



Islamabad POST

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Detailed News On Page-08

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Briefs

Govt to complete its term

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Tuesday said that the government will complete its term till 2023. Former Prime Minister and PML-N leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi while talking to the media said that vote of no-confidence motion was successful, as a result of which the new government has been formed which will now complete its term. He said the Prime Minister would decide how the cabinet could be expanded, adding that the cabinet will look into how inflation has risen and how to curb it.

All dacoits have joined cabinet

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: PTI senior vice-president Fawad Chaudhry has said that all big dacoits have joined the cabinet. In a message on Twitter, he said that the people have to face severe humiliation due to this 'crime minister'. "The cabinet list is giving a look of the attendance register of Central Jail," he added. He said that the imported government stands only on three votes. "Today if Akhtar Mengal does not join the cabinet and does not vote for the confidence, then the government of the 'crime minister' will end."

Hamza moves LHC over oath-taking

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has approached the Lahore High Court (LHC) in an effort to have the governor of Punjab administer the chief minister oath to Hamza Shahbaz, the newly elected chief of the province, and to subsequently avoid constitutional crisis. Hamza Shahbaz filed a petition in the high court and made the Punjab governor as well as the Punjab chief secretary respondents in it.

37-member cabinet takes oath

The cabinet consists of 31 federal ministers, 3 ministers of state and 3 advisors

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani has administered the oath to federal ministers and ministers of state, who will form the cabinet of newly elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The oath-taking ceremony began with the recitation of the Holy Quran at the President House. Thirty-one federal ministers and three ministers of state took the oath. Shehbaz has also appointed three advisers, taking the total strength of the cabinet to 37 members. In a tweet, PM Shehbaz said that the federal cabinet was formed after "thorough consultations" with PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif and the government's coalition allies. "It is my fervent hope that federal ministers, ministers of state and advisers will provide leadership, and resolve the problems of the people. Work, work and only work is our motto," he said. According to Radio Pakistan, PML-N's Marriyum Aurangzeb and Azam Nazir Tarar have been appointed the information and law minister, respectively.

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Attempts to gag media to be foiled

Marriyum Aurangzeb says PMDA disbanded; digital media wing also wrapped up



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Newly elected Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb Tuesday announced disbanding the Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA) set up during the PTI government's tenure. "An attempt was being made to gag an already muzzled media. But now, whatever shape and form PMDA is working in, we have announced to disband it," the minister — who took oath hours earlier — told journalists. Aurangzeb said the coalition government would not allow the imposition of curbs on freedom of expression in the country as she termed the PMDA a "black law".

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Bilawal, Khaqan missing from cabinet

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Despite reports of PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi to be given the portfolio of the foreign ministry and petroleum ministry respectively, the two politicians are not a part of PM Shehbaz Sharif's cabinet so far. Bilawal did, however, attend the oath-taking of the cabinet members. It may be noted that a PML-N leader, while speaking during a news, said that Bilawal would become the next foreign minister. According to media, PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif contacted Abbasi and asked him to hold the portfolio of the minister for petroleum to steer the country out of the crisis, citing sources.



ISLAMABAD: Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Pakistan, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Mian Shehbaz Sharif. — DNA

PM urges world to condemn Islamophobia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday called upon the international community to take notice of the recent incidents of Islamophobia that took place in Sweden and the Netherlands. "The people of Pakistan and Muslims around the world are deeply hurt by the recent incidents of Islamophobia in Sweden and the Netherlands," he said in a tweet. PM Shehbaz Sharif said the international community must condemn these incidents and stressed taking steps to check such "abhorrent behaviour". He also emphasized standing united against Islamophobia. Earlier, the Foreign Office in a statement had said that "these mindless provocative Islamophobic incidents served no purpose other than hurting the sensitivities of over 1.5 billion Muslims living all over the world".

Terrorist killed in North Waziristan

RAWALPINDI: A terrorist was killed during an intense exchange of fire in the general area of Datta Khel, North Waziristan District, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said Tuesday. As a result of the exchange of fire between terrorists and security forces, a terrorist, identified as Fareed Ahmed, was gunned down, the ISPR said in a statement. The military's media wing added that weapons and ammunition were recovered from the possession of the killed terrorist,

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PM all praise for vision of UAE leadership

Ambassador of the UAE calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz; extends best wishes to him on assumption of PM office

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Pakistan, called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, on Tuesday. While extending warm felicitations to Mr. Shehbaz Sharif on his assumption of office as the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the Ambassador reaffirmed UAE's desire to further strengthen bilateral relations. The Prime Minister thanked the UAE Ambassador and lauded his efforts to promote bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and the UAE in various fields. The Prime Minister conveyed his warm greetings for the UAE leadership and expressed his firm resolve to closely engage with them to further deepen and broaden this vital partnership.

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PM Shahbaz meets COAS

Picture on Back Page

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday, a week after the latter became the 23rd prime minister of Pakistan by ousting PTI Chairman Imran Khan through a parliamentary vote of no-confidence. During the meeting, professional matters, including national security issues, were discussed, said a brief statement issued in the evening.

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Training session of "Model OIC Int'l Relations Academy" held — Page 06

Afghanistan to continue co-op with Uzbekistan Railways JSC — Page 07

Russia launches major 'offensive' in east Ukraine — Page 08

6 killed in Kabul school blasts

Several bodies were strewn outside of a school in densely populated Shiite Dasht-e-Barchi neighbourhood in Kabul

NEWS DESK

KABUL: At least six people were killed and 24 wounded on Tuesday by two bomb blasts that struck a boys' school in a Hazara neighbourhood of the Afghan capital, police and hospital staff said. The number of attacks in the country has significantly declined since the Taliban ousted the US-backed Afghan government in August, but the militant Islamic State group has claimed several attacks since then. Several bodies were strewn outside the gate of a school in the densely populated Shiite Dasht-e-Barchi neighbourhood in Kabul, alongside patches of blood, burnt books and school bags, according to images posted on social media. "We were leaving school and had just stepped out from the rear gate when the explosion occurred,"

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Pakistan condemns Kabul terrorist attacks

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday strongly condemned three terrorist attacks in Afghanistan's capital Kabul that resulted in the loss of precious lives while injuring several innocent people. Three explosions rocked a high school in western Kabul earlier in the day, killing at least six people and injuring children, according to Afghan security and health officials. Many residents in neighbourhood belong to the Shia Hazara community, an ethnic and religious minority frequently targeted by militant groups, including Islamic State. "The gov-

ernment and the people of Pakistan extend deep sympathies to the families of those who have lost their lives and pray for the early recovery of the injured," the Foreign Office said in a statement. The FO said Pakistan strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, adding that, "We stand with our Afghan brothers in this moment of sorrow". "It is important that Afghanistan and the international community engage in close cooperation against the scourge of terrorism," it further said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which followed a lull in violence over the cold winter months and after foreign forces withdrew last year.

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Businessmen urged to exploit potential in New Lahore City



ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD. New Lahore City developed by Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA) is a national project and business community from Faisalabad must also play its role for its colonization in addition to exploiting its business potential, said Mr. Fardan Khalid Director Investor's Relations RUDA. Giving a presentation on RUDA in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that historically all major cities and civilizations emerged and developed along rivers from where water supply was ensured. He mentioned the civilization of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa and said that these civilizations were 20 times bigger than Lahore but were destroyed as river Indus changed its path. He said that under the Sindh Tas agreement, we had to brickline the river Ravi immediately after this agreement but we failed to do so. He said that water from river Chenab is now channelized to river Ravi through BRB canal but the quantity of this water is quite insufficient for a river. He said that if we failed to understand the gravity of emerging water scarcity, it would become a rare commodity and we would have to purchase water tankers to meet our immediate needs. He said that the new city would be developed 47 kilometers along river Ravi and its water would be repeatedly recycled to

fulfill our needs. He further said that this city would sprawl over one lac and two thousand acres of land and it would have different areas dedicated for government officials, knowledge, tourism, entertainment, sports, commercial, downtown and industrial areas. Comparing this city with Islamabad, he said that it would be bigger than Islamabad as it has an area of only 86,000 acres. He said that New Lahore City would be developed on most modern and scientific lines in order to offer international level facilities to its inhabitants. He said that RUDA has so far received investment offers of 8 billion dollars and we are taking measures to materialize it. He further said that on completion in 2050, it would be the world's largest river front city. "In order to save its natural ecosystem, 13% green area would be reserved whereas at present Lahore has only 1% green area", he said and added that during the first phase of this project 2,000 acres of land has been leased out to Arif Habib Group for real estate development. He said that Arif Habib in collaboration with other 18 groups would make investment in RUDA. He said that 10,000 acres have been allocated for the industrial area which would be adjacent to the eastern bypass of Lahore ring road. "It would be 13 kilometers away from the airport and 10 kilometers from the railway station", he said and added that it would also have easy access to the GT road. About the price of land, he said that ini-

tially it has been evaluated at Rs. 70-80 million per acre, however, final price would be determined in consultation with the international evaluators. He assured to remain in touch with FCCI to provide latest information about the development in this mega project. He also invited FCCI office bearers to visit the RUDA office immediately after Eid. Earlier President FCCI Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh introduced Faisalabad and FCCI and said that this city was contributing 45% share in total textile exports of the country, however, this share in total export of Pakistan is estimated around 22-24%. He further said that this city was also catering 80% of the needs of domestic clothes and clothing. He said that Faisalabad has world class universities like UAF and NTU in addition to other institutions. He also appreciated the role of FCCI in starting direct international flights for Faisalabad and said that Chief Minister Punjab is expected to perform the ground breaking ceremony for a state-of-the-art Expo Centre during next month. "The Punjab government has allocated 52 acres of land for this project", he said and added that FIEDMC is developing M3 and Allama Iqbal industrial estates and land in these projects are available at only Rs. 10 million per acre. He further said that FIEDMC would also provide all basic amenities in these estates including sewerage, gas, electricity, boundary wall and security etc. "The facility of ten-year tax holiday has also been offered to the industrialists intending to set up their units in these estates", he said and added that the cost of land would also be recovered in easy installments during a period of 3-5 years. He further said that the units completed before given time would get an extra facility of 5% discount. Later Engineer Ahmad Hassan offered vote of thanks while this meeting was also participated by Muhammad Jazil of RUDA, former President FCCI Rana Muhammad Sikandar Azam, Dr. Khuram Tariq, Engineer Asim Munir, Babar Shehzad, Mian Abdul Waheed and Dr. Habib Aslam Gaba.

Complete the Nishtar II project in current year



SAQIB MUSHTAQ

BAHAWALPUR: Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Capt.(Retd) Saqib Zafar has given a deadline to complete the Nishtar II project in current year, and has said that no delay will be tolerated in the completion of

the project. He said Punjab government is spending a huge amount of Rs 9.32 billion on the construction of 500 bedded Nishtar II and it will provide health facilities to the people of this whole region. He expressed these views on his visit to the underconstruction project of Nishtar II hospital. He was accompanied by Additional Secretary Specialized Healthcare South Punjab Amjad Shoaib Khan. Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Capt. (Retd) Saqib Zafar said that another 500 beds would be added in the second phase in Nishtar II project and a Medical University will also be set up. He directed the concerned authorities that all the obstacles in the project should be removed. Muhammad Asif, Project Manager, IDAP, while briefing the Additional Chief Secretary, South Punjab, said that the building of Nishtar II Hospital is being completed at a cost of Rs.5 billion and Rs. 1.90 billion are being spent on the purchase of biomedical equipment. It was informed in the briefing that Rs. 3.96 billion has been spent on the project so far. It was told in the briefing that 10 modern operating theaters are being constructed in the hospital. The emergency block and trauma center of the hospital will consist of 120 beds, gynecology ward 150 beds, orthopedic ward 120 beds and ICU 50 beds. Construction of the residences for doctors and para medical staff, cafeteria and shelter home are included in the plan. It was informed in the briefing that LC of CT scan, MRI and other machinery has been opened while purchase of generators, UPS and other equipment has been completed.



