the interaction between traders and businessmen to identify additional areas where each side has a comparative advantage and to explore complementarities in the tradable products.

Saudi Arabia and Pakistan also cooperate closely on a host of regional and global issues of concern. They have always sought to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan and Kashmir and deal with global issues of deep concern to the Muslim world, such as Islamophobia. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan has twice travelled to Islamabad recently. Last December, he attended the successful special session of the OIC's Council of Foreign Ministers, which was held in response to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Then, last month, he participated in the 48th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers to deal with key Muslim world challenges, including the Kashmir issue. But Saudi-Pakistani coordination in strategic affairs must grow further.

Let me conclude by reiterating that our historic relationship has come a long way and its evolution is opening up vast avenues for tangible progress. A rare spirit of camaraderie brings the two nations together, including the fact that millions of Pakistanis visit the Kingdom each year to perform Hajj and Umrah. That is why, with each passing decade, the two countries' cooperation in the political, security, economic and cultural spheres has grown by leaps and bounds. I have no doubt that this brotherly bond will reach new heights under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sharif. May Allah bless Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in their common cause for an enlightened future.

- Courtesy: Arab News

# We should not forget the dangers hiding under Afghan soil

Charlotte Slente

The pressures introduced by sanctions may soon result in the collapse of Afghanistan's de-mining ministry. Such a collapse would be a painful setback for the people of Afghanistan and for the efforts to clear their land of dangerous remnants of war. Capacities built and knowledge gathered over decades could suddenly be lost

**T**ODAY, due to displacement, economic collapse, and a disintegration of social services including health and education, most Afghans are living in increasingly precarious conditions. Up to 23 million Afghans are facing acute hunger – more than half of the country's population. As the world is rightfully looking at Ukraine, we must not forget Afghanistan. The current humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is to some extent the result of the international sanctions introduced after the fall of the Afghan government last August. While sanctions can be a legitimate political tool, they must not put civilians at risk.

Some threats these sanctions pose to the lives of Afghan civilians are very visible, but others are hidden under the soil – waiting to explode. Decades of conflict have littered Afghanistan with land mines and other explosive remnants of war. As a result, today the country is one of the most contaminated in the world. A few weeks ago, four children lost their lives in Herat, Afghanistan when an old grenade exploded in their hands. A couple of months ago, nine children perished in a similar accident in the village of Degnan in Nangahar Province. Since the beginning of 2022, many more have been killed, hurt and wounded in this way. In 30 years, more than 41,000 civilians have lost their lives to unexploded ordnances. In 2021, 79 per cent of the victims were children.

Together with local partners, DRC has worked with humanitarian mine action in Afghanistan since 1999 – conducting mine clearance activities, destroying unexploded ordnance from old battlefields, and providing risk education to civilians to teach them how to avoid being harmed. First and foremost, to save lives, but also because de-mining operations are crucial for Afghanistan's future. Without de-mining, Afghans harmed by decades of war cannot build themselves a safe future in their country. Without effective de-mining operations, farming cannot happen, internally displaced people cannot return to their villages, and education cannot be effective as children cannot go to school. Now, the efforts to clear Afghanistan of mines and unexploded ordnances are hanging by a thread. With the current international sanctions, it is a more difficult task than ever before to get specialised mine clearance tools into the country. So there is a risk that lifesaving Afghan-led de-mining activities will have to be radically scaled down.

The pressures introduced by sanctions may soon result in the collapse of Afghanistan's de-mining ministry. Such a collapse would be a painful setback for the people of Afghanistan and for the efforts to clear their land of dangerous remnants of war. Capacities built and knowledge gathered over decades could suddenly be lost. The vast majority of the ministry's employ-

ees have been in their jobs for years and have worked tirelessly in partnership with the international mine clearance community. Regardless of who is in power in the country, these employees deserve investment and support. Paradoxically, the risk of collapse is happening at a time where there is a momentum to increase the space in which we can work, and to expand operations into areas that have been left contaminated by deadly weapons for too long. With the decrease in fighting since August 2021, there is now greater access to communities and more of the country than ever before. We are standing in front of a unique window of opportunity to scale up de-mining work, with the potential to save countless lives. It is an opportunity we must seize.

To do this, there is an urgent need for restoring international support to the people of Afghanistan and for immediately introducing sanctions exemptions that clearly allow for the full resumption of de-mining operations in the country. For the sake of Afghanistan's people, the international community should urgently seek ways to engage with and not turn its back on the successful efforts to build up the country's de-mining capacity. It is time to act and to implement flexible financial solutions to help sustain the efforts of brave Afghans working to clear their land of mines.

- Courtesy: Al Jazeera



## Briefs

## China demands thorough probe

FROM PAGE 01

China Moin ul Haque to express extremely grave concern. He demanded that the Pakistani side should immediately make a thorough investigation of the incident, apprehend and punish the perpetrators to the full extent of the law, and take all possible measures to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens in Pakistan and prevent such incidents from happening again. "The Chinese Embassy in Pakistan and Consulate-General in Karachi are working with the Pakistani side to deal with the follow-up matters of the casualties," the spokesperson said. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad on the evening of April 26 to convey condolences, saying that the government will conduct an in-depth probe into the incident, give exemplary punishment to the perpetrators, and strengthen the security of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan in an all-round way. He said his government will never allow any force to undermine the Pakistan-China friendship. Local authorities in Sindh and Karachi have launched a full-scale investigation to hunt down the perpetrators. The spokesperson said that the Chinese Foreign Ministry and Chinese diplomatic missions in Pakistan would continue to urge relevant Pakistani departments to handle the follow-up matters properly of those killed, treat the injured, and resolutely crackdown on the terrorist organisation involved. "The blood of the Chinese people should not be shed in vain, and those behind this incident will surely pay the price," added PM Shehbaz.

