



# Islamabad POST

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**Egypt's El-Sisi on surprise visit to Saudi Arabia**

Detailed News On Page-07

**No need for US forces in Iraq, says PM Sudani**

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**Amir likely to take back retirement**

Detailed News On Page-07



## Elections in Punjab, KPK

# SC announces verdict today

Govt submits petition to form new bench; CJP stresses political dialogue, decision reserved

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court Monday reserved the verdict on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) plea against the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to delay the elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The court said that it will issue the verdict today (Tuesday), but the time would be announced later. While directing the Attorney General of Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan, Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial — who was heading the three-judge bench comprising Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Ijazul Ahsan — said that the government and PTI should find a solution through political dialogue. "Have a political dialogue for the Pakistani nation's sake. Reach a political conclusion," the chief justice said. The verdict was issued despite the government seeking the formation of a new bench to hear the case. CJP Bandial said that Constitutional machinery exists if political dialogue doesn't take place. "Allegations are being made because everyone wants to fulfil political interests. They even want to choose their own judges to have their cases heard," the chief justice remarked adding that this has never happened before. CJP Bandial urged for patience and tolerance while stating that he respects the parliament and government. "The idea of elections taking place at the same time is excellent. But two assemblies have been dissolved in this case. A guarantee would be needed from the federal government," he said. The top judge of the country further spoke about the lack of political dialogue in the country and acknowledged the pressure on the federal government. "If the federal government assures conducting elections then something can be considered." He also mentioned that Article 218 is the ECP's responsibility, but it doesn't allow violation of the Constitution. "Mr Irfan Qadir said that the president's powers are subject to consultation. Unfortunately, political agendas come to the fore in political parties," he said.

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## Justice Isa seeks removal of registrar

Cabinet decides to remove Registrar

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Strongly reacting to the March 31 circular issued by the Supreme Court Registrar Office "disregarding" a judgement issued by a three-member bench, senior puisne judge Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Monday asked the establishment division to immediately remove Ishrat Ali — the registrar — to prevent him from further "damaging the reputation and integrity" of the top court. A special apex court bench, with a two-to-one majority on March 29, ordered suspending all suo motu cases — under Article 184(3) of the Constitution — until amendments are made to the Supreme Court Rules 1980 regarding the discretionary powers of the chief justice to form benches. In a letter to the top court's registrar, the senior puisne judge said that the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) cannot issue administrative direction against the judicial order. "I was astonished to receive your circular" bearing No. Registrar/2023/SCJ dated 31 March 2023. The circular purports to negate, undo, disobey and violate order dated 29 March 2023 of a

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Federal Cabinet. — DNA

## NO TRADE WITH ISRAEL: PM

# Brotherly states helping Pakistan to get IMF deal

Chairs emergency cabinet meeting; weighs legal options

DNA

ISLAMABAD: While chairing the parliamentary party meeting of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Islamabad on Monday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said, "We have always brought the country out of difficult circumstances. [Currently] the situation is tough, but our intention is clear. God willing! It will improve. The time will come, and things will change. That's my belief." "The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has tied the hands and feet of the federal government. All the preconditions of the IMF have been accepted," he said. "Due to the IMF programme of the previous government, waves of inflation are coming. Negotiations on the IMF's final condition are ongoing. Brotherly countries are helping Pakistan a lot," he added. "The government has started providing free flour to Rs100 million poor families. It is providing free flour to the poor people in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Islamabad during Ramadan," he stated.

Continued on Page 06

## Reiterates 'no-confidence' in SC bench

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif on Monday maintained that all the leaders of coalition parties in the federal government had expressed their 'no-confidence' over the three-member Supreme Court (SC) bench hearing polls delay case, media reported. Addressing the National Assembly session, the prime minister endorsed the views of Minister for Law Azam Nazeer Tarrar regarding the expression of no confidence over the constitution of the bench seized of the matter. PM Shehbaz claimed that Justice Ijazul Ahsan, another member of the bench, had recused himself

Continued on Page 06

## Bilawal Bhutto fears Martial Law

Says only full court can take up constitutional matters

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman PPP and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has feared imposition of Martial Law if the Chief Justice did not form the full bench to hear the case regarding elections in Punjab and KP provinces. While addressing a public gathering the Foreign Minister said his lawyers were not allowed to speak in the apex court. He further said that formation of the full court was the demand of all and sundry and the same should be constituted for justice not only to be done to be seen as well. He was of that the matter related to the

Continued on Page 06

## 'Govt won't accept SC hasty decision'

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar Monday said the government will not accept if the Supreme Court's decision on a sensitive and important issue is announced in haste. "We will not accept if a decision is made in haste on such a sensitive and important issue. We have tried our best to maintain the institution's sanctity," Tarar said during a session of the National Assembly, adding that this is the same institution which gave nine years, instead of three months, to a dictator.

## Briefs

### Dar to visit US, attend meetings

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Finance Minister Ishaq Dar will visit the United States from April 10 to 16 to attend the upcoming annual spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, sources said. Secretary Finance Hamid Yaqoob and Governor State Bank of Pakistan Jameel Ahmed will also accompany the finance minister along with a high-powered delegation, sources at the Ministry of Finance said. The delegation will hold a separate meeting with the IMF officials during the visit, sources said. The finance minister will inform the international lending institutions about reforms introduced by the government. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, known as Bretton Wood Institutions, will also be briefed about the economic discipline and progress in efforts for funding from the friendly countries. The coalition government has already said that it has fulfilled all toughest requirements set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for release of 1.1bn dollar tranche.

## Pakistan at turning point, says Imran

PTI says three judges were part of bench sending PTI govt home

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has warned that Pakistan today is at the crossroad in its constitutional history where it can be like Turkey or become another Myanmar. In a statement on Monday, PTI Chairman stated: "Today we stand at a turning point in our Constitutional history where we can be like Turkey or become another Myanmar." Imran Khan said: "Everyone must choose whether they stand, as PTI does, with Constitution, Rule of Law and democracy; or with a corrupt mafia, law of the jungle and fascism." Meanwhile lashing out the government for looking excuses for polls delay, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders said that the lawyers representing

Continued on Page 06

## Whole nation stands behind SC: Fawad

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Information Secretary Fawad Chaudhary Monday said that the Chief Justice of Pakistan should announce his order, and they would see who does not obey it. Talking to media, PTI's senior leader said that the whole of Pakistan is standing behind Chief Justice Saqib Nisar. He said that the government has no standing. He added that those sitting in power corridors cannot come out and face

Continued on Page 06

# Finland to become 31st NATO member today

Objections from Turkey and Hungary held up Helsinki's bid for months

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: Finland's flag will be hoisted outside NATO headquarters on Tuesday when it becomes the newest member of the Western alliance, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said. "Tomorrow we will welcome Finland as the 31st member," Stoltenberg told reporters on the eve of a historic meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels. Russian President Vladimir Putin's all-out invasion of Ukraine last year

upended European security and pushed Finland — and its neighbour Sweden — to drop decades of non-alignment and seek to join NATO's protective umbrella. Objections from Turkey and Hungary held up Helsinki's bid for months, and are still blocking Stockholm, before the parliament in Ankara cleared the final obstacle for Finland with a vote last week. Completing the ratification in well under a year still makes this the fastest membership process in the alliance's recent history. Now all that is left are the last highly choreographed formalities at NATO headquarters in Brussels. Finland's foreign minister will hand over the formal accession papers to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the keeper of NATO's founding treaty, and the country's blue-and-white flag will be raised alongside those of its new allies. Finland's President Sauli Niinisto will speak at the event, Helsinki said. "President Putin went to war against Ukraine with a clear aim to get less NATO," Stoltenberg said.



**Sehr, Iftar Timing**

Ramazan 13, 1444

Sehr: 04:26 am  
Iftar: 06:34 pm  
Fique-Jafria  
Sehr: 04:16 am  
Iftar: 06:44 pm

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# NDMA asks provincial departments for effective measures

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued guidelines for federal and provincial departments to ensure effective measures to cope with any emergent situation amid weather forecasts of more rain-thunderstorm and hailstorm across the country. The NDMA informed that as per the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast a westerly wave was likely to enter western parts of the country on April 2 and likely to intensify in upper parts of the country by April 3 and to persist in upper parts of the country till April 4. Under the influence of this weather system, rain-wind and thunderstorms with isolated heavy falls and hailstorms were expected from April 2-4 (Monday to Tuesday) in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab. Moreover, heavy rains might cause flash floods in Swabi, Mardan, Peshawar, Manshera, Abbotabad, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Nowshera, Waziristan, Bajur, Kurram, Kashmir during the forecast period. Landslides may occur in hilly areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gallyyat, Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir and Murree during the forecast period, it added. In light of the

forecast shared by PMD, following region-specific impacts are expected. Therefore, all concerned stakeholders are to remain vigilant against possible hazards. Moreover, strong wind and hailstorm may cause damage to loose infrastructure and standing crops (particularly wheat crop) in the country. Farmers should irrigate the crops keeping in view the forecast. The Authority in the light of the above forecast directed all the provincial disaster management authorities (PDMAs), Gilgit Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA), State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration, National Highway Authority (NHA), National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP), Frontier Works Organization (FWO), Rescue 1122, line departments, ministries and federal agencies to undertake measures as per respective mandate.

However, following preemptive measures were to be ensured by all concerned in addition to measures deemed appropriate as per on ground situation: Ensure widespread circulation of alerts and advisories, especially in local languages, to raise awareness and sensitize travellers or tourists and local communities in at-risk or vulnerable areas. It also directed to engage local communities at traditionally and historically dangerous and hazard-prone sites

to enable round the clock monitoring and establish feedback mechanism for early warnings and alerts for at-risk population. And also ensure adequate awareness for farmers regarding impacts on standing crops, coordinate with relevant district and municipal administrations to ensure mitigation measures for flash or urban flooding and to secure or remove billboards or hoardings in view of thunderstorm, high winds and hailstorms.