KARACHI: Karachi press club hosted an Iftar dinner for foreign diplomats at Press Club. – DNA

CM for restoration of Masjid Mohabbat Khan in its original shape

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has directed the quarters concerned to accelerate pace of work on the project for the restoration of historic Masjid Mohabbat Khan in its original form. He also directed them to fix realistic timelines for the completion of the project and to ensure physical progress accordingly. Expressing his dis-satisfaction over the pace of work on the project, the chief minister formed a committee consisting of provincial cabinet members and other relevant officials which will present him monthly report regarding progress on the project on regular basis. Members of the committee include Shaoukat Yousafzai, Zahoor Shakir, barrister Muhammad Ali Saif and Secretary Auqaf department.

He was chairing a meeting held here on Tuesday to review progress on the project regarding restoration and preservation of Masjid Mohabbat Khan. He directed the authorities concerned to take solid and result-oriented steps to remove encroachments on the properties of Auqaf department adjacent to historic Masjid Mohabbat Khan so that any possible damage to the building of mosque could be avoided. Besides provincial cabinet members Shaoukat Yousafzai, Zahoor Shakir and barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Chief Secretary Dr. Shehzad Bangash, Principal Secretary to CM Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Auqaf Saqib Raza Aslam, Secretary Archeology Amir Tareen, Provincial Chief Khateeb Maulana Tayyab Querashi and other relevant officials attended the meeting. The chief minister has termed the Masjid Mohabbat Khan as a national

heritage and said that the provincial government was committed to restore this mosque in its original condition adding that the resources required for the purpose would be provided on priority. He directed the concerned quarters to revise PC-I of the project with the purpose to provide funds to improve the system of utilities connections in the mosque and other important works. The forum also discussed the matters related to the renovation and rehabilitation of Eid-Gah on Charsadda road Peshawar and the chief minister has directed the relevant officials to prepare PC-I in consultation with the Archeology department for the purpose. He also directed the aforementioned committee to visit the Eid-Gah and submit him a comprehensive and workable report regarding rehabilitation of Eid-Gah.

DC Abbottabad imposes ban on campfires

Over 8.315m people vaccinated in Faisalabad

BUREAU REPORT

ABBOTTABAD: Commissioner Abbottabad Tariq Salam Marwat Tuesday imposed a ban on setting up fire in the camps under section 144 of the Penal Code. The ban was imposed during a meeting regarding taking measures against the occurrence of forest fires following the provincial government orders. The DC while speaking on the occasion said that the majority of wildfires in district Abbottabad are human-caused by cigarettes, campfires, improper burning of debris, arson and discarded wood ashes. – APP

FAISALABAD: Over 8.315 million (8,315,252) people have so far been vaccinated against COVID-19 in the district. District Health Officer Dr Ataul Mun'im said on Tuesday that 4,616,449 citizens were injected first dose while 3,615,520 were administered the second dose of vaccine. He further said that 39,853 health workers were also given first dose while 43,430 received the second dose of vaccine. He said that sufficient stock of coronavirus vaccine was available in the district. He said that 37 vaccination centers and 20 mobile vaccination camps were operational in Faisalabad where registered people were being vaccinated. In order to facilitate the people these centers had been established in various areas of the city including Allied Hospital, District Headquarters Hospital, Government

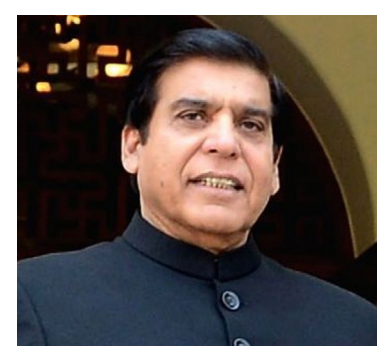
General Hospital, Faisalabad Institute of Cardiology, Government General Hospital Samanabad, Children Hospital, Sports Complex Samanabad, Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Jaranwala, Samundri, Tandlianwala, Chak Jhumra, Sports Complex Chak Jhumrah, Sports Complex Jaranwala, Government General Hospital Chak 224/R-B, New Building RHC Khurrianwala, New Building THQ Samundri, New Building THQ Tandlianwala, Social Security Hospital Medina Town, Wapda Hospital, Rural Health Centers Mureed Wala, Chak 174-JB, Chak 134-JB, Chak 229/R-B, Chak 65-GB, RHC Lundianwala Jaranwala, RHC Khurrianwala Jaranwala, Pindi Sheikh Musa, Kanjwani, Mamukanjan, RHC Chak 400-GB, RHC Chak 153/R-B, RHC Chak 374-GB and Chak 469-GB, he added. He further said that timing of these vaccination centers was 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. except Sports Complex Samanabad center which would remain open round the clock.



PESHAWAR: Employees of private banks protesting against the decision of Saturday as working day. – DNA

Supremacy of constitution, law vital for progress

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Tuesday said that supremacy of Constitution and rule of law would ensure progress and development in the country. He said that the role of lawyer community is of vital reality to ensure rule of law. He said that lawyer community has always struggled for the supremacy of law in the country. He expressed these views during a meeting with delegation of Peoples Lawyer Forum, Gujranwala in Parliament House, said a news release. While discussing the issues faced by lawyer community in Gujranwala, Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf reiterated that he would



continue to support lawyer community of Gujranwala. He also said that lawyer community is crucial part of civil society and their role in uphold-

ing rule of law is supreme. He asked them to continue playing their proactive role for prompt dispensation of justice to people. Raja Zahoor Manzoor, President of People Lawyer Forum Gujranwala and participants of delegation extended warm felicitations to Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf for being elected unopposed as 22nd Speaker of National Assembly of Pakistan. He said that it is moment of pride for people of Gujranwala that Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has been elected as custodian of this house. He also requested Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf to visit Gujranwala Bar Association at his convenience. – APP

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- The competent authority reserves the right to increase or decrease the number of any item mentioned in Tender Documents as per rules.
- The subject Tender Notice will also be available on PPRA and NAB websites.

Assistant Director (Gen)
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Shahra-e-Gulistan, Quetta Cantt
081-9203460

National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

- April 04 / Senegal National Day
- April 07 / W. H. O. World Health Day
- April 12 / Somalia Armed Forces Day
- April 15 / DPR Korea The Day of the Sun
- April 16 / Denmark National Day
- April 17 / Iran Army Day
- April 17 / Syria Independence Day
- April 18 / Zimbabwe Independence Day
- April 24 / Holy See Anniversary of His Papacy of his Pontificate
- April 25 / DPR Korea Armed Forces Day
- April 26 / Tanzania National Day
- April 27 / Sierra Leone Independence Day
- April 27 / South Africa Freedom Day
- April 30 / Sweden Birthday of His Majesty
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MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan after taking oath as Prime Minister with Sardar Ilyas Khan (Father) Sardar Rashid Ilyas Khan, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan (brothers) Zafar Bakhtawari, Ejaz Abbasi (former presidents ICCI) Khalid Chaudhry and Ch. Naseer in a group photo at Prime Minister house Muzaffarabad. – DNA

TDC seeks ICCI co-op to promote diabetes care

Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, ICCI appreciated the the noble cause of TDC led by Dr. Asjad Hameed and assured that the business community would try to extend its cooperation in this noble mission

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Asjad Hameed, Chairman, Board of Directors of The Diabetes Centre (TDC) along with his team visited Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) and held a meeting with Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President to seek the cooperation of business community to promote diabetes care and save people from this rapidly spreading disease. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President, Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI, Mian Shaukat Masud former President, Khalid Chaudhry former Senior Vice President and others were present at the occasion. Dr. Asjad Hameed said that there was no specialized diabetes hospital in the public or private sector in Pakistan. Therefore, The Diabetes Centre (TDC) was established to focus on diabetes care, treatment and to create awareness about this disease in the general masses. He said that TDC is a not-for-profit state-of-the-art



healthcare facility while currently its two branches are working in Islamabad and one in Lahore. He said that its network would be further enhanced in cooperation with the philanthropists so that more diabetes

patients could take benefit of its services. He invited the ICCI delegation to visit TDC in order to see its facilities and services. He further said that ICCI should join the Advisory Board of TDC and contribute towards

promoting its vision and mission. He said that 50 percent deserving patients were being provided free treatment. He hoped that the business community would come forward to cooperate with TDC so that it could further expand its network to provide diabetes care to more patients. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry appreciated the the noble cause of TDC led by Dr. Asjad Hameed and assured that the business community would try to extend its cooperation in this noble mission. He proposed that TDC in cooperation with ICCI should organize an awareness program on diabetes for the business community so that they could adopt preventive measures to remain safe from this disease. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President, Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI, Mian Shaukat Masud former President and others also lauded the noble cause of TDC and assured that the business community would cooperate with it in taking forward its good mission.

Ministry engages varsities to promote STEAM learning



ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) has launched an initiative to improve learning outcomes in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) in middle and high schools across the country as it will provide a chance for the school stu-

dents to be university-ready. As a step forward in this regard, the education ministry has engaged eight renowned higher education institutes by signing memorandum of understandings here yesterday. These institutes include National Textile University, Faisalabad, NFC Institute of Engineering & Fertilizers

Research, Faisalabad, NFC Institute of Engineering & Technology, Multan, Pakistan Institute of Fashion Design, Lahore, Federal College of Education, Islamabad, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, and National Skills University, Islamabad. – DNA

IESCO issues shutdown notice

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Tuesday issued a power suspension programme for Wednesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 06:00 AM to 10:00 AM, Park View, Pindi Board, Morgah, Iqbal Town, Misryal Road, Iqbal Road, Westridge, Ara Bazaar, Main Bazaar, Millat Chowk, Line Park, KSM-1, Sarcal, Dhudial Rural, Dhudial City, Latifal Feeders from 06:00 AM to 11:00 AM Shahpur, Kohala Feeders and surroundings. – APP

Air quality of capital healthy

ISLAMABAD: The air quality of the federal capital on Tuesday was reported healthy as the ratio of air pollutants was recorded below the permissible limits in the atmosphere due to reduced vehicular traffic in peak hours. 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 little 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 31.03 microgrammes per cubic meter on average which is below the NEQS of 35 microgrammes 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. However, a slight jump was mainly due to congestion of automobiles plying on the roads owing to Ramadan timings during the peak working hours, he added. – APP

Hina Rabbani takes charge as State Minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Member of National Assembly Hina Rabbani Khar on Tuesday took charge as State Minister for Foreign Affairs in the cabinet of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Upon arrival at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to join her new responsibilities, Hina Khar was received by Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood and senior officials. Belonging to Pakistan Peoples Party, Hina Rabbani Khar has previously served as Foreign Minister from February 2011 to March 2013 – the youngest person and the first woman to hold this office in the country. Earlier, she has also served as the State Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs.

Saba Qamar unveils first look of her drama serial

ISLAMABAD: Celebrated Pakistani star Saba Qamar unveiled the first look of her upcoming drama serial under the banner of iDream Entertainment. The Cheekh star took to Instagram and shared the teaser of her most-awaited project with the caption "Next up: Fraud." She further revealed some details about the drama and wrote "With strong star cast, powerful narration and mesmerizing OST by Ali Zafar." The star-studded cast includes Saba Qamar, Mikail Zulfikar and Ahsan Khan in the main lead. After a long-time the three superstars came together for most anticipated drama serial "Fraud". The series is produced under the vital direction of the famous director Saqib Khan. Moreover, the story is penned by the very talented playwright and screenwriter Zanjabeel Asim Shah. – APP

Teaser of Late Naila Jaffri's Serial

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Television officially released the trailer of late veteran actress Naila jaffri's last project. Jaffri was a renowned actress and director loved for her amazing personality and heartfelt acting. Fans were left in cry after the demise of beloved actress due to cancer. Recently Pakistan Television dropped the official teaser of her last project which will be released on 'PTV Home' soon. It was shared on the official Facebook page of PTV Home with the video of trailer paying homage to the late actress. "In loving memory of veteran actress Naila Jaffri," the trailer starts with this caption. Fans are eagerly waiting for the project to be launched soon and sharing their wishes for the drama to be an amazing one.