## CEC PML-N's agent: Imran

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the foreign funding cases against all the major political parties should be heard together." Imran further maintained that a conspiracy was hatched to forge evidence against the PTI in the for eign funding case. The former prime minister said that an "imported government has been imposed on Pakistan under a conspiracy." "The conspiracy was hatched outside [the country] and Mir Jafar and Mir Sadiq were united here. Your prime minister was ousted due to his independent foreign policy," Imran said. Imran said that "control the United States will "control the imported government through the three stooges and cherry blossom (a brand of shoe polish)." "They will enslave this country to cover their corrupt practices." Imran went on to say that the turncoats who became part of the conspiracy were not aware of it. "The three stooges were part of the conspiracy but the turncoats may not know [about their indirect involvement]. They sold their conscience for Rs200-250 million." Saying that PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, PPP's Asif Ali Zardari, and Maulana Fazlur Rehman were part of the conspiracy, Imran demanded the courts to take action against them by hearing the case on a daily basis. The PTI chairman also announced that a prayer ceremony will be organised tomorrow night which will be attended by Maulana Tariq Jamil. Asking the workers to spread the message, Imran said that special prayers for the country's real freedom will be said at the event. The PTI chairman said despite the country's current account deficit being at an 11-year low, a "conspiracy" was hatched to oust him. "American undersecretary met our ambassador and told him that a no-confidence motion will be presented before Imran Khan tomorrow; if that succeeds, then everything will be forgiven for Pakistan," the ex-premier said. Moving on, the PTI chairman said he wanted at least two million people to gather in Islamabad when he asks them to reach the capital - to protest against the government. "For 30 years, they have been ruling the country; corruption cases against them were not created during our tenure," the ex-prime minister said.

## EU Chief vows 'united' response to Russia's gas cut

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: The EU Commission chief on Wednesday pledged an "immediate, united, and coordinated" European response to Russia's decision to cut gas supplies to Bulgaria and Poland. "The era of Russian fossil fuel in Europe is coming to an end," Ursula von der Leyen told reporters. She called Gazprom's announcement on Russia's unilateral halt of gas deliveries to Bulgaria and Poland "another provocation from the Kremlin." The EU had prepared for such a move and will give an "immediate, united, and coordinated" answer to it, she said. Bulgaria and Poland are already receiving gas from their EU neighbors due to the previous investments in strengthening gas infrastructure and interconnectivity between member states, von der Leyen explained. She also pointed out that payment in rubles is a breach of EU sanctions according to the European Commission's opinion



because "about 97% of all contracts explicitly stipulate payments in euros or dollars." She said "companies with such contracts

should not accede to the Russian demands" because "this would be a breach of the sanctions, and high risk for them." Von der Leyen reassured that the Russian move will have "the least possible impact" on European consumers, promising that the European Commission and member states will intensify their work in the so-called regional groups to "mitigate any impacts on possible gas disruptions." She also said that they will continue to look for replacement options and the EU's executive body will present its plans for accelerated green transition next month. "The latest aggressive move from Russia is another very stark reminder that we need to work with reliable partners and build our energy independence," she asserted. Earlier Wednesday, Russian energy giant Gazprom announced that it had suspended gas deliveries to Bulgaria and Poland due to their refusal to pay in rubles. The move came after Russian President Vladimir Putin said that "unfriendly countries" must now pay for gas supplies in

rubles after they froze the Russian Central Bank currency assets over the Ukraine war, which began on Feb. 24. Last month, the European Commission revealed a plan to reduce dependency on Russian energy and cut gas import by two-thirds by the end of this year by replacing it with other sources from East Africa and the US, as well as accelerating the transition to green energy. The EU has allocated 1.5 billion (\$1.6 billion) in military support to Ukrainians and adopted five packages of sanctions since the beginning of the war. The restrictive measures target individuals, including President Putin, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, oligarchs, and military officers. The EU has also banned the export of luxury goods and the imports of coal, and excluded Russian and Belarusian banks from the SWIFT international banking system. The bloc is currently preparing the sixth set of restrictive measures amid growing pressure to ban Russian energy imports.

## 'Lota' symbol suits all govt parties: Fawad

FROM PAGE 01

like these are the reason our judiciary is rated 130th in the world. But he is hopeful that the courts will fulfil their responsibility to provide justice soon, he said. Taking to PML-N leader and Information Minister Maryam Aurangzeb, he said that the person who did not even win a councillor's election in her life should not be commenting on the leader of the country's largest political party. Maryam Nawaz and Maryam Aurangzeb both talk like gossipy aunties, and Pakistan's future can not be handed over to these women, he said.

## No chances of early elections

FROM PAGE 01

the inflation which had reached an all-time high in the last four years. While addressing a press conference on Wednesday she presented two weeks performance of present government, saying what Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has done in this short span of time which former Prime Minister Imran Khan could not even think so in four years. She grilled the Imran Khan government for instituting false cases against the PML N leaders adding Imran Khan has not been able to come out of PML N phobia. She said Pakistani people are asking from Imran Khan if people committed corruption then why not even a single case has not been proved. She declared PTI demand that ECP chief should resign as absurd and unwarranted. She ruled out chances of any early elections adding she wanted to make it clear to everybody that elections will take place on the stipulated time. The Information Minister said the price of sugar has been reduced from eighty-five rupees to seventy rupees per kilogram and ten kg flour bag is now available at four hundred rupees instead of five hundred and fifty rupees. Marriyum Aurangzeb said the Prime Minister has also directed to end power outages from the 1st of next month. Out of twenty-seven closed power plants, twenty have been made functional in two weeks. The Information Minister said Islamabad metro bus project which had been facing delay over the last four years was started in four days. Feasibility is being prepared for the extension of metro projects to Bhara Kahu and Rawat. We have also taken the step to establish a metro bus station on the motorway. Marriyum Aurangzeb said that the speed of construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam has been accelerated and now a new deadline has been fixed to complete this project by 2026 instead of 2029. She said groundbreaking of Kuchlhar-Khuzdar highway has been performed in Balochistan.