The PDMA and DDMA were also demanded to arrange and preplace necessary inventory and other essentials at strategic locations, vulnerable or choke points in coordination with NHMP, NHA, FWO, local C&W, Rescue 1122 and line departments. The provincial and federal authorities were also demanded to ensure a pro-active approach by diverting traffic, providing alternate routes, imposing move or travel restrictions, to avert any situation of road closure with stranded people. Local administrations to assess and plan the deployment of additional resources and exercise control over traffic leading to and in vicinity of vulnerable, choke points, tourist spots to prevent losses or damages and save precious lives. It also demanded to ensure that tourists, visitors and travellers in at-risk or affected areas be apprised and forewarned about weather forecast.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Defence presenting over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House. —APP

## PPP vows to continue Bhutto's vision

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, Acting President of the Pakistan People's Party Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, paid tribute to the founder of the PPP, Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, on the occasion of his 44th death anniversary. He praised Bhutto's contributions to the country, including the establishment of Pakistan Steel Mill and Port Qasim, as well as his revolutionary initiatives in industry, health, education, and labour. He also highlighted Bhutto's role as an international leader and his significant impact on the country's politics. The minister noted that Bhutto's services and sacrifices for democracy were unforgettable and lamented that the military dictator overthrew his government, and later Bhutto was martyred in a false case. He emphasized that Bhutto set new paths for the welfare and development of the people of the third world and gave the slogan of bread, cloth, and house to end poverty and bring politics out of the drawing rooms and into the fields. He said that former President Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari are following Shaheed Bhutto's vision and policies to make the country prosperous and solve the problems of the people. He pledged to work day and night to make the Pakistan People's Party organized, diligent, and strong, and make Pakistan a great country by following the thoughts, ideas, and manifesto of its martyred leader Z.A. Bhutto. On the anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Quran recitation and prayer ceremonies will be held in all districts. —DNA

## Senate Defence body approves Pakistan Maritime Zones Bill

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Defence on Monday unanimously approved the Pakistan Maritime Zones Bill, 2023 (PMZ - 2023), which consolidated and amended the law relating to territorial sea and maritime zones of Pakistan.

The PMZ-2023 will enable Pakistan to deal with these matters in accordance with national and international laws, and assert its rights, jurisdiction, and sovereignty in sync with internationally accepted provisions, a news release said. The Senate Standing Committee chaired by Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, met here at the Parliament

House. During the meeting, the Committee received a comprehensive briefing on the National University of Pakistan Bill, 2023. The proposed university will be a unique model and a public sector initiative with a multidisciplinary scope. It will focus on strengthening and empowering affiliated colleges and achieving excellence in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge in the fields of natural and applied sciences, engineering and emerging technologies, management sciences, computing, social sciences, humanities and arts, and other such

branches of knowledge. The representatives from Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Ministry of Law voiced their support for the Bill. After due deliberation, the committee unanimously approved the bill. The Chair of the Committee appreciated the efforts of Commodore Dr. Syed Mahmood Akhter Hussain Gardezi, Judge Advocate General of Pakistan Navy, in this regard. The meeting was attended by Senator Walid Iqbal, Senator Engr. Rukhsana Zuberi, Senior officials from the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Law, Pakistan Navy, and HEC. —APP

## Birth anniversary of Nazia Hassan observed

ISLAMABAD: Nazia Hassan, one of the most iconic figures in the history of Pakistan pop music was remembered on the occasion of her birth anniversary on Monday. Pop queen of the 80s and 90s, she was Pakistan's, as well as the subcontinent's, sweetheart whose songs were on everyone's playlist. Born on April 3, 1965, into a well-to-do Karachi family, the "Queen of Pop", as she was called, started her career at the age of 10 as a child artist. She rose to prominence through the popular Pakistan Television programme "Sung Sung". She was also a recipient of the country's highest civilian award, Pride of Performance. In addition to singing in films, Nazia was also a philanthropist and was appointed by UNICEF as its cultural ambassador in 1991. A lot of her money was given to charity; she also set up an organisation to help the poor, and — even at the peak of her popularity — made special appearances on television shows for children. —DNA

## Ramadan Bazars set up in AJK to ensure supply of edibles on subsidized rates

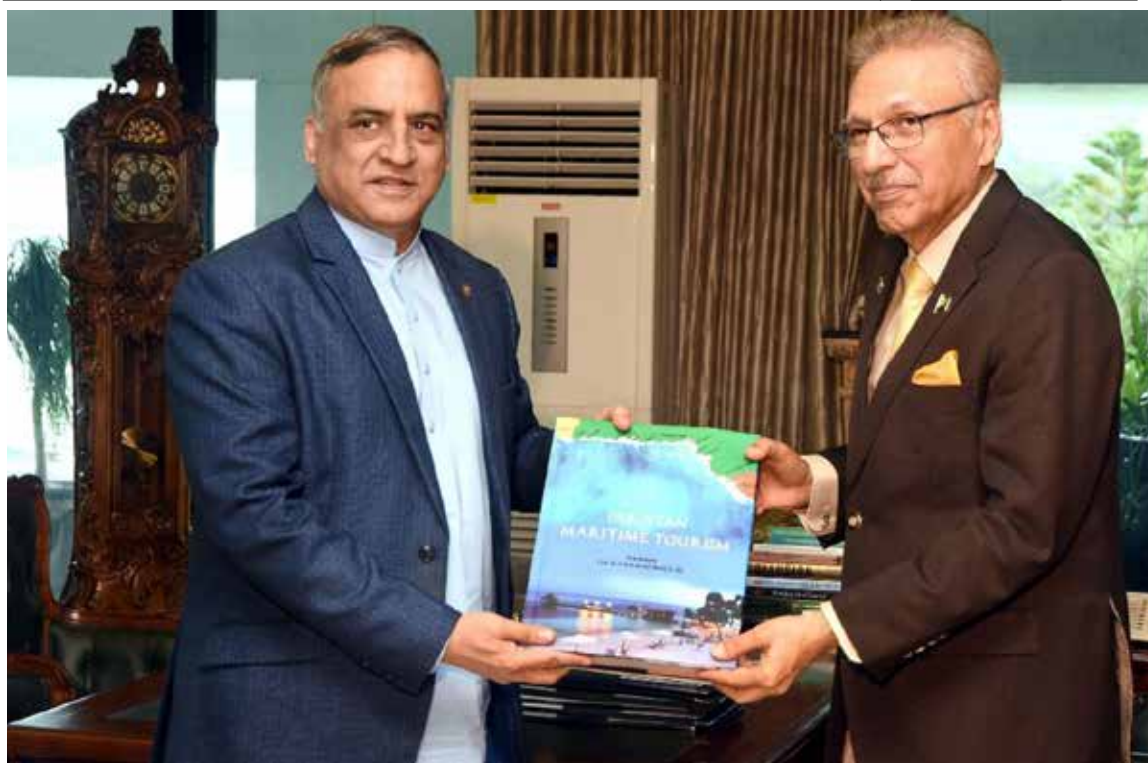
MIRPUR: AJK State authorities asserted that they have established special Ramadan Bazars in various major cities and towns under the spirit to ensure the required supply of edibles to the general consumers at subsidized rates during the Holy month of Ramadan. On the special directives of the state government to all district administration of the state, Mirpur district administration has launched special Ramzan Bazars in various parts of Mirpur district including one in front of MUST University's city campus at central Allama Iqbal Road. Deputy Commissioner Ch. Amjad Iqbal told APP here Monday that in Mirpur city, the main Ramzan Bazar had been set up at Allama Iqbal Road where all quality edibles would be available at inexpensive rates as compared to the general market, fixed by the district price control committee. Vendors at Ramzan bazars will be bound to display the rate lists of the com-

modities, determined by the authorities, at a visible place at their sale points from 8.30 in the morning, he said. When questioned that what preventive steps were being taken by the administration to take punitive action against the profiteers and hoarders, the Deputy Commissioner stated that an extensive drive has already been kicked off across the district to overcome the price hike on the part of the shopkeepers involved in overcharging besides creating artificial scarcity and hoarding. Mobile teams headed by magistrates have been constituted to conduct surprise checking of the prices and the shopkeepers — both wholesalers and retailers, involved in charging exorbitant rates would be booked. Besides, general shopkeepers, wholesalers, and owners of the main shopping malls have also been warned to maintain the prices of the items of

daily use — fixed by the administration — during and even after the Holy month of Ramzan. "The violators would be taken to task under the law", he warned. Meanwhile, a senior AJK government official told this news agency that all the district administrations in AJK have been directed to take stringent measures to discourage profiteering, hoarding, and artificial scarcity of edible items during and after the Holy month of Ramzan. He asserted that those involved in such unlawful exercise will be booked. "The sanctity of this Holy month will be maintained in all circumstances", the official declared. "The government is determined to ensure the availability of edibles including mutton, beef, chicken, sugar, vegetables, fruit, flour, rice, pulses, and other items at inexpensive rates at Ramzan bazaars as fixed by the concerned district administrations", the official pointed out. —APP

## Six die in rain related incidents in KP

PESHAWAR: At least six people were killed while 22 others sustained injuries due to roof collapse incidents caused by the torrential rains in different areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The KP Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Monday reported three casualties in Peshawar, deaths of children in Mardan, and a woman in South Waziristan. The heavy rainfall also caused damage to several houses in the province. The KP PDMA has issued an alert regarding the heavy rains in different parts of the province from tonight till Wednesday. The authority has warned of potential landslides in hilly areas of the province during this time. Tourists were advised to take necessary precautions and remain extra cautious. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Dr. S M Shehzad presenting his book "Pakistan Maritime Tourism" to President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr. —DNA

## ICIMOD-UNCDF join hands for action against impacts of climate change

PESHAWAR: The UN Capital Development Fund, UNCDF, is partnering with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, ICIMOD, for coordinated action on adaptation to the impacts of climate change in the highly vulnerable Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH). This mountainous region, which includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan, is the highest on the planet and temperature rises are already having devastating consequences on the environment and communities that live there, says a press release issued here on Monday.