Efforts underway for 'responsible tourism in GB'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Managing Director Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) Aftab Ur Rehman Rana has said that efforts were underway to expedite campaign for responsible tourism in northern areas of the country particularly Gilgit-Baltistan. The PTDC Managing Director said a proper mass awareness campaign was being designed to educate and create awareness among the local people and tourists visiting the scenic areas of the country, he told APP while elaborating the PTDC endeavours for sustainable tourism development. Rana said the PTDC was creating booklets, public awareness messages, and training guides on responsible tourism that would help overcome the damaged incurred by careless tourists. Since the post pandemic

era, he said there was a surge in domestic tourism in the region. A record 800,000 to 900,000 people had visited the northern areas in 2021 whereas the number was over 1.2 million during pre-COVID-19 times, he added. He informed that the environment and tourism departments of Gilgit-Baltistan have been sensitised on responsible tourism and sustainable development. Moreover, Gilgit and Hunza have also established their solid waste management bodies whereas Gilgit Baltistan had also established the country's first ever Tourist Police that almost had graduate personnel, he added. Rana told that 1422 helpline was made active in Gilgit Baltistan for Tourist Police, adding, it was a prompt and efficient service for tourists' information and emergency services in the region.

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Briefs

Mobile phone import increases 3.93pc

ISLAMABAD: The import of mobile phones has witnessed an increase of 3.93 percent during the nine months of the fiscal year (2021-22) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. Pakistan imported mobile phones worth the US \$1596.339 million during July-March (2021-22) as compared to the imports of US \$1535.996 million during July-March (2020-21), showing growth of 3.93 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Meanwhile on a year-to-year basis, the import of mobile phones however witnessed a decrease of 18.09 percent during the month of March 2022 as compared to the same month of last year. The import of mobile phones during March 2022 was recorded at \$183.894 million against the exports of \$224.503 million in March 2021. On a month-on-month basis, the imports of mobile phones however increased by 29.47 percent during March 2022, as compared to the imports of US \$142.033 million during February 2022, according to the data. It is pertinent to mention here that the country's total merchandise exports increased by 24.98 percent during the first nine months of the current fiscal year. The merchandise exports during July-March (2021-22) were recorded at \$23.355 billion as compared to the exports of \$18.687 billion during July-March (2020-21), the PBS reported. - APP

IRSA releases 87887 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Tuesday released 87887 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 86523 cases. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1076.60 feet, which was 20.26 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded a 25836 and 28000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 37566 ,38981 and 26010 cases respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River, a total of 15500 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 12887 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala. - APP

Govt notifies transfer, posting of officers

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Tuesday notified transfer and posting of high rank officers. According to a notification issued by Establishment Division, a BS-19 officer of Secretariat Group, Muhammad Ahad, presently posted as Deputy Secretary, Cabinet Division, is transferred and posted as Deputy Secretary, Finance Division with immediate effect and until further orders. While, a BS-19 officer of Secretariat Group, Amjad Mehmood Kayani, presently awaiting posting, Establishment Division, is transferred and posted as Deputy Secretary, Industries and production Division, with immediate effect and until further orders. - APP

Federal govt teachers seek solving of issues

ISLAMABAD: President, Federal Government Teachers Association Malik Amir Khan Tuesday demanded of the new government to resolve long-standing issues of the federal government teachers. In a statement, while congratulating Shehbaz Sharif on assuming office as Prime Minister he demanded immediate implementation of the 12-year-old hierarchical formula be ensured. "We hope that the new government will solve the problem of teachers," he said, adding that the post of SST has not been upgraded for the last 12 years. Although the Finance Division has approved it, he said but it has affected the teaching community. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani administering the oath to Ministers of State at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

COMSTECH holds webinar on energy consumption by ICTs

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH organized an online webinar on energy consumption by information and communication technologies: facts and challenges, on Tuesday. The webinar was delivered by Prof. Sami Erol Gelenbe, Turkish computer scientist, electronic engineer and applied mathematician currently serving Polish Academy of Science, Institute of Theoretical and Applied Informatics in Gliwice, Poland. Prof. Sami mentioned that information and communication technologies impact the amount of energy that we consume in the world and impact the CO2 or other emissions that are influencing global warming. He said having online

meetings we save travel energy but at the same time we consume energy of electrical power in megawatts because we could not possibly operate online conversation if we don't have in the background, some very large data centers, and the millions of routers and fiber optics lines and copper connections for the digital interfaces. Prof. Sami asked that why do we care about energy and ICT? He said that ICT has significant environmental impact both good and bad, including heat dissipation and of course energy consumption, production and transportation cost. So energy in ICT is a substantial part of the cost. He mentioned that the energy has a real impact on the profitability. And energy extraction of whatever kind we use has significant envi-

ronmental impact. Prof. Sami concluded that ICT systems are complex and highly interconnected. Although individual components are more energy efficient, however the complexity and the interconnectivity makes them more energy consuming. He mentioned that the presence of ICT is growing and new applications such as cryptocurrencies, blockchain and artificial intelligence are highly energy consuming. For instance, it is estimated that Bitcoin consumes as much electricity as a small country, the Netherlands. Prof. Sami suggested careful analysis, experimentation and active management to reduce energy consumption and environmental impact of the use of information and communication technologies. Coordinator General COM-

STECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary said in his introductory remarks that today people from different continents are attending this first webinar of COMSTECH-MSTF webinar series. He said that COMSTECH is an OIC ministerial standing committee on scientific and technological cooperation which represents 57 OIC member states and Mustafa (p-buh) Science and Technology Foundation (MSTF) is a Tehran based non-profit organization that honors scientists of the Islamic world with Mustafa Prize biennially, along with training future scientists worldwide. Prof. Choudhary said that this is an important series of lectures which will be given by prominent scientists in the world both within

the OIC system and outside. He said, today's speaker, Prof. Dr. Sami Erol Gelenbe is a very eminent scholar and hoped that this lecture will lay the foundation of collaboration. Prof. Sami Erol Gelenbe is a Turkish computer scientist, electronic engineer and applied mathematician. He is a member of the Science Academy of Turkey, and holds the "Dennis Gabor" professorship in Electrical and Electronic Engineering at Imperial College, London. Prof. Gelenbe received Mustafa Prize in 2017 for his pioneering research on "Modeling and Performance Evaluation of Computer Systems". He is currently working as professor at Institute of Theoretical and Applied Informatics, Polish Academy of Science, Poland.

PTI destroyed national institutions: Rana Tanveer

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senior Leader of Pakistan Muslim League-N Rana Tanveer Hussain criticized that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf in their three years tenure had destroyed all national institutions and left country's economy in bad shape while the soaring inflation has rendered the lives of the poor masses miserable. Talking to a private news channel, he said that PML-N government under a dedicated leadership of Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif would reshape the economic policies to move towards a strong growth. He said PML-N government is committed to revival of economy and will undertake all necessary steps required to boost its growth. He criticized the leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf for using uncivilized language and malicious campaign against national institutions, adding, opposition should desist from pinpointing heads of the institutions. Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) wanted political stability in the country and electoral reforms for transparent future elections, he added. Replying a question, he said that all allied parties have completed the talks related to the distribution of ministries, however, the PML-N led government would take its all allied parties in confidence while taking any decision for formation of cabinet.

CDA allocates Rs 4m for water tankers' maintenance

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority's (CDA) Water Management Wing has allocated Rs four (4) million for maintenance of water tankers to address water supply complaints in a timely manner. A tender in that regard would be floated in national dailies in few days after that the repair work on the water tankers would be commenced in workshop of Machinery Pool Organization (MPO), Deputy Director General (DG) water management, Sardar Khan Zimri told APP on Tuesday. The amount would be spent on repair of essential spare parts of tankers including tyres, tubes and flippers, he added. The authority, he said had recently added eight (08) vehicles to water tankers' fleet after necessary repair and maintenance work to improve water supply at sectoral areas. Currently the wing possessed a fleet of around 34 water tankers to address water supply complaints from the residents. "CDA supplying water regularly as per available sources and water management wing had increased two (2) million gallons per day water on directions of authority's chairman to avoid water shortage in the holy month of Ramzan,"

he noted. The CDA through various measures had overcome the water shortage issue, he said, adding earlier there were around 350 daily complaints but nowadays they have been reduced to 150. Similarly, a helpline was set up for protecting water from wastage and challans were issued to violators. Citizens may report the water leakage at any time on WhatsApp number 03357775444 while inquiry offices for water tankers supply were functional in all the sectors, he added. Zimri said an online Khuli Katcheri (open court) on water supply issues in areas falling within municipal limits of Islamabad were being held on weekly basis live on CDA official facebook from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. The deputy DG water management said in order to improve performance of field staff and monitor the vehicles the CDA management had installed a modern tracking system to monitor them with the help of a single dashboard. The initiative was continuation of measures being taken self-accountability in the organization, he added. It may be mentioned here that the CDA used to charge Rs100 to provide 1/3 tanker. - APP



ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar visits ministry of foreign affairs after taking oath and meets foreign secretary Sohail Mehmood. - DNA

Progress on Water Governance Project discussed at PCRWR

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development office (FCDO) and International Water Management Institute (IWMI) Tuesday visited Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), Islamabad to discuss the Water Governance Project (WRAP). Head Climate and Resilience Group, British High Commission, Islamabad, Ms. Pauline Seenan briefed the participants about the project objectives and

focus areas of the project. She discussed briefly about the three components of the project with a special focus on water accounting system at pilot scale in Islamabad and Punjab in line with Pakistan National Water Policy 2018 and early drought warning and crop insurance system (EDWCIS). Speaking on the occasion, Chairman PCRWR, Dr. Muhammad Ashraf shared his experience and briefed the guests about the PCRWR and IWMI contribution towards

the instrumentation of canals by installing telemetry system with the generous funding of USAID. He shared the lesson learned in the flow measurements of main canals and conflicts resolution among the provinces of Pakistan under Water Apportionment Accord 1991. He briefly discussed the DaaS (Data as a Service) concept and emphasized the need of building of trust among the provinces and involvement of stakeholders in water distribution. - APP

Kashmiri scholar arrested for 2011 article

ISLAMABAD: A post-doctoral scholar at the University of Kashmir in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) has been arrested by the local forces' State Investigation Agency, over an article he wrote for the Kashmiri Walla, a Srinagar-based digital media outlet, whose editor Fahad Shah has been languishing in jail since February this year. According to Kashmir Media Service, the arrest of Abdul AalaFazili, a PhD scholar at the Kashmir University's Pharmaceutical Department, comes days after a prominent law professor, Sheikh Showkat Hussain, was sacked as the principal of Kashmir Law College on charges of being a supporter of the liberation struggle in IIOJK. According to reports, a team of J&K's elite State Investigation Agency (SIA), which was formed last year, raided the residence of Aala in Humhama on the outskirts of Srinagar on, April 17. Simultaneous raids were carried out at Fahad's residence and The Kashmiri Walla office in Srinagar. State Investigation Agency called