## PM's visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

FROM PAGE 01

investment ties and creation of greater opportunities for the Pakistani workforce in Saudi Arabia. The two sides will also exchange views on a range of regional and international issues of mutual interest. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are bound by fraternal relationship marked by mutual trust and understanding, close cooperation, and an abiding tradition of supporting each other. The people of Pakistan hold the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in the highest esteem. The bilateral relationship is complemented by close mutual collaboration at regional and international fora. Saudi Arabia is a member of the OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir. Saudi Arabia is home to more than two million Pakistanis, contributing to the progress, prosperity and economic development of the two brotherly countries. Regular high-level visits are a key feature of this special relationship. The Prime Minister's visit to Saudi Arabia will impart a strong impetus to deepening bilateral cooperation in diverse fields and further reinforce the growing partnership between the two countries.

## City edge seven-goal thriller over Real



LONDON: Manchester City will take a slender Champions League semi-final advantage to the Bernabeu after winning a seven-goal first-leg classic against Real Madrid at Etihad Stadium. City delivered a magnificent display as they peppered Real's goal for long periods but Carlo Ancelotti's side kept rising off the canvas to somehow keep themselves in serious contention to reach another final. Kevin de Bruyne set the tone for a magical night of football with a diving header from Riyad Mahrez's cross in the second minute and in-

form Gabriel Jesus quickly added a second from close range as Real reeled under wave after wave of attacks. Mahrez enraged manager Pep Guardiola when he hit the side-netting instead of finding the unmarked Phil Foden, who shot inches wide before Karim Benzema, inevitably, gave Real a lifeline by sweeping home Ferland Mendy's cross after 33 minutes. The Spanish side escaped again shortly after the break when Mahrez struck the post but City restored their two-goal advantage when an unmarked Foden headed

home Fernandinho's cross in the 53rd minute. City were pegged back again when Vinicius Junior dummied past Fernandinho and ran from inside his own half to score a superb second for Real. However, a brilliant use of advantage from referee Istvan Kovacs allowed Bernardo Silva to fire into the top-left corner for City's fourth. There was still no let-up and Benzema capped a spectacular game by showing nerves of steel to chip a Panenka penalty past Eder-son with eight minutes left

following Aymeric Laporte's handball. Liverpool face Spanish side Villarreal in this year's other semi-final, with the first leg at Anfield on Wednesday. City would have taken any sort of advantage to Spain before kick-off but deep down they will know their almost total dominance of Real should have given them much more than this narrow lead for the second leg. Guardiola's side were simply irresistible for spells and could have been four goals ahead before Benzema struck Real's first, the manager clearly infuriated by Mahrez's selfishness in shooting with Foden standing unmarked in front of goal at 2-0. Guardiola and his players will take heart from the manner in which they carved Real open so often and they will hope to capitalise on their opponents' need to press for a goal in Spain. De Bruyne was outstanding once more and Foden just showed how at home he is on the elite stage, but City have to be concerned at how they looked defensively vulnerable on occasion to leave Real very much alive in this semi-final. A side of City's calibre will be confident of progress - but most observers will know this tie should already be over. - Agencies

## World No.1 Swiatek pulls out of Madrid Open

WEB DESK

MADRID: World number one Iga Swiatek has pulled out of the Madrid Open due to a right shoulder injury, the Women's Tennis Association said on Wednesday. The 20-year-old from Poland is on a 23-match winning streak and picked up her fourth consecutive title on Sunday when she defeated Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka in the Stuttgart Open final. "After intense last weeks and winning four titles in a row it's time to take care of my arm that has been fatigued since the Miami Open and I haven't had a chance to handle it properly," Swiatek said in a Twitter post. "I need a break from playing so intensively in order to treat my arm well and that's why, unfortunately, I have to withdraw." Swiatek, who won her maiden Grand Slam title at the French Open 2020, was scheduled to her campaign against a fiercer at the WTA 1000 on clay in Madrid, the draw of which starts Thursday. Before Stuttgart, Swiatek won WTA 1000 titles in Doha, India, Wells and Miami while also leading Poland to November's Billie Jean King Cup Finals with two singles wins in the qualifying tie against Romania this month. Swiatek is aiming to return at the Italian Open, which will be played from May 9-15 in Rome, before the claycourt Grand Slam at Roland Garros starts from May 22. "My body needs rest. I'm going to take some time to prepare for Rome and Paris," she added. - APP

## Rune shock for former champion Zverev

SPORTS DESK

MUNICH: Danish teenager Holger Rune sealed the biggest win of his career at the Munich Open on Wednesday, outclassing top seed Alexander Zverev 6-3 6-2 for a spot in the quarter-finals of the ATP 250 claycourt tournament. The 18-year-old Rune broke world number three Zverev four times in a flawless performance for his first win over a player in the ATP top-10, ending the streak of the German who reached the quarter-finals in his previous five appearances. "It was a difficult match from the beginning," world number 70 Rune said following his victory over 2017 and 2018 champion Zverev at the Iphitos Tennis Club. "He's in the top three in the world and has been playing some unbelievable tennis, especially in the past year winning so many big titles. "I have a lot of respect for him, and I obviously didn't expect to win in two sets, and with a score like this. But it was a really hard match, we played a lot of rallies and I'm really happy about my performance today." - APP