The Hindu Kush Himalaya region is home to many highly fragile ecosystems, immense biodiversity, and unique communities. Climate change and rising global temperatures, linked to greenhouse gas emissions, are exerting enormous pressure on the region and the way of life of the people who live there. Current impacts include extreme water insecurity, rapidly melting glaciers and worsening floods and droughts. The memorandum of understanding signed between UNCDF and ICIMOD aims to enhance collaboration and co-operation of technical assistance and support to Hindu

Kush Himalaya countries concerning climate change adaptation and mountain development, particularly at the local level, with a five-point focus, adds the press release. "We're delighted to be joining forces with ICIMOD to scale up our adaptation activities in the Hindu Kush Himalaya," said Sophie De Coninck, Global Manager, Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility, UNCDF. "This is a region that is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change but where greater cooperation can, we believe, deliver impactful results for communities across the

region." "At ICIMOD we are thrilled to be collaborating with UNCDF on this important and timely venture," says Pema Gyamtsho, Director General of ICIMOD. "Targeted climate adaptation is key to improving the lives and livelihoods of the millions of people living in the HKH, and the many more who rely on water and other resources from this region. We're hopeful that this partnership will focus our combined efforts on developing sustainable solutions for the region," he added. It merits insertion here that UNCDF is the United Nation's flag-

ship catalytic financing entity for developing and least developed countries. Catalytic financing involves leveraging public finance to attract, or catalyse, further investments from the private sector, primarily for development projects. Such financing also aims to mitigate risks, distribute risks among multiple investors, aggregate small projects to combine resources, and endorse public-private co-investments. Under the agreement initiatives would be taken to address issues that affect the entire region, including the impacts of climate change. —APP



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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### APRIL

April 04/Senegal  
National Day

April 07/W. H. O.  
World Health Day

April 12/Somalia  
Armed Forces Day

April 15/DPR Korea  
The Day of the Sun

April 16/Denmark  
National Day

April 17/Iran  
Army Day

April 17/Syria  
Independence Day

April 18/Zimbabwe  
Independence Day

April 24/Holy See  
Anniversary of His Papacy of his Pontificate

April 25/DPR Korea  
Armed Forces Day

April 26/Tanzania  
National Day

April 27/Sierra Leone  
Independence Day

April 27/South Africa  
Freedom Day

April 30/Sweden  
Birthday of His Majesty

April 30/Netherlands  
Birthday of Queen



### Hotels & Restaurants

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



### Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



### Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15  
Bomb Disposal.....15  
Fire Services Rawalpindi/  
Islamabad.....1122 & 16  
Emergency Ambulance.1122  
& Rescue Services.4451122  
Motorway Police.....9266044  
Motorway Police.9270601-20  
Women Police Stations  
Islamabad.....9222596  
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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PIA Flight Info.....114  
PIA Cargo.....9280979  
Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489  
CAA.....9281092



### Hospitals

CMH.....5611111  
MH.....561116  
Dant Hospital.....9270907-11  
CHQ.....5556311-4  
RGH.....9290301-7  
Holy Family.....9290322-7  
PIMS.....9261170-79  
Polyclinic.....9218300-09  
Shifa International 4603666



### Departments

CDA.....9221334-43  
CDA.....9208301-04  
Met Office.....9250360-6  
RDA.....5555864  
TMA.....5770886  
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

### Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224  
Potohar Town.....9209224  
Rawal Town.....5773343

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Chairman FBR assures to look into the tax issues

Khalid Iqbal Malik, Zafar Bakhtawari and Khalid Javed, former Presidents ICCI also shared useful proposals to improve tax base and increase tax revenue of the country.

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Asim Ahmad, Chairman, Federal Board of Revenue said that the business community is playing a key role in the development of the economy and assured that he would look into their tax issues for redress. He said that the budget making process is in progress and ICCI should submit its written budget proposals for consideration and incorporation in the final budget. He appreciated the initiative of ICCI for acknowledging the role of top taxpayers in the region and said that it would help promote tax culture. He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry that called on him led by Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President.



Tariq Mahmood Pasha, Special Assistant to PM on Revenue said that there is a trust deficit between the taxpayers and the tax collectors and stressed the need of taking measures to build confidence between the two important stakeholders of the economy. He said that it is

very important to create a relationship of trust and confidence between the tax collectors and the taxpayers in order to enhance the tax base and improve tax revenue of the country. He hoped that ICCI would play a role to achieve this goal. Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry apprised the

Chairman FBR about the various tax issues of the business community that needed his attention for redress. said that the completion date of construction projects under the amnesty scheme will be expiring on 30th September 2023 and requested that this scheme should be further extended, at least for 2 years to facilitate the completion of ongoing projects under

this scheme. He said that ICCI should be given representation in FBR tax committees that would help build confidence between the taxpayers and the FBR and improve tax culture. He said that ICCI plans to confer awards on the highest taxpayers from every sector of the economy in order to acknowledge their key role in the tax contribution. He said that the Prime Minister of Pakistan would be invited as Chief Guest to that event. He said that the highest tax collecting officers of FBR should also be conferred awards to recognize their hard work and dedication. He further said that the top 10 highest taxpayers of the country should be conferred civil awards on 23rd March by the President of Pakistan on the recommendation of FBR that would encourage tax culture in the country. He said that a level playing field should be given to businesses on the installation of POS devices. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that due to ban on imports and LCs issue, the industrial activities are badly suffering and stressed that the government should look into this issue to address the concerns of industries. Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that high taxes on the construction sector is affecting its business activities and said that FBR should reconsider them. Khalid Iqbal Malik, Zafar Bakhtawari and Khalid Javed, former Presidents ICCI also shared useful proposals to improve tax base and increase tax revenue of the country.

## IRSA releases 89,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 89,900 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 65,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1428.75 feet and was 30.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 21,900 cusecs while outflow was 7,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jehlum at Mangla Dam was 1102.90 feet, which was 52.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 19,500 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur has recorded 31,200, 45,000, 40,900 and 9,300 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 26,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 14,300 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

## Senate Chairman refers three Bills to committees

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, has referred three bills to relevant Standing Committees of the Upper House of Parliament. One bill, the Toshakhana (Maintenance, Administration and Regulation) Bill, 2023, moved by Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, aims to provide for the maintenance, administration, and regulation of Toshakhana. Another bill, The National Commission on the Rights of Child (Amendment) Bill, 2023, moved by Prof Dr Mehr Taj Roghani, seeks to amend the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017. The third bill referred by the Chairman, The Export Processing Zones Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023, was moved by Senators Faisal Saleem Rehman, Bilawal Khan, Manzoor Ahmed, and Hidayatullah. The bill aims to introduce amendments to the Export Processing Zones Authority Ordinance, 1980.

## Pakistan to export over 1 million workers

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistan and Human Resource Development Sajid Hussain Turi here on Monday said that the government would export over one million labour workers including skilled and unskilled to abroad this year. Talking to APP, he said that a high level delegation of Saudi Government would visit to Pakistan very soon for the final selection of workers. Technical test passed candidate would be eligible for jobs in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, he added. The minister said that the incumbent government was working to sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with around 50 countries to export the Pakistani workers including Germany, Italy, Greece and Romania. He said that Japan also demanding skilled labour from Pakistan as well as South Korea seeking 10,000 workers. Sajid Turi said that over 27,000 block passport had been restored to Overseas Pakistanis and the issue of illegal Pakistani immigrants in Europe would be address soon. The issue of visas for Malta Republic would be resolved through Pakistani Embassy in Italy, he added.

## Resolution adopted to chalk out roadmap against Riba

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Monday adopted a unanimous resolution to chalk out a practical roadmap for eliminating Riba and establishing an interest-free financial and economic system in the country. Presenting a couple of proposals for eliminating the interest-based system from the country, the mover of resolution Jamaat-e-Islami's Senator Mushtaq Ahmed urged the government to establish a permanent division and its subordinate task force under the administrative control of the Ministry of Finance. He said the government should enact laws for prohibiting

individual and collective interest-based business in the country. He said the government should eliminate Riba from various financial institutions, including National Investment Trust Unit, House Building Finance Corporation, Pension and Savings Fund, Consumer Finance and others. He further said a task force may be established with the responsibility of implementing recommendations of reports of all previous committees, commissions, and task forces established regarding the elimination of Riba. According to the resolution, the Senate recalls

Article 38 (f) of the Constitution which stipulates the elimination of 'Riba' as early as possible expressing concerns that for the last 75 years the curse of 'interest' was not eliminated from the country. It acknowledged the decision of the Federal Shariat Court for the elimination of Riba from the country and also appreciated and supported the decision of the government, State Bank of Pakistan and National Bank of Pakistan for withdrawal of appeals against the decision which was encouraging for establishing an interest-free financial and banking system

in Pakistan. Seconding the resolution, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Senator Aisha Ghaus Pasha said the Riba-free economy was the topmost priority of the incumbent government. She said the government had already constituted a task force and for the establishment of a division in the Ministry of Finance, a summary had been moved for its approval. She made it clear that it was a bit difficult to transfer the financial system towards an interest-free economy as it needs a proper roadmap to get rid of this social nuisance.—APP

## Institutions, politicians owe to nation: President

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday said inadequate investment in human capital was an important issue that needed to be addressed by the institutional and political leadership. "Institutional and political leadership owes it to the nation to sober up, unite & deliver," he wrote on Twitter. The president regretted that the real issues of the country had taken a back seat in the current situation. "These are the real issues of my country, but they have taken a remote back seat in the current hysteria," he said. He stressed the role of institutions and politicians to get united and deliver. President Alvi also shared an article published in a national daily based on the data of the World Bank and Pakistan Human Capital Review. Low human capital investments will limit the realisation of Pakistan's ambition to become an upper-middle-income country by 2047, says a new World Bank report. Pakistan's Human Capital Index (HCI) value of 0.41 is low in both absolute and relative terms; lower than the South Asia average of 0.48, with Bangladesh at 0.46 and Nepal at 0.49. "If Pakistan continues on its current trajectory in human capital development, its GDP per capita would grow overall by a mere 18 percent through 2047.—APP

## Resolution to equip women with digital skills passed

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Monday passed a unanimous resolution to equip women with digital skills by prioritizing education in Information Communication Technology (ICT) subjects and allocating separate funds through Public Sector Development Programmes for their digital empowerment. Senator Seemee Ezedi of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and on behalf of Samina Mumtaz Zehri of Balochistan Awami Party presented the resolution on the floor of the Upper House of parliament and urged the government to prepare and implement a National Action Plan for providing a gender-responsive approach to innovation, technology and digital

education. According to the resolution, the Senate commemorated 8th March 2023 as International Women's Day with the aim of endorsing and creating a world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination in accordance with the United Nations theme 'DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality. Celebrating the contributions being made by women and girls in every field, especially in technology and online education, it acknowledged the impact of the digital gender gap on widening economic and social inequalities and recognized the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls in digital

spaces, besides addressing online and ICT-facilitated gender-based violence. The Senate recognized that bringing women and other marginalized groups into technology would result in more creative solutions as they have greater potential for innovations that meet women's needs and promote gender equality. The resolution quoted the father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah as saying that "There are two powers in the world: one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a great competition and rivalry between the two. There is a third power stronger than both, that of the women."—APP