Abdul AalaFazili's article titled 'The Shackles of Slavery Will Break', which was published by 'The Kashmiri Walla' in November 2011, "seditious". In a statement, the agency said Aala was arrested in connection with FIR No. 01/2022 filed at JIC Police Station of SIA's Jammu wing under Section 13 (advocating, abetting, advising or inciting unlawful activity) and Section 18 (sets out the quantum of punishment for involvement in such activity) of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The agency has also invoked Section 121 (waging war against the Government of India), Section 124 (spreading disaffection against the government), Section 153-B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration) and Section 120-B (criminal conspiracy) in the FIR, in which Fahad has been named as an accused. is the fourth FIR against The Kashmiri Walla's editor, who has so far secured bail in two cases, and if convicted, he could spend life in jail. The SIA spokesperson said the search

teams seized "incriminating evidence, which includes computers, laptops and other digital equipments" during the raids at three places. Fahad is presently lodged at a jail in Kupwara. Aala, who was a vocal voice in Kashmir's human rights circuit before Article 370 was read down, had authored a piece titled 'The Shackles of Slavery Will Break' which was published by The Kashmiri Walla on November 6, 2011. The SIA described the article as "highly provocative, seditious and intended to create unrest in Jammu and Kashmir" while adding that it was written "with the purpose of abetting the youth to take the path of violence". The article, written in the backdrop of three years of unrest between 2008 and 2010 in the Kashmir Valley which brought the international focus back on the Kashmir issue after years of uneasy calm, was published by the Srinagar-based media outlet with the disclaimer that "it does not necessarily reflect The Kashmiri Walla's editorial policy". - APP

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Intolerant India

IN India, it is the Muslim community again that has landed under the butcher's knife. Going by the police sources, it is still unclear what sparked the latest episode of violence in New Delhi, but while they may need several rounds of committee meetings to get to the bottom of the pickle, those sitting outside the stadium can easily point to the culprit: religious fanaticism. What had started as a foolproof bait to gain a communal electorate by the ruling BJP has now turned into a vile genie that refuses to get corked inside. The "Incredible India" had opened the window to foreign tourists using the kaleidoscope of its religious harmony: unity in diversity, they used to proclaim. However, what message the capital seeks to send out, unleashing ruthless mobs at fully-occupied mosques in the month of Ramazan when religious sentiments run high is unclear to many. Simply arresting the rioters and sending out notices to the remaining lot can be called an effective optic strategy but loses effectiveness when those responsible for steering the ship are very bluntly (and in broad daylight) petting the beast of communalism, slipping in derogatory buzzwords. The torturous saga of Muslims living in India having to prove their loyalty to their homeland every second of their existence is old news. Since the verdict is clearly out and they have lost the patriotic case, they can be twisted, dragged through the streets and badgered howsoever the dirty powers like. Their cries of financial subjugation fall on deaf ears. Their response to reprehensible campaigns against their women and children is branded with hot iron rods and the clamour against a constant erasure of their religious identity is swept under the rug of nationalism. The battles are far too many, but the manpower to fight back remains the bare minimum. As neither their country nor the world around them seems interested in fighting their cause, the Indian Muslims are on their own. And from superstars to butchers to students, each one of them is losing badly. Incredible India is not well on its way to becoming an Intolerant India because the fascist forces have already won. It is high time the international community opens its eyes to the gross violations of fundamental freedoms right under its nose.



Sweden: Pouring fuel on raging fire

AS the crisis rages in Ukraine, threatening to turn into a wider global conflict, the last thing the world needs is another conflict, such as the ones brewing in Sweden and occupied Jerusalem. Dozens have been injured in three-day clashes in Sweden, including 17 police officers, following the burning of copies of Islam's holy book, the Quran, by a convicted racist activist, who leads an anti-immigration group, called Stram Kurs, or Hard Line. There have been warnings of the consequences well before the fanatic Rasmus Paludan burned copies of a holy book sacred to more than 1.5 billion people worldwide. The Quran is not just any book. It is the word of God and symbol of the religion and source of pride for Muslims. Swedish authorities knew that. It happened few years ago. But they chose to ignore the warnings claiming 'freedom of speech' was paramount! Nonsense. That is not free speech. It is a terrorist act, meant to intimidate the Muslim community of Sweden into submission to the rules of another community, those who Paludan claims to represent. Sweden and almost all European countries have banned all Russian media broadcasts in their territories, shut Russian access to YouTube and other social media platforms immediately after the start of the Ukraine war. Where was that sacred principle of free speech then? As we have said here before, such values seems to be applied by the West selectively. The world needs peace. Not conflict, hate or racism. The timing of the racist group's action is dubious too. So is the timing of the containing provocation of Israel's forces in Islam's third holiest mosque, Al Aqsa. As Muslims mark Ramadan, a month where they feel closer to their creator, Israel for the last 10 days has been attacking the Palestinians who pray in the mosque. Nearly 200 Palestinians have been injured so far. The Israeli proactive exercise of power in the occupied city threatens to ignite another war. The UAE, as well as most other Arab states, have called for calm and protection of the worshippers. Israel should stop any action that violate the sanctity of Al Aqsa Mosque. The statement said this is a time to advance the peace process and end all illegal Israeli practices. Indeed, it is time to end all wars. It is time to protect the rights of minorities in Sweden and the rest of Europe. And it is a time to refrain from any action that threaten to unleash another bloody conflict in the Middle East. The question, nevertheless, is why couldn't the world react to these provocative acts in the same manner that it did against the Russian offensive in Ukraine.

High time for UK to take action on Myanmar at UNSC

Chris Sidoti

The UK has instead focused its efforts on achieving consensus by settling for lesser options, including non-binding statements on Myanmar that amount to little more than fine words. This reasoning crumbles under scrutiny. Consensus was not an issue to the US and Albania, the co-penholders on Ukraine...

MOMENTS before voting in favour of a historic General Assembly resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Myanmar's Ambassador to the United Nations Kyaw Moe Tun told fellow delegates in New York "Myanmar understands and shares more than others the suffering that the people of Ukraine are encountering." For the past 14 months, the people of Myanmar have been under attack from a brutal military government led by deluded strongman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, whose attempted coup on February 1, 2021, ended a decade of quasi-democracy in the country. The generals have responded to nationwide civilian resistance to the coup with a systematic campaign of mass killings, torture, sexual violence and abuse. In resistance strongholds, military forces are burning entire towns to the ground and cutting access to food supplies in an attempt to starve people into submission. For the first time in decades, state capitals and ethnic minority areas are being bombed, reflecting the fact that the generals have lost control on the ground. IDP camps are being targeted for air raids and artillery barages, while in recent months massacres of unarmed civilians have become a hallmark of the generals' increasing barbarity. And yet, in contrast to the decisive

response by the international system to Putin's aggression, the response to Min Aung Hlaing's attack on the Myanmar people has been, at best, one of empty rhetoric. For this the UN Security Council, the international system's most powerful body, bears much responsibility. UNSC members took less than 24 hours to table a resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It was a timely and necessary response to the situation. By contrast, no UNSC member has ever tabled a resolution on Myanmar, in spite of decades of atrocities committed against ethnic minorities, including the genocidal "clearance operation" against Rohingya in 2016 and 2017, and more recently against the entire country by the Myanmar military. Put simply, the UNSC has failed to uphold its legal responsibility under the UN Charter to act for international peace and security. It has failed in its responsibility to protect the people of Myanmar from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This should be cause for deep unease for the United Kingdom's government and among its diplomats in New York. As Myanmar's former colonial occupier, the UK has taken principal responsibility for Myanmar among the Western states in the UN. It is historically the "penholder", that is, the lead drafter, of resolutions on Myanmar in the GA in New York and Human Rights Council in Geneva. In those forums, the UK has done well. But in the Security Council? At the Security Council in New York, the UK's obsession with consensus and fear of failure have rendered it impotent in the face of one of the great humanitarian crises of this century. Its thinking is that it's better not to present a resolution than to present it and have it vetoed by another permanent member, Russia or China, that shares close ties with the illegal military government and sells it weapons. The UK has instead focused its efforts on achieving consensus by settling for lesser options, including non-binding statements on Myanmar that amount to little more than fine words. This reasoning crumbles under scrutiny. Consensus was not an issue to the US and Albania, the co-penholders on Ukraine, when they tabled a UNSC resolution denouncing Russian aggression, even though knowing it would be impossible to pass. Council members' overwhelming public opposition to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Russia's forced defence of its actions, including exercising the veto, demonstrated Russia's growing isolation on the international stage.

Why then does the UK continue to shield the junta's allies Russia and China from accountability at the Security Council instead of upholding the Council's legal responsibility to act on behalf of the Myanmar people? Why then does the UK allow the treacherous generals to go about their brutal business unimpeded? The UK has an opportunity to act at last having assumed the rotating monthly role of UNSC president at the start of April. This is an opportunity for leadership, if the UK is capable of it. Council Presidents are able to set the agenda for the month in many ways, including by indicating when taking office what the priorities will be and what they hope to accomplish. First, the UK should work with another Council member to convene an Arria Formula, or informal, meeting on Myanmar to enable UNSC members to be briefed on the situation by well-informed civil society and other experts who cannot address formal sessions of the Council. Second, the Arria Formula meeting should be followed later in the month by an open meeting of the UNSC on Myanmar to enable a formal debate on Myanmar. The UK should propose a resolution on Myanmar in the UNSC and take it to a vote at that meeting. This would make it clear once and for all who sides with the Myanmar people and who sides with Min Aung Hlaing and his murderous generals. This resolution should demand that Min Aung Hlaing's illegal military government stop its systematic campaign of violence against civilians. It should call for a comprehensive global arms embargo and targeted economic sanctions against the junta and its businesses, as well as the referral of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court where Min Aung Hlaing and military government leaders should stand trial for their decades of atrocity crimes against the Myanmar people. A Chinese or Russian veto of the resolution may be a likely outcome, but one for which they will face immediate condemnation and long-term consequences. The UK's misguided obsession with consensus on Myanmar at the UNSC only serves to embolden Myanmar's genocidal generals and those member states that seek to profit from chaos. With its April presidency under way, the UK's principal responsibility is not the protection of China or Russia. It is the protection of the people of Myanmar. It's not yet too late for the UK to show some courage and exercise some leadership. Almost but not yet too late.

Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Qur'an burning in Sweden an incitement of hate

Dr. Hamdan Al-Shehri

The center is located in Vienna and seeks to advance the process of dialogue and understanding among followers of multiple religions and cultures. It also promotes a culture of respect for diversity and establishes the rules of justice and peace among nations and peoples

HATE speech covers many forms of expression that incite, promote or justify hatred, violence and discrimination against a person or group of persons for a variety of reasons. In Sweden, hate speech poses a grave danger to the cohesion of democratic society, the protection of human rights, and the rule of law. Plans by Sweden's far-right, anti-immigrant, anti-Islam group Stram Kurs, led by Rasmus Paludan, to burn the Qur'an in the month of Ramadan, go against the sovereign nation's civil laws and its values. Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed its condemnation and denunciation of the far-right group's actions in deliberately provoking and inciting hate against Muslims. The Kingdom stressed the importance of concerted ef-

orts to spread the values of dialogue, tolerance and co-existence, rejecting hatred, extremism and exclusion, and preventing abuse of all religions and sanctities. Saudi Arabia has always been keen to respect cultures and religions and jointly established an international organization under the Center for Interfaith Dialogue. The King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue was founded in 2012 by Saudi Arabia, Austria and Spain, with the Vatican as an observing founding member. The center is located in Vienna and seeks to advance the process of dialogue and understanding among followers of multiple religions and cultures. It also promotes a culture of respect for diversity and establishes the rules of justice and peace among nations and peoples. Its board of directors comprises religious leaders, including Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists and Hindus. In the past, we have seen a fierce campaign, whether through traditional or new media, to undermine Muslims; a problematic notion since Muslims represent more than 1.5 billion of the world's population. These campaigns are carried out in an openly hostile manner and, in many cases, under what is called democracy or freedom of expression. The strange thing is that freedom of speech is supposed to be in the interest of humanity and is based on civilized values that respect others and their religion, coexisting with no differentiation or prejudice against race, or undermining religious symbols or subjecting them to ridicule. In the past, this interpretation of free expression was expressed through 12 caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad published in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten on Sept. 30, 2005. On Jan. 10, 2006, the Norwegian newspaper Magazinet, German newspaper Die Welt, French newspaper France Soir and other newspapers in Europe republished the images. Their publication hurt the feelings of the vast majority of Muslims and was met with a great wave of condemnation at different political levels of the Muslim world.