## Kadyrov is a 'traitor', says Chechen commander

MOSCOW: Sheikh Mansur, commander of the Chechen Sheikh Mansur Battalion - one of the two Chechen battalions fighting alongside Ukraine - told Arab media in a video interview that Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of the Russian republic of Chechnya, was a "traitor" who "Putin bought." Kadyrov has been actively involved in the Ukraine war, sending troops to fight alongside Russia against Ukraine. However, there have been accounts of some Chechens fighting alongside Ukraine on the battlefield, taking a stance against Russia. "Unfortunately, Kadyrov is a traitor, and of course if you asked us about it, we would have never allowed someone like Kadyrov to represent the Chechen people," he said. "We are an open-minded, freedom-loving people, and we provide help to anyone in need. We would never say that we are anyone's soldiers or slaves." He continued, "Putin has actually bought Kadyrov. He fed him a lavish meal, then ordered him to go and invade Ukraine."



"We are fighting against a common enemy" The battalion has been present in Ukraine since 2014, "when the war started," according to Sheikh Mansur, who also revealed that they were invited by Ukrainian forces to fight against Russia but to do so under their own national flag of Ichkeria. "Of course, we coordinate all our ac-

tions with the Ukrainian Forces as we are fighting together against a common enemy, a common evil." Ukrainian Forces have provided the Battalion with the necessary weaponry needed to fight against the Russian offensive in the war-torn country. "The Battalion consists of more than 100 gunmen, and they are regarded as elite forces deployed at the war's hot-spots," the commander said. Russia invaded Ukraine in what it called a "special military operation" on February 24. "At the start of the [Russian] invasion, we were deployed at the outskirts of Kyiv," said Mansur, adding that they were relocated as the fighting intensified and were given frontline positions. They are now present in the besieged port city of Mariupol and other areas where the fighting continues to intensify which he could not disclose. "We have some 100 fighters and we carry out special operations such as mining, tactical attacks, ambushes, and we also secure particular positions," he explained. - Agencies

## South Africa recalls its long walk to freedom

Country held 1st multiracial elections on April 27, 1994, ushering in a democratic government led by Nelson Mandela

MONITORING DESK

JOHANNESBURG: Saber Ahmed Jazbhay, a leading South African lawyer, remembers waking up very early on April 27, 1994 to cast his vote in the country's first multiracial elections. "I recall standing in a long queue for a period of three hours in the blazing sun waiting to cast my vote," he told Anadolu Agency by phone from his home in Newlands in Durban in the eastern coastal province of KwaZulu-Natal. This day was long awaited by Jazbhay and millions of Black South Africans who, for the first time, were able to exercise their right to vote. Jazbhay recalled that when he approached the polling booth, he broke down and cried because there were so many people he knew but thought they had been killed by the apartheid police. During apartheid, Blacks lived in townships and shanty towns and were required to produce passes whenever they traveled out of their settlements. Black South Africans were subject to



racial oppression and subjugation for many years. Blacks were also not allowed to mingle with whites. Most of their townships lacked basic services or had substandard

service delivery. "Nineteen ninety-four was the most tense moment of our lives as South Africans because there were attempts by some people who supported apartheid who

wanted to derail the elections, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal," said Jazbhay, who also worked as a field officer for the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party. He said they worked very hard to ensure they had a substantially free and fair election, which they achieved. The 1994 multiracial parliamentary elections saw a landslide victory by the ANC. The new parliament then elected national liberation hero Nelson Mandela as South Africa's first Black president. "I voted in (the capital) Pretoria, quite close to the union building (South Africa's seat of government) where the election and inauguration of Mandela took place," said Dirk Kotze, a professor in the Department of Political Sciences at the University of South Africa. "These are events that I think South Africans will never see again. Our people went out in large numbers and voted despite uncertainties," he told Anadolu Agency, adding that "1994 marked a turning point in South Africa's history, ushering in one of the best constitutional democracies in the world."



## Briefs

## Suu Kyi sentenced to 5 years in prison

YANGON: A junta court in Myanmar on Wednesday sentenced Aung San Suu Kyi, the country's incarcerated former leader, to five years in prison over alleged corruption.

Suu Kyi, 76, was found guilty of receiving bribes of cash and gold from Yangon's former Chief Minister Phyo Min Thein, Myanmar Now news website reported.

Their claim he gave Suu Kyi \$600,000 in cash and 11.4 kilograms of gold "in exchange for favors for his businesses." Suu Kyi has described the charges as "absurd." Since last December, the Nobel laureate has been sentenced six times for at least 11 years in jail in multiple cases.

The ruling for 11 other charges is pending.

Suu Kyi's lawyers are considering to challenge the verdict at a higher court.

Suu Kyi's government was deposed in a military coup last year after it made strides in November 2020's nationwide elections.

The coup was met by mass civil unrest as people protested Suu Kyi's ouster and the restoration of military rule. The junta cracked down violently on protests as the UN repeatedly warned the country has descended into civil war. The junta forces have since killed more than 1,500 people in a crackdown on dissent, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a local monitoring group. - Agencies

## Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan mull co-op

BAKU: Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have discussed the interaction within the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route.

