



Islamabad POST

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Uzbek President hopeful for the better future of Uzbekistan

Detailed News On Page-06

UK announces fresh Russia sanctions

Detailed News On Page-07



Chief Election Commissioner is anti-PTI

Detailed News On Page-08



Briefs

'Court is open even for critics'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) resumes hearing of Presidential reference on the interpretation of the Article (63)-A. According to details, the lawyer Raza Rabbani said that the constitutional officials violated the constitution even after the Presidential reference was filed. To the statement of Raza Rabbani, the chief Justice (CJ) of the SCP stated that the Supreme Court stands to uphold the constitution of Pakistan.

CJCSC for strengthening Pak-Nigeria relations

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Defence Staff Nigerian Armed Forces General Lucky E Iuonye Onyenuecha Leo Irabor called on Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Nadeem Raza. Matters of bilateral defence cooperation including security, military exchanges, training and prevailing regional environment were discussed during the meeting. Chief of Defence Staff Nigeria said that these mutually beneficial interactions have deepened the bilateral defence relationship, strengthened the cooperation and enhanced mutual understanding between the two armies.

Miftah in Washington for IMF talks

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Finance minister Miftah Ismail on Thursday left for Washington to meet with International Monetary Fund (IMF) officials for the resumption of the delayed \$6 billion loan programme. The minister accused the former ruling party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan of "derailing the IMF program and thus endangering the economy".

Nation stands united against terrorism: PM

PM Shehbaz visits Waziristan; gets briefed on border management and security situation



DNA

RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited North Waziristan's Miranshah area on Thursday and vowed that the sacrifices tribal people made would not go to waste as he assured that the government would work for their betterment. The prime minister spent time with the tribal elders and they thanked him for his first visit to the area "which speaks of his focus and concern for tribal districts", a statement from the PM's Office said. "The people of tribal districts have rendered great sacrifices

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Four terrorists killed in Bannu

PESHAWAR: The Counter Terrorism Department Bannu and the district police carried out a joint operation on Wednesday night in limits of Bannu township police station area and killed four suspected terrorists in an 'encounter' who had recently arrived to carry out terror attacks in the areas.

According to a press release issued by the CTD Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the intelligence-based operation was conducted after verifying reports about presence of suspected terrorists in Bannu Township police station area, who had arrived to carry out terror attacks. A special striking team of the CTD Bannu region and district police was constituted under the supervision of the District Police Officer Bannu following identification of the hideout. The terrorists opened fire

Continued on Page 06

Bilawal, Nawaz meet to resolve issues

"PML-N and PPP will solve Pakistan's issues once they are on the same page," Bilawal says

NEWS DESK

LONDON: LONDON: PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif berated ex-prime minister Imran Khan for backtracking on every promise and said the PTI chairman broke the back of Pakistan's economy, so there was no reason for a foreign conspiracy against him. "Were you involved in holding an atomic blast? Why will there be a foreign conspiracy against you?" Nawaz asked ousted premier Khan as he addressed a press conference alongside PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari in London. "But now we will have to repair the damage done to the economy," Nawaz said as he stressed that ousting Khan from power was

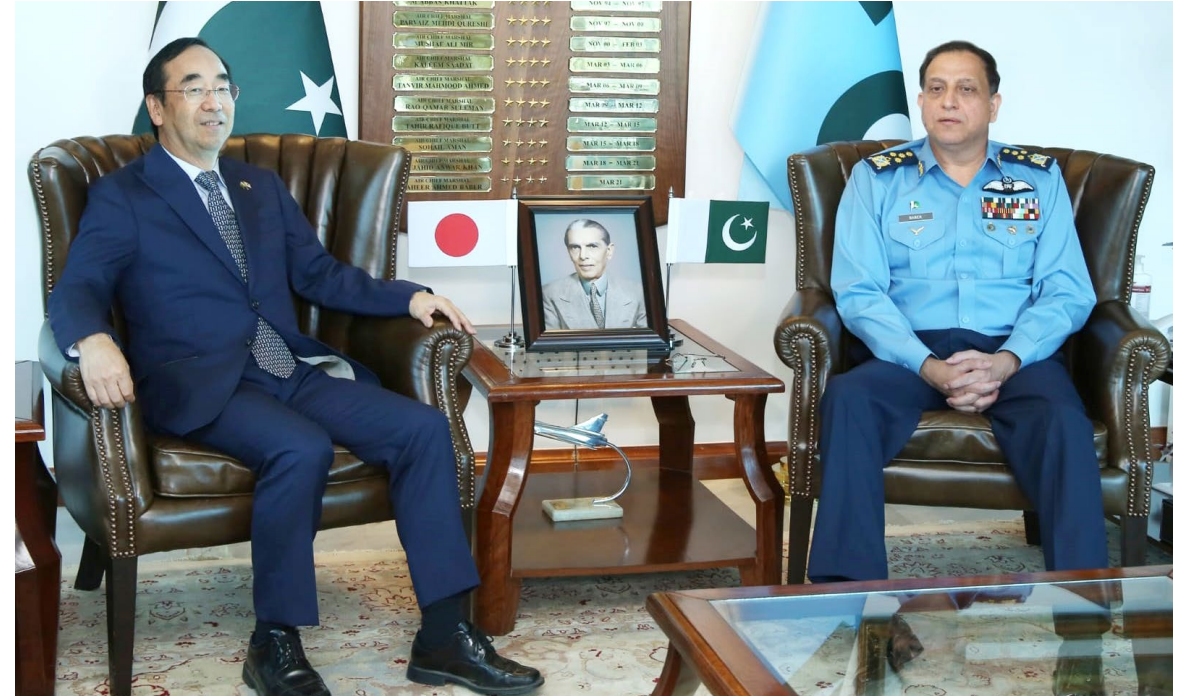
Continued on Page 06

PPP invites MQM-P in Sindh Cabinet

ISLAMABAD: The ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in Sindh has decided to include MQM-P into the provincial cabinet. The PPP asked its ally MQM-P to nominate two of its MPs in the Sindh Assembly for their inclusion in the provincial cabinet. In another development, the Sindh government Thursday appointed PPP leader Sharjeel Memon as provincial minister. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Khan Niazi exchanging views with Tarek Mohamed Dahroug Ambassador of Arab Republic of Egypt to Pakistan. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan. WADA Mitsuhiro called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force. - DNA

Mubashir Hasan appointed PIO

Mubashir Hasan is a career civil servant who has worked on many important positions



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Mubashir Hasan, a BS-20 officer of the Information Group, presently posted as Managing Director Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), Islamabad, has been assigned to look after the work of Director General/Principal Information Officer (PIO), Press Information Department (PID), Islamabad, in addition to his own duties.

According to a notification of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting issued, Mubashir Hassan will assume charge as PIO with immediate effect and will perform these responsibilities until further orders. Sohail Ali Khan, who was posted as PIO, has been transferred and directed to report to the ministry with immediate effect.

Mubashir Hasan is a career civil servant who has worked on many important positions. He had worked with the Information Minister Maryam Aurangzeb during her first stint as State Minister for Information. Mubashir was her Director then. Similarly Mubashir has also served as the Deputy Managing Director Baitul Mal and Head of the Film Sensor Board. Besides, he also made his mark as the Press Attaché, Pakistan Embassy Cairo.

Pak wants to solidify ties with Japan: Air chief

Ambassador Of Japan WADA Mitsuhiro calls on Air Chief

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan. WADA Mitsuhiro called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office. The visiting dignitary lauded the professionalism of PAF personnel and the exceptional progress made by PAF over the years, especially through indigenization. The Air Chief highlighted that both countries enjoy cordial relations and reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing bilateral cooperation between the air forces of the two countries. Various matters of mutual interest and

professional cooperation also came under discussion during the meeting. Pakistan has a huge workforce concentrated in the IT sector and Japan is planning more collaboration with Pakistan regarding the training of skilled human resources and employment of Pakistani skilled workers in different sectors, said Deputy Director-General at Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan Iwamoto Keiichi. He was speaking during the Japan-Southwest Asia Exchange Year 2022 Webinar held to mark the establishment of Japan's diplomatic ties with Paki-

stan and other South Asian countries and discuss mutual relations in the future. Panellists from seven South Asian countries participated in the event. Mr Iwamoto Keiichi said since the formal establishment of relations with Pakistan, Japan had been providing aid to Pakistan, the largest recipient of Japan's financial assistance. He said after the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, Tokyo helped Islamabad with its expertise in tackling natural disasters, while the Japanese people were very thankful for Pakistanis' over-generous help and cooperation after Japan was hit by a major earthquake in 2011.

Journey of progress re-started: Marriyum



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb

said on Thursday that the journey of national development has started from where it had been halted in 2018. The first ten days of Shehbaz Sharif as the Prime Minister reflected that Pakistan was moving towards progress and prosperity, she said in a statement. For the first time in the history of the country, members of the cabinet belonging to different parties were committed to work together for development of the country, Maryam Aurangzeb maintained. The minister opined that congratulatory messages from the countries received by the prime minister around the world were a clear indication of the improvement in foreign policy after almost four years. The present government, she said enjoyed the confidence of not only the people of Pakistan, but also the friendly countries.

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Respect Muslims' religious beliefs: China to Sweden

MONITORING DESK

BEIJING: Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin has hoped that Sweden would earnestly respect the religious beliefs of Muslims and other minority groups, protect their lawful rights and interests, and square their words of respecting and protecting freedom of religious belief with actions. China always opposes extreme behavior of attacking people with different religious beliefs and instigating conflicts between civilizations, he said while commenting on the recently anti-Islam rallies organized by far-right political party Stram Kurs in multiple places across Sweden and burning of the Holy Quran, which had triggered an outrage among the Muslim community.



Large-scale unrest broke out in many places across Sweden, resulting in the vandalism of public facilities and injuries of many people. While noting the relevant reports, Wang Wenbin said that freedom of speech should not be used as an excuse to incite racial or cultural discrimination and create division in

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APRIL 2022

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Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165

Briefs

Secretary agriculture monitors Ramadan Bazaras

OUR CORRESPONDENT

BAHAWALPUR: Secretary Agriculture South Punjab Saqib Ali Ateel monitoring of Ramadan bazaars and wheat procurement centers, inquired from consumers about the quality and prices of food items, reviewed the arrangements of wheat procurement centers. Achieved 87% target of wheat procurement, Secretary Agriculture South Punjab 10 kg bag of flour is being provided in abundance in Ramadan bazaars at the rate of Rs 400 while sugar will be provided at the rate of Rs 75 per kg, Saqib Ali Ateel.

Secretary Agriculture South Punjab Saqib Ali Ateel visited Kot Mithan, Rojhan and Rajanpur to monitor Ramadan bazaars and wheat procurement centers. During the visit to Ramadan bazaars, consumers were asked about the quality and prices of food items and also checked the quality and quantity of items at various stalls. Talking on the occasion, he said that thanks to the pro-people initiative of the Punjab government, 10 kg flour bag is being provided in abundance in the Ramadan bazaars at a cost of Rs. 400 and it is also being monitored on daily basis. Sugar prices have also been further reduced. Sugar will be provided at Rs 75 per kg in all Ramadan bazaars of Rajanpur district.

PR inaugurates 'Thal Express' Rwp to Multan

RAWALPINDI: Divisional Superintendent (DS), Pakistan Railways (PR) Rawalpindi Division Inamullah here on Thursday inaugurated the passenger train 'Thal Express' which would run between Rawalpindi and Multan via Kundlan, Attock, Golra Sharif and other cities. 'Thal Express' with an AC Standard and seven economy class coaches would run between Rawalpindi and Multan via Kundlan, Attock, Taxila, Hassanabdal, Attock, Jand, Dadukhel, Kundian, Bakhar, KotAddu, Muzaffargarh and other areas.

Pakistan Railways in collaboration with private company, 'Imran Enterprise' would operate 'Thal Express' which was suspended due to corona. The DS informed that the cargo facility would also be available in 'Thal Express'. - APP

Quality education key to progress: Asif Khan

PESHAWAR: MPA and Focal Person for Mega Projects and Rehabilitation of Peshawar Asif Khan on Thursday underlined the need for taking solid measures for promoting quality education for achieving socio-economic development of the country.

He expressed these views while chairing a meeting which was attended by officials of education and Communication and Works departments. The MPA said that all the ongoing development projects in the education sector should be timely completed and these initiatives would help promote education for betterment of the society. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Wife of Ambassador of Palestine hosted iftar dinner for the orphan children. Wife of the Turkish ambassador also seen in the picture. - DNA

PM orders to ensure Imran's foolproof security

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday, the Interior Ministry issued letter to the authorities concerned to ensure foolproof security to former Prime Minister Imran Khan. The prime minister issued directives in view of the reports of security threat to the life of former prime minister. The Interior Ministry sent an urgent letter to the Home Secretaries of the four provinces, Azad Kashmir and GilgitBaltistan, asking to take strict security measures for Imran Khan. The same directive was issued to the Inspector General Police and the Chief Commissioner of Islamabad. PM Shehbaz Sharif also directed Interior Minister RanaSanaullah to personally monitor the situation and ensure implementation of the orders. The letter instructed about putting in place foolproof security arrangements as Imran Khan moved across the country.

Railway to be put on track: Khwaja Saad

LAHORE: Railways Minister KhwajaSaadRafique has vowed to put the railways on track with an increased speed, to provide maximum facilities to travellers.

He was talking to the Pakistan Railways officers during his first visit to the PR headquarters after taking over the charge as the Railways minister, here on Thursday. He said the journey of progress would be started from where it was left in 2018, adding that work of railways rehabilitation would be carried out on war-footing.

He directed the officers to ensure safe travel for passengers. He promised that no political pressure or approach would be put on them in their job so that all projects could be completed honestly and on time. He also ordered for reducing fare on the Eid holidays to facilitate passengers. He said that all train coaches parts which could be manufactured at the railway workshops should not be imported. The minister said that no compromise would be made on cleanliness, and quality of services would be improved. - APP

Islamic teachings about women education clear

Pakistan Ulema Council and Darul-Ifta Pakistan fully support and endorse the stance of Hazrat Maulana Mufti Taqi Usmani

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Ulema Council and Darul Iftaa Pakistan have contended that Islamic teachings regarding women's education are very clear and explicit.

Pakistan Ulema Council and Darul-Ifta Pakistan fully support and endorse the stance of Hazrat Maulana Mufti Taqi Usmani, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council, President Darul-Ifta Pakistan. While talking to media her on Thursday, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that Ulema-e-Islam have always raised voice and guided the public regarding women's education in accordance with the teachings of Quran-o-Sunnah. Educated women can play an important and vibrant role in solving women's problems and improving the overall situation in the society, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi.

He stated that the advice given by Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani to the Interim Government of Afghanistan regarding women's education is in accordance with prevailing circumstances, time and situation in Afghanistan. Pakistan is not persuaded to interfere in the internal and external affairs of friendly countries but the rules of



Islamic Shari'ah are not specific for any particular country or nation but are destined for the whole Islamic world. In the light of Islamic Shari'ah, making opinions and issuing Fatwa is Shariah responsibility, which should be fulfilled by the religious scholars. Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council and President Darul Iftaa Pakistan Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that the rights of women have been fully protected in Islam. He said that interim government of Afghanistan used to make decisions in view of their prevailing circumstances.

However, letter that Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani has written to the Amir al-Mu'minin of Afghanistan is a valid advice and the decision in this regard is to be made by the Afghan interim government, Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi said. He stated that Ulema-e-Islam have always negated the false propaganda with respect to Women's rights and education. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) has clearly taught that it is obligatory for every Muslim man and woman to acquire knowledge. Therefore, propaganda against Islam and Muslims should not be carried out without knowledge of the ground realities, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi. He stated that he hoped that the interim government of Afghanistan would soon resolve the issue regarding women.

Real estate sector growth vital for national economy



ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Exacerbated growth of the real estate sector will have a salutary impact on the overall national economy, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President FCCI. Addressing an introductory and promotional activity of Zaitoon City Lahore here in Faisalabad, he said that Pakistan is facing acute shortage of housing units. "At present there is a shortage of ten mil-

lion houses which will jump to 13 million in 2025", he said and added that despite strenuous efforts of the government we could not fulfil the people's demand through the public sector. He appreciated the role of the private sector and said that it has been undertaking mega housing projects throughout the country where best possible facilities are being offered.

He said that scientifically developed colonies are also taking into consideration the

hot issue of global warming by allocating sufficient green area for plantation.

Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh particularly appreciated the expertise of Lahore properties and said that it is developing Zaitoon City in addition to Askari Towers and Autograph by H&S. About Zaitoon City, he said that it would have plots of ten Marla and a Toyota corolla car would be offered through balloting among the first hundred buyers of plots in this city.

He further said that being a provincial metropolis, the residents of Faisalabad have to repeatedly visit Lahore and they need a second home in Lahore to trim their hotel expenses. He said that they could avail the best location and facilities of Zaitoon City in this respect. Mr. Rehan Ashraf Sheikh, Farhan Ali Sheikh and Mr. Ahmad Bilal gave a detailed presentation on the different projects developed by the Lahore properties.

FCCI hails announcement of NEAC

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Announcement of National Economic Advisory Council (NEAC) is a first step towards the much needed "Charter of Economy" however business community and all political parties must be involved in this national task to make it a real success, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

He termed political uncertainty as a death blow to the economy and said that Mr. Shahbaz Sharif being opposition leader had floated this unique idea which was ignored by the then ruling party. He said that in the absence of a charter of economy we are facing repeated economic setbacks and now we must take this bold initiative to ensure sustained growth even during the change of seats.

Sanctity of Quranic verses should be ensured

SAQIB MUSHTAQ

LODHHRAN: Deputy Commissioner Capt (ret'd) Shoaib Ali has also issued official letters to the officers of district departments and editors of local and national newspapers for necessary steps based on necessary instructions.

Lodhran : A meeting of the District Welfare Fund Board was held under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue (ADC-R) Azuba Azeem. During the meeting, 84 applications for furnishing and burial grants, 101 for marriage grants, 14 for monthly aid grants and 666 for scholarships were presented.

papers and to prevent their desecration. Deputy Commissioner Capt (ret'd) Shoaib Ali has also issued official letters to the officers of district departments and editors of local and national newspapers for necessary steps based on necessary instructions.

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Saudi Arabia hands over 100 tons of dates to Pakistan

The kingdom is one of the biggest producers of dates in the world and accounts for nearly 17 percent of the overall global yield of the fruit



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia has handed over 100 tons of dates to Pakistan's new administration for distribution among needy people across the country, said the kingdom's envoy in Islamabad on Thursday. As an annual ritual, Saudi Arabia's King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Agency (KSRelief) shares tons of dates with Pakistani authorities to help people. The kingdom is one of the biggest producers of dates in the world and accounts for nearly 17 percent of the overall global yield of the fruit. In a ceremony held in Islamabad, Saudi ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki and director KSRelief Dr. Khalid M. Al-Othmani handed over the consignment to officials of the Pakistani government.

"It is my pleasure to hand over this gift of 100 tons of dates to the brotherly country," Al-Malki told Arab News on the sideline of the event. He added the dates were distributed by KSRelief, saying the Saudi aid agen-

cy was always in the forefront of providing services to humanity.

"On this occasion, I would like to ensure our Pakistani brothers about the firm commitment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under the leadership of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud to always stand by their country and take our brotherly relations to new heights," Al-Malki continued.

Pakistan is the fifth largest recipient of assistance from KSRelief.

Speaking to Arab News, the aid agency's director said: "We just concluded distribution of thousands of Ramadan food packages across Pakistan. Now, we are handing over this year's gift of dates while many more humanitarian relief projects are in the pipeline as well." Brigadier (r) Hamad Amjad, director general at the cabinet division, thanked the Saudi authorities for the donation. "We are grateful to the Saudi government for this kind gesture which is now a regular feature and goes a long way in strengthening brotherly relations between the two countries," he said.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

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



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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& Rescue Services.....	4451122
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Potohar Town.....	9209224
Rawal Town.....	5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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ISLAMABAD: JUI-F Chief Molana Fazl-ur-Rehman calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

Kyrgyz business delegation visits ICCI to explore coop

DNA
ISLAMABAD: A business delegation of Kyrgyzstan led by Dzhunushaliev Aibek, Head of the Department for Controlling the Execution of Decisions of the President and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic visited Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) to explore business partnerships with the business community of Islamabad. H.E. Totuiaev Ulanbek Asankulovich, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan also accompanied the delegation. The delegation was representing various sectors including mining, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, textiles, chemicals, food processing & products, construction materials, logistics, IT & telecom, shipbuilding, renewable energy, metallurgy,

gold, sugar, ventilation equipment etc. Speaking at the occasion, Dzhunushaliev Aibek, Head of delegation said that Kyrgyzstan is determined to promote business & economic relations with Pakistan on a sustained basis as both countries have good potential to cooperate with each other in many sectors of the economy. He stressed that Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan should create working groups on business that should work for optimization of the legal framework for providing the private sectors easy access to each other's market. He said that the Kyrgyzstan business delegation has come to Pakistan to explore business partnerships with Pakistani counterparts in areas of interest.

H.E. Totuiaev Ulanbek Asankulovich, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan said that Paki-

stan and Kyrgyzstan are enjoying friendly relations and his government wants to promote cooperation with Pakistan in all fields. He said that his embassy would cooperate in the initiatives for promoting business linkages between the private sectors of both countries.

Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan can cooperate in many sectors including minerals & mining, agriculture, industry, energy and tourism. He said that the geographical location of both countries offers them good potential to increase collaboration and play a role in promoting trade connectivity in their respective regions and markets. He said that Pakistan can provide Kyrgyzstan easy access to many promising markets including the Middle

East, South Asia and China. Similarly, Kyrgyzstan can provide Pakistan easy access to the Central Asian States. Therefore, strong trade and economic relations would be very beneficial for both countries and regions. He said that Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan are currently doing trade in limited items and they should focus on diversification of trade to achieve better results. He said that many Pakistani products including marble & granite, fruits & vegetables, construction material and others can find good market in Kyrgyzstan.

Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President ICCI, Tariq Sadiq President Islamabad Industrial Association, Nasir Qureshi, Sanaullah Khan, Faseeullah Khan and others also spoke at the occasion and showed interest to set up business collaborations with the business community of

Turkish ambassador's wife distributes iftar boxes



ISLAMABAD: Madame Zlatomira Yurdakul (Turkey), during a Holy Month of Ramadan handed over a hot food iftar boxes to orphans, females and old age persons. –DNA

Commuters seek PM's intervention to pace up Expressway project

ISLAMABAD: The daily commuters on Thursday made a passionate appeal to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for his intervention to pace up the on-going expansion work on Islamabad Expressway Project to provide them a stress-free travel. The residents of various housing societies adjacent to Islamabad Expressway daily face gridlock for hours due to unfinished PWD interchange and expansion of Korang Bridge as the contractors Maqbool Associates and Calson left the project incomplete, saying they were unable to carry out the project due to material's enhanced cost. Travelling on the PWD underpass was even a misery after sunset as the whole area plunges into darkness due to absence of proper lighting system. Only polls have been erected sans any connection of electricity. The project was awarded to a joint venture of Maqbool Associates and Calson in June 2020. However, the contractor stopped the work on the project demanding extra money. The commuters sought Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's special attention towards the slow pace of work on Korang Bridge expansion and suspension of

work on Rs420 million PWD underpass. "We expect the prime minister like other development projects would also intervene to pace it up to ensure hassle-free traveling for hundreds of thousands of daily travellers on country's one of the busiest artery which accommodates almost 4,20,000 daily," said Zahoor Ahmed a daily commuter on Expressway. "The incomplete underpass and heaps of garbage around give commuters an ugly look also exposing them to health hazards as road beautification that adds trees and landscaping was still pending," said Rehan a frequent commuter who travels from Blue Area to Media Town vice versa daily on the route.

When contacted CDA official said the civic authority was already working on expansion of Islamabad Expressway and different portions of this busy road would be completed in different phases. The officer said the contractor had left the work saying that due to increase in the price of construction material, particularly steel, his buying capacity was badly affected, and he was unable to carry out the project. The officer admitted the delay in Korang Bridge expansion and said the

contractor had already been served notice to complete the project in stipulated time otherwise pay the due damages. "We are mulling over various options for expediting the project, the decision on fate of the project would be determined soon, One thing is clear, the authority wants this project completed at the earliest and it can also go for re-tendering, if the need arises," the officer maintained. It merits mentioning that Maqbool and Calson had not yet completed its another project Rawal Dam interchange despite being given extended time by the civic body. The Signal Free Corridor from Zero Point to Rawat was PML-N's flagship and mega project the first phase of which was completed from Zero Point to Faizabad in their previous tenure. Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government could not provide adequate funds for the project which caused inordinate delay, a source in the civic body told APP.

A senior official of CDA while divulging details over expansion of road from PWD to T-Chowk, said the Project Concept-I of Rs8.5 billion have been prepared in which two bridges would also be constructed at Naval Anchorage and KakPul. – APP

Pak-China JWG discusses cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The second meeting of Pakistan-China Joint Working Group (JWG) on Science and Technology under Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was held via video link to discuss cooperation in science and technology. According to Gwadar Pro on Thursday, the meeting was co-chaired by Humaira Ahmed, Federal Secretary for Ministry of Science and Technology and Dai Gang, Director-General of Department of International Cooperation of Ministry of Science and Technology of China. The JWG meeting expressed that China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic partners, and that China and Pakistan will work together to deepen cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), and provide

APHC calls for complete shutdown in IOJK on Modi's Visit

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference in IOJK has appealed to the Kashmiri people to observe complete shutdown on the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's visit to the territory on 24 April (Sunday) to convey a message that they reject India's illegal hold of their homeland.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the appeal has been made by the illegally detained APHC Chairman, Masarrat Alam Butt, and Vice Chairmen Shabbir Ahmad Shah and Ghulam Ahmad Gulzar. The APHC leaders in their messages from jails termed the visit of Narendra Modi to the territory a cruel joke with the people of Kashmir.

They said the RSS-backed fascist Modi regime has broken all the records of brutality and has usurped all the basic rights of the Kashmiri masses. The APHC leaders maintained that the scrapping of Article 370 and 35-A was a direct attack on the basic rights of the Kashmiri people and a blatant violation of the international law. – APP

CSAIL helps Pakistan become energy-secure: PM Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has "deeply appreciated" the role of China Three Gorges Corporation's CSAIL in helping Pakistan become an "energy-secure" country, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. "CSAIL received a letter from PM's office in which the office on behalf of the PM deeply appreciated the role of CSAIL in helping Pakistan become energy-secure," according to CTGI. CSAIL is an investment holding company formed by China Three Gorges Corporation in 2011 to acquire, develop, build, own and operate renewable power generation projects in South Asia with current focus on Pakistan. CSAIL is currently operating and developing 6 power projects in Pakistan, with a total installed capacity of over 2600 MW with more than US\$ 6 billion of total investment. These Projects are 1124 MW Kohala Hydropower Project, 720 MW Karot Hydropower Project, 640 MW Mahl Hydropower Project, 49.5 MW TGF WPP, 49.5 MW TGS WPP and 49.5 MW TGT WPP. All these projects are on fast track for implementation, and 4 of them are under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). – APP

'Supremacy of constitution only way to move forward'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party senior leader Dr. Nafisa Shah Thursday said that supremacy of the Constitution, sustainable democracy, accountability, and merit-based political selections only ways to move forward. Talking to the PTV news channel, she said every institution must not cross its limits and work within its constitutional limits and mandate so that the purpose of the Pakistan Resolution and independence could be achieved. She emphasized that a strong foreign policy is the need of the hour, adding, that our foreign policy will make sure that it protects Pakistan's interests without damaging its relations with other countries. To end corruption, it is important for all political parties that they should disclose their funding transparently, she added. While criticizing PPP leader further said that former PM Imran Khan has pushed the country into an anarchy situation, adding, those attempting to spread further anarchy and create any unrest in the country will be dealt with as per law as no one has the right to change the constitution to save his chair. Replying to a question, she said her party fully believed in the supremacy of democratic institutions and will never accept anything against it. – APP

ADB sells \$4 bln Dual Tranche 3, 10-year global benchmark bonds

ISLAMABAD: Asian Development Bank (ADB) returned to the United States (US) dollar bond market with the pricing of a 3-year global benchmark bond worth \$3 billion and a 10-year global benchmark bond worth \$1 billion, proceeds of which will be part of ADB's ordinary capital resources.

The 3-year bond, with a coupon rate of 2.875% per annum payable semi-annually and a maturity date of 6 May 2025, was priced at 99.882% to yield 12.625 basis points over the 2.625% US Treasury notes due April 2025, according to ADB press statement received here Thursday. The 10-year bond, with a coupon rate of 3.125% per annum payable semi-annually and a maturity date of 27 April 2032, was priced at 99.966% to yield 26.95 basis points over the 1.875% US Treasury notes due February 2032. – APP

Briefs

PFC felicitates newly elected PM AJK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Thursday felicitating the newly elected Prime Minister Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) Sardar Tanveer Ilyas hoped that infrastructure development would be accorded priority besides promoting tourism and strengthening of small industries in the region.

In his greeting message, Chief Executive Officer PFC Mian Kashif Ashfaq said under the dynamic and sagacious leadership of Sardar Tanveer Ilyas, an era of progress, development and prosperity would usher in whole of the territory of the state, said a press release issued here.

He said it was point of satisfaction that all possible measures would be taken to promote tourism of international standard by improving infrastructure on modern lines and extending Murree Expressway to Kohala with the collaboration of federal government.

He said another feather in the cap of new PM was that he in his maiden speech made historic announcement of launching of his own airline through a public-private partnership (PPP) which he added would be poised to attract millions of local and international tourists.

He said Sardar Tanveer Ilyas had inherited the matchless ability to turn AJK into a self-reliant welfare state by executing mega development projects mainly aimed at ameliorate a lot of the poor strata of the society.

Mian Kashif said he would put into practice the vision of chairman PTI Imran Khan and workers would be given rightful place. — APP

PM terms Baloch people 'valuable asset' for country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said the government on a priority basis would take measures to ensure the national mainstreaming of the youth of Balochistan. The prime minister expressed these views in a meeting with Balochistan National Party Chairman Sardar Akhtar Mengal. PM Shehbaz Sharif termed the Baloch workforce an asset for the country. The meeting, also joined by federal ministers Rana Sanaullah and Khwaja Saad-Rafique, discussed the current political situation in the country.

Lawmakers congratulate Durrani

ISLAMABAD: The parliamentarians on Thursday congratulated Zahid Akram Durrani for being elected unopposed Deputy Speaker National Assembly, expressing confidence that he would ensure rule of law, supremacy of the Constitution and the Parliament.

Speaking on floor of the National Assembly, Dr Nisar Ahmed Cheema of Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) felicitated Zahid Akram Durrani on assuming charge as deputy speaker of the august House. He said that the former prime government Imran Khan was pushing country towards anarchy, chaos and civil war.

He said unnecessary narrative of American interference was being promoted in the country. USA pressurized Pakistan thrice in history, he added.

He said first Pakistan was threatened when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was asked to be away from nuclear programme, second time America forced Pakistan in 1998, when the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif, to not conduct nuclear tests in response to Indian atomic explosions and threat came after the 9/11 incident.

Ghous Baksh Mehr of Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) while felicitating the new speaker hoped that he would follow the constitution and work for supremacy of the Constitution and the Parliament.

Shahida Rehmani of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) while congratulating the newly elected Deputy Speaker said his party always struggled for the supremacy of the parliament and the constitution. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Children of Mashal School, Islamabad posing for a picture during iftar dinner at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. — DNA

FSC assures commitment for EU-supported Project

The inception phase of this programme last year provided the building blocks to support the current engagements and make a transition towards successful implementation of the programme

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Steering Committee (FSC) of the 'Deliver Justice' programme was held today at the Economic Affairs Division (EAD), where key federal and provincial government stakeholders and development partners came together to amplify programme oversight and to discuss challenges and opportunities. The 'Deliver Justice' programme aims to support reform processes to ensure delivery of people-centered justice, enhance access to justice for all, particularly women and marginalized groups; and improve service delivery of the security sector in line with constitutional safeguards and international standards. Implemented in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Merged Areas, the programme is funded by the European Union and jointly implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Joint Secretary Economic Affairs Division, Ms. Anita Turab chaired the meeting and thanked the European Union for its contin-

ued support for the rule of law and building capacity of relevant institutions. In her opening remarks, Ms. Turab emphasized that the Government of Pakistan has a strong commitment and interest in reinforcing the rule of law and justice system in Pakistan. She added, "The Government of Pakistan is pleased to partner with UNDP, UNODC and UN Women to implement the reform agenda smoothly under the EU-funded Rule of Law Programme in KP and Balochistan." In his welcome remarks, the Head of Cooperation of the European Union Delegation to Pakistan, Mr. Ovidiu Mic, reiterated the EU's commitment to join forces with Pakistan to actively advance the delivery of justice, peace, and security for the people, particularly women and girls. He emphasized that "this work is also an essential part of the priorities of the EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan agreed in 2019."

The inception phase of this programme last year provided the building blocks to support the current engagements and make a transition towards successful implementation of the programme. Enhanced partnerships at federal and provincial levels, engaging all key stakeholders in the rule of law sector including the Legal Aid and Justice Authority (LAJA) and the Law and Justice Commission

of Pakistan (LJCP) at the federal level, the Judicial Academies, the Courts, the Home Departments and relevant offices, were recognised as key achievements under the project. On the occasion, the UNDP Pakistan Resident Representative, Mr. Knut Ostby, thanked the Government of Pakistan and the European Union for their continued support in strengthening the rule of law and access to justice in Pakistan. He said, "UNDP has been a long-standing partner of the Government of Pakistan in supporting and strengthening Rule of Law institutions for enhanced service delivery, and improving access to justice for citizens, particularly the most vulnerable and the marginalized. UNDP is privileged to be a long-standing partner in the development and implementation of Rule of Law roadmaps."

UN Women Pakistan Representative, Ms. Sharmela Rassool, in her remarks said, "UN Women is delighted to be part of this joint programme, and the core of our work focuses on supporting women, girls, and vulnerable segments of society access formal justice mechanisms. While in parallel we will build up the capacity of our government partners to provide justice and redressal mechanisms in an efficient, empathetic and gender sensitive manner." UNODC Pakistan Representative, Mr. Jer-

emy Milsom, assured UNODC's commitment towards accelerating progress and catalyzing valuable reform in rule of law and criminal justice system through this project. "This first FSC meeting marks yet another milestone for this programme. As we all know, Provincial Steering Committee meetings have been successfully conducted both in Balochistan and KP in January this year. We are looking forward to the success of this meeting as well."

During the meeting, the work plan for the current year was presented to the committee. The work plan included working alongside law enforcement agencies to strengthen rule of law, including initiation of trainings for two thousand police personnel from the Merged Areas. Refurbishment of the Prison Academy, seven district prisons in the Merged Areas and five central prisons will also take place.

For Balochistan, work will commence on establishing smart police stations along with Police Facilitation centers. This workplan also includes establishment of smart classrooms in Balochistan Judicial Academy and Police Training College, Quetta. Prison Management Information System (PMIS) is also planned to be developed and implemented in the prison facilities of Balochistan.



ISLAMABAD: Hamad Obaid Alzaabi, UAE ambassador in Islamabad, meets Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Speaker of the National Assembly, and discusses the exchange of visits and experiences at the parliamentary level and ways to enhance bilateral cooperation between the two countries. — DNA

UN Chinese language Day marked in Pak

ISLAMABAD: In connection with commemoration of the UN Chinese Language Day observed on 20th April annually, celebrations are solemnized with zeal and zest in Pakistan, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. On the occasion, Chinese Acting Consul General in Lahore Peng Zhengwu said that the UN Chinese Language Day is to pay tribute to Cangjie, who is believed to be the inventor of the Chinese characters about 5,000 years ago. "Characters and languages are the symbols of civilization. With the growing demands of communication between peoples, Chinese language has been spread to a world-wide range," he added. In Pakistan, he said, there are several Confucius Institutes in local universities offering Chinese language teaching and certification. "Moreover, lots of local schools, such as Aitchison College, Grammar School and Lahore American School have Chinese language courses.

There are more and more people in Pakistan taking Chinese language as the key to the life and work of the coming era. With the peaceful and dynamic development of China, they believe, those who can master Chinese well will share the benefits of a stronger China and become the leaders of future generation," he explained.

He further mentioned that some Pakistani people are famous for their fluent Chinese and good way of teaching. "There are numerous Chinese courses taught in Urdu on line as well. Institute of International and Chinese universities offer hundreds of scholarships to Pakistan students every year, which facilitate them to learn Chinese language in local society. — DNA

Development partners briefed on Pak single window

The Pakistan Single Window system began rolling out in July 2021 with Phase 1 scheduled for completion in June 2022 and is currently offering online customs registration, integration of the commercial banks with PSW system, and online processing of import permits

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Single Window (PSW) organized a donor's meeting at the PSW Islamabad headquarters to brief them on the implementation of the Single Window system. The meeting was attended by officials from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the USAID funded Pakistan Regional Economic Integration Activity (PREIA), and the International Finance Corporation.

The participants were briefed on the implementation status of the Pakistan Single Window and were also given a walkthrough of the recently launched Trade Information Portal of Pakistan (TIPP). The briefing was followed by an interactive Q&A session focusing on PSW's implementation strategy, financial sustainability, and future plans.

The Pakistan Single Window allows parties involved in trade and transport to file standardized information and documents at a single entry point for all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements.

Around the world, bureaucratic processes that burden traders deter business and discourage exports. PSW expedites cross-border trade, enabling businesses to expand their operations, and the government to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy. The single window is a key trade facilitation tool that helps countries improve efficiencies in customs and regulatory clearances, increase the speed at which goods can move, and reduce the overall cost of trade.

The CEO of PSW Mr. Aftab Haider thanked the donor community for their significant support to PSW and said, "PSW has tremendously benefitted from multi donor support and collaboration who have provided technical and financial assistance on various components of the PSW. Strong program management by the PSW team has ensured that donor support to PSW development and implementation remains well coordinated and in sync."

The Pakistan Single Window system began rolling out in July 2021 with Phase 1 scheduled for completion in June 2022 and is currently offering online customs registration, integration of the commercial banks with PSW system, and online processing of import permits, and Phyto-sanitary certificates on import, export of agricultural commodities by the Department of Plant Protection. More than 44,000 traders are now registered with the system using it to access the Web-BOC system as well as available services.

The participants appreciated the efforts of PSW, and the inclusive approach taken towards the implementation of the Single

Window System particularly, small and medium enterprises, women owned businesses and private sector IT firms and businesses with whom PSW is currently exploring partnership opportunities for development of value-added products for traders and other stakeholders using the PSW platform. They also took a keen interest in the TIPP which provides a single point of access for all import, export, and transit related information for the guidance of traders, investors, and other stakeholders engaged in cross border trade with Pakistan.

Pakistan Single Window (PSW) is an initiative of Pakistan's federal government with a focus of transforming the trade and industry ecosystem. The system is being developed and rolled out in phases by the PSW Company which is the notified 'Operating entity' for the PSW system under the provisions of the Pakistan Single Window Act, 2021.

Qawwali night to enthrall audience

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Folk & Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) is holding a Qawwali Night with renowned Qawwal Ghulam Abbas Ali Khan on April 23. The event is expected to be attended by high level dignitaries and general public, Lok Virsa has arranged food stalls of traditional food on nominal rates, said a press release issued here. These stalls will serve food at Iftar time and during the Qawwali programme. All shops at Lok Virsa selling craft items will also remain open. All are invited to bring families and friends and join Lok Virsa, on 23rd April and make this night a memorable one. — APP

PM extends condolence to son of late MNA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday extended his condolences to the family of Muttahida Qaumi Movement's Member of National Assembly Iqbal Muhammad Ali, who had passed away a few days ago.

In a telephonic call to MNA's son Iqbal Muhammad Ali, the prime minister said the services of late Iqbal Ali would be long remembered for the country and democracy. Shehbaz Sharif said Iqbal Muhammad Ali was a decent, educated, and kind person. He prayed for the departed soul to rest in peace and for the grant of patience to the bereaved family.

Cement export decrease 5pc in 3 quarters

ISLAMABAD: The exports of cement witnessed a decrease of 5.08 percent during the three quarters of the fiscal year 2021-22, against the exports of the commodity during the corresponding period of last year.

The cement exports from the country were recorded at US \$199.370 million from July-March (2021-22) against the exports of US \$210.045 million during July-March (2020-21), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

In terms of quantity, the exports of cement also dipped by 16.31 percent going down from 6,247,086 metric tons to 5,277,877 metric tons, according to the data. Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the exports of cement decreased by 26.19 percent during the month of March 2022 as compared to the same month of last year.

The exports of cement from the country during March 2022 were recorded at the US \$19.817 million against the exports of US \$ 26.849 million in March 2021.

On a month-on-month basis, exports of cement however increased by 6.39 percent during March 2022 when compared to the exports of US \$ 18.627 million in February 2021, the PBS data revealed. — APP

New minister for best Hajj arrangements

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Mufi Abdul Shakoor said the ministry's officials should use their full potential to make best arrangements for upcoming Hajj and provide quality services to the pilgrims. Receiving a detailed briefing on the activities and responsibilities of the ministry the other day, he said Hajj was one of the basic pillars of Islam and to make this sacred obligation a success story, we would have to sacrifice our comforts and provide all possible facilities to the intending pilgrims.

The minister said the operation of Hajj 2022 was a big task for the ministry as it had a very short time to manage all the prerequisites for its smooth sailing. He, realizing the omnipresence of Allah Almighty, expressed his determination that he would discharge his professional obligations in an efficient manner and expect the same from all other employees and officers of the ministry. The briefing was given by the secretary and additional secretary and it was attended by all the quarters concerned of the religious affairs ministry. — APP

Keep sports aside from politics

ACCORDING to reports, Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) Patron-in-Chief, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has decided to remove Ramiz Raja from the chairmanship of the PCB. Sources revealed that PM Shehbaz will nominate two candidates for the position and the Board of Governors (BoG) will select one of them as the new PCB chairman. It is expected that former PCB chairman, Najam Sethi, and former BoG member, Shakil Shaikh, will be nominated by the PM. Meanwhile, Ramiz held a meeting with the PCB staff on Wednesday where he informed them that he has received the go-ahead from the government to continue his work as the PCB chairman.

"I have been told to continue working as PCB chairman. We should now focus on work rather than thinking about what is going to happen," Ramiz stated. Former national team captain was appointed as the PCB chairman in September 2021 as he took over the reins from Ehsan Mani. Ramiz has already implemented a few groundbreaking ideas including pathway cricket program and Junior PSL-like league while some other ideas such as a Women's PSL league are in the works. Meanwhile, Former Prime Minister Imran Khan has also reacted to news about the removal of Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chief Ramiz Raja.

According to media, a journalist questioned PTI chief Imran Khan about some people trying to oust the PCB Chief, after his meeting with US congresswoman Ilhan Umer. Imran Khan said that he does not think that the new government will let him and he would soon be removed from his position. Ramiz Raja's removal, if the rumors turn out to be true, will not bring anything good for the incumbent government. The man is doing a commendable job and he must be given authority to continue his job. If the sports are to be succeeded in the country, they must be kept aside from political rivalries. The Shehbaz Sharif government will be applauded if they let the man do his job.

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

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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



Boris Johnson in India

IN an apparent effort to strengthen ties between the United Kingdom and India and cater to the UK's strategic tilt to the Indo-Pacific, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has begun a visit to India starting Thursday. Indeed, with the UK economy struggling to bounce back from the combined blows of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic, Johnson has been doing the rounds, cap in hand, looking to strike some trade deals. London and New Delhi started their negotiations on a free trade agreement in January and expect to conclude them at the year end. With bilateral trade averaging 23 billion pounds (\$29.95 billion) per year, the two countries are looking to double the value by 2030, which well explains the two countries' enthusiasm to ink the deal. But given India's different stance toward the conflict in Ukraine, it is that issue that may eat up much of the talk time. There has been much speculation about whether Johnson will try and take the opportunity to continue to mount pressure on New Delhi to join the West's "united front" against Russia in the Ukraine crisis. India has, so far, refused to criticize Russia, let alone join the sanction regime the United States is orchestrating against the country. Not only have Indians rushed to social media platforms to heap support on Russia, the Indian government has also increased imports of energy and other commodities from Russia even as the US and its allies either ban or shun Russian energy. In a move that has drawn much ire from the US and its allies, India has reportedly bought at least 13 million barrels of crude oil from Russia since Feb 24, compared with nearly 16 million barrels in all of 2021. If Johnson chooses to press his Indian host on the Ukraine issue later this week, it seems he will be as disappointed as US President Joe Biden who achieved little in that regard during a virtual summit with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week. Johnson would be better advised to hold out his cap to see what he can get.

Government's law reform challenge

Mohammad Yahya Farid Khwaja

Most importantly, structural changes within the judiciary would be required. Currently, there is a singular stream within the judiciary of Pakistan. A person aspiring to be a criminal judge has to be tested in the field of civil law and might be given the portfolio of civil judge in the future. It is imperative that criminal judiciary is made wholly independent of the civil judiciary...

ONE of the many tasks that the former government had taken to head was reformation of the criminal legal system. Farogh Naseem and his team of consultants at the Law Ministry undertook a three year exercise to accomplish this behemoth task. When the draft copy of the amendments was publicly shared, the same received immense flak for merely bringing cosmetic changes. A more humiliating and ironic accusation against the law minister was of plagiarism. Majority of the amendments were complete "copy-paste" from Indian criminal law amendments. Without delving into the merits of the same, just the idea of how reform process was carried out was embarrassing. Now that the new law minister has taken charge, the question remains as to what happens to reform activities that were carried out by the previous government. Azam Nazir Tarar is a seasoned lawyer of Punjab and would understand the gravity of the situation. He has also served as Vice chairman of the Pakistan Bar Council, the highest elected body of lawyers in Pakistan. Tarar brings more credibility to the law ministry which is a sine quo non for any major reform process acceptable to the bar and to the judiciary. Former Law Minister, though a successful lawyer, was not a man liked by his colleagues from the legal community. The issue of fil-

ing reference against Justice Qazi Faiz Issa had further eroded his credibility among the bar and the judiciary. The current government, when in the opposition, was extremely vocal against law amendments carried out by PTI government. They had accused PTI-led government of witch-hunting and political engineering viz-aviz amending the law to suit their agenda of muscle flexing. Amendments in the laws of NAB, PEMRA, PECA, FIA among many other amendments were a hotly contested issue between the two. Attempts made by the government to amend the laws were most of the time turned down for not having the support of the majority which is a requirement for bringing an amendment in the law through an act of the parliament. The route of passing amendments through temporary ordinances had its own challenges from the judiciary.

While it can be predicted that Farogh's reforms will be brushed aside for political reasons, the fact remains that reformation of our criminal legal system remains an agenda that must be carried out with utmost priority no matter who is in power. It would be ironic if the new law minister completely brushes aside the idea of reforming criminal justice system. The system has crippled and it needs a major shake-up. Moreover, it would be a great achievement for the incumbent government which is already in dire need to show immediate results. Sooner or later, the elections would be announced. The incumbent government would need convincing narrative for their electoral vote bank. The most favorite and sellable weapon of large infrastructure projects would not be available due to paucity of funds and shortage of time. Law amendments would not only give the current regime credibility as a neutral government but also win them more votes. Moreover, an amendment in law does not require any capital injection or budgetary approvals as required for big infrastructure development projects. Amending the legal system can gain valuable support from the media, lawyers and judiciary, civil society, think-tanks, policy making entities and most importantly the litigants.

There are few areas in the criminal legal system that would require immediate attention of the new worthy law minister. First and foremost is the delay of pending cases before all courts of Pakistan. The delay can be attributed to our flimsy structure of long adjournments by lawyers and judges, frequent transfer of judges, lack of case management system and delay in filing of Challans by Police. Presently, out of 81,000 prisoners only 21,000 are convicted. The rest await trial or are victims of a painfully slow and decaying criminal legal system. Considering that the new law minister has a voice within the legal fraternity, reforms which require change of behavioral attitude of lawyers which has been the biggest challenge to reform process in the past would have chances to

break through. Moreover, the law minister's good repute within the judiciary may also imply that judiciary would be receptive to the idea of taking the bull by the horns i.e. of reforming the two main stakeholders, rowdy lawyers and corrupt incompetent judges.

Most importantly, structural changes within the judiciary would be required. Currently, there is a singular stream within the judiciary of Pakistan. A person aspiring to be a criminal judge has to be tested in the field of civil law and might be given the portfolio of civil judge in the future. It is imperative that criminal judiciary is made wholly independent of the civil judiciary and an independent Session Judge is appointed for every District who oversees the criminal judiciary and criminal cases in the District. Currently the District Judge is also given the additional portfolio of Session i.e. criminal matters. Once the criminal judiciary is made independent, focus can be put on training of judges in the field of criminal law which would include forensics, ballistics, medico-legal and law of evidence. Another important aspect requiring reform would be the misuse of powers of arrest by the law enforcement agencies and the provision of bail by the judiciary. The entire concept of arrest without warrant would have to be rethought to put more checks and balances against the LEAs against arresting accused without formidable evidences or charges. Currently, only on the basis suspicion police can arrest any individual and seek remand. Seeking remand by Police shall be limited to recovery of any incriminating evidence rather than recording a statement from the accused which in most of the cases is rejected for being given under duress. Lastly and most importantly, the concept of justice of peace must be restored to its original position. Justice of peace having the powers of arrest, bail, issue search warrants and hear habeas petitions historically was appointed or elected from the citizens of the jurisdictions in which they would serve and were usually not required to have any formal legal education. A justice of peace is typically someone of a good stature who has roots in the same community. By giving the powers of Justice of Peace to the Session Judge has made the reason d'etre of having one almost negligible. A Session Judge has no nexus with the community where he serves. In most cases, he/she does not even belong to that community. He has to be approached through a lawyer within the realm of our criminal legal system. This formal legal landscape attached to the Justice of Peace becomes a barrier for the community for resolution of grievances against Police excesses. Justice of peace must be an elected community elder with a good stature and easily approachable for the community where he serves.

- The writer is the Partner at Farid & Farid Law Firm

Finally, a glimmer of hope in the Middle East

Ishtiaq Ahmad



The Turkish-Gulf amity may also help to mend fences between Ankara and Cairo. Annoyed by Turkish support for the Muslim Brotherhood, the Abdel Fattah El-Sisi government chose to join the Greek and Greek Cypriot bid...

AMPLE indicators suggest that the Middle East may at last be moving beyond the unprecedented turmoil of the Arab Spring, which allowed Iran to destabilize the Arab world through overt and proxy warfare in ways never seen before. The promising signs in regional geopolitics include the political transition in Yemen amid the ceasefire in the war, the emerging thaw in Turkey's relations with the Gulf states, the growing harmony among GCC members after an amicable resolution of the Qatar crisis, and the stabilization moves in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

These developments bring a sigh of relief for Saudi Arabia, which has a natural stake in Middle Eastern unity and stability as the epicenter of Islamic faith and Arab power. But they represent a worrisome moment for Iran, as it faces further global isolation in the wake of the deadlock in the nuclear talks in Vienna.

In the case of Yemen, the Saudi-led coalition was forced to intervene in 2015 to protect the legitimate rule of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi from the onslaught of the Houthi-led rebels. Subsequently, this Iranian-sponsored militia has waged a deadly civil war, refused to join the UN peace talks and also attacked Saudi Arabia, and the UAE more recently, with Iranian drones and missiles. Against this backdrop, the enforcement of a two-month ceasefire on April 3 constitutes a major breakthrough in the war. A consequent respite in hostilities will help to avert the worsening humanitarian crisis, with the generous Saudi-Emirati offer of \$3 billion on April 7. The same day, key Yemeni political factions agreed in Riyadh after week-long talks to establish the Presidential Leadership Council, to work out a viable political plan for the war-torn nation.

The Houthis refused to participate in these negotiations. However, the fact that the eight-member council represents a cross-section of Yemeni tribal groups means that the Houthis will now be

singled out as a warmonger. The council, under the influential leadership of Rashad Al-Alimi, now confronts the difficult task of weaning the Houthis away from Iranian tutelage and toward the political process. Proactive Saudi diplomacy will help.

As a result, Turkey may not be willing to support the militant cause of Iran-backed Hamas in Palestine, as it did before. Ankara's current outreach to Israel also goes well with the strategic realignment of Gulf interests with Tel Aviv through the historic Abraham Accords.

Re-entry in the Gulf markets will alleviate Turkey's worsening economic woes. Riyadh will particularly benefit from Turkish military supplies such as drones, the alternative it needs to compensate for the erosion of US defense support. But the most potent gain for the Gulf nations will be the isolation of Iran and its inability to exploit intra-Arab/Muslim fissures and endanger their security.

But the odds are still heavy. There is no indication that the ayatollahs are willing to abandon their deadly ambitions. Iran had a rare chance to mend fences with Saudi Arabia, but it chose to unilaterally withdraw from the security talks in Baghdad. As Iran's proxy infrastructure regime wanes, its recalcitrant regime is likely to be more desperate. With or without the JCPOA, it has already gotten closer to the nuclear breakout by enriching sufficient amounts of uranium of up to 60 percent purity. The Arab capitals have consistently pleaded for averting this lurking danger. Yet, the Biden administration refuses to acknowledge that US vital interests will also be in serious jeopardy if Iran is allowed to pursue militarism and nuclear jingoism. With the US currently focused on confrontation with Russia and China amid the Ukraine war, only a unified Middle East can deter an aggressive Iran. Therefore, it is important that the prevailing progressive trends in the region are sustained well into the future.

- Courtesy: Arab News

Indo-Pacific: New geopolitical alliance epicenter

Sabah Aslam

As mentioned by Alfred T. Mahan, "Whoever rules the waves rules the world". Indo-Pacific due to its unique water-channel positioning makes it a geopolitical epicenter of the new political alliance system, rivalry, and making it epicenter...

ONE of the frequently used models in international relations is 'Alliance', however, the alliance theory is one of the weakest theories in international relations, as alliance is always considered as a support to 'system structure' and 'balance of power'. In the contemporary scenario, the study of making and maintenance of political processes of alliance is of utmost importance. Alliance - "a formal association of states for the use (or non-use) of military force, intended for either the security or the aggrandizement of their members, against specific other states, whether or not these others are explicitly identified." Moreover, there is a clear distinction between wartime 'Coalition' and peacetime 'alliance'. It can be either offensive or defensive, bilateral or multilateral, ad hoc or permanent etc. Keeping in view the shifts in the international arena, the rise of the east is 'inevitable'. Many having doubts

but the ones confident of it, are in the making of new alliances to hinder or at least slow down the stride. The formation of new blocs or alliance par say in these difficult times of history seems eerie, when human security is at stake. People in Africa, Middle East, and in our very neighbourhood Afghanistan went through a lot because of these colonial powers and pseudo-human rights defenders. To safeguard their common interests, these colonial powers form alliances. Alliance to them is a "unity of interest which will make the welfare of one the welfare of all, and the quarrel of one the quarrel of all; and in war, or rather for war, by inducing such measures of organization and defense as shall be felt by all to be a fair distribution of a burden of which each reaps the benefit."

As mentioned by Alfred T. Mahan, "Whoever rules the waves rules the world". Indo-Pacific due to its unique water-channel positioning makes it a geopolitical epicenter of the new political alliance system, rivalry, and making it epicenter of great-power competition. AUKUS - the Indo-Pacific alliance was launched by the three countries (Australia, U.K., U.S.) in September 2021. Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. working on a deep collaboration across a range of advanced military technologies, including cyber, artificial intelligence, quantum technology and undersea robotics. Moreover, the U.S., U.K. and Australia will also cooperate in developing hypersonic weapons and other advanced military technology. In the given circumstances, this cooperation would "undermine peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region". Many security experts hold that AUKUS - a Asia-Pacific Version of NATO in making. By cooperating on military technology advancement including hypersonic weapons, AUKUS is now a security alliance rather than a non-security alliance. This initiative backed by the U.S. would put Australia in an awkward position

as it would label Australia too as warmongering, reactionary and belligerent. However, this term Indo-Pacific was coined to counter the rise of the east as a bloc. It is to divide the eastern countries and push them into alliance with the western countries. It is also to lessen the influence of the regional powers like Russia and China. AUKUS and QUAD are basic part of the U.S.'s containment strategy to restrict the rise of East. Through this alliance system, the U.S. is trying to balance and uphold the status quo. The U.S. and U.K. by engaging with this part of the world is actually ensuring their own security. QUAD, AUKUS are actually meant to enhance their own relative power to maintain their positions in the international arena. This all has increased the pre-existing power competition in the very Indo-Pacific region. The impetus behind all these new alliance systems is to curtail the growth of China and to limit the Russian influence in the region. In addition, to be actively involved in the Indo-Pacific would enhance the U.S. ability to steer the balance of power in its favour. It is also an initiative to reinforce the Anglo-Saxon grouping in the Indo-Pacific region.

What is left with the major powers, is to develop a counter-alliance system and for that SCO is the best medium. Russia, China, Pakistan and other SCO should form a unique counter-balancing bloc to safeguard regional peace and stability. Regional prosperity is only possible through peace-time alliance. The strategic shift to geo-economics is the key for the SCO countries to cooperate and form a close association. It will not only counter the western influence but would also contribute in making individual state's independent of western financial pressures.

- Sabah Aslam is Founder & Executive Director of Islamabad Institute of Conflict Resolution - IICR.

Briefs

Four terrorists killed in Bannu

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on the CTD officials, causing the raiding team to respond effectively. The encounter lasted for 40 minutes in which four terrorists were killed. Some accomplices managed to escape towards nearby hills during the nighttime operation. Weapons in a large quantity were also seized from the terrorists including one Kalashnikov with magazines, one rifle, two pistols, cartridges, NICs, cash amount, mobile phones, various cards and other items. Search operation was launched to arrest those remaining terrorist who fled. It said that deceased terrorists belonged to TTP's local commander Zargul alias Uncle group, Haider Group North Waziristan, LashkarAkmal group and commander Noor Dawood group North Waziristan. Those terrorists killed were identified as ZiaurRehman alias Hafiz, Shah Fiyaz alias Shahbaz, SaudurRehman alias Hamza and local commander Noor Muhammad alias Junaid who was carrying Rs1.5 million head money.

Nation stands united against terrorism: PM

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and we owe them a lot. We will not let their sacrifices go waste," the prime minister told the tribal elders. The prime minister thanked tribal elders for their all-out support in the war against terrorism for a peaceful and stable Pakistan. In response, tribal elders assured the prime minister of their complete support for the peace, stability, and prosperity of Pakistan. Earlier, Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa received the prime minister when he arrived in North Waziristan. The premier then laid a floral wreath at the Shuhada monument and offered fateha for martyred soldiers. During the visit, the prime minister was given a detailed briefing on the prevalent security situation with a special focus on terrorists' activities from across the border, a separate statement from the PM Office read. The prime minister was also briefed on the western border management system including the status of border fencing. Speaking on the occasion, the PM paid rich tributes to the officers and men of the Pakistan Army for their success in breaking the back of terrorism. PM Shehbaz said it was not too long ago that terrorists had been indiscriminately targeting innocent men, women, children, educational institutions, and state infrastructure across the country. "Thanks to the valiant efforts of our armed forces, fully supported by the nation, we have been successful in defeating and degrading all types of terrorist organisations and dismantling their infrastructure."

Bilawal, Nawaz meet to resolve issues

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crucial for the country's development. He also claimed that there has never been such a hostile political environment in Pakistan as there was during PTI's tenure. "Khan promoted the culture of hooliganism and immorality." Noting that there was an enormous challenge facing the new government, he called for joint efforts from all the parties to resolve Pakistan's issues. "We need to work together as Pakistan saw the worst of times during the four years that Imran Khan was in power [...] he took U-turns on everything and always did the opposite of what he vowed to," Nawaz said. Taking a jibe at the PTI chairman, Nawaz said that Khan had claimed that he would take his own life before approaching the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for financial support.

China proposes 'global security initiative'

BEIJING: The Chinese president on Thursday proposed a "global security initiative" to promote "security for all" in the world. "We need to work together to maintain peace and stability in the world," Xi Jinping told Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022. "Stability brings a country prosperity while instability leads a country to poverty," said Xi, quoting a Chinese proverb to emphasize his initiative. The Chinese proposal comes amid Russia's war on Ukraine which began on Feb. 24 and during which nearly 15,000 people have been killed. More than 5 million refugees have fled Ukraine since the war erupted two months ago, according to the UN. It has also led to global instability in energy supplies as western nations mounted punishing sanctions on Russia to force it to halt its military operations against its southern neighbor. China has, so far, avoided condemning Russia over its war on Ukraine. Instead, Beijing has insisted on facilitating dialogue between Moscow and Kyiv to seek a solution to the conflict. Beijing has called for "solving the root cause" of the conflict while it has opposed the expansion of NATO. However, Xi said security is the "precondition for development." "We humanity are



living in an indivisible security community. It has been proven time and again that the Cold War mentality would only wreck the

global peace framework, that hegemonism and power politics would only endanger world peace, and that bloc confrontation would only exacerbate security challenges in the 21st century," the Chinese president said, apparently addressing the US. To promote "security for all" in the world, Xi said: "China would like to propose a Global Security Initiative that we stay committed to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and work together to maintain world peace and security." Xi also called for respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries emphasizing "non-interference in internal affairs, and respect for the independent choices of development paths and social systems made by people in different countries." Calling Asia an "anchor for world peace," the Chinese president said: "When Asia fares well, the whole world benefits." "Therefore, we need to continue developing and strengthening Asia, demonstrate Asia's resilience, wisdom and strength, and... a powerhouse for global growth and a new pacesetter for international cooperation," he added. While urging "peaceful resolution of differences and disputes" through dialogue and consultation, Xi rejected "double standards, and opposed the wanton use of unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction." - Agencies

Uzbek President hopeful for the better future of Uzbekistan



NEWS DESK

TASHKENT: President Shavkat Mirziyoyev arrived in Uzbekistan's Kashkadarya region to become familiar with the development of regions and people's living conditions, reports "Dunyo" IA correspondent. According to the press service of the President of Uzbekistan, the Head of the state visited the Kukdala district.

The initiative to form this territorial-administrative unit was included in the pre-election program of Shavkat Mirziyoyev. By the decision of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of March 17 this year, the Kukdala district was formed in one part of the Chiroqchi district to create amenities for the population and streamline the process of urbanization. On the eve of the President's visit, Chiroqchi Cluster LLC sewing enterprises started operating in the

new district. Its building is constructed of lightweight structures. The enterprise employs about 500 local women and young people. The President became familiar with the working process at the enterprise and talked with women. "As you can see, we take a lot of decisions and organizational measures to support women. The main goal is to make you happy. If we provide a woman with a job, her mood will affect the whole family, she will raise her children well. Today we will offer many plans and opportunities. We strive for the time to come when dreams come true in Uzbekistan", Shavkat Mirziyoyev said. The company produces 7 million units of ready-made clothing per year. Most of the products are exported under the brand "Samo". To this end, it is planned to establish cooperation with well-known foreign brands. The cluster manager was given recommendations on increasing cotton yields and developing new lands. The city of Yettitum is defined as the administrative center of the Kukdala district. Now it is necessary to develop the infrastructure here. The President got acquainted with the project of detailed planning of the city.

CPEC Phase-2 contributes to development of Pakistan

BEIJING: The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has entered its second phase, with a focus on industry, agriculture, technology, tourism thus contributing to overall socio-economic development in the country, said Pakistan Ambassador to China, Moin ul Haque. The flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is also helping in the development of remote areas, creation of jobs, and improving the livelihoods of people, he said in a recent interview with Sun Chao, Head of Belt and Road Ambassador Interview Program, the Author of Global Leaders on the Belt and Road Initiative. Sharing his views on many important topics, including China's Belt and Road Initiative, Ambassador Haque termed China Pakistan



Economic Corridor (CPEC), a transformational project for Pakistan. He said, the CPEC has facilitated the upgrade of our physical infrastructure, addressed our acute energy needs, and contributed to the development of Gwadar Port. It is very much in

sync with Pakistan's renewed focus on geo-economics and economic security. About the development of innovative sectors in Pakistan, he said, the emerging technologies like AI, robotics, 5G, big data, and quantum computing are having a huge impact on our lives. The useful applications of these technologies in sectors like trade, industry, agriculture, health and education cannot be denied. Consequently, this area has the necessary attention of the government of Pakistan. Ambassador Haque informed that an initiative called Digital Pakistan has been launched. The government has announced new policy package to promote innovation and research in IT areas. A number of incubation centers in the country have been established to assist new start-up companies. - APP

Impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer behaviour

To uncover the impact of Celebrity endorsement on the sales of brands, let's have a look at some of the major events that majority of people would know about

HUZAIMA AJMAL / SHAMAZ SHAFIQ

Generally, a celebrity is any famous and influential individual that is admired and is much talked about by the people in society. A celebrity endorsement is when any person enjoys public recognition and is considered as a public figure, and upon that general recognition appears in the advertisements on behalf of the consumer goods to endorse the quality or the product as a whole. In recent years, we have seen that most of the advertisements on television, social media, and traditional media use celebrities for the endorsement of their products and services, which results in influencing the buyer and target customers to trust any particular brand or their products. But the question here is; why are brands paying hefty amounts of money to celebrities for appearing in 30seconds-1 minute advertisements? To dig deeper, when we look at statistical data, we see

that the brands that do celebrity endorsements witness a prominent increase in their sales and productivity. Celebrity endorsement is now the common activity for advertisement in Pakistan and globally. A pattern of connectivity is being established by the communication between the celebrity and the brand they endorse. The term Celebrity endorsement might be established in the 1760's as most people say, but the concept of promoting certain products or services through the people who are trusted by the general audience is centuries old. To uncover the impact of Celebrity endorsement on the sales of brands, let's have a look at some of the major events that majority of people would know about; In 1984 a basketball player Micheal Jordan was emerging as a very talented asset in the NBA, and everyone was very optimistic about Micheal going a long way in Basketball, because of his unmatched talents. That's when Nike, a brand formerly famous for running shoes decided to enter the sneakers market and proposed Micheal with an

offer of upfront 250,000 dollars and a sneaker line only with his name, which made him reject other offers by brands such as Addidas. The partnership started and at that time, NBA only allowed players to play with white sneakers, and the only prominent player, wearing a prominent pair of Nike Air Jordans, made out of Black, Red, and White colors (Colors of Chicago Bulls; the league he used to play for), everytime he wore Jordans, NBA fined the player with \$5000 but Nike was ready to pay for the Fines too, for the only reason that Jordans would be highly prominent when all other players would be wearing plain white sneakers, this shook the sneakers market, and the rest is history. The projections Nike did to earn from this partnership was to have 3 million dollar sales of Air Jordans for the first 4 years, but the brand sold 126 Million dollars worth of Air Jordans only in the first year alone. This historic example makes us believe an exponential and at times, very unreal level of growth attained by many brands when they

started doing celebrity endorsements. To direct our examples towards the Pakistan's context, we see that almost all major brands now use celebrities to endorse their products, and this highly depends on what a celebrity is famous for. For instance, Shahid Afridi who is a well known Pakistani Cricketer and is very popular among the people of Pakistan, is known to have silky hair, due to this quality, a shampoo brand Head and Shoulders partnered with Shahid Afridi to endorse their Shampoo which brought a very positive impact on the brand's sales, even though there isn't much data available publicly regarding the monetary benefits enjoyed by the brand due to this partnership, but the positive impact is evident from the repetitive ads the brand shot with Shahid Afridi, indicating that their sales were booming due to his endorsements Pepsi also took Shahid Afridi on board because they wanted their product to be connected with sports, and to do so, Shahid Afridi was the best person to endorse the fizzy drink, the advertisement

was made and it was displayed extensively during the last quarter of 2012, followed by another advertisement - featuring Misbah-ul-Haq and Shahid Afridi with a feature line, 'Ye PEPSI kis ki hogi', leading to polls being conducted over social media and people from all across the country engaged in this campaign and made it a huge success for the brand by exponentially growing their sales volumes. The examples to discuss are numerous, almost every brand is using celebrities to endorse their products, and long discussions can be done to prove that each of these brands involves these celebrities and pays heaps of money because they are sure that the endorsements will convince the target customers to buy and ultimately grow the sales. To conclude, celebrity endorsements always tend to bring a positive impact on a brand's sales by associating certain characteristics of a well-known celebrity to the product they endorse leading people to believe in the endorsements and consume the products.

Badosa qualifies for the quarterfinals in Stuttgart

STUTTGART: Spanish tennis players Paula Badosa and Sara Sorribes qualified this Thursday for the quarterfinals of their respective clay court tournaments in Stuttgart (Germany) and Istanbul, with much more work for the Catalan. This, second seeded in the indoor red clay event, suffered a lot in her complicated debut against Kazakh Elena Rybakina, nineteenth in the world and who forced her to play a 'sudden death' in a third and final set to seal her victory. pass among the top eight. Badosa had to battle for two and a half hours to get rid of his rival 6-2, 4-6, 7-6(4) after a hard-fought match in which he could only dominate in the first set that he got back on track very quickly thanks to two 'breaks' and his firmness with the serve. But Rybakina, fourth last summer in Tokyo, reacted forcefully, breaking Badosa's first two serves in the second set for a 4-0 lead. The number three in the world recovered and returned the breaks, but gave up her serve again when she was looking for 5-4 and the Kazakh, after saving a 'break' ball, did not forgive to take the clash to a third and final set where Badosa had to finish his pass in the 'tie-break' after winning a 4-1 lead. - APP

Ronaldo thanks Liverpool fans for 'moment of respect'

LONDON: Manchester United star forward Cristiano Ronaldo has extended gratitude to Liverpool fans after they showed support for the Portuguese following the death of his newborn child. Manchester United and Liverpool fans, on Tuesday, came together at Anfield for a minute of fan-led applause in solidarity with Cristiano and his family. In the seventh minute of the league encounter, Liverpool fans sang their club's anthem, 'You'll Never Walk Alone,' which is Cristiano's jersey number at United. In an Instagram post, Cristiano thanked Liverpool fans for showing support for him in tough times. - Agencies

Respect Muslims' religious beliefs: China to Sweden

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society. No civilization is superior to others. They are different only in feature and geographical distribution. He said that the Chinese side advocates replacing clash of civilizations with exchange of civilizations and added, We oppose discriminatory rhetoric against certain religion and civilization.

Zahid Durrani elected as NA Deputy Speaker

ISLAMABAD: JamiatUlema-e-Islam (JUI-F) parliamentarian ZahidAkramDurrani has been elected as Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly unopposed here on Thursday. Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf announced the result of the election, saying there was only one validly nominated MNA ZahidAkramDurrani for the slot, who had been declared Deputy Speaker of the House. Durrani was the only candidate who fielded his nomination papers with the National Assembly Secretariat by the end of the stipulated time on Tuesday. Following the election, the Speaker administered the oath of office from the newly elected Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly. - APP

PM, JUI-F chief discuss political situation

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the chief of JamiatUlema-e-Islam MaulanaFazlurRehman met here Thursday and discussed the overall political situation in the country. The meeting was joined by federal ministers RanaSanullah and KhwajaSaadRafique. MaulanaFazlurRehman expressed concern over the economic indicators presented during the government's first cabinet meeting, the PM Office said. He welcomed the government's commitment to steer the country out of current challenges to ensure a journey of progress and development. - APP

IRSA releases 105927 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Thursday released 105927 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 110390 cases. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1077.85 feet, which was 27.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded a 31663 and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 47113, 40148 and 25670 cases respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River, a total of 21900 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 18227 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala. - APP

Govt notifies posting, transfer of officer

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Thursday notified transfer and posting of high rank officers. According to a notification issued by Establishment Division, Ata-ur-Rehman, a BS-19 officer of Police Service of Pakistan, presently serving in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) under Interior Division, is transferred and his services were placed at the disposal of government of the Punjab, with immediate effect and until further orders. While Flt. Lt. (Retd) Quratul Ain Fatima has relinquished the charge of the post of Deputy Secretary, (BS19/PAS/Acting Charge) and assumed the charge of the post of Deputy (BSIS/PAS) on regular basis in this division. - APP

Briefs

Uzbekistan development Strategy presented in Beijing

BEIJING: A presentation of the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan was held at the Headquarters of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Beijing, reports "Dunya" IA correspondent. The event, organized by the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Beijing together with the Development Strategy Center of Uzbekistan, SCO Secretariat and Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies, was attended by the leadership and permanent representatives of the SCO member states, senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, as well as representatives of diplomatic corps, socio-political, expert-analytical, business circles and Chinese media.

SCO Secretary-General Zhang Ming praised Uzbekistan's important contribution to ensuring sustainable development, peace and stability in the SCO region. In recent years, large-scale reforms have been carried out in the country under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Chinese experts focused on the progress achieved in Uzbekistan over the 5 years in the development of almost all spheres of society, including education, healthcare, employment, social security, poverty reduction, youth and women's development.

Participants gave a positive assessment of Uzbekistan's constructive and open foreign policy. Tashkent's efforts to further develop broad international cooperation, including within the framework of the UN, SCO and other organizations.

Netflix loses \$54B in market value

LONDON: Netflix saw a loss of more than \$54 billion in market value as its stock price plummeted over 35% on Wednesday, a day after the company announced its first loss of subscribers in over a decade. The stock price of Netflix, a US-based global streaming service and production company, closed Wednesday at \$226.19 per share on the Nasdaq - down 35.12% from its previous close of \$348.61 a share. While the company had a market capitalization of \$154.77 billion on Tuesday, this plummeted to \$100.42 billion on Wednesday - a \$54.35 billion loss in market cap. The sudden decline came after Netflix reported late Tuesday that it had lost 200,000 subscribers during the first three months of 2022, marking its first loss in users since October 2011. The company cited account sharing, revenue decline, and rising competition as major issues. More than 100 million households use a shared password around the world for the company's service, with over 30 million of those in the US and Canada, according to Netflix. "Our revenue growth has slowed considerably... a large number of households sharing accounts, combined with competition, create revenue growth headwinds," the company told shareholders after the release of its first-quarter financial results on Tuesday. - APP

Russia closes consulates of Baltic states

MOSCOW: Russia has closed consulates of Baltic states and expelled diplomats in a retaliatory move, the country's Foreign Ministry announced on Thursday. In a statement, the ministry announced the decision to close the Latvian consulates in Saint Petersburg and Pskov, Estonia's consulate in Saint Petersburg and its office in Pskov, and the Lithuanian consulate in Saint Petersburg. The ministry said all diplomats of the consulates, including their heads, are declared "persona non grata," adding that employees of administrative and technical staff who are not citizens of Russia are "unacceptable." "We demanded that all the mentioned persons leave the territory of the Russian Federation within the same time interval that was given for the departure of employees of Russian consular missions from these countries," the ministry said. - Agencies

UK Ambassador Partnership appoints Javed Malik as regional director

Javed Malik is a distinguished personality in the region being the President of the Diplomatic Business Club Dubai

DUBAI: The prominent UK based Ambassador Partnership has designated former Ambassador of Pakistan Javed Malik as their Regional Director for Middle East and South Asian region. The influential international network of 50 former Ambassadors representing United Kingdom, Europe, the Americas and other countries that have served in over 100 countries as well as the United Nations. Prominent that are part of the Ambassadors Partnership UK include Sir Stuart Eldon OBE, Sir Richard Stagg KCMG, Amb. Peter Collocott CMG, Sir Steven Brown KCVO, Sir William Patten KCMG, Richard Schiffer Co-Chairman, Amb. James Watt CVO, Sir David Warren KCMG, Amb. Jules Chappell OBE, Amb. Nestor Osorio, Sir Richard Gozny, Amb. Peter Jenkins CMG, as well as Sir Stephan Brown who also served as the Chief Executive of the UK Trade and Investment [Full list can be seen on website : www.Ambassadorip.com]. As a distinguished global network, the Ambassador Partnership has unparalleled access to key decision makers globally and advises and assists both the private and the government sector in effective Corporate & Economic Diplomacy. "The Ambassador Partnership regards the Middle East and South Asia as an important region and we are keen to see how we can assist in promoting regional economic cooperation and corporate diplomacy, dispute resolution and reputation management as well as impact diplomatic and leadership training. We pleased to have Ambassador Javed Malik as our regional director who has worked and has a strong network in the region" explained Ambassador James Watt who was the British Ambassador to Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan and was also a diplomat with the British Embassy in Islamabad. The Regional Director ME and South Asia, Javed Malik is a distinguished personality in the region being the President of the Diplomatic Business Club Dubai. He also served as Pakistan's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain, in addition to being Pakistan's Ambassador at Large for Overseas Pakistanis and Special Envoy in for Investment & Trade based in the Gulf region. He has organized and spoken at various international forums on Trade & Economic diplomacy and Digital transformation in London, Dubai, Pakistan and other countries. While thanking the Ambassador Partnership, the Regional Director for the Middle East and South Asia Ambassador Javed Malik said that "I am honoured to represent the prestigious Ambassador Partnership with so many illustrious and eminent diplomats, Ambassadors, and government officials on its board. In today's interdependent world Sustainable Trade, Investment promotion and adapting to the impact of digital transformation are vital for Economic Revival in a post pandemic environment and with our global network we look forward to advising and assisting in this regard. In addition to other conferences, and seminars, The Diplomat Business Club also plans to host an International Trade Diplomacy Summit in Islamabad that brings together thought leaders and global personalities. 'we are looking forward to discussing this with the business community as well as the relevant stakeholders in the Ministry of Commerce, Board of Investment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the he added. - DNA



Our latest history will begin in Shusha with the V Congress of World Azerbaijanis!

TURAN RZAYEV

BAKU: Azerbaijan is on the threshold of another historic event. This event can be called the beginning of our recent history. We are talking about the V Congress of World Azerbaijanis, which will be held on April 22-23 in Shusha, the cultural capital of Azerbaijan, liberated from enemy occupation by our mighty Army under the leadership of Supreme Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev. The fact that the V Congress of World Azerbaijanis coincides with the period of large-scale reconstruction in our liberated lands, especially in Shusha, the cultural capital of Azerbaijan, has historical significance and symbolic meaning: First, Shusha is an important city for Azerbaijan, both spiritually and culturally. It is no coincidence that during the 28 years of occupation, the city of Shusha has become a symbol of confidence in victory. The value and symbolic meaning of the city of Shusha, which increased during the occupation process, is still evident today. Thus, the V Congress of World Azerbaijanis to be held in Shusha will

go down in history as the Victory Congress. Undoubtedly, this historical reality is the result of the leadership, thoughtful and decisive policy of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, President Ilham Aliyev. Secondly, about 400 diaspora representatives from 65 countries are expected to attend the Congress. This is an invaluable opportunity to declare to the world that the liberated territories have returned to their rightful owners. Winning does not mean the end of the process. This victory must be promoted worldwide. Unfortunately, we have to promote the liberation of our ancient lands. Although this is an obligation for us today, it is an important point so that the process does not flare up again in the future.

An important point related to the V Congress of World Azerbaijanis will be the first big meeting of our diaspora after the liberation of Karabakh, which in recent years has demonstrated high organization and unity, playing a special role in informing the international community about the realities of Azerbaijan. It will also be an important event in

terms of coordinating the activities of our compatriots living abroad, organizations, the realization of the idea of national solidarity and unity. Admittedly, the Azerbaijani diaspora has long lagged behind the Armenian diaspora in competition. However, the major steps taken over the past four years, such as the establishment of 14 Coordinating Councils covering 31 countries and the establishment of 18 Azerbaijani Houses in 12 countries, have borne fruit in the 44-day war. At a time when the war was in full swing, the Azerbaijani Diaspora held about 200 rallies in more than 30 countries to end Armenia's policy of aggression and restore Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. About 300 diaspora organizations operating in more than 50 countries have sent statements and appeals to heads of state and government, members of parliament and international organizations. As a result, the holding of the V Congress of World Azerbaijanis in our cultural capital Shusha, as well as the participation of about 400 representatives of the diaspora from 65 countries in the congress is an important event in terms of our recent history.

UK announces fresh sanctions on Russian generals

LONDON: A new set of sanctions announced on Thursday target the Russian generals "committing atrocities on the front-line in Ukraine, and individuals and businesses supporting" the military, the British government said. A government statement said that "following (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's renewed assault in Donetsk and Luhansk, and intelligence which reveals intentional bombing of critical and civilian infrastructure in Mariupol, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has today (Thursday 21 April) announced a new wave of 26 sanctions - targeting defence actors." It further said that since March 10, "Russian bombers have repeatedly dropped munitions on civilian infrastructure, including civil government buildings, hospitals, schools and transportation nodes." "The UK government conclusion is that this is intentional targeting based on the types of civilian targets struck, frequency of strikes, volume of munitions and the repeated targeting of the same locations on consecutive days." The sanctions target major generals from the Russian army, including Lt. Col. Azatbek Omurbekov, Col. Gen. Andrey Serdyukov, Maj. Gen. Valery Flyustikov, and Col. Gen. Nikolay Bogdanovsky. The targeted individuals include Oleg Belozorov, the CEO and chairman of vital logistics company Russian Railways; and Ilya Kiva, the defecting and expelled Ukrainian MP "who has publicly supported Russia's actions in Ukraine." "The depravity of Russia's assault on the people of Ukraine is plain for all to see. They are deliberately targeting hospitals, schools, and transport hubs in Mariupol and beyond - just as they did in Chechnya and Syria," Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said. She said: "The UK is unyielding in our support for Ukraine and in holding Putin and his regime to account. Today's new wave of sanctions hits the generals and defence companies that have blood on their hands." - APP

Queen Elizabeth II turns 96

DNA

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth II turned 96 on Thursday, receiving a rousing "Happy Birthday" from a military band and ceremonial gun salutes, after a troubled year hit by health concerns. The Band of the Coldstream Guards, in red tunics and bearskin hats, played the tribute to crowds of on-lookers outside her Windsor Castle home west of London. Ceremonial gun salutes resounded across the country, including at the Tower of London. But the queen - the oldest and longest-serving head of state in the world - marked the occasion with little fanfare, retreating to her Sandringham country estate in eastern England for a short break. No official engagements have been planned, although royal officials released a photograph of the horse-loving head of state with two of her fell ponies. Her grandson Prince William and his wife Kate called her "an inspiration to so many across the UK, the Commonwealth and the world". Royal tradition since the 18th century has also seen the monarch have a second, official birthday, typically celebrated in warmer weather in June.

UBG facilitates Naveed Qamar

KARACHI: Leaders and members of United Business Group (UBG) SM Munir, chief patron, Zubair Tufail, President and other Members UBG have congratulated Syed Naveed Qamar on being nominated as Federal Minister for Commerce and Investment. UBG said Naveed Qamar is a seasoned politician having vast experience of running different sectors particularly commerce and investment and enjoys great repute in business circles. He served the business community as a Chairman of the Standing Committee of National Assembly on Commerce. UBG expects Naveed Qamar will bring about revolutionary measures in commerce and investment, restore the confidence of the trade bodies, facilitate the business community, enhance export facilitation, encourage and ease investment policies, eliminate the bogus trade bodies, streamline the DGTO office and making it unbiased and more business friendly, activate the commercial sections of Pakistan abroad, give special attention to EPZs. - APP

A further 51,000 Ukrainians flee war: UN

GENEVA: A total of 5,085,360 Ukrainians have fled the country since Russia invaded on February 24, the UN refugee agency said Thursday. The figure marks an increase of 50,921 from Wednesday's data, UNHCR said. Women and children account for 90 percent of those who fled abroad, with men aged 18 to 60 eligible for military call-up unable to leave. The UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) said an additional 218,000 citizens of third-countries - largely students and migrant workers - have also escaped to neighbouring countries. Beyond the refugees, the IOM estimates 7.1 million people are displaced within in Ukraine. Before the invasion, Ukraine had a population of 37 million in the regions under government control, excluding Russia-annexed Crimea and the pro-Russian separatist-controlled regions in the east. - APP

EU sends \$22 million humanitarian aid to Lebanon

BRUSSELS: The European Commission announced on Thursday that the EU will send 20 million (almost \$22 million) of humanitarian aid to Lebanon to ease the food insecurity exacerbated by Russia's war in Ukraine. "To support the most vulnerable segments of the population in Lebanon, the EU has allocated an additional 20 million in humanitarian aid to respond to rising food insecurity and other needs," the EU executive body said in a statement. - APP

COVID-19 cases continue to decline globally: WHO

GENEVA: The numbers of new COVID-19 cases and fatalities worldwide have continued to decline since the end of March, the World Health Organization said Thursday, with more than 5 million infections and 18,000 deaths reported in the last week. "During the week of April 11 to 17, over 5 million cases and over 18,000 deaths were reported across the six WHO regions, a 24% and 12% decrease compared to the previous week," said the global health organization. As of April 17, more than 500 million confirmed cases and over 6 million deaths were reported globally, it noted. All regions reported decreasing trends in the number of new weekly infections and fatalities. "The trends should be interpreted with caution as several countries are progressively changing their COVID-19 testing strategies, resulting in lower overall numbers of tests performed and as a result lower numbers of cases detected," said WHO. South Korea reported the highest number of new weekly cases (972,082 new cases, down by 33%), France (827,350, a decrease of 11%), Germany (769,466, down by 25%), Italy (421,707, a decline of 6%), and Japan (342,665, up by 1%). The highest numbers of new weekly deaths were reported in the US (3,076 further deaths, down by 9%), Russia (1,784, a decrease of 11%), South Korea (1,671, a reduction of 24%), Germany (1,227, down by 27%), and Italy (944, 5% less). - Agencies



STOCKHOLM: Pakistan ambassador to Sweden Zahoor Ahmed visits the Buddharama Temple in Stockholm. He was warmly welcomed by Monk Phramaha Boonthin Taositi. - DNA

Azerbaijan-Kyrgyzstan: Ties with bright prospects

DNA

BAKU: Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov paid an official visit to Azerbaijan on April 20. This was his first visit to Azerbaijan since his election as Kyrgyzstan's president in January 2021. As part of the visit, the presidents of the two countries signed a strategic partnership declaration. The signed declaration represents a serious effort to deepen bilateral cooperation. In the case of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan, the definition of a "declaration on the strategic partnership" should be interpreted as a political and cultural acknowledgment of the two countries' proximity. The strategic partnership involves a high level of interaction and encourages countries to collaborate strategically. Language, traditions, cultural, and historical roots bind Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan together. The signing of cooperation agreements and such high-level meetings are critical for closer cooperation and the further strengthening of bilateral ties between the two countries.

In addition, the two countries have always supported each other in all international organizations, including the UN, OSCE, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The strate-

gic partnership declaration elevates relations between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan to a new level. Given that Azerbaijan has always prioritized the development of bilateral relations with various countries around the world, the signing of this declaration can be considered another significant diplomatic success for the country. Prior to the signing of the declaration, relations between the two countries were more friendly, but not as developed or extensive as they could have been. There is now every reason and a plethora of opportuni-

ties to deepen and strengthen bilateral cooperation as soon as possible.

The declaration has the potential to open up a wide range of opportunities for the two countries to develop and consider cooperation. Although the strategic partnership focuses primarily on bilateral cooperation, it also includes a multilateral format. It is worth noting that Kyrgyzstan considers the transportation sector to be one of the most important areas of cooperation for OTS member countries. Azerbaijan has a



modern transportation infrastructure that allows cargo to be sent in all directions - north, south, and west. Officials in Bishkek have repeatedly emphasized the importance of fully utilizing the Trans-Caspian International Transport Corridor [Middle Corridor], which is the safest and shortest trade route between Europe and Asia. Now that Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan have signed a declaration on strategic partnership, it will be easier to complete all mutually beneficial projects. Especially since China has already begun the construction of a new railway route. The train will travel through Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic before arriving in Mannheim, Germany. At the same time, the two countries have excellent investment opportunities, particularly in the energy infrastructure sector. Apart from the strategic partnership declaration, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan have signed 10 important documents and agreements, including those on agricultural cooperation, information technology, aviation, antimonopoly regulation, and intellectual property protection. They also signed a memorandum of understanding on the formation of the Interstate Council, under which they will discuss bilateral issues, as well as regional and international issues, more effectively and actively on a regular basis.

Briefs

Rawalpindi-Orange Line routes to be linked up from Monday

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a big step to facilitate the residents of Rawalpindi traveling to Islamabad International Airport, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed to connect between the routes of the Rawalpindi metro bus and Orange Line metro.

The prime minister directed the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) to connect the metro route originating from Rawalpindi Saddar and the Islamabad Secretariat with the Peshawar More Station of the Orange Line metro.

For this purpose, a junction is being made at Faiz Ahmed Faiz station of Rawalpindi metro, which will become operational by Monday. After its inauguration by PM Shehbaz Sharif, the Orange Line metro at present is running from Peshawar More's NHA Station up to Islamabad International Airport. From Monday onwards, the travelers from Rawalpindi besides accessing the airport route will also benefit through the connections of Golra and NUST.

LHC bench excuses from hearing Maryam's plea

LAHORE: A Lahore High Court (LHC) division bench on Thursday excused from hearing a petition filed by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice President Maryam Nawaz seeking directions for return of her passport for performing Umrah. The division bench comprising Justice Syed Shahbaz Ali Rizvi and Justice Anwaarul Haq Pannun observed that it could not entertain the petition as previously the matter was heard by another bench.

The bench referred the petition to the LHC Chief Justice for fixing the same before the relevant bench. Maryam Nawaz through her petition submitted that she surrendered her passport to the high court after a division bench granted her post-arrest bail in the Chaudhry Sugar Mills case in 2019. She submitted that as per the Constitution, freedom of movement was a fundamental right and the passport condition imposed through the bail granting order deprived her of the said right. The PML-N leader requested the court to direct the Deputy Registrar (Judicial) to return her passport. - APP

SC allows Czech model to fly abroad in drugs case

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed the Customs appeal and allowed Czech Republic model Tereza Hluskova for travelling abroad in drugs smuggling case. A three-member SC bench comprising Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Sayyed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi heard the Customs appeal against acquittal of Tereza Hluskova. During the course of proceedings, Justice Ijaz asked whether the heroin samples sent to the lab according to the law? Advocate Waqar A Sheikh counsel for the Customs said that the trial court had ruled that the delivery of samples was correct. He said that the accused had purchased the ticket and would leave for abroad on April 23. He pleaded the court to put the Czech model's name on the no flying list. Justice Ijaz said that the court would only include the model's name on no fly list after it deemed it appropriate.

He said that Islamabad High Court's decision regarding acquittal of accused was correct. Tereza Hluskova was sentenced to eight years and eight months in jail by a Sessions court in April 2019. She was arrested at Lahore airport for attempting to smuggle heroin from Pakistan to Abu Dhabi on January 10, 2018. - APP

Election Commissioner is anti-PTI, says Imran Khan

Imran Khan went on to say: "When prices of sugar had risen to Rs26, our government tried to stop them but those people exposed themselves," he said. Khan also expressed dissatisfaction with the CEC Sikandar Raja Sultan



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Ex-prime minister Imran Khan Wednesday slammed Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Raja Sultan, saying he is anti-PTI and has given many verdicts against his party. The PTI chairman spoke at length on social media about his party's challenges and

problems faced after coming into power in August 2018, stressing that NRO II will be disastrous for the country. "Ex-president Pervaiz Musharraf gave Asif Zardari and Nawaz Sharif NRO I, and now if they both are given NRO II, no one will accept the justice system in Pakistan and it is dangerous for the country," said Imran Khan. Imran Khan was speaking during a Twitter Spaces session, which attracted hundreds of thousands of listeners from all over the world. The former prime minister has lately been holding rallies and public gatherings in the country as a part of the PTI's campaign to galvanize public support for an early election in the country and his participation in Twitter space was also a part of that campaign.

Talking about the current political scenario and his ouster through the no-trust motion, the ex-prime minister said that in his first speech after coming into power, he had said that they all [the current ruling alliance] would unite against him. "I had mentioned it in my very first speech as PM that in the name of democracy, all other parties will campaign against me," he said. Without taking names but in an apparent reference to his disgruntled party members Aleem Khan and Jehangir Khan Tareen, Imran Khan said that they tried to take advantage of the PTI's government. "Some of our people had thought that they

would make money after coming into power, but we tried to stop them," he added. Imran Khan went on to say: "When prices of sugar had risen to Rs26, our government tried to stop them but those people exposed themselves," he said. Khan also expressed dissatisfaction with the Chief Election Commission (CEC) Sikandar Raja Sultan. On Monday, Khan had said a deadlock emerged between the then Opposition and government on the appointment of the chief election commissioner. In light of the situation, the establishment suggested Sultan's name, he had said, adding that the CEC should be appointed through an independent body. However, during the Twitter Spaces session, Imran Khan said: "CEC Sultan Raja is too much anti-PTI as he has announced many decisions against our party."

"If the investigation into the party funding of all political parties is conducted, including PML-N, and PPP, I can challenge that only PTI has proper data of foreign funding, however, both PML-N and PPP will not be able to provide such data," he asserted. Talking about the "letter gate" conspiracy in which Imran Khan claimed that the US government was involved in ousting him from power through a no-trust motion, he said: "I had invited the heads of the then opposition alliance to see the letter but they did not come". The ex-prime minister further said that no one should speak against

Pakistan Army as the country needs army more than Imran Khan.

"When Nawaz Sharif was ousted, he had started speaking against institutions," he said, adding that, "the country would have been divided into three pieces if Pakistan Army was not there." The PTI chairman also termed dissident party MNAs traitors. It is worth mentioning here that before the no-confidence motion against Imran Khan, around 24 members of the PTI had announced to part ways with the ruling party. "During the current scenario, many electable kept standing with us but several of them betrayed us for their personnel interests," he said. Shedding light on the preparation for the upcoming election in the country, Imran Khan said: "I had not given party tickets in 2018 elections, however, this time I will give tickets after a proper scrutiny." Imran Khan also termed his experience of running the country with a coalition government "worst of all".

He said that his government had been passed through a very difficult time as PTI had a very thin majority in the National Assembly. "Due to the coalition government, we were blackmailed most of the time and every time the PTI government had to compromise for passing laws," he said, adding that "therefore, I ask the masses to vote for the PTI next time for a clear majority so we could build a strong government."

Nigerian Chief of Defence meets Gen Nadeem Raza

RAWALPINDI: General Lucky Eluonye Onyenuchea Leo Irabor, Chief of Defence Staff Nigerian Armed Forces, who is on official visit to Pakistan called on General Nadeem Raza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi, today. Matters of bilateral defence cooperation including security, military exchanges, training and prevailing regional environment were discussed during the meeting. Chief of Defence Staff Nigeria said that these mutually beneficial interactions have deepened the bilateral defence relationship, strengthened the cooperation and enhanced mutual understanding between the two armies. Chairman JCSC reaffirmed the strong and long-standing bilateral defence relationship between Nigeria and Pakistan. The visiting dignitary expressed his complete satisfaction on the performance JF-17 fighter aircraft, inducted from Pakistan. He also said that the JF-17 aircraft, with its unique fighting capabilities, would prove to be a potent platform in addressing the security requirements of Nigeria. - DNA



MUZAFFARABAD: US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar visits the Line of Control, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. - DNA

Palestine calls for urgent Geneva session

RAMALLAH: The State of Palestine sent an urgent letter to the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions, to assume their responsibilities and pursue concrete measures aimed at enforcing the Convention and previous Declarations; The State of Palestine requested that the High Contracting Parties convene an urgent Conference to determine whether Israel's gross violations of international humanitarian law have transformed this occupation into an illegal regime necessitating even further action by the international community; The State of Palestine calls on all High Contracting Parties to intensify their efforts, in line with their legal obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, to undertake serious legal, political, and diplomatic

measures to ensure Israel's compliance with international law as a necessary for a regional and international stability; Israel, the occupying Power, must fully and effectively respect the Fourth Geneva Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and investigate and bring to justice all those responsible for all serious violations of international humanitarian law; International law, including humanitarian and human rights law, cannot be selectively applied when it comes to the Palestinian people, who continue to unjustly suffer under Israel's nearly five decade-long military occupation; The Palestinian people must be accorded the same rights and protections, guaranteed by international law, that are accorded to all other peoples. - DNA

Afghan blasts: Over 34 killed, 102 wounded

NEWS DESK

MAZARI-SHARIF: At least 34 people were killed and 102 others wounded in two explosions in northern Afghanistan on Thursday, local media reported. In Mazar-i-Sharif, capital of Balkh province, at least 30 worshippers were killed and 80 others wounded when a blast ripped through a mosque, the Khaama Press quoted officials of Abu Ali Sina Regional Hospital in the city as saying. Health officials in Abu Ali Sina hospital in the Mazar-e-Sharif city of the northern Balkh province said that 30 killed and 80 wounded have been dispatched to the hospital after an explosion hit "Se Dukan" mosque in the city. The health officials have said that the number of victims is feared to increase as the statistics are preliminary. An eyewitness said that the blast took place inside the Saay Doakaan Mosque when scores of worshippers were offering prayers at around 12:45 p.m. local time.

The second blast came about 15 minutes later in neighboring Kunduz province, killing four people and wounding 22 others. The Kunduz blast occurred after a roadside bomb hit a vehicle carrying military personnel on the outskirts of provincial capital Kunduz city, according to spokesman of provincial police Obaidullah Abid. Abid said that military personnel were killed and

PM strongly condemns bomb blast

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday strongly condemned the bomb blast which took place at a mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif city of Afghanistan. The prime minister expressed condolence over the loss of lives and prayed for peace of the departed souls and early recovery of the injured. He said that Pakistan always desired peace in Afghanistan. - DNA

It was not immediately known if any pedestrians were affected by the explosion. In addition, two children were slightly wounded in a bomb attack in Police District 5 of the country's capital of Kabul earlier Thursday morning, police spokesman Khalid Zadran confirmed in a tweet. Details about the incidents are not available amid the absence of any official statement. No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks. In recent months, the war-torn country was hit by a series of terror attacks reportedly staged by militants of the Islamic State (IS) group opposing the Taliban-led caretaker government.

PIA postpones direct flights to Australia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has postponed its direct flights to Sydney, which were scheduled to commence on April 22, after the Australian Home Ministry decided to review security arrangements at the Lahore and Karachi Airports.

"The PIA is postponing the first two flights until the review is completed," PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez Khan said in a press statement here on Thursday. He said the PIA administration and the Pakistani embassy were in constant contact with the Australian authorities and extending full cooperation in completing the security review. The spokesman said passengers of the first two scheduled flights were being informed about the postponement of the flights through the PIA's call centre.

PM Shehbaz set to visit Saudi Arabia next week

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Newly elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will leave for Saudi Arabia on April 27 (Wednesday) on his first official trip after assuming the office. The prime minister will arrive in Saudi Arabia on April 27 along with his senior cabinet members.

PM Shehbaz Sharif during his visit to Saudi Arabia will perform Umrah and meet the Saudi leadership. In this connection, the foreign minister has started preparations for the premier's upcoming Saudi Arabia visit, likely to take place next week, they said.

Sources say that details of the PM's upcoming Saudi Arabia visit will be released in due course of time by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After Saudi Arabia, the prime minister will pay a visit to China, said sources. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud recently felicitated Shehbaz Sharif on his election as the prime minister. In a statement from the PM's Office, Salman made a telephone call to PM Shehbaz Sharif and warmly congratulated him on assuming the prime minister's office.

PM directs probe into Dadu villages fire

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday directed the authorities concerned to hold a complete probe into the fire incident which had engulfed two villages in Dadu districts of Sindh. The prime minister, who was presented an initial report on the tragedy, also vowed to take strict action if anyone found to have shown negligence in dispensation of the duties.

On the prime minister's directives, an amount of Rs 10 million was released for the heirs of the deceased as well as those injured in the incident. The prime minister instructed the district government to extend all possible support till rehabilitation of the victim families. - APP



ISLAMABAD: The British High Commissioner Dr. Christian Turner calls on Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar. - DNA

Khar lauds British role in promoting various sectors

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The British High Commissioner Dr. Christian Turner called on Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar in her office. He congratulated her on assuming the office and hoped that both sides will work together to further deepen the Pakistan-UK relations.

Minister of State (MoS) Khar thanked the British High Commissioner for the felicitations and stated that Pakistan highly values its relations with the UK, which are based on mutual respect and shared perceptions on broad range of regional and international issues. MoS also appreciated the role un-

dertaken by the British government in promoting health, education, governance and human development in Pakistan. Both sides also agreed to celebrate 75th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations in a befitting manner. Besides bilateral relations, discussions on evolving geopolitical situation and regional matters including IIOJK & Afghanistan also took place. MoS noted with concern the economic impact of the continuity of the Ukraine crisis and expressed the need for early resolution of the matter through diplomacy and peaceful means. The British High Commissioner thanked MoS and conveyed his good wishes and keen interest in promoting bilateral relations.