Another form of inciting hate toward Muslims was through attacks on places of worship, such as the Christchurch Mosque terror attacks in New Zealand in 2019 by Brenton Harrison Tarrant, an Australian terrorist. He killed more than 51 Muslims at two mosques. Such demagogic actions do not serve the values of peace, coexistence and the civilized world. Instead, they will take us back to the dark ages under the pretext of freedom of expression. Such atrocities would not be carried out if there were regulations and laws criminalizing such heinous acts, which would lead to more reactions and riots, or even worse, such as was case with the storming of the Charlie Hebdo offices in Paris in 2015. But we must not lose sight of newspapers' responsibilities when they published cartoons insulting the Prophet Muhammad. In the case of Charlie Hebdo, Saudi Arabia condemned both parties, holding accountable both the magazine and the attackers, who caused the death of 12 people and the injury of 11 others. Let us not forget that these drawings were an act of terrorism against more than 1.5 billion Muslims. Humanity is reeling from a pandemic. Though the world is still struggling to overcome it, the upside was that it allowed people to forget their differences in religion, language and race, and join forces to confront the threat of COVID-19. This effort should be directed toward fighting bigotry and Islamophobic rhetoric and actions. The world might soon face food shortages due to the Russia-Ukraine war, which calls for a concerted effort to resolve the conflict peacefully. With its different cultures, races and religions, the world must think about the future of its children and avoid further conflicts that divide efforts and create disasters. Terrorists and criminals who do not respect other religions and cultures, and who seek to inflame differences and drag the world into religious wars, must not be given the space to freely express their briefs with little or no regard for the consequences of their actions.

Courtesy: Arab News

Defending Al-Aqsa against injustice

Chris Doyle

Palestinians keenly feel these double standards. It feeds the anger. What does the international community expect them to do?

FOR months, even passing observers of the Israel-Palestine conflict have been able to predict the next escalation. The conjunction of Ramadan and Passover, the anniversary of last year's conflagration in East Jerusalem and then Gaza and the heightened tensions of the past few months made this a racing certainty. Clashes at Al-Aqsa, therefore, were neither unexpected nor unprecedented. They were avoidable, and of course, pointless. Above all, parties know that Jerusalem possesses an emotional hold and sacred place in the lives of Jews, Muslims and Christians. Tinker with the delicate status quo arrangements over the holy sites, especially Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and watch the subsequent explosion. Historically this has all happened before so many times, with the Wailing Wall riots of 1929, or the October 1990 massacre of 17 Palestinians after a Jewish extremist group tried to lay the cornerstone to the third temple. In September 1996, Benjamin Netanyahu played prime arsonist for the first time in Jerusalem when he opened the western wall tunnel: 70 Palestinians and 17 Israeli soldiers died in the ensuing clashes. Ariel Sharon knew precisely the consequences of his visit with hundreds of armed officers to Al-Haram Al-Sharif in September 2000, the spark that triggered the Second Intifada and his rise to being prime minister. In 2014 and 2021, escalation in Jerusalem led to wars on Gaza. The current clashes and then incursion of Israeli armed police into Al-Haram Al-Sharif on April 15 has led to more than 150 Palestinian injuries. Jewish extremists had promised to carry out the sacrifice of a goat on what they refer to as the Temple Mount. An extremist group, "Returning to the Mount," had offered a cash prize to anyone who was able to do this. Palestinian Muslims from inside Israel and the Occupied Territories answered the call to defend Al-Aqsa, many of them spending the night on the platform. Yet the Israeli authorities had made it clear they would not allow the goat sacrifice. They arrested six individuals on April 14, one of whom had a goat at his home. Most years this is attempted and thwarted. The extremists wanted to fan the flames. They got the desired reaction. It is a key difference to the April 2021 conflagration. Then the Netanyahu administration was desperate to ramp up the tensions and provoke confrontation, even encouraging "death to Arab marches" in Jerusalem. The current government did allow more Palestinians to pray in Jerusalem during Ramadan. Demolitions were put on hold. This year, the Israeli leadership feared an escalation as it could fracture the weakened coalition and trigger elections. Earlier this month, the Naftali Bennett-led coalition lost its majority in the Knesset so it is on borrowed time. The eyes of the world often focus on Israel and Palestine but are unlikely to shift south from Ukraine right now. But that too is the challenge. Major powers, from the US to European actors, do little to stop the very same crimes in the Occupied Territories as Russia has committed in Ukraine. They may not currently be of the same in scale but are in principle — the issue of occupation, acquisition of territory through force, transfer of population, targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, torture, and detention without trial. The international reaction is polar opposite: For Russian aggression — sanctions and the International Criminal Court; for Israeli crimes — favorable trade deals, top-table access and eternal immunity. The defense of Al-Aqsa is akin to the last-gasp defense of Palestinian rights. It is why the international community has to reimpose a meaningful return to the status quo agreements on the holy places. What will happen next is in the realm of the unpredictable, but this week, next month or next year Jerusalem will be exploding once more.

Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

37-member cabinet talks oath

FROM PAGE 01

Ahsan Iqbal, also from the PML-N, has been appointed the planning and development minister. Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's (MQM-P) Aminul Haque has taken charge as the information technology and telecommunications minister, APP reports. Haque had also held the same portfolio under the previous PTI government. Further, PPP's Hina Rabbani Khar was appointed the state minister for foreign affairs while PML-N's Rana Sanaullah was given the interior ministry. PML-N's Miftah Ismail and Aisha Ghaus Pasha were appointed as finance minister and state minister for finance, respectively.

FEDERAL MINISTERS:

Pakistan Muslim League-N:

1. Khawaja Muhammad Asif, MNA (DEFENCE)

2. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary, MNA (Planning)

3. Rana Sana Ullah Khan, MNA (Interior)

4. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, MNA

5. Rana Tanveer Hussain, MNA (Parliamentary Affairs)

6. Khurram Dastagir Khan, MNA

7. Marriyum Aurangzeb, MNA (Information)

8. Khawaja Saad Rafique, MNA (Railways)

9. Mian Javed Latif, MNA

10. Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, MNA

11. Murtaza Javed Abbasi, MNA

12. Azam Nazeer Tarar, Senator (Law)

13. Miftah Ismail (Finance)

PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY:

14. Syed Khurshid Ahmed Shah, MNA (Water)

15. Syed Naveed Qamar, MNA (Commerce)

16. Sherry Rehman, Senator (Climate Change)

17. Abdul Qadir Patel, MNA (Health)

18. Shazia Marri, MNA (BISP)

19. Syed Murtaza Mahmud, MNA (Industries)

20. Sajid Hussain Turi, MNA (Overseas Pakistanis)

21. Ehsaan-ur-Rehman Mazari, MNA (Human Rights)

22. Abid Hussain Bhayo, MNA (Privatisation)

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl:

23. Asad Mahmood, MNA

24. Abdul Wasay, MNA (Housing and Works)

25. Mufti Abdul Shakoor, MNA (Religious Affairs)

26. Muhammad Talah Mahmood, Senator (SAFRON)

MUTTAHIDA QAUMI MOVEMENT:

27. Syed Amin-ul-Haque, MNA (IT)

28. Syed Faisal Ali Subzwari, Senator (Ports and Shipping)

Balochistan Awami Party:

29. Muhammad Israr Tareen, MNA

JAMHOORI WATAN PARTY:

30. Nawabzada Shazain Bugti, MNA (Narcotics Control)

Pakistan Muslim League-Q:

31. Chaudhary Tariq Bashir Cheema, MNA (Food Security)

MINISTERS OF STATE:

1. Dr. Aisha Ghaus Pasha, MNA - PML-N

2. Hina Rabbani Khar, MNA - PPP (State Minister of Foreign Affairs)

3. Abdul Rehman Khan Kanju, MNA - PML-N

The cabinet also includes Advisers namely Qamar Zaman Kaira, Engineer Amir Muqam and Aon Chaudhry. Qamar Zaman Kaira will be Advisor on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan.

Terrorist killed...

FROM PAGE 01

who remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces. Following the killing of the terrorist, the ISPR said locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to the army to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the area.

Greece eyes bullish tourism season

ATHENS: mGreece's pandemic-battered tourism industry is hoping the war in Ukraine won't derail recovery, with hundreds of thousands cancelling trips as the country lifts Covid restrictions in a bid to revive the key sector. The war in Ukraine erupted just as tourism in Greece was coming back to life, with officials betting on a strong season following two years of lockdowns and restrictions. - Agencies

Training session of "Model OIC Int'l Relations Academy" held

Mr. Bilal Hayee made a presentation on the "The Role of Pakistan within the OIC region: Pakistan's Foreign Policy with the OIC Member States"

DNA

BAKU: The second training session of "Model OIC International Relations (IR) Academy" project, organized by the Eurasian Regional Center of Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF-ERC) in partnership with Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was held in Baku State University on April 16, 2022.

Around 100 students representing different universities of Azerbaijan took part in the lectures. During the program, ICYF-ERC hosted two guest speakers. The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Bilal Hayee made a presentation on the "The Role of Pakistan within the OIC region: Pakistan's Foreign Policy with the OIC Member States".

Then, Mrs. Leyla Abdullayeva the Head of the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan delivered lecture on the topic of "The Priorities of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy and the Role of Media in Diplomacy". During the program, lecturers answered various questions of participants, and the sessions earned huge positive responses. We do appreciate the time



and effort our guest speakers put to grace our second session of "Model OIC International Relations Academy 2022". It should be noted that this year ICYF-ERC plans to hold the event in Pakistan, Tatarstan (Russia), Central Asian republics and Indonesia.

Barca's shock loss puts Real on verge of LaLiga title



BARCELONA: Barcelona's faint hopes of catching LaLiga leaders Real Madrid suffered a huge blow as they slipped to a shock 1-0 home defeat by relegation-threatened Cadiz on Monday. Real's last-gasp victory at Sevilla on Sunday extended their advantage over Barca in second to 15 points, but Xavi Hernandez's in-form side were expected to close

the gap by beating Cadiz at the Camp Nou. The hosts never really got going, however, in front of a disgruntled crowd and Cadiz had the better first-half openings with Lucas Perez missing a glorious opportunity to break the deadlock.

Cadiz kept coming after the interval and Perez scored in the 48th minute before the visitors wasted further

big chances to extend their advantage. Alex Fernandez slotting wide when it looked easier to score. Barca piled on the pressure but lacked that killer pass as they slipped to a first defeat in 16 LaLiga matches stretching back to December. They remained on 60 points from 31 games, 15 behind Real who have one hand on the trophy. "We had the chances, more

than enough to take the three points, but we have to rise from this and think about the next games," Xavi said. "We have to change our form as soon as possible. We have got back into the Champions League places but we have to keep going. It's a very bad week for us and we need to change the dynamic as soon as possible." Aside from their shock Europa League exit at home to Eintracht Frankfurt last week, Barca have enjoyed a revival under Xavi in recent months to climb back into the title race.