The discussion took place during the meeting between Azerbaijan's Economy Minister Mikayil Jabbarov and Kazakhstan's Presidential Administration Deputy Head Erzhan Kazzykhan.

"During the meeting with Erzhankazykhan Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Kazakhstan, Special Envoy of the President for International Cooperation, we discussed economic cooperation between our countries and interaction within the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route," Mikayil Jabbarov wrote on his official Twitter page. It should be noted that the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route is a vital trans-Eurasian corridor that runs through the South Caucasus. The route begins in Southeast Asia and China and travels to Europe via Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. It is one of the new Silk Road routes, the Middle Corridor of the 'One Belt, One Road' project. The East-West or Trans-Caspian International Transport Route is intended to increase freight traffic from China to Turkey, as well as to the EU countries and vice versa. A consortium formed by the participating countries manages and develops the transport corridor. Chinese Railways is a consortium member in China, and KTZ Express is a consortium member in Kazakhstan. Caspian Shipping Company in the Caspian Sea, ADY Express in Azerbaijan, and Trans-Caucasus Terminals in Georgia. - Agencies

## Tree plantation to mark 30 years of Pak-Azerbaijan ties



The Ambassador thanked the honourable Ministers, the senior officials of Government of Azerbaijan as well as the large number of students and volunteers from Azerbaijan

DNA

BAKU: The staff of the Embassy of Pakistan joined Ministers of Defence Industry and Ecology of the Republic of Azerbaijan in a ceremony to plant 300 saplings in the vicinity of Baku. It was part of a series of events to mark 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan.

H.E. Mr. Madat Guliyev, Minister of Defence Industry and H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Babayev, Minister of Ecology; Pakistan Ambassador to Azerbaijan Bilal Hayee, and the Pakistan Embassy officials planted trees to highlight the commitment of the two brotherly countries to join hands in meeting the challenges of climate change. Talking to the media persons present on the occasion, Ambassador Bilal Hayee noted that today's ceremony was a demonstration of the shared commitment of Pa-

kistan and Azerbaijan to take all measures including the planting of trees to minimize the negative impacts of climate change affecting both countries. The Ambassador informed that the Government of Pakistan was already engaged in the massive exercise to plant billion trees across the length and breadth of the country with a view to increasing the forest cover, reduce the soil erosion and other negative impacts of climate change. Pakistan was happy to join hands with the brotherly country in similar efforts for afforestation and building a greener Azerbaijan.

The Ambassador thanked the honourable Ministers, the senior officials of Government of Azerbaijan as well as the large number of students and volunteers from Azerbaijan and Pakistan who were present on the occasion and took active part in the plantation of trees. A souvenir representing Pakistan Azerbaijan relations was also presented to the Honourable Ministers.

## Indonesia widens export ban

JAKARTA: Indonesia widened the scope of its export ban on raw materials for cooking oil to include crude and refined palm oil, among other products, its chief economic minister said on Wednesday, just hours before the restriction comes into force. The announcement was a reversal of the minister's statement a day earlier, in which he had said the export ban would only cover refined, bleached, and deodorized palm olein. For the latest headlines, follow our Google News channel online or via the app.

The change was "in line with the president's decision and after taking into account the feedback and views from the people," Airlangga Hartarto said in a short statement.

President Joko Widodo said in a separate statement that people's need for affordable food trumped revenue concerns for now. "Once domestic needs have been met, of course I will lift the export ban because I know the country needs taxes, the country needs foreign exchange, the country needs a trade balance surplus, but meeting the people's basic needs is a more important priority," he said.

It was unclear if palm oil companies had been informed of the latest policy change. Eddy Martono, secretary general of the Indonesia Palm Oil Association (GAPKI), earlier on Wednesday said the industry was trying to "operate as usual while continuing to monitor market movements." Eddy said that with such short notice on the ban, first announced by President Joko Widodo on Friday evening, there was no way exporters could rush their products out. - Agencies

## Azerbaijan, Iran have great opportunity to increase trade



DNA

TEHRAN: Azerbaijan and Iran have enough potential to increase trade and economic ties, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Iran Ali Alizada said, Trend reports citing IRNA. He

made the remark during a meeting with the Governor of Iran's Ardabil Province Hamid Ameli on April 26.

According to Alizada, Iranian and Azerbaijani businessmen have mutual trade relations in both countries. It is necessary to increase investment

in the two countries with the participation of businessmen.

The ambassador added that relations between the two countries will be further enhanced by the simplification of border crossings. "Despite the fact that

Azerbaijan's borders with other countries were closed during the coronavirus pandemic, its borders with Iran have always been open for trade. In the near future, land borders between the countries will be opened for citizens," he noted.

## 'UK has imported over \$275M of Russian oil

LONDON: The British government has imported £220 million (\$276 million) worth of Russian oil since Moscow declared war on Ukraine, according to a new analysis. Data released by global campaigning network Greenpeace on Wednesday showed the UK has imported some 2 million barrels of Russian oil since the war in Ukraine began on Feb. 24. "The UK government is no stranger to hypocrisy but pledging 'unwavering support' to Ukraine while shipping in almost 2 million barrels of Russian oil is utterly disingenuous, even by (Prime Minister) Boris Johnson's standards," said Georgia Whitaker, an oil and gas campaigner at Greenpeace UK. "This war has cost at least 2,000 civilian lives so far. That's 2,000 innocent deaths largely funded by fossil fuels. Despite the mounting death toll, the UK government has given itself until the end of

the year to stop importing Russia's bloody oil." Greenpeace has set up an automated tracker to monitor supertankers delivering oil and gas from Russia.