## Cheapest private Hajj package to cost Rs1.18 million

ISLAMABAD: At least 12 packages have been announced for the private Hajj operators, and the cost of the cheapest package is Rs1180,000 while that of the most expensive one is over Rs3 million. Dr Attaur Rahman, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Religious Affairs, said that the pilgrims who wanted more than the specified facilities would have to pay more. "Some private Hajj pilgrims go to Saudi Arabia in the last days of Hajj. A few days before Hajj, hotels become expensive. Four- and five-star hotels become more expensive," he added.—NNI

## Pakistan earns US \$484m from travel services'

ISLAMABAD: The country has earned US \$484,140 million by providing different travel services in various countries during the first seven months of the current fiscal year 2022-23. This shows growth of 53.67 percent as compared to the US \$315,060 million worth same services provided during the corresponding period of the last fiscal year 2021-22, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During the period under review, personal travel services increased by 53.16 percent, from US \$313,880 million last year to US \$480,750 million during July-January 2023. Among the personal services, the exports of health-related expenditure dipped by 10.53 percent while the education-related expenditure also dropped by 4.28 percent. In addition, other personal services however increased of 54.80 percent. Meanwhile, the exports of business services grew by 187.29 percent, from US\$ 1,180 million to US\$ 3,390 million, the PBS data revealed. It is pertinent to mention here that the exports of services from the country, witnessed an increase of 6.39 percent during the first seven months of the current financial year (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period of last year, it added. The exports of services during July-January (2022-23) were recorded at US\$ 4196.76 million against the exports of US\$ 3944.84 million during the same period of last year.—APP

## Climate change: Pakistan, China ought to join hands

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China ought to join hands to face climate change, said Dr. Ahmad Ali Gul, an expert of China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF) Climate Change Working Group. "Despite being responsible for less than 1 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan has been among the 10 countries most-affected from impacts of climate change in the past two decades," said Dr. Ahmad Ali Gul, during an interview with Gwadar Pro. "Our agriculture-based economy is sensitive to climate related shocks, and disasters can exacerbate the water security challenges." Half a month ago, Dr. Gul participated in the Disaster Risk Management Symposium organized by the East Asian Biosphere Reserve Network (EABRN), making a speech on Pakistan's lessons and opportunities in the context of global climate change. Soon after, an earthquake that jolts Afghanistan and Pakistan caused casualties and losses in both countries. This may not be a coincidence. In reality, growing scientific evidence shows that climate change can increase the risk of such tremors. As melting glaciers change the distribution of weight across the Earth's crust, the resulting "glacial isostatic adjustment" drives changes in plate tectonics that could lead to more earthquakes. And besides earthquakes, other climate disasters are also threatening Pakistan's fragile ecological balance, among which the 2022 flood sounded the alarm for the whole country and even the world.

## Expert stresses for more autism awareness

### Behavioural therapies and support for autistic children could help children learn new behaviours and skills, she said, adding, parents should skip sugary food items in the diet of the child with autism

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Expert on Monday stressed for increasing parents' awareness and tolerance in society to address autism as early-age behavioral therapy programs could help children with this condition to live a normal life. Renowned neurologist/psychiatrist, Jawahar Shahid Anwar while talking to the PTV news channel explained that many autistic individuals remain undiagnosed, especially in rural areas, where surveillance was

rarely done for any neuro-developmental disorder. "Families often have limited access to evaluations and other resources to assess and respond to autism or other neuro-developmental conditions," she added. Dr Anwar said many families were not seeking out assessment or treatment due to limited awareness about autism, social and cultural stigma related to neuro-developmental conditions, and financial barriers. Behavioural therapies and support for autistic children could help children learn new behaviours and skills,

she said, adding, parents should skip sugary food items in the diet of the child with autism. Replying to a question, she said the diagnosis and therapy of autism in Pakistan occur in various settings and were provided by various health professionals. She regretted that unfortunately, awareness concerning autism was still low among Pakistani healthcare professionals, adding, society needs to know everything about autism first. To another question, she said autism was a complex group of neuro-de-

velopmental disorders, also referred to as autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Children with autism faced discrimination that comes from a lack of understanding about the condition, she said, adding, most parents think that their autistic child was simply "a bit slow", therefore, "more screenings were needed so that children with autism could be helped at the early stage. More child screening and assessment centres were needed to make early diagnoses of developmental impairments such as autism, she demanded.



## Briefs

## Political stability vital: Qaiser Sheikh

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-N Senior leader Qaiser Ahmad Sheikh on Monday said that the government was making all-out efforts to bring the economy on right track. Talking to Radio Pakistan's current Affair programme, he said that political stability is vital to strengthen the economy of the country, adding that the government was committed to transforming the country into an export-led economy. Replying to a question, he said all parties should put national interest before party interest and separate elections will be resulted in a heavy burden on the economy of the country. The coalition government has developed a mutual consensus and demanded that general elections should be held on the same day across the country, he mentioned. To another question, he said that the PTI chief is not even ready to talk for the sake of national interest, adding, that the coalition government had assumed the power to save the country, and not for the sake of merely gaining power.—APP

## Wanted member of thief gang held; stolen mobile phone recovered

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital Koral police team arrested an accused involved in theft activities and recovered a stolen mobile phone from his possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements involved in theft activities in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directions, the Koral police station team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending an accused involved in theft activities. The accused was identified as Nadir Ali. Police team also recovered a stolen mobile phone from his possession. Case has been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. CPO/DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in heinous crimes. "Safety and security of the citizens is our foremost priority and no laxity will be tolerated in this regard" he added.—DNA

## 14 year old missing boy found, safely reunited with parents

DNA

ISLAMABAD: According to the details, Islamabad Capital Nilore Police Station received an application from a citizen namely Muhammad Asif which stated that his son namely Ahmed Raaza went missing. Upon receiving the application, the Nilore police team registered an FIR. The police team used technical, human resources and Safe City modern cameras and succeeded in tracing the missing boy who was safely reunited with the parents. The boy told that he himself left the home.

The missing boy family members appreciated the police team's efforts and thanked the Islamabad capital police for immediate action. CPO/DiG Operations Islamabad Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari appreciated the police team for taking timely action and said that Islamabad Capital Police is taking all possible steps to protect the life and property of the citizens, no criminal element will be allowed to disturb the peace of the general public, citizens are also requested to cooperate with the police and report any suspicious thing or activity at "Pukar 15" helpline.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran Syed Muhammad Ali Hosseini cutting the ribbon along with Chairman Council of Islamic Ideology Dr. Qibla Ayaz and others to inaugurate exhibition of rare Manuscripts of Holy Quran.—Online

## Kartarpur style resolution: AJK PM orders inquiry

Sardar Tanveer Ilyas paid tribute to all Kashmiri detainees including All Parties Hurriyat Conference Chairman Maasrrat Alam Butt

ISLAMABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan ordered an inquiry into the submission as well as approval of a resolution by the AJK Legislative Assembly regarding the opening of the Kartarpur-style corridor. He made the announcement while addressing an Iftar dinner hosted for APHC-AJK leadership at Kashmir Houses, said a press release. Responding to the AJK PM's announcement, APHC-AJK Conve-

neur Mehmooh Ahmad Saghar said that the AJK PM gave a positive message to the people of India illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir by taking the Hurriyat leadership into confidence and the controversial resolution would be withdrawn. Sardar Tanveer Ilyas paid tribute to all Kashmiri detainees including All Parties Hurriyat Conference Chairman Maasrrat Alam Butt, Muhammad Yasin Malik, Shabbir Ahmad Shah, Nayeem Ahmad Khan, Ameer Hamza, Syeda Aasiya Andrabi and Dr. Hameed

Fayyaz languishing in jails of India and the occupied territory. He said that Kashmiri delegations would be sent abroad to make the international community aware of false cases registered by India against Kashmiri Hurriyat leadership. The AJK Prime Minister expressed concern over the resolution presented in the AJK Assembly seeking the opening of the Kartarpur-style corridor and announced the investigation of the matter.

Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan said that the right to self-determination is the fundamental right of the Kashmiri people and assured the Hurriyat leadership of extending all-out support to the Kashmir freedom movement. AJK Ministers Sardar Mir Akbar Khan, Dewan Ali Chaghatai, Abdul Majid Khan, Chaudhry Muhammad Akbar Ibrahim, Parliamentary Secretary Asim Sharif, Political Advisor Sardar Iftikhar Rashid Chughtai, Spokesman Dr. Irfan Ashraf,

Hurriyat Leaders Ghulam Muhammad Safi, Syed Yusuf Naseem, Syed Faiz Naqshbandi, Sheikh Abdul Mateen, Mushtaqul Islam, Muhammad Sultan Butt, Imtiaz Wani, Muhammad Rafiq Dar, Sanaullah Dar, Muhammad Ashraf Dar, Gulshan Iqbal, Abdul Majeed Lone, Manzoor Ahmad Dar, Zahid Ashraf, Sheikh Majid, Mushtaq Ahmad Butt, Shaheen Iqbal, Zahid Safi, Syed Manzoor Shah, and Uzair Ahmed Ghazali were also present on the occasion.

## \$14m Gwadar sanitation project in the offing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Gwadar Municipal Corporation under CPEC, Gwadar Smart Environment Sanitation System and Landfill Project costing \$14 million is in pipeline. However, it is not yet clear when the project will be set in motion. An official of the Gwadar Municipal Corporation told Gwadar Pro that "The project aims to establish a smart sanitation and solid waste management system to ensure sustainable development in Gwadar City. The project includes mechanical cleaning and manual cleaning for which sprinkle trucks and sweeper trucks would be utilized. It also includes a container collection system, manual collection system, and transportation system. Sealed garbage containers would be placed in public and residential areas. Door-to-door collection of solid waste management collection personnel would be arranged," he explained. "A major component of solid waste is the biodegradable waste that does not carry any price tag and is the worst of all sorts of waste as it decomposes soon after being dumped.