Not only had they won 16 matches unbeaten in the league, they had won their previous seven LaLiga games in a row, scoring 22 goals in the process. Other than Ousmane Dembele's shot, they did not look like scoring in the opening period, with Cadiz, looking for their first-ever win in the Nou Camp, much the better side. The decisive strike came at the third attempt after Marc-Andre terStegen made a fine double save, with Perez picking the perfect moment to score his first league goal of the season.

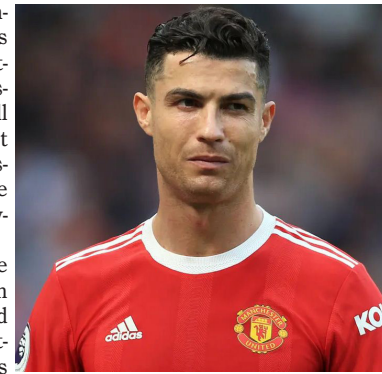
Ronaldo to miss Liverpool match after death of son

LONDON: Manchester United's Portuguese football superstar Cristiano Ronaldo will not play against Liverpool on Tuesday, following the death of his newborn son.

"Family is more important than everything and Ronaldo is supporting his loved ones at this immensely difficult time. As such, we can confirm that he will not feature in the match against Liverpool at Anfield on Tuesday evening and we underline the family's request for privacy," Manchester United said in a statement. "Cristiano, we are all thinking of you and sending strength to the family," the club added.

In addition to Manchester United, Ronaldo's former clubs Real Madrid and Juventus have also offered condolences. "It is with our deepest sadness we have to announce that our baby boy has passed away. It is the greatest pain that any parents can feel," Ronaldo, 37, had said on Instagram on Monday.

"Only the birth of our baby girl gives us the strength to live this moment with some hope and happiness," he said. Ronaldo, who is a father of five after the birth of his daughter, also said they are devastated and asked for some privacy at this difficult time. Fifth-place Manchester United will visit title contenders Liverpool on Tuesday evening. Liverpool have 73 points in 31 matches to pursue leaders Manchester City, who have 74 points. Manchester United have bagged 54 points in 32 games. - Agencies



Attempts to gag media to be foiled

FROM PAGE 01

"There will be zero tolerance regarding this and we have instructed the inspector general of Islamabad to make sure that culprits are punished."

No revenge; president should resign

Aurangzeb noted that the government would not take revenge on its political opponents, but who-ever has done something illegal while in office, action will be taken against them. With regards to President Arif Alvi refusing to administer the oath to the federal cabinet and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Aurangzeb said the president should be aware of the fact that he is not a member of the PTI, but has a constitutional role. "...if he cannot fulfil the oath he took while becoming president, then the best option for him is to resign," the information minister told Alvi, who refused to administer oaths to the coalition government's members, and in his absence, Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani administered the oaths.

She said that the present government fully believed in freedom of expression and independence of media. Promoting links between the Ministry of Information (MoI) and the media would be her topmost priority, she said after assuming charge as Minister for Information and Broadcasting.

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6 killed in Kabul...

FROM PAGE 01

Ali Jan, a student who was wounded in the first blast, told AFP at a hospital in the area where the blasts occurred. The second blast took place as rescuers arrived to ferry victims from the first explosion to hospitals. "Some of our friends have lost hands, while some were covered in blood," said Saeed Rahmatullah Haidari, a student at the school.

"There were pieces of broken glass and pools of blood... my whole body was shaking." Outside a hospital treating the wounded, Taliban fighters beat back the families of students who had gathered searching for information. Women cried out as they scanned through pictures of victims posted on nearby walls by medics.

PM all praise...

FROM PAGE 01

He also expressed deep appreciation for the vision of the UAE leadership for inspirational transformation of the country in the span of just 50 years. The Prime Minister underscored his Government's commitment to further advance the economic dimension of the relationship, focusing on enhanced trade, investment, energy, infrastructure, food security, and employment generation.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif affirmed that Pakistan and the UAE had always enjoyed special relations which are firmly rooted in shared history, common faith and geographical proximity. He underlined that these relations were further amplified by close people-to-people contacts.

Pakistan and the UAE enjoy close fraternal ties marked by decades of close collaboration. High-level interactions provide continuous momentum to the growth of bilateral cooperation.

PM Shahbaz meets COAS

FROM PAGE 01

Earlier in the day, the members of the federal cabinet were administered oaths by Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani after the unavailability of President Arif Alvi. The meeting came amid an increase in attacks on security forces along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, resulting in the martyrdom of soldiers over the weeks.

In a strongly-worded statement, Pakistan had told the Afghan Taliban to put an end to cross-border attacks emanating from Afghan soil.

Pakistan to host Asia Cup Shooting C'ship 2023

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan has been awarded the hosting right of the Asia Cup Shooting Championship 2023 which is set to be held in Lahore in March as the county hosts its first big international shooting event. Asian Shooting Confederation (ASC) write a letter in which they decided to give the hosting rights to Pakistan. Razi Ahmad Khan, Secretary of the National Rifle Association of Pakistan, told Geo News that Pakistan has been invited to host the Asia Cup for the first time, which is a big and huge honour. Pakistan has also received a letter to host the event after ASC granted the rights, instead of giving it to Iran and India, who were also in the consideration of hosting the event. To a question, Razi said that the Indian team will also come to Pakistan for the shooting championship as they get rating points from Asia Cup which qualifies for Olympics. The shooters will come from 25 countries including India, said Razi.

Ashleigh Barty to play in golf exhibition series

CANBERRA: The 25-year-old, who announced her shock retirement from tennis in March, will play in the Icons Series in July. Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola and 23-time Olympic champion Michael Phelps are among the other stars taking part. "It's such a unique opportunity to have fun, test yourself and compete," Barty told the Sydney Morning Herald. "I hope through my participation in the series that we can encourage more women and girls to participate in golf around the world." Barty, whose three Grand Slam singles titles include last summer's Wimbledon crown, is a keen amateur golfer with a reported handicap of four. Her father Robert represented Australia as an amateur and had considered attempting to turn professional himself. Barty played professional cricket for Queensland and Brisbane Heat in 2015 during a break from tennis. She has previously suggested

ed that she would not attempt similar in golf, telling the Courier Mail earlier this month that she "had a good laugh" about the speculation. Barty is also writing a series of children's books, set to be released later this year. The first in the Icon Series will take place at the National in New June with further tournaments planned for Europe, Asia and Australia. - DNA



Neo-Nazi movements lead to increased Islamophobia

"Anti-Christianity, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia are crimes against humanity"

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Turkiye on Tuesday criticized a Swedish far-right politician for burning the Muslim holy book Quran, saying that such "neo-Nazi movements have led to increased Islamophobia." Urging collaboration against any form of racism and Islamophobic rhetoric, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told a joint press conference in the capital Ankara with his Hungarian counterpart Peter Sziijarto that attacks on mosques and the burning of the Quran have nothing to do with freedom of expression. On Thursday, Rasmus Paludan, the leader of Sweden's far-right StramKurs (Hard Line) group, burned a copy of the holy Quran in the southern city of Linköping. Three people were injured Sunday in the eastern city of Norrköping when police reportedly fired on rioters during protests against the burning of the Quran.

Noting that racist and Islamophobic attacks rose during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Cavusoglu said the incident in Sweden took place "under police supervision." He also cited other racist attacks happening in other parts of the world, saying that a Turkish citizen faced a racist attack in New York on April 15, while a Turkish mosque in Dortmund, Germany got threatening letters with photos of pigs on April 16. Cavusoglu also decried attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank and at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, saying at least 18 people have died so far and over 400 were injured. "We think that this rise during Ramadan is no coincidence. Especially in the West, we see that neo-Nazi movements, including political parties, stepped up racist and anti-Islamic attacks," he added. "Anti-Christianity, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia are crimes against humanity," he said.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday will hold a phone conversation with his Israeli counterpart Isaac Herzog on the ongoing incidents in the West Bank and at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, he said. On Russia's war on

Ukraine, Cavusoglu said: "We are of course seeing the start of a new cold war ... It may take 10 years for trust to be established, but we think that quick steps on a cease-fire and certain issues need to be taken." For his part, the Hungarian

sands of Ukrainian refugees have sought refuge in Hungary. "We will not support sanctions on Russian oil and gas," he said, adding that Russian gas shipments to Hungary are arriving without any disruptions. At least 2,072 civilians have been killed and 2,818 injured in Ukraine so far in the war that started on Feb. 24, according to UN estimates, with the true figure believed to be much higher. More than 4.9 million Ukrainians have fled to other countries, with over 7 million more internally displaced, said the UN refugee agency. Earlier, Cavusoglu also attended a groundbreaking ceremony for the new Hungarian Embassy building in Ankara.

"The (Turkish) Embassy residence in (Budapest) Hungary, which was built in the first years of our republic, has been serving our relations for nearly a century. Hopefully, the new buildings that we will lay the foundations for will strengthen

our relations for the next century," said Cavusoglu at the ceremony. Relations between the two countries have strengthened in recent years, said Cavusoglu, adding that 2024 has been declared the Hungarian-Turkish Year of Culture.

Turkiye's top diplomat also praised Hungary's contributions to the Organization of Turkic States as an observer. "Our bilateral trade volume continued to rise in 2021, up 11% to \$3 billion," said Cavusoglu, adding that the target is \$6 billion. Sziijarto, for his part, said that recent developments and the Ukraine war have shown "the value of everything that brings stability and predictability." "The cooperation and strategic partnership between Hungary and Turkiye is such a predictable relationship ... The development of cooperation is always in the focus of Hungarian foreign policy and I can assure you so it will remain," he said.



Ukraine, Cavusoglu said: "We believe that a solution can only be achieved through diplomatic means. We believe that there will be no military solution." Saying that Turkiye continues its high-level dialogues and discussions with Russian and Ukrainian delega-

foreign minister welcomed Turkiye's efforts for peace and an end to the Russia-Ukraine war. Sziijarto reaffirmed his country's support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, saying that Hungary "cannot pay the price for the war." Hundreds of thou-

Briefs

NZ imposes
new
sanctions
on Russian
banks

AUCKLAND: New Zealand on Tuesday announced new sanctions on Russian banks and financial institutions as a response to Moscow's war in Ukraine. In a statement, Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta said her country was imposing sanctions on 18 entities, including Russia's central bank, sovereign wealth fund and the largest financial institutions in the country. "These major institutions make up approximately 80% of Russia's total banking assets," said Mahuta. "These sanctions are designed to impose an economic and political cost, specifically targeting organizations that finance the continued invasion of Ukraine. "With this latest round of sanctions, New Zealand is joining countries around the world who have imposed heavy penalties on (Russian) President (Vladimir) Putin and the system financing his illegal invasion," she added. Last month, New Zealand imposed sanctions on Russia, including a travel ban on President Putin and other senior officials, while also imposing a 35% tariff on Russian imports. Also at a meeting on Tuesday, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern strongly condemned the Russian "invasion" in Ukraine and demanded the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces. "... actions by Russia are a flagrant violation of fundamental principles of international law and risk long-term global instability," they said in a joint statement issued after the meeting in Singapore. - Agencies

Russia
expels Dutch,
Belgian
diplomats

MOSCOW: Continuing the tit-for-tat diplomatic fallout from the Ukraine war, Russia on Tuesday declared 15 Dutch diplomats and an unspecified number of Belgian diplomats persona non grata, effectively expelling them. In a statement on its website, the Foreign Ministry said 14 employees of the Dutch Embassy in Moscow and one employee of the Dutch Consulate in St. Petersburg must leave Russia within two days. The step is being taken in response to the expulsion on March 29 of 18 employees of the Russian Embassy in The Hague, the Russian Trade Mission in Amsterdam, and Russia's mission to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the ministry said. The ministry also said the Netherlands cannot abuse its rights and privileges as an OPCW host state and that The Hague must strictly comply with the 1997 OPCW Headquarters Agreement. In a separate statement, the ministry said it had summoned Belgian Ambassador Marc Michielens and informed him about the expulsion of Belgian diplomats from Moscow, who must leave by the end of May 3. - APP