A total of eight tankers have delivered shipments of Russian oil to the UK since the end of February, with an average of one tanker arriving each week, according to the group. Another tanker carrying 33,000 tons of Russian diesel is currently anchored off the coast of Lincolnshire.

Six of the shipments to the UK originated from the Russian ports of Primorsk, Tuapse and Vysotsk, ending up at five UK ports including Merseyside, Essex, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire. As part of its measures against Moscow over the Ukraine war, the British government has banned Russian-flagged, owned or operated vessels from entering the country. - Agencies

## Russia hits arms depot housing West's weapons

MOSCOW: Moscow's Kalibr missiles struck an arms depot in Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region housing weapons from the United States and European countries, Russia's Defense Ministry said Wednesday as Russian forces pounded the Azovstal steel plant where civilians and the last defenders of the besieged southern city of Mariupol are holed up. The Russian Defense Ministry, which said its air force had destroyed 59 Ukrainian military targets overnight, said the missiles had "destroyed hangars with a large batch of foreign weapons and ammunition supplied to Ukrainian troops by the United States and European countries." It was not possible to independently confirm the Russian claim, which did not say which kinds of weapons were housed in the hangars. Russia has warned the United States that large Western deliveries of weapons to Ukraine are fuelling the nine-week-old conflict. The United States and NATO have ruled out sending their own forces to Ukraine, but Washington and its European allies have supplied large quantities of weapons to Kyiv, including drones and anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles. Petro Andryushchenko, an aide to Mariupol's mayor, said there had been no let-up in airstrikes on the Azovstal plant despite Russian President Vladimir Putin saying there was no need to storm it after declaring "victory" in the port city. - Agencies

## Turkey, UAE aim to double trade

DNA

ABU DHABI: Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have officially launched talks on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which is expected to significantly lift their trade, officials said on Tuesday.

The announcement comes as the two countries seek to build economic bridges after a yearlong rift.

The agreement will enable Turkey and the UAE to develop their commercial and economic relations more comprehensively and deeply. Trade Minister Mehmet Muş told a joint press meeting with Emirati Minister of State for Foreign Trade Thani al-Zeyoudi.

The UAE is seeking broad free trade agreements, known as CEPAs, with several countries and has signed such pacts this year with India and Israel.

The agreement looks to remove trade barriers and promote the free movement of goods by cutting tariffs.

The deal will enable Turkey and the UAE to achieve a bilateral trade volume of nearly \$15 billion. Muş said, referring to the highest level ever recorded back in 2017, before declining as relations strained. Al-Zeyoudi said the CEPA is expected to double trade between the two nations.

"By cutting tariffs, promoting free movement of goods, facilitating capital flows and reducing trade barriers, we will make it easier than ever to do business. It will also underpin a new era of cooperation," he noted.

Turkey and the UAE have moved to put years of tense relations behind them, opening the doors to a new phase in bilateral relations marked by deeper economic cooperation after a yearlong dispute, during which the sides maintained economic ties. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan paid a return visit to the UAE in mid-February, after a trip by the UAE's de facto ruler Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ) to Ankara in late November that marked a significant move toward overcoming disputes.

The visit, which was Erdoğan's first to the Gulf country since 2013, was marked by a score of agreements, including on trade, industry, defense, health and medical sciences, land and sea transportation and climate action.

Russia expels 3 Norwegian diplomats

MOSCOW: Amid continued diplomatic fallout from the Ukraine war, Russia on Wednesday declared three Norwegian diplomats persona non grata. The move was in response to Norway's "unjustified" expulsion of three Russian diplomats on April 6, according to the Foreign Ministry.

The ministry said it summoned Norwegian Ambassador Rune Resaland to hand over a diplomatic note and lodge a protest over Norway's actions against Russian diplomats.

Russia also conveyed its objections over Norway's weapons deliveries to Ukraine and "the cover-up by Oslo of the crimes of Ukrainian nationalists against the civilian population of Donbass and Ukraine." It was conveyed that such "unfriendly" steps by Norwegian authorities are "causing serious damage to bilateral relations," the ministry said. - APP



STOCKHOLM: Ambassador of China to Sweden Cui Aimin, calls on the ambassador of Pakistan to Sweden, Zahoor Ahmed. During the meeting, they discussed the issues of mutual importance. - DNA

## Denmark becomes world's first country to suspend Covid drive

COPENHAGEN: Denmark has become the first country in the world to suspend its COVID vaccination program. The country has cited its high vaccination rate vaccinated and a reduction in the number of new infections and stable hospitalization rates as the reason for the move. The decision means that invitations for vaccinations will no longer be issued after May 15, but health officials in the country expect that vaccinations will resume after the summer.

Denmark's chief physician, Bolette Soborg, said: "We plan to reopen the vaccination program in the autumn. This will be preceded by a thorough professional assessment of who and when to vaccinate and with which vaccines." Professor of European public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Martin McKee, told Newsweek: "It's important to be clear that Denmark is not halting vaccination. People who haven't finished their courses will still be able to get doses.

"Also it's seen as a pause over the summer, with an expectation that it will resume in the fall." As Newsweek previously reported Denmark made headlines in February when it became the first country in the European Union to lift all of its COVID restrictions.

The move meant that citizens of Denmark were no longer required to wear face masks in indoor spaces with COVID passes for bars and restaurants and the need for self-isolation following a positive test result also ended.

The justification for this move was also high vaccination rates in the country.