Insects and pests harbour organic waste, causing a foul smell due to aerobic decomposition. It also emits greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere. The best way to recycle the organic solid waste is through anaerobic fermentation into a closed chamber to get biogas as a source of clean energy and decomposed organic manure besides earning carbon credits," he added. A Gwadar Development Authority environmentalist said that solid waste is primarily composed of metal, paper, plastic, rubber, animal waste, food waste, grass, leaves, textile waste, glass, bones, stones, etc. Primarily, waste can be classified into municipal solid waste and hazardous waste, however, in terms of its recycling potential, solid waste can be classified into metal, plastic, paper, glass and rubber items, he added. If recycling companies are engaged in Gwadar, all these items have got a price tagged to them and are sold and processed through recycling to produce useful products for the market. "At present, solid waste collection in Pakistan stands at only 50% of the total generated waste. Recycling is among

the most effective means through which solid waste can be reduced and natural resources can be conserved by reusing materials and putting them back into productive use," he added. A majority of plastic is released as waste due to inadequate recycling and incineration facilities. Pakistan ranks sixth in the world and third in Asia in terms of plastic pollution. The government of Pakistan has enacted Pakistan Environmental Protection Act (PEPA) in 1997. Section 11 of the Act states "No person shall discharge or emit or allow the discharge or emission of any effluent or waste or air pollutants or noise in an amount, concentration or level which is more than the National Environmental Quality Standards." PEPA and the provincial Environment Protection Acts, rules and policies provide for a legal framework for waste management sustainably but on the ground nothing seems to be in favour of such institutional provisions. "Waste is dealt with through multiple means like recycling, dumping and burning. Recycling is the ideal way of dealing with solid waste as it is the most environmentally

friendly and sustainable option. At present, Europe recycles 41% of its municipal waste while the United States recycles 32% of its waste," the GDA official said. Globally, countries produce about 4 billion tons of solid waste, of which 1.2 billion tons comprise municipal waste. Of the total, only 1 billion tons are utilised through various means and 600 million tons are recycled. Moreover, almost 200 million tons of solid waste is utilised for energy generation. Residential and commercial activities litter Gwadar with 150 tons of solid waste every day. Due to a lack of sustainable solid waste management, solid waste is posing threats to human life. However, this challenge may prove to be a great source of opportunities in terms of income and employment generation for the companies and individuals involved in solid waste recycling. Currently, the majority of solid waste is dumped in the open at undeclared landfills or open grounds in Gwadar. Although most of the components of solid waste are inert and useful for reuse and recycling, others may prove highly hazardous and fatal to the general public.

## ANF recovers over 447 kg drugs; arrests eight

The spokesman informed that ANF in an operation near Islamabad Chungi No 26 recovered 2.4 kg charras from the possession of a drug smuggler resident of Peshawar

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in eight operations managed to recover over 447 kg drugs and arrested eight accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that ANF managed to recover five charras-filled capsules from the possession of an Abu Dhabi-bound passenger, a resident of Bannu, netted at Islamabad International Airport. In another operation, 1.2 kg heroin was recovered from a private courier company office near Chandni Chowk Rawalpindi. The parcel was booked for Birmingham. In third operation near Motorway Toll Plaza, 3.6 kg charras was recovered from the possession of an Afghan national. The spokesman informed that ANF in an operation near Islamabad Chungi No 26 recovered 2.4 kg charras from the possession of a drug smuggler resident of Peshawar. ANF and ASF in an operation at Lahore International Airport arrested three accused residents of Okara and recovered 104 heroin-filled capsules from the possession of an accused. He said that in an operation at Karachi International Airport, over two kg heroin was recovered from the possession of a Saudia-bound passenger resident of Chiniot. Heroin was tactfully concealed in a hotpot. ANF and FC in an operation in Noshki managed to recover 416 kg charras while in the eighth operation ANF recovered 22 kg charras concealed in bushes in Dalbandin area. He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.—APP

## Country pushed into an unmanageable debt trap

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Monday said useless mega projects have played a key role in bankrupting the country. These projects have not served the country but politicians and their favorite bureaucrats. Unnecessary projects are made by borrowing billions of dollars, which benefits politicians and the country suffers, it said. For several decades, the masses are told that completion of a certain project will usher in a new era of development and prosperity, production and exports will increase; inflation and unemployment will end but these lies have never come true, said Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of PEW. He said that before every such project, the masses are told that it will make Pakistan a developed country, but such moves end up making politicians and their close bureaucrats more prosperous while the lives of people become more miserable.

He said that important institutions like the Planning Commission are kept weak for unholy designs, and if necessary, a new department or authority is created to serve political purposes. Incompetent bureaucrats do not know how to run the institution, but they are experts in pleasing politicians which results in annual losses of hundreds of billions of rupees to institutions, he observed. Those who claimed to set up industries across the country have pushed the country into an unmanageable debt trap for political and material gains.

## Pakistan ready to work with all SCO countries

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister for Political, Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture Engr Amir Muqam said that Pakistan was looking forward to working with all Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) countries to achieve common goals. Addressing the 20th meeting of ministers of culture of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Adviser to Prime Minister Engr Amir Muqam has said that Pakistan attaches great importance to SCO and strongly believes that it is a unique platform to celebrate our commonalities and to work together to forge a common future marked by our rich cultural heritage. The online meeting was held with the Minister of Culture of India in the chair in which ministers of culture of the SCO Member States and delegates also participated. The meeting was also virtually attended by Federal Secretary for National Heritage and Cultural Fareena Mazhar and other senior officials. Engr Amir Muqam said that they were ready to collaborate with SCO member states by launching joint initiatives, projects and programs, ensuring effective participation of folk artists in cultural festivals and events, promoting exchange of research scholars, museums technicians and managers as well as arts and craft experts and undertaking joint publications to focus on cultural similarities in the member state.—APP

## Pakistan economy burdened as currency pegged with US dollar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Economies of Pakistan and many other countries are excessively burdened because their currencies are pegged with the US dollar. According to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Monday de-dollarisation is a critical solution of it for developing countries. It was contended that as nations grapple with the impact of sanctions, shifting trade patterns, and volatile currency markets, the move towards de-dollarisation represents a critical response to these challenges, offering a way to safeguard against the uncertainties of the global economy and chart a course towards greater stability and prosperity. The report says, "In the wake of the year-long conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the world has experienced significant changes in economic, geopolitical, and cultural spheres. However, the most profound effect of the conflict is its impetus towards multipolarity - the redistribution of global economic power among several advanced economies rather than being concentrated in a single hegemonic

power - the United States. This shift towards a more balanced global power dynamic has been accelerating and is likely to continue. The culmination of World War II prompted the US dollar to dominate the financial world for over eighty years, but now another conflict in the backyard of Europe has applied a reverse gear to this phenomenon. When America imposed a cascade of sanctions against Russia last year - including freezing nearly half of Russia's foreign currency reserves and excluding major Russian banks from SWIFT, an interbank messaging service used for international payments - they were expecting the Russian economy to be squeezed to the point of surrender. However, the financial sanctions against Russia, billed as the "weaponization" of the dollar, resulted in a different outcome - the rise of alternative financial infrastructures promoted by the US's two most significant geopolitical competitors, China and Russia. In response to these measures, these nations have moved to develop their own financial systems, which could potentially diminish the US dollars' global financial dominance. The movement towards

de-dollarisation is by no means confined to Russia and China alone. Rather, it is a global trend, with nations and regions from India to Argentina, Brazil to South Africa, and the Middle East to Southeast Asia all redoubling their efforts to reduce their reliance on the dollar. At the core of this drive towards financial independence lies a deep-seated fear among many capitals: that the United States may one day use the full weight of its currency to target them with the same devastating sanctions that have been imposed on Russia. The recent surge in de-dollarisation initiatives can be traced back to this growing anxiety, as countries seek to protect their economic interests and safeguard against potential future threats. From the collapse of the Bretton Woods system to the launch of the euro by the European Union in 1999, and from the aftermath of the 2008-2009 financial crisis to the present day, questions about the dollar's weakening hold on the global economy have persisted. Today, the world's central banks fell below 59 percent of their foreign exchange reserves in dollars in the final quarter of last year - a decline from around 70 percent in 2000 - depict-

ing the simmering trend towards de-dollarization. During the same period, the euro has registered only a modest increase in its share of global reserves, rising from 18 percent to just under 20 percent today. In contrast, the Chinese renminbi (RMB/yuan), despite accounting for less than 3 percent of the world's reserve currency holdings, has been showing very rapid growth since 2016. In the first quarter this year, Chinese RMB held by various central banks as foreign exchange reserves reaches the highest level since it was first included in the IMF's special drawing rights basket in Q4 2016 and representing 2.45 percent of the total, as per the International Monetary Fund. The dollar's value has fluctuated significantly in recent years, with the currency currently standing at over 10 percent higher than its value at the start of the Ukraine conflict in February 2022, and a whopping 30 percent higher than a decade ago. The rapid appreciation of the dollar in recent years has had far-reaching implications for countries around the world. One significant impact has been on dollar-denominated debt, which

has become considerably more expensive to repay as the currency has surged in value. In the quest for financial independence, many smaller economies have grown increasingly wary of their exposure to dollar-denominated debt. This, coupled with a push to strengthen regional trade ties, has spurred many countries to seek alternatives to the dollar. The rise in the dollar's value has also translated into a sharp increase in import bills for essential commodities such as fuel and food. This has been a particular concern for nations that rely heavily on imports from other countries, as the cost of these goods can quickly become prohibitive in the face of a strong dollar. As such, the move towards de-dollarisation can be seen as a way for these countries to mitigate against the potentially devastating effects of currency fluctuations and rising import costs. Egypt provides a compelling example of the challenges faced by countries burdened by dollar-denominated debt. In recent years, the country has been forced to take on ever-increasing levels of borrowing in order to stabilize its economy and prop up the value of its currency, the Egyptian pound.



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## New generation of UAE leaders

The appointments of Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed as Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, and Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed as Vice President along with Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed and Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed as Deputy Rulers of Abu Dhabi, by UAE President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, mark a turning point for the UAE. These young leaders of a new generation are poised to continue the country's march towards progress, development and prosperity.

Ads by The UAE has long been a symbol of progress and leadership in various fields, from infrastructure to technology, and from education to tourism. These appointments demonstrate the country's commitment to continuing this legacy of success and growth, with a fresh outlook and new ideas.

Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed brings a wealth of experience and expertise to his new role as Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. As Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Office, he has overseen some of the country's largest and most successful development projects, including the Hub71 start-up incubator.

He is also widely respected for his leadership qualities, strategic vision, climate initiatives and business acumen, which will be crucial in driving the country's economic growth and development in the years to come.

Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed has been a driving force behind many of Abu Dhabi's recent achievements. As Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Presidential Court, he has been instrumental in shaping the country's economic policies and business strategies. He has also played a key role in transforming Abu Dhabi's legal system, with a focus on ensuring fairness and justice for all residents, regardless of their background or nationality.

As head of the Emirati Talent Competitiveness Council, Sheikh Mansour has led efforts to boost employment opportunities for Emiratis in the private sector, in line with the country's broader goals of creating a diversified and sustainable economy. His leadership and vision will be invaluable in helping the UAE navigate the challenges and opportunities of the coming years.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed and Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed are both accomplished leaders in their own right, with extensive experience in government, business and sports. Their appointment as Deputy Rulers of Abu Dhabi reflects the country's commitment to fostering talent and leadership at all levels.

As the UAE looks to the future, these young leaders will play a key role in shaping the country's destiny and charting a course towards greater prosperity and success. Their energy, enthusiasm and vision will be instrumental in driving the UAE's continued progress and development, and ensuring that the country remains at the forefront of global innovation and leadership.

With Sheikh Khaled, Sheikh Mansour, Sheikh Tahnoon and Sheikh Hazza in key leadership roles, the UAE is well-equipped to tackle the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, and to continue its march towards a more brighter and prosperous future.



## Blame game is unnecessary

Blaming China and blaming each other for "ceding the future" to China has not only become part and parcel of the political circus in Washington, it has become pretty much the only act on show. Both the Democrats and Republicans accuse each other of being eager to "please" or even of "surrendering" to China, no matter what the issue is. They each claim the other's policies are not tough enough and so are allowing China to win "the competition" between the two countries.

Yet China is just a MacGuffin. It is necessary for them to have something to beat each other with in public that doesn't put the focus on their domestic failings, and their fabricated China threat serves that purpose. What prompted US President Joe Biden to use the super weapon of accusing the Republicans of "surrendering to China" was not anything China has done, but his argument with the Republicans about the US budget.

Biden wants the Republicans to put forward their own budget plan first while the latter want to start talks about spending cuts first. Biden mentioned "surrendering" the US' tech advantage to China only because he was in Durham, North Carolina, where local semiconductor manufacturer Wolfspeed has announced a \$5 billion plan to invest in new manufacturing facilities in Chatham County, which Biden is crediting to his CHIPS and Science Act, which provides about \$280 billion in new funding to boost domestic semiconductor research and manufacturing.

That the US is not at risk of losing its dominance in the sector was made clear by the 2021 State of the Industry Report issued by the US-based Semiconductor Industry Association, which said: "The U.S. semiconductor industry has nearly half the global market share and has displayed steady annual growth." With former US president Donald Trump initializing the ban and Biden continuing the ban on exporting chips of 14-nanometer accuracy and above to China, as well as pressuring the Netherlands to restrict advanced lithography machines export to China, the latter's semiconductor industry still has a long way to go to catch up with that of the US. But this is irrelevant in Washington, as the two parties are locked in a tug-of-war for public approval with positioning for the next presidential election already underway.

As shown by the newly established bipartisan committee on competition with China, both parties know that they need China to be a MacGuffin if they are to sell the proposal to US voters that they are acting in their interests. Thus with campaigning for the next presidential election beginning to gain momentum, it can be expected that the demonizing of China will also start building to a crescendo as it is now integral to their cut-and-thrust squabbles.

## China and US competition for primacy in Indo-Pacific

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The crucial variable in whether China is successful in its strategic purpose is the domestic, economic, military, and diplomatic strength and resolve of the United States and its allies, and not Chinese actions. At this writing, as the Biden administration enters office, the United States is deeply divided on political, economic, and racial issues, marked by a polarized Congress and an angry partisan public fed for years by Donald Trump's divisive rhetoric and actions exemplified by the chaos and violence at the Capitol in Washington on January 6. In this context, President Biden has an enormous challenge

China seeks to replace the United States as the most important and influential nation in the Indo-Pacific region. This strategic goal may have been an aspiration among Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent predecessors, but it has become under Xi the engine of most of China's day-to-day foreign policies. Convinced that the United States is in secular decline and the only questions being how fast and how far, Beijing projects its increasing economic and diplomatic power to undermine the foundations of the American posture in Asia, beginning with the U.S. alliance system. As Lee Kuan Yew, late prime minister of Singapore and supreme global strategist, emphasized, they have transformed a poor society by an economic miracle to become now the second-largest economy in the world on track, as Goldman Sachs has predicted, to become the world's largest economy. They have followed the American lead in putting people in space and shooting down satellites with missiles. There is a culture 4,000 years old with 1.3 billion people, many of great talent a huge and very talented pool to draw from. How could they not aspire to be number 1 in Asia, and in time the world? It is China's intention to be the greatest power in the world.

China's tactics will change over time; its desire for dominant influence, at least in the Indo-Pacific region, will not. One sees this in the effective conciliatory speeches Xi and his senior colleagues make in international forums, which contrast vividly with former President Trump's bitter, resentful outbursts. Indeed, Beijing remains a verbal champion of international cooperation precisely when the Trump administration largely abandoned it. This is not to say that China does not make mistakes in implementing its strategic goals through its tactical actions. Its crude, threatening "wolf warrior" diplomacy is counterproductive. The financial terms of its Belt and Road Initiative have aggrieved some countries in the developing world. China's military actions in the Himalayas along the India-China border in the early summer of 2020 in unforgiving mountain terrain have dramatically changed public opinion in India and pushed it geopolitically closer to the United States. So this is far from an error-free team in Beijing.

The crucial variable in whether China is successful in its strategic purpose is the domestic, economic, military, and diplomatic strength and resolve of the United States and its allies, and not Chinese actions. At this writing, as the Biden administration enters office, the United States is deeply divided on political, economic, and racial issues, marked by a polarized Congress and an angry partisan public fed for years by Donald Trump's divisive rhetoric and actions exemplified by the chaos and violence at the Capitol in Washington on January 6. In this context, President Biden has an enormous challenge to unite the country in pursuit of agreed domestic and international goals. He will benefit from available vaccines and other medical positives in the early months of his term that could lift some domestic pressure and give him more international flexibility. Should he succeed in reanimating American power and intensifying ties to allies, managing China's rise becomes substantially less daunting, and the leaders in Beijing would likely slow their aggressive push toward Asian dominance. Should he fail, he would only reinforce the view in Beijing and in some allied capitals that the United States has joined all the other nations over the centuries that dominated the international system, then faltered, then failed.

The United States with its allies and partners can successfully compete with China, and there is no reason for intrinsic pessimism. Although the following are not perfect comparisons, they are illustrative. The combined economies of the United States, Japan, South Korea, and Australia far outstrip that of China. U.S. nominal gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019 was \$21.4 trillion compared to China's \$14.3 trillion. The 2019 total nominal GDP of the United States, Japan, South Korea, and Australia was \$29.5 trillion. When measured by purchasing power parity, China's \$23.5 trillion GDP exceeds the U.S. figure of \$21.4 trillion, but is still behind the \$30.4 trillion of the U.S.-Asian alliances. Even if the economic fallout of the coronavirus changed those numbers significantly for 2020, it is difficult to imagine that the immediate ramifications of the pandemic could close the GDP gap between China and the United States and its Asian allies. Additionally, PRC exports of goods and services in 2019 totaled \$2.6 trillion, compared to \$2.5 trillion in the United States, but U.S. allies in Asia make up almost \$2 trillion in additional exports. Combined defense spending by the United States, Japan, South Korea, and Australia outpaced China in 2019. Washington spent \$684.6 billion on defense and budgeted \$69 billion for war funding.

Japan, South Korea, and Australia combined to spend an additional \$113.9 billion on defense. China, the second biggest spender, put an estimated \$181.1 billion toward defense. That said, it is difficult to quantify or accurately break down PRC military expenditures, and Beijing does not pay as much per soldier as Washington does. Of course, what matters most is what is being purchased in these budgets. China has modernized its force at a blistering pace since 2000, but U.S. allies in Asia are also increasing budgets to acquire more advanced weapons and improve their navies' blue-water capabilities. The four now have advantages in most general military dimensions over China, including U.S. superiority in naval tonnage, higher-quality submarines, and superior long-range stealth aircraft. However, these sorts of measures of inputs shed relatively little light on who can sustain prolonged combat and where. The PRC has major advantages in its ability to sustain fighting on a large scale in the seas and airspace near Taiwan. Beijing often cannot match the united diplomacy of Washington and its allies and partners in Asia and Europe, but this situation is evolving. The United States and NATO allies the United Kingdom and France hold three of five of the permanent UN Security Council seats. Although China acquired chairmanship of four UN specialized agencies, the United States and its European and Asian allies combined hold chairmanship of six. But China does not stand idle. It is strengthening its military partnership with Russia. It maintains close relations with Iran, Pakistan, Myanmar, and North Korea. All of these except North Korea have conducted joint military exercises in several locations. China, Russia, and Iran have carried out joint naval exercises. Russian and Chinese bombers have flown together in patrols over the Sea of Japan. Moreover, PRC economic linkages and dependencies have a value that can influence and compel behavior even among U.S. allies, the Philippines being a case in point. For instance, China recently concluded both the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership in Asia, which includes all five U.S. Asian treaty allies and a bilateral investment treaty with the European Union (EU). Although China is catching up, the United States still generally leads

in the application of advanced technologies. Moreover, Beijing's soft power and values appeal only to governments with authoritarian tendencies. India, although not a treaty ally of the United States, increasingly sees its capacity to avoid intimidation from Beijing as linked to ever-closer relations with the West. Further, publics in the democracies now decisively see China as a threat to their values and well-being.

In October 2020, a Pew poll showed that in twelve democracies in Europe and Asia, majorities of at least 70 percent had a very or somewhat unfavorable view of China. A report published in November 2020 by the Central European Institute of Asian Studies revealed that in all thirteen European nations surveyed, respondents had a negative view of China's "effect on democracy in other countries." Finally, in addition to all these factors are the many substantial domestic problems China currently faces that will to some degree constrain its external behavior.<sup>27</sup> In short, there is much repair to be done with respect to U.S. international influence and America's alliance systems after the Trump years, but enormous potential power resides in these nations to work together to deal successfully with China.