Ukraine
rejects
Serbian
allegations

KYIV: Ukraine has rejected allegations from Serbia that the country's secret service is behind a series of hoax bomb threats on Air Serbia flights to Russia. Several flights to Moscow and St. Petersburg have been delayed or forced to return to Belgrade after anonymous bomb threats were made since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February. Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić has claimed that the foreign intelligence services in Ukraine and an unnamed EU nation are responsible, without providing evidence. Other Serbian officials have alleged that the threatening bomb hoax emails have been sent to Serbia from either Ukraine or Poland. But Ukraine's Foreign Ministry spokesman Oleg Nikolenko has dismissed the accusations as "baseless" and "untrue". - APP

Afghanistan to continue co-op
with Uzbekistan Railways JSC

DNA

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



half of 2021, there was a significant decrease in railway freight turnover. Thanks to the joint work carried out in the first quarter of 2022, the volume of cargo turnover reached last year's level (more than 1.1 million tons). During the talks, the Afghan side stressed its readiness, together with Uzbekistan Railways JSC, to organize work to maximize the use

of opportunities to speed up the unloading of wagons, thereby increasing the volume of incoming cargo at the Khayratan station, as well as accelerating the rehabilitation of the Naibot and Mazar-i-Sharif stations. Within the framework of the meeting, a visit to the Educational Center for Training Afghan Citizens in the city of Termez, created on the

initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, was organized. In addition, the Afghan delegation visited the training center at the Termez locomotive depot, where young Afghan railway specialists undergo practical training. The members of the delegation talked with promising personnel of their country, got acquainted with the conditions of training and life

created for them. The issues of further cooperation in the educational sphere were discussed. In particular, it is planned to create a field training center on the basis of the Hairatan station in Afghanistan together with Uzbek railway workers to train and improve the skills of Afghan railway specialists. The delegation of Afghanistan separately

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

Tourist
police
launched in
Gwadar

GWADAR: The Balochistan government has launched tourist police in Gwadar to ensure safe and secure environment for the visitors thronging the coastal city for recreational activities. Chief Secretary Balochistan Mithar Niaz Rana inaugurated the force whereas around 20 cops would be deployed at picnic spots to facilitate the tourists in the district. The force has been established under the Gwadar Safe City project which would be further strengthened in the near future, said an official of Balochistan government. He said the Gwadar Tourist police would be an exemplary force by guiding and helping the local and foreign tourist. The official said the government had provided vehicles and equipment for the tourist police to ensure better enforcement and facilitation to the visitors. The officers were supposed to not only present a friendly face of police to tourists but would also act as guides with information about key attractions and specifically resolve problems faced by the tourists. - APP

Fish meal
exports to
China topped
13,866 tons

BEIJING, April 19 (): Pakistan's fish meal export to China topped 13,866 tons with a value of over US\$15.68 million, witnessing a year-on-year increase of 250.59% in the January-February period, Chinese customs data showed, Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, bilateral trade between Pakistan and China has increased significantly. Pakistan's exports to China stood at US\$ 670.72 million in January-February of FY22, up 22.77 per cent from US\$ 546.30 million in the same period of the previous year.

According to the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC), flours & meals of fish, used in animal feeding commodity code (23012010) from Pakistan, crossed US\$ 15.68 million with a total volume of 13,866 tons, while last year it was US\$ 4.47 million with a total volume 4,917 tons in the January-February period. Data showed that in 2021, the total fish meals used in animal feeding, imported from Pakistan was 40,654.92 tons, worth US\$40.53 million. He mentioned that Pakistan's fishery processing industry needs improving to enhance exports although due to the 2nd China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement in which more than 313 items are now enjoying duty-free access to China including fisheries; there is still a need to build jetties for local fishermen. - APP

Global growth
prospects
worsen: IMF

NEW YORK: Global growth prospects have worsened due to effects of inflation, Russia's war on Ukraine and the coronavirus pandemic, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in a statement on Tuesday. Overall risks to economic prospects have increased sharply and policy trade-offs have become more challenging, the statement said, as the spring meetings of the IMF and World Bank began in Washington, DC. IMF Chief Economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas said that the war in Ukraine is raising energy and commodity prices around the world and is leading to less production and more inflation. "Inflation is higher in most countries and is expected to persist longer. In addition, we have a slowdown of the Chinese economy with more frequent lockdowns due to omicron that is weighing down and then also elevated price pressures in many parts of the world or leading central banks to tighten monetary policy controls," he added. Gourinchas warned that if the war escalates or the sanctions become broader, this would weigh down on global economic activity. He stressed that monetary tightening by central banks, as a response to record high inflation, could weigh down on output and economic activity, and cause more financial instability. - Agencies

China assures full support to
Pakistan in developing SEZs

ISLAMABAD: China on Tuesday assured its full support and cooperation to Pakistan in developing Special Economic Zones (SEZs) as part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Chinese Charge de Affaires Ms Pangchunxue gave the assurance in this regard during a meeting with Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Miftah Ismail here at the Finance Division. Minister of State for Finance Dr

Aisha Ghaus Pasha was also present in the meeting, said a Finance Ministry press release. The Chinese envoy extended her felicitations to the minister on assuming his new responsibilities and expressed her good wishes for the new government. She also thanked the Government of Pakistan for facilitating Chinese companies in various projects in the country. Minister Miftah Ismail greeted the guest and extended his best

wishes for the People's Republic of China. He thanked the charge de affaires and expressed his desire to further enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields. Referring to CPEC, the minister said the corridor would play an important role in taking Pakistan's economy forward as well as cementing the bilateral relationship between both the countries. He assured his full support and assistance in that regard. - DNA

For 3rd day in row, Israeli
forces raid Al-Aqsa Mosque

AGENCIES

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: Well-armed Israeli occupation forces raided the Al-Aqsa mosque in occupied Jerusalem, attacked and injured worshippers, earlier on Tuesday, to make room for settler intrusion. For the third day in a row, at around 7am, local sources reported, dozens of Israeli forces raided the holy site. They attacked, beat, and chased the worshippers in the courtyards of the mosque, including women and children, in an attempt to empty the mosque of its worshippers in order to secure the entry of the colonial settlers to the holy site to mark the third day of the so-called Passover holiday.

The forces also fired rubber-coated metal bullets, sound bombs and tear gas canisters towards the worshippers. The Israeli forces also blockaded hundreds of Muslim worshippers inside prayer halls. The worshippers reported that the forces sprayed pepper gas while they were trapped inside the halls. 622 Israeli colonial settlers broke into the Al-Aqsa mosque, protected by well-armed forces, who attacked and chased worshippers to make room for settler intrusion, earlier on Tuesday. To mark the third day of the so-called Passover holiday, Al-Qastal documented 622 Israeli settlers broke into the Al-Aqsa mosque while being backed by well-armed forces who

assaulted and blockaded Muslim worshippers inside prayer halls in an attempt to empty the holy site of its worshippers to secure the entry of the settlers. During the raid and in the aftermath of the attack, the settlers stormed the holy site and performed provocative Talmudic prayers. They entered the mosque through the Al-Mughrabi Gate which is under full-Israeli control. This is the fourth raid and aggressive assault to be launched by the Israeli occupation forces since last Friday and for the third day in a row. Earlier on Friday, the forces broke into the holy site and brutally attacked the worshippers who gathered to perform the Al-Fajr prayer, injuring around 153 and arresting 400.

Uzbekistan
rejects IS-K
claim of assault

Afghan-MoFA rejects all social media rumors regarding firing of rockets from Afghanistan's soil on Termez, Uzbekistan; The situation along the Afghan-Uzbek border is normal

NEWS DESK

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan has rejected claims by a regional affiliate of Islamic State that it carried out a rocket attack on the Central Asian nation from neighboring Afghanistan. The Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) said on April 18 that it had fired 10 rockets at an Uzbek military base in the border town of Termez, according to SITE Intelligence Group, which tracks terrorist propaganda. But Uzbek presidential spokesman Sherzod Asadov denied the claim on April 19, calling on Uzbek citizens to disregard what he called "provocations." "The information distributed by some Telegram channels about a so-called rocket attack from the territory of Afghanistan at units of Uzbekistan's armed forces near the town of Termez absolutely do not correspond to the reality. According to the Defense Ministry and Uzbekistan's border guard troops, there are no active military developments along the Uzbek-Afghan border, the situation is stable," Asadov said in a statement placed on Telegram. IS-K, meanwhile, claimed that it fired the rockets from the Afghan town of Hairatan near the Uzbek border. IS-K has increased attacks in and around Afghanistan following the U.S.-led military withdrawal from the country in August after 20



years. The terrorist group has conducted several attacks in neighboring Pakistan, including a deadly suicide bombing of a Shi'ite mosque in the northwestern city of Peshawar last month. In February, the United States offered a \$10 million reward for information that helps identify and locate the leader of IS-K in Afghanistan, Sanaullah Ghafari, also known as Shahab al-Muhajir. The U.S. State Department says Ghafari was appointed to lead IS-K in June 2020 and that he is responsible for approving all IS-K operations throughout Afghanistan and arranging funding for activities. The State Department has designated Ghafari and two other leaders of the extremist group's affiliate in Afghanistan as global terrorists.

CPEC to remain top priority of the new govt

DNA

ISLAMABAD: CPEC will remain top priority of the new government and change of regime in Pakistan makes no effect in carrying forward the long-standing Sino-Pak friendship, says a report published by Gwadar Pro on Tuesday. The report mentioned the recent speech of the new Prime Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif delivered in the parliament, in which he declared that his government would speed up the high-quality construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, making it a symbol of China-Pakistan friendship. CPEC lives in the heart of the people of Pakistan where no matter who rules the country, CPEC will remain at the top priority, he remarked. According to the report, due

to this fate-changing China-Pakistan cooperation on CPEC, the life of Pakistani people, especially at grassroots level, has been not only improved but transformed towards a better direction. The entire political spectrum including the leading political parties has a strong consensus for standing together on CPEC. While reacting on the new appointment, China appreciates the new Prime Minister's remarks and is ready to work with Pakistan to continue to further advance the high-quality development of CPEC. There is an urge to practically expand the bilateral cooperation and build CPEC together for shared benefits. There is also a desire from both sides to accelerate the building of closer China-Pakistan ties to create a community of shared future in this new era and work together to promote the well-being of the two peoples.

At the advent of CPEC in 2015, Pakistan Muslim League (N) was ruling in Islamabad with the vast majority. During the reign of Nawaz Sharif, many long-term communications and energy projects under CPEC made huge progress. It is also important to note that when Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif was Chief Minister of Punjab, a province with a solid industrial and agriculture base, he worked on CPEC projects at phenomenal speed. There is an expectation that this time he will deliver at the national level with the same enthusiasm and speed. CPEC has been so entrenched in the national roots of Pakistan that no government can change it. It is a state-to-state strong partnership. Government and people's representation may change at the national level, and there may be slight changes in the ways of implementation; however, the basic normative model and structures

will remain the same. CPEC holds a strong ground for the essential cooperation between Pakistan and China. Over all these years, the defining moments in the history of relations helped both sides thwart the test of times with grounded support through prudence and foresightedness shared by Beijing and Islamabad. Our ancestors' seeds of friendship sowed more than decades ago have evolved into a perfectly developed tree with many branches of benevolence and fruits growing all around. The roots are vivid in our hearts and on our lands. Pakistan-China relations are based on the strength of the shared belief in peace and prosperity and beyond any politics or change of governments. The level of relationship that both Pakistan and China enjoy is beyond time and space, having the strength and resilience to face and battle any storm together. CPEC is the epit-

ome of the China-Pakistan relations and is considered as a model for the other countries to follow. With the change of government in Pakistan, there would not be any change in the level of friendship. Instead, it will grow manifold. The only constant change is the stronger Pakistan-China ties. Over these years, there has been a constant pattern of strengthening resolve to build closer ties with China by all kinds of ideological regimes in Pakistan. In Pakistan's chequered history of democracy, China has always remained a source of strength and inspiration. With the multibillion-dollar CPEC in the extraordinary second phase that focuses on agriculture, industry, and socio-economic development, Pakistan has a bright and robust future. The incumbent government will continue to focus on these projects and build and further capitalize on them to bring peace and prosperity to the country.