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said in a press conference in February: "The pandemic is still here but with what we know, we now dare to believe that we are through the critical phase." AP reported that Frederiksen told Danish radio: "I dare not say that it is a final goodbye to restrictions. We do not know what will happen in the fall, whether there will be a new variant." - Agencies

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**Briefs**

**Imran Khan meets Monis Elahi**

DNA

LAHORE: A meeting chaired by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman and former Prime Minister Imran Khan on the political and constitutional crisis of Punjab reviewed current political issues of the province.

Usman Buzdar, Governor Punjab Omar Sarfraz Cheema, Shafiq Mehmood, Sibtain Khan, Mian Mehmoodur Rashid and Advocate General Ahmed Awais were also attended the meeting.

The Advocate General briefed the meeting regarding the decision of the High Court while it was decided in the meeting that the Governor Punjab should continue the consultation with the constitutional experts so that the unlawful actions of PML-N could be stopped.

While addressing the meeting, Imran Khan said that the manner in which the sanctity of the House was violated by using the police in the Punjab Assembly was shameful. On the other hand, Monis Elahi also called on former Prime Minister Imran Khan and discussed the political, administrative and coalition affairs of the province and the situation created after the decision of the LHC.

**Deadly Israeli air raids kill nine in Syria**

MONITORING DESK

DAMASCUS: At least nine people, including five Syrian soldiers, were killed in Israeli airstrikes near Damascus on Wednesday, according to a war monitor. It was the deadliest such raid since the start of 2022.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said an ammunition depot and several positions linked to Iran's military presence in Syria were among the targets.

Official Syrian media confirmed four of the five casualties in the strikes. Israel did not comment.

"The Israeli enemy carried out an air assault at dawn... targeting several positions around Damascus," a military source was quoted as saying by SANA news agency. "The investigation indicated that four soldiers were killed, three others injured and material damage noted." The latest strike follows another near Damascus on April 14, without casualties, according to SANA.

**Time ripe for boosting Pak-US tech bonds, says Amb. Masood**

WASHINGTON: The Pakistani government is taking steps to create a hospitable environment for tech industry and now the time is ripe for strengthening tech bonds between Pakistan and the United States, Ambassador Masood Khan has said.

"The US is ready to help and we are ready to join the IT revolution by integrating and absorbing innovations in US technologies," he told Pakistan Tech Summit 2022 in Silicon Valley, about 40 miles southeast of the US city of San Francisco, California. The Pakistani envoy said that the Summit provides business leaders, tech entrepreneurs and technology experts from Pakistan a platform to come together and form synergies, build bridges between Silicon Valley and the Pakistani startup ecosystem and join hands for a bright future of Pakistan.

"You are already on a roll," he said. Ambassador Masood Khan observed that more than 64% population of Pakistan is below the age of 30 years and a growing middle class was expected to cross the 100 million mark soon. This youth bulge combined with the growing middle class promised bright prospects for the growth of IT sector in the country. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Former President Asif Ali Zardari, Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah and CEO Monal Luqman Ali Afzal witnessing oath taking ceremony of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. - DNA

**Russia halts gas supplies to Poland and Bulgaria**

The step was denounced by European leaders as "blackmail", and comes as European countries have joined the United States in ramping up arms shipments to help Ukraine fend off a new Russian assault in the east

AGENCIES

WARSAW: Russia halted gas supplies to Bulgaria and Poland on Wednesday for rejecting its demand for payment in roubles, taking direct aim at European economies in its toughest retaliation so far against international sanctions over the war in Ukraine. The step was denounced by European leaders as "blackmail", and comes as European countries have joined the United States in ramping up arms shipments to help Ukraine fend off a new Russian assault in the east. Ukraine reported on Wednesday that Russian troops had made gains in several villages there. Russia reported a number of blasts on its side of the border, and a blaze at an arms depot. Kyiv called the explosions "karma". Despite the collapse in ties between Russia and the West, Moscow and Washington carried out a prisoner swap. The United States freed Russian pilot Konstantin Yaroshenko, jailed on drug trafficking charges. Russia released

former U.S. marine Trevor Reed, accused of fighting with police. Moscow says the gas cut-off is to enforce its demand for payment in roubles, which would help to soften the effect of sanctions on its economy. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Russia was a reliable energy supplier and denied it was engaging in blackmail. Gazprom (GAZP.MM), the Russian gas export monopoly, said it had "completely suspended gas supplies" to the Polish and Bulgarian gas companies "due to absence of payments in roubles". Polish President Andrzej Duda said the move violated "basic legal principles". Bulgarian Energy Minister Alexander Nikolov said gas was being used as a "political and economic weapon". Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a decree last month ordering Gazprom to cut off buyers from "unfriendly" countries who fail to pay in roubles. The European Union says contracts stipulate payment in euros, and that paying in roubles could violate its sanctions. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called the cut-off

"yet another attempt by Russia to use gas as an instrument of blackmail".

Poland and Bulgaria are both former Soviet-era satellites of Moscow that have since joined the EU and NATO. Poland has been one of the Kremlin's most vocal opponents over the war. Bulgaria has long had warmer relations with Russia, but Prime Minister Kirill Petkov, an anti-corruption campaigner who took office last year, has denounced the invasion of Ukraine. Petkov was due in Kyiv on Wednesday to meet President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The cut-off comes as the weather turns warmer and the need for gas heating dwindles, and so is unlikely to lead to immediate supply cuts to consumers. Poland says it has ample gas in storage, and Bulgaria, a comparatively small consumer, is seeking alternative supplies from Greece and Turkey. Unlike many European neighbours, the two countries use mainly coal rather than gas to generate power. Companies with manufacturing operations in both countries said they did not anticipate problems yet.

But if the cut-off lasts for many months or spreads to other countries, it could cause havoc for a continent that relies on plentiful and cheap Russian gas to heat homes, power factories and generate electricity. Russia's energy exports had until now continued largely unhindered since the war began, the main loophole in sanctions that otherwise cut off Moscow from much of its global trade. Poland receives its Russian gas through the Yamal-Europe pipeline from Russia's huge gas fields in the Arctic far north, which continues west to supply Germany and other European countries. Bulgaria is supplied through pipes that cross Turkey. Supplies from Gazprom (GAZP.MM) cover about half of Poland's consumption and 90% of Bulgaria's. Kyiv has long called on Europe to stop funding Moscow's war effort by halting imports that bring Russia hundreds of millions of dollars a day. Germany, the biggest buyer of Russian energy, has said it hopes to stop importing Russian oil within days, but weaning itself off Russian gas is a far bigger challenge.

**SBP to remain closed during Eid days**

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Wednesday announced four public holidays on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. "State Bank of Pakistan will remain closed from 2nd to 5th May, 2022 (Monday to Thursday) on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr," according to a statement issued by the SBP. The federal government had announced a four-day holiday on account of Eid-ul-Fitr from May 2-5, according to a notification issued by the PM Office Tuesday. Sources said that a summary was moved seeking three holidays, however, PM Shehbaz Sharif granted four holidays. The holidays will begin on May 2 (Monday) and will continue till May 5 (Thursday). - APP

**Bilawal will restore country's dignity: Shazia**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Central Information Secretary of PPP-P Shazia Atta Marri has said that country has needed a foreign minister like Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari because Imran Khan had isolated the Pakistan in the world. She said that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari would restore the dignity of the country like his grandfather Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his mother Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. This she said in a statement issued hereon today. Marri said that former President Asif Ali Zardari during his rule had made the country one of the most prestigious country in the world. Free, independent and dignified foreign policy is our main principle of current county and world will see Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as the best foreign minister in upcoming days.

**Army Chief Bajwa visits forward areas along LoC**

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa Wednesday visited forward areas along the Line of Control (LoC). The COAS was briefed on situation along the LoC and operational preparedness of the formation, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release. The Army Chief interacted with the troops deployed along the LoC in Chakothi Sector and spent time with them. The

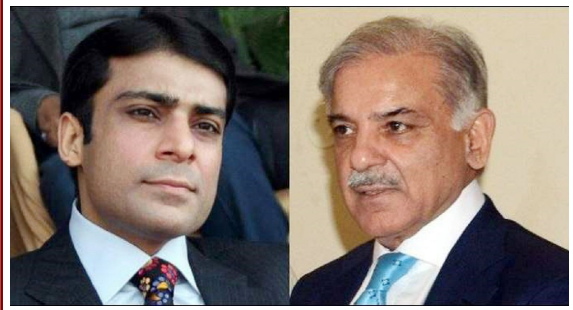


COAS appreciated the troops' combat readiness and high state of morale. Earlier, on arrival at the LoC, the COAS was received by Corps Commander Lieutenant General Sahir Shamshad Mirza.

**PTI MNAs sent to jail**

ISLAMABAD: A local court in Islamabad on Wednesday sent three accused including two lawmakers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) allegedly involved in attacking Sindh House to jail on 14-day judicial remand. PTI MNAs Attaullah Niazi and Faheem, and PTI leader Tanveer Khan were arrested on Tuesday after the cancellation of their interim bail by the Islamabad High Court (IHC) in Sindh House attack case. The hearing was conducted by Judicial Magistrate Muhammad Inam Ullah however the accused PTI leader and lawmakers were not presented before the court due to security concerns. APP

**Court to indict PM, Hamza Shehbaz on May 14**



BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: A special court in Lahore on Wednesday stated that charges against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and others in the Rs16 billion money laundering case will be framed on May 14, asking them to ensure their presence at the next hearing as no further adjournments will be made. "It is made clear that on [the] next date of hearing, charge[s] shall be framed and all the accused shall ensure their personal attendance," the written order said.

**Pakistan wants to deepen trade ties with US: Miftah**

On her part, Ms Angela P. Aggeler congratulated the Finance Minister on assuming the office and extended full support of the government and people of the United States to Pakistan

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Miftah Ismail says Pakistan wants to further deepen its trade and investment ties with the United States. He was talking to US Charge d' Affaires in Pakistan Ms Angela P. Aggeler who called on him in Islamabad on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, the Finance Minister said the two countries enjoy long-term, broad-based and multi-dimensional relationship. He highlighted the economic agenda and policies of the new government with an aim to bring eco-

conomic and fiscal stability in the country. Underlining the government's focus on creating business friendly environment for foreign investors, the Finance Minister said attracting the US foreign investment in different sectors of Pakistan's economy is the government's top priority. On her part, Ms Angela P. Aggeler congratulated the Finance Minister on assuming the office and extended full support of the government and people of the United States to Pakistan. She underscored that Pakistan and USA enjoy good relations and she supports further promotion of bilateral economic relations.



**Israeli forces kill a Palestinian**

OCCUPIED WEST BANK: A Palestinian youth was killed by Israeli army fire during a raid in the occupied West Bank early Wednesday, according to the state news agency Wafa. Ahmed Mohamed Masad, 21, was shot in the head and died of his wounds in the town of Burqin, northwest of Jenin. Jani Abu Jokha, the director of Ibn Sina hospital in Jenin, told Wafa. He said three other Palestinians were injured by Israeli army fire. Israeli forces raided a number of houses in the Jenin refugee camp, triggering clashes with angry Palestinian residents, Wafa said. According to the news agency, six Palestinians were detained by Israeli forces during the raid. - Agencies