The United States and China are well on their way to confrontation, which could eventually lead to war. During the past two years, almost every international issue divided Washington and Beijing. They disagreed about the most effective ideological underpinnings and political structures for modern societies, the futures of Hong Kong and Taiwan, freedom of navigation and the nature of maritime claims in the South China Sea, how best to curtail the North Korean and Iranian nuclear weapons programs, nuclear weapons and arms control, cyber penetration and other influence operations, the place of alliances in the current era, bilateral trade and intellectual property, human rights, 5G networks and advanced technology, climate change, China's Belt and Road Initiative and geo-economic coercion, the India-China dispute in the Himalayas, and the proper roles and missions of international organizations. In the fervor of the just completed U.S. electoral season, many of these disagreements have worsened a problematical reality that the Biden administration just inherited.

In the past few years, Beijing and Washington seemed uninterested in using diplomacy to arrest the potentially catastrophic decline in their relations. Few meetings have been held between the top diplomats of the two sides, and crisis management mechanisms are moribund. Thus neither the United States nor China made any serious effort to reduce disagreements on the major issues between them. Instead, they hurled daily public accusations against the other. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo all but said that Washington could not successfully address its problems with Beijing as long as the Chinese Communist Party ruled there in short, a call for regime change. China in its media has found nothing good to say about the United States, from its racial and class problems to its international behavior. This absence of diplomacy perplexes because it widens the U.S.-China gulf and increases the likelihood of eventual violent confrontation. History is replete with examples of how such conflict-ridden policies by contending states lead to tragedy. One hopes that the Biden administration will rectify this problem.

No grand bargain will be struck between the United States and China on world order. This is especially true given that both the U.S. and Chinese governments currently strive for illusionary primacy in the Indo-Pacific.

## Time for Palestine to be recognized as a full UN member

Daoud Kuttab

A senior Israeli official – Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who is also a member of the all-important security Cabinet and is overseeing the situation in the Occupied Territories – spoke and acted in total opposition to this commitment. No Israeli official is even speaking or working toward a "just solution," as the current Netanyahu administration is not

The spiraling debate between Tel Aviv and Washington has included a request by the Israeli leadership that the US stay out of the country's internal affairs.

While this request would be logical for a sovereign state, it is illogical for states that do not respect their own international commitments or the UN Charter. In the post-Second World War order, member states are obliged to abide by both the spirit and the text of their international commitments. The preamble of UN Security Council Resolution 242 notes "the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war." The same resolution also highlights the need to work for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. What has transpired in Israel for some time, particularly under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, is totally opposed to this.

A senior Israeli official – Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who is also a member of the all-important security Cabinet and is overseeing the situation in the Occupied Territories – spoke and acted in total opposition to this commitment. No Israeli official is even speaking or working toward a "just solution," as the current Netanyahu administration is not even making superficial attempts to hold political negotiations to end the long-rejected military occupation or colonial (and illegal) settlement enterprise.

Furthermore, in a speech at a French right-wing forum and behind a lectern that included a map showing the so-called Greater Israel, covering Palestine, Jordan and parts of Syria and Lebanon, Smotrich negated the very existence of the Palestinian people. He appeared to hint at the possibility of their expulsion

and the annexation of Palestinian land because, in his eyes, there is "no such thing as Palestinians." This racist and dangerous senior Israeli official has been neither fired nor publicly criticized.

Therefore, in light of the continued rejection of any peace efforts, and in heeding Israel's own request that others should not interfere in its policies, there is now little justification for the US and others to continuously defend Israel in international forums.

What is needed is not the repetition of diplomatic rhetoric condemning Israel or even lip service to the two-state solution. What is needed is an international position that seriously reinforces the world's commitment to Palestinian self-determination.

A resolution at the UN Security Council recognizing Palestine as a full member state would confirm what the majority of member states have already decided and would force Israel to negotiate with the state of Palestine on issues of borders and bilateral relations. European parliaments have also overwhelmingly recommended their governments do the same. But rather than acting separately, as Sweden did when it recognized Palestine, European countries have chosen to do so collectively at the right time and with the ability to make a difference. What better time than now? The US could also add its support by voting for or at least abstaining from such a vote in the UNSC. According to the latest Gallup poll, 49 percent of American Democrats sympathize more with the Palestinians, compared to 38 percent being more sympathetic toward the Israelis. Now – a long time before the next US presidential campaign begins – might be politically the best time for the Biden administration

to take such a courageous decision. This would be the prerogative of the White House and does not need the support of Congress.

A vote for full membership for Palestine would send the message to Israel that its days of getting carte blanche from the US and other Western countries are now numbered, both in terms of Israel's democratic status and its attitude toward its Palestinian and Arab neighbors. In addition to recognizing Palestine as a state under occupation, the world community – along with nearby Arab countries – must work hard with the Palestinian people to help decouple them from an unhealthy dependence on Israel. The Palestinian economy must be freed from this forced dependence and serious efforts need to be made to help reach full independence. While this might require additional resources, the Palestinian people are resilient enough to be able to continue building not only an independent country but also a country based on democratic transparency and a true adherence to the separation of powers – an independent judiciary and a free press, along with genuine efforts for transparency and the rule of law.

In short, to deal with the situation in the Middle East, the world should – in order for its behavior to be consistent with its own values and principles – go beyond paying lip service to the two-state solution and delve into the implementation of such a position. It can start by recognizing Palestine and ensuring that it can be a contiguous, independent and democratic state living in peace with all its neighbors.

—Courtesy: Arab News



## Briefs

## SC announces verdict today

FROM PAGE 01

He asked if the elections date could be issued without consultation with the president and that the AGP did not raise such an important question while getting embroiled in the bench related matters. "We cannot listen to the lawyers of the ruling alliance due to the boycott of court," he said. Ahead of today's hearing Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan filed a miscellaneous plea in the apex court for the reconstitution of the bench. In the plea, filed on behalf of the federation, the Supreme Court was requested to dismiss the election delay case because of the majority (4-3) order/judgment of March 1. The petition stated that the proceedings in the instant petition might kindly be postponed in light of the order passed by Justice QaziFaez Isa, postponing all the proceedings in suo motu matters.

"This Hon'ble Bench, in view of submissions made in paragraphs 11 and 12, may graciously recuse from hearing the instant petition and a bench comprising of all remaining Hon'ble Judges of this court, who did not hear SMC No. 1/2023, CPs No 1 and 2 of 2023, may kindly be constituted to decide the questions raised herein," it requested.

At the outset of the hearing, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) lawyer Farooq H Naek came to the rostrum and requested to speak.

However, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial asked whether they were becoming a party to the case as they had announced a boycott of the proceedings. At this, Naek told the bench that they have not boycotted the proceedings as of yet.

"Do your consultations and tell us. Tell us in writing that you have not boycotted the hearing," said the CJP. The PPP counsel then clarified to the court that his party had objections to the formation of the bench and had not boycotted the proceedings. The CJP then remarked that in the newspapers it has been reported that the PPP has boycotted as well.

"You have boycotted and came to present your arguments. In the [PDM] meeting, no confidence was expressed in the bench," interjected Justice Muneer Akhtar. On this, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawyer Akram Sheikh told the court that they are yet to take back the power of attorney and they have objections to the bench hearing the case. He also clarified they have not boycotted the proceedings yet.

"A conference of political parties was held and in the last 48 hours in the national press, it is being stated that a boycott has been announced. If you do not have confidence in us then how can you give arguments," asked Justice Akhtar.

The CJP then turned towards AGP Mansoor Usman Awan and asked what instructions he had gotten, adding that the government cannot boycott the proceedings. The AGP responded that the governments operate according to the Constitution and that the ECP has the power to defer the date for the polls. However, Justice Ahsan observed how can ECP change the date when the Supreme Court has made a decision.

"Supreme Court's decision is applicable to everyone including the executive," said Justice Ahsan. AGP Awan then went on arguing about the March 1 order of the Supreme Court stating the president was asked to give a date for polls in Punjab and the governor in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He added that the KP governor is yet to fix a date for the polls to the provincial assembly.

"The law does not allow anyone to delay elections. Only the court can defer the election date," responded CJP Bandial. He added that in 1988 as well the court postponed the elections.

"The order that is being referred has already been implemented," added CJP Bandial. He added that the Supreme Court's hearing is in the public interest and there is a difference of opinion among judges. On the other hand, Justice Ahsan stated that the real issue was the ECP order, adding that court directives are bounding. AGP Awan then went back to the suo motu case stating that in the "first round," a nine-member bench heard the case.

# Israeli troops kill two Palestinians, injure others

Deceased Palestinians Muhammad Nasser Saeed (L) and Muhammad Abu Bakr Junaidi

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: Two Palestinians have been shot dead during an Israeli military raid in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus, as the Israeli regime's far-right Netanyahu administration intensifies its deadly raids across the occupied territories. The official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that confrontations broke out soon after Israeli forces stormed Nablus, located approximately 49 kilometers (30 miles) north of al-Quds, in the early hours of Monday, with dozens of armored vehicles and special forces.

The Palestinian Ministry of Health later identified the victims as Muhammad Nasser

Saeed and Muhammad Abu Bakr Junaidi. The victims sustained serious gunshot wounds as Palestinian resistance fighters engaged in clashes with Israeli forces during the raid. Witnesses described Israeli soldiers opening fire indiscriminately. Ahmed Jibril, director of ambulance and emergency services at the Palestine Red Crescent Society in Nablus, said the pair were transported to Rafidia Surgical Hospital and Nablus Speciality Hospital, where they were pronounced dead shortly afterward. He added that Israeli troops raided Nablus Speciality Hospital with poisonous gas bombs. Jibril noted that at least 55 Pal-

estinians also suffered breathing difficulties due to inhaling tear gas fired by the Israeli forces. A man was injured in his foot after he was attacked by an Israeli police dog. The Israeli forces also arrested two citizens, identified as Izz al-Din Touqan and Nidal-Tabanga, after they forced their way into their houses and ransacked them.

**Hamas calls for retaliation**  
The Gaza-based Hamas resistance movement said, "There is no way to confront the occupying Israeli regime other than resistance and an increase in retaliatory measures." "Monday morning's deaths, which bring the number of Palestinians killed since the

start of the year to 95, clearly indicate the rise in the criminal policy of the Israeli enemy and its widespread exercise of murder and assassination," Hamas said.

It also stressed that the surge in the Israeli regime's crimes and its utter disregard for Palestinian lives necessitate stronger retaliatory measures against Israeli troops and extremist Jewish settlers. "Our revolutionary youths are ready to respond to the crime, and fully prepared to defend our nation as well as the holy al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the face of the incessant aggression of Israeli forces and terrorist settler groups, which is being directly and publicly sponsored by the

incumbent far-right administration [led by prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu]," the resistance movement added.

Over the past months, Israel has ramped up attacks on Palestinian towns and cities throughout the occupied territories. As a result of these attacks, dozens of Palestinians have lost their lives and many others have been arrested.

Most of the raids have focused on Nablus and Jenin, where Israeli forces have been trying to stifle a growing Palestinian resistance against occupation. Local and international rights groups have condemned Israel's excessive use of force and "shoot-to-kill policy" against Palestinians. - APP

## Justice Isa seeks...

FROM PAGE 01

three-member bench of the Supreme Court, passed in suo motu Case No. 4 of 2022. The Registrar does not have the power or authority to undo a judicial order, and the Chief Justice cannot issue administrative directions with regard thereto," read the letter. Slamming the registrar, he further wrote: "Your conduct demonstrates that you do not have the requisite competence, ability and understanding to hold the office of Registrar. Moreover, a bureaucrat holding the office of the Registrar violates Article 175(3) of the Constitution, which mandates the complete separation of the judiciary from the executive."

## Brotherly states...

FROM PAGE 01

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from 2014 to 2018, Pakistan was on the road to development. The country faced devastating floods. A total of Rs100 billion have been given to the flood-hit people by the federal government only," he averred. "Imran Khan trapped Pakistan in economic quagmire. The previous rulers used bad language against the friendly countries. Serious allegations were levelled against the Chinese projects," the prime minister deplored. "Imran and his followers said that 45 per cent corruption took place in the Chinese projects. China invested \$30 billion in Pakistan, and frivolous allegations were levelled against the friendly country," he lambasted.

## Reiterates 'no...'

FROM PAGE 01

from the bench. He requested Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial to constitute a full court sans two judges as it would be acceptable to the nation. Such a contentious decision, the premier said would be against the norms of justice. Referring to CJP's remarks that certain people speaking in the National Assembly had undergone jail terms, PM Shehbaz said that it was a matter of pride that he had been released by the high court on merit in the false and fabricated cases. "[PTI Chairman] Imran Khan and his collaborators had framed false cases against his political opponents and tried to implicate me in those fabricated cases," he added.

## Pakistan at turning...

FROM PAGE 01

the parties in government miserably failed to present any constitutional and solid argument for postponing the polls in Punjab and Kyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Talking to media here on Monday, Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi along with PTI Central Secretary General Asad Umar praised the Supreme Court (SC) for not bowing to the pressure of the imported government in the case.

## Whole nation...

FROM PAGE 01

the public. He questioned the parliament where Raja Riaz is the leader of the opposition. This parliament is not representing the people, he asserted. Fawad Chaudhary further said that the people of Pakistan want a new election. We want to go for general elections. Let's do it in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. The country has been made a banana republic. He emphasized that they have to continue to stand firm and win.

## Bilawal Bhutto...

FROM PAGE 01

interpretation of the constitution for which full court was need of the hour. He added, such matters need to be discussed with consensus. He added: "It is a trial of the Supreme Court. It will decide whether the court is an institution for the protection of the Constitution or it wants to become a Tiger Force." He continued: "Historical criticism of the Supreme Court is being made."

# Malaysia moves to end mandatory death penalty

KUALA LUMPUR: The Dewan Rakyat, or lower house, of Malaysia's Parliament on Monday approved legal reforms to abolish the mandatory death penalty for some offences. The Dewan Negara, or upper house, will now take up the legislation, and if it passes there, it will be sent to the king to be signed into law. It is widely expected to be passed by the upper house. The amendments would apply to 34 offences currently punishable by death, including murder and drug trafficking. Eleven of them carry it as a mandatory punishment. Capital punishment would be removed as

an option for some serious crimes that do not cause death, such as kidnapping and the discharging and trafficking of firearms. Malaysia has had a moratorium on executions since 2018, but courts have continued to send inmates to death row. Under the amendments passed on Monday, alternatives to the death penalty would include whipping and imprisonment for 30 to 40 years under certain conditions. Deputy Law Minister Ramkarpal Singh said capital punishment was an irreversible punishment that had not been an effective deterrent for crime.

"We cannot arbitrarily ignore the existence of the inherent right to life of every individual. The death penalty has not brought the results it was intended to bring," he said while wrapping up the parliamentary debates on the bill.

The legislation passed in Malaysia as some of its Southeast Asian neighbours have stepped up their use of capital punishment. Last year, Singapore executed 11 people for drug offences, government data showed, while Myanmar carried out its first death sentences in decades against four pro-democracy activists. Human Rights

Watch deputy Asia director Phil Robertson called Monday's vote an "important step forward for Malaysia". "This is an important breakthrough that will cause some serious conversations in the halls of upcoming ASEAN meetings," he told AFP news agency, referring to the 10-member Southeast Asian bloc.

"Malaysia should show regional leadership by encouraging other governments in ASEAN to re-think their continued use of the death penalty, starting with Singapore which has recently gone on a post-Covid execution spree." - Agencies

## Kiev behind murder of Russian military blogger

MOSCOW: The blast in St. Petersburg that killed military blogger Vladlen Tatarsky was orchestrated by Ukraine, Russia's National Anti-Terrorism Committee (NAK) said on Monday. It described the murder as "a terrorist attack."

Tatarsky, whose real name was Maksim Fomin, was hosting a live event with his followers in a café in the city's historical center on Sunday when a bomb went off, killing him and wounding more than 30 others. According to the NAK, Kiev used "individuals who collaborated with [Alexey] Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation [FBK]" to carry out the attack. Officials described suspect Darya Trepoza, who was detained on Monday, as an "active supporter" of the FBK. Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner and opposition figure, founded the FBK in 2011. The organization was labeled by the authorities as 'extremist' and banned in Russia in 2021. Navalny is currently serving a prison sentence for an embezzlement conviction. He accused Russian officials of trying to poison him after suddenly falling ill on a domestic flight in 2020. The Kremlin denied any involvement in the incident. Witnesses told Russian media that the young woman attended Tatarsky's event and gave him a figurine as a gift shortly before the blast. A Donbass native, Tatarsky joined the local forces that fought against Ukrainian troops in the wake of the 2014 coup in Kiev. He later built a career as a prominent blogger, covering the Russia-Ukraine conflict on his Telegram channel. - Agencies

# Chelsea sack Potter with club 11th in Premier League

LONDON: Chelsea have sacked manager Graham Potter, the London club said on Sunday after a string of poor results left the expensively-assembled team 11th in the Premier League. Potter had been signed by Chelsea's new ownership in September after they prised him away from Brighton & Hove Albion but the Englishman lasted 31 games, winning only 12, before the owners pulled the trigger. While Potter oversaw wins in the Champions League where they topped their group after beating AC Milan twice and knocked out Borussia Dortmund, their league form nosedived as they fell out of the top four and into the bottom half of the table. His last game in charge was Chelsea's 2-0 loss at home to Aston Villa on Saturday which led to boos and jeers from the fans at Stamford Bridge as the result left them 12 points off the

top four and in danger of missing out on Europe next season.

"Graham has agreed to collaborate with the club to facilitate a smooth transition," Chelsea said in a statement. "In his time with the club, Graham has taken us to the quarter final of the Champions League, where we will face Real Madrid. Chelsea would like to thank Graham for all his efforts and contribution and wish him well for the future. Salto's first game in charge is on Tuesday at home to eighth-placed Liverpool, who sit four points above them."

"Along with our incredible fans, we will all be getting behind Bruno and the team as we focus on the rest of the season," co-controlling owners Todd Boehly and Behdad Eghbali said. "We have 10 Premier League games remaining and a Champions League quarter-final ahead. We will



put every effort and commitment into every one of those games so that we can end the season on a high."

Potter is the 12th manager to be sacked in the Premier League this season with the announcement coming hours after relegation-threatened Leicester City parted ways with Brendan Rodgers by mutual agreement. The departures of Rodgers and Potter set a new Premier League record for most dismissals in a season, beating the 10 that happened in four other seasons, most recently in 2017-18. Potter was a surprise choice to replace Thomas Tuchel who was sacked by the club in September after a poor start to the season. He initially impressed as Chelsea went nine games unbeaten before a 4-1 hammering at Brighton on Oct. 30. - Agencies

## Amir likely to take back retirement

Amir, by far the youngest of the three, received widespread sympathy and he was granted a return to international cricket in 2016 when Najam Sethi, also the current head of PCB, was in charge of cricket affairs in the country

LHAORE: Left-arm pacer Mohammad Amir is expected to come out of retirement in international cricket in near future. According to reports, Amir, who took retirement in 2020 citing issues with the then team management led by Misbah-ul-Haq, has been told to get ready for international cricket. Reports claimed that the Pakistan team's selection committee has contacted Amir's manager and asked him to direct the cricketer to not make unnecessary statements in the media. The cricketer has also got hints to play this year's ICC World Cup which is scheduled for October-November in India.

Amir had represented Pakistan in 36 Tests, 61 ODIs, and 50 T20Is. He last played an international match in 2020. The pacer was also part of the Pakistan team when they won ICC T20 World Cup 2009 and ICC Champions Trophy 2017. His Champions Trophy 2017 final spell earned Pakistan their maiden title in an eight-team tournament. The 18-year-old, his new-ball partner Mohammad Asif and former Pakistan captain Salman Butt were banned from cricket for five years and handed jail sentences in 2010 after they were found guilty of match-fixing during the Test series against England. Amir, by far the youngest of the three, received widespread sympathy and he was granted a return to international cricket in 2016 when Najam Sethi, also the current head of PCB, was in charge of cricket affairs in the country. In 2020, Amir once again gave birth to controversy after he took sudden retirement from international cricket. In his statement, the cricketer accused the then head coach Misbah and bowling coach Waqar Younis of doing favouritism. - DNA