Briefs

Pakistan, IMF resume talks in Washington

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has formally resumed talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington over the bailout package. The negotiations with the IMF officials will remain continued until April 24 and the IMF will release US dollar one billion tranche after successful talks, sources said. Governor State Bank of Pakistan Reza Baqar has been in Washington for talks with the IMF officials. Governor central bank will also attend the session of the World Bank's steering committee. Prime Minister's Adviser on Finance Miftah Ismail will online join the talks with IMF, according to sources. The proposals for the next budget would also come under considerations during the talks.

Muslim US Lawmaker Ilhan Omar arrives in Pak

ISLAMABAD: Muslim US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar arrives in Islamabad today on her first visit to the country during which she will meet the country's senior leadership, reported media. The outspoken lawmaker, who grew up in a refugee camp and made history by becoming the first Somali-American to be elected to the US Congress, is also expected to visit Lahore and Azad Kashmir during her trip to Pakistan. The duration of her trip is not yet known. Omar is a strong supporter of human rights and regularly raises her voice against Islamophobia. - APP

Violators of constitution, watch thieves to go to jails: Sana Ullah

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Rana Sana Ullah Khan on Tuesday said that now violators of constitution and watch thieves would go to jails. In a tweet, he said those who tried to disgrace others have become self-deprecating. The culprits remained imposed on the country for four years while innocent were in jails, he said. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani administers oath to newly elected federal cabinet. - DNA

Russia launches major 'offensive' in east Ukraine

Moscow said Russian forces opened a humanitarian corridor for Ukrainian troops who agreed to lay down their arms to leave embattled city of Mariupol

KYIV: Moscow launched dozens of air strikes across eastern Ukraine overnight, its defence ministry said on Tuesday, after Kyiv accused Russian forces of unleashing a major new offensive in the Donbas region. Russia's defence ministry said that "high-precision air-based missiles" had hit 13 Ukrainian positions in parts of the Donbas while other air strikes "hit 60 military assets", including in towns close to the eastern frontline. Russia's defence minister said Moscow was seeking to "liberate" east Ukraine, but accused the West of dragging out the military operation by supplying Kyiv with arms. "We are gradually implementing our plan to liberate the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics," Sergei Shoigu said in reference to eastern Ukraine's two rebel regions, which Moscow has recognised as independent states. "We are taking measures

to restore peaceful life," he said in a televised meeting with Russian military commanders. Ukraine's armed forces also confirmed that fighting had increased throughout the east just hours after President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia had kicked off the widely anticipated offensive in the Donbas region on Monday. "The Russian occupiers intensified offensive operations along the entire line of contact," the general staff of Ukraine's armed forces said in a report published early on Tuesday. Ahead of the advance, Ukrainian authorities had urged people in Donbas to flee west to escape, even as officials called off evacuations for a third straight day from frontline cities due to ongoing fighting. "No matter how many Russian soldiers are brought here, we will fight. We will defend ourselves," Zelensky said on Telegram late on Monday. Control of Donbas

would allow Moscow to create a southern corridor to the occupied Crimean peninsula. However, Zelensky's advisor Oleksiy Arestovich offered a slightly different take during an interview on Ukrainian TV on Tuesday, saying the offensive in the Donbas had been ongoing for nearly two weeks. "The offensive has been going on for 12 days in the Donbas," said Arestovich. "They advance by looking for weak points in our defence. As soon as they find them, they infiltrate them," he added. Russian forces have seized the city of Kreminna in eastern Ukraine and Ukrainian troops have withdrawn from the city, the regional governor said on Tuesday. Kreminna, a city of more than 18,000 people about 100 km southeast of the capital Kyiv, appears to be the first city captured in a new Russian offensive in eastern Ukraine. "Kreminna is under the control of the 'Orcs'

(Russians). They have entered the city," Serhiy Gaidai, the governor of the Luhansk region, told a briefing. "Our defenders had to withdraw. They have entrenched themselves in new positions and continue to fight the Russian army." He said Russian forces had attacked "from all sides". "It is impossible to calculate the number of dead among the civilian population. We have official statistics - about 200 dead - but in reality there are many more," he said, without making clear what period the estimated death toll covered. Meanwhile, Moscow said Tuesday that Russian forces had opened a humanitarian corridor for Ukrainian troops who agreed to lay down their arms to leave the embattled city of Mariupol. Some of the heaviest fighting of the Russian military campaign has focused around the strategic Sea of

Azov port city. "The Russian armed forces opened a humanitarian corridor for the withdrawal of Ukrainian military personnel who voluntarily laid down their arms and militants of nationalist formations," the defence ministry said, adding the safe corridor was opened at 2:00 pm (1100 GMT). To that end, Russian forces and troops of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic "halted any military activity" around the Azovstal steelworks plant, Mikhail Mizintsev, head of the Russian National Defence Control Centre, said in a statement. The ministry said the decision was made taking into account the "catastrophic situation" at the plant and "purely humanitarian principles". Humanitarian convoys have been deployed in "three directions" that include buses, cars and ambulances to transport and treat people.

New leaders take office as hope glimmers for Yemen

ADEN: Yemen's new leaders took a ceremonial oath of office under tight security on Tuesday, completing a major shake-up aimed at ending seven years of war with the Huthi rebels. The newly formed, eight-man leadership council performed a largely symbolic swearing-in in Aden witnessed by members of a parliament elected in 2003, as hundreds of soldiers patrolled the southern city, a government official told AFP. Ex-president Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, who fled to Saudi Arabia when the war started in 2015, handed over his "full powers" to the council in a televised address on April 7. The ceremony was not announced in advance and was held at an undisclosed location for security reasons. In December 2020, about 20 people died in an attack on Aden airport as government officials arrived. The Huthis took over the capital Sanaa in 2014, prompting a Saudi-led military intervention to support the government the following year and a war that has caused what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. A fragile, UN-brokered truce has largely held since April 2, the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, providing a rare respite from the fighting. - Agencies

Sikh Yatrees visit Gurudawara Kartarpur Sahib

DNA

KARTARPUR: A large number of Sikh pilgrims from all over the world, including India, visited the Gurudawara Kartarpur Sahib, here on Tuesday, and performed their rituals. Acting Chief Executive Project Management Unit Kartarpur Rana Shahid warmly welcomed the yatrees while Deputy Secretary Shrinves Imran Gondal was also present on the occasion. Pakistan Sikh Gurudawara Parbandhak Committee President Sardar Ameer Singh and Dr Mimpal Singh were leading the yatrees. The pilgrims visited different parts of the Gurudawara and appreciated the Pakistan government for the best arrangements and maintenance of their sacred places. They also lauded arrangements of transport, residence, security and food for the pilgrims.

'Structural challenges pose risks to sustained growth'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's economy enjoyed a strong recovery and grew 5.6 percent in FY21 following measures taken by the government to mitigate the adverse socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Bank's Pakistan Development Update said on Tuesday. While economic activity maintained its momentum during July-December 2021, high demand pressures and rising global commodity prices led to double-digit inflation and a sharp rise in the import bill during this period. According to the report released today, these developments have had an adverse impact on the rupee. Moreover, long-standing structural

weaknesses of the economy including low investment, low exports, and low productivity growth pose risks to a sustained recovery. The report highlights that with economic recovery and improved labor market conditions, poverty—measured at the lower middle-income class poverty line of \$3.20 Purchasing Power Parity 2011 per day—declined from 37 percent in FY20 to 34 percent in FY21. However, rising food and energy prices are expected to decrease the real purchasing power of households, disproportionately affecting poor and vulnerable households that spend a larger share of their budget on these items. "Pakistan's economic recovery after the COVID-19 crisis indicates that the country has enormous poten-

tial to overcome challenging economic situations," said Najy Benhassine World Bank Country Director for Pakistan. "However, sustaining the economic recovery requires addressing long-standing structural weaknesses of the economy and boosting private sector investment, exports and productivity." On the back of high base effects and recent monetary tightening, real GDP growth is expected to moderate to 4.3 and 4.0 percent in FY22 and FY23, respectively. Thereafter, economic growth is projected to slightly recover to 4.2 percent in FY24, provided that structural reforms to support fiscal sustainability and macroeconomic stability are implemented rapidly, and that global inflationary pressures dissipate.

China lauds PM's remarks on China-Pak relations

BEIJING: China on Tuesday highly appreciated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's positive remarks on Sino-Pakistan relations and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), saying they fully reflected the Pakistani side's emphasis on China-Pakistan all-weather friendship and all-round cooperation. "China has noticed that for sometimes, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has made positive remarks on China-Pakistan relations and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor on many occasions, which fully reflects the Pakistani side's emphasis on China-Pakistan all-weather friendship and all-round cooperation. China highly appreciates this," Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said in response to a question asked by APP during his regular briefing. Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the mass transit bus project on Monday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said China had greatly contributed to strengthening Pakistan's economy and expressed gratitude to President Xi for launch of CPEC as a game-changer for the country. - APP



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

Looking forward to continue working with new govt: US

Working with Pakistan to bring about stable, secure Afghanistan

DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States of America is working with Pakistan to bring about a more stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan that respects the fundamental rights of all Afghans, including minorities and women. At his daily news briefing, State Department Spokesman Ned Price said US views Pakistan as an important stakeholder and partner, with whom it is engaging and has engaged to work together to stabilize Afghanistan. "We view Pakistan as an important stakeholder and important partner with whom we are engaging and have engaged as we work together to bring about an Afghan-

istan that is more stable, is more secure, is more prosperous, and importantly an Afghanistan that respects the basic and fundamental rights of its people, all of its people, including its minorities, its women, its girls," he said. The US State Department spokesperson termed Pakistan an important partner of the US government. Highlighting US ties with Pakistan, he said we look forward to continue working with the new government in Pakistan across regional and international issues that has the potential to promote peace and prosperity in Pakistan and throughout the region. Price also appreciated the US relationship with Pakistan and vowed to continue working with the new government. "For almost 75 years, our

relationship with Pakistan has been a vital one and we look forward to continuing that work with the new government in Pakistan across regional and international issues," he said. "This is work that has a potential to promote peace and prosperity in Pakistan and throughout the region," he added. Price went on to say, "we have already congratulated the new Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on his election, adding, "We look forward to working closely with his government." After Shehbaz Sharif's election as the new Prime Minister of Pakistan, the US Department of Defense also issued a statement and hoped to continue its "healthy" military-to-military ties with Pakistan despite the change in the govern-

ment. "We do have a healthy military-to-military relationship with Pakistani armed forces. And we have every expectation that that will be able to continue to be the case," Pentagon Press Secretary John F Kirby had said. The Pentagon official said the US recognises that it has shared interests with Pakistan with respect to security and stability. "We recognise that Pakistan plays a key role in the region." Ruling out any US military role in Pakistan, he said that America recognises that Pakistan and its people are, themselves, victims of terrorist attacks "inside their own country." "I don't foresee any US military role here. And I'm certainly not going to, again, wade into internal domestic politics in Pakistan," he told a journalist at the press briefing.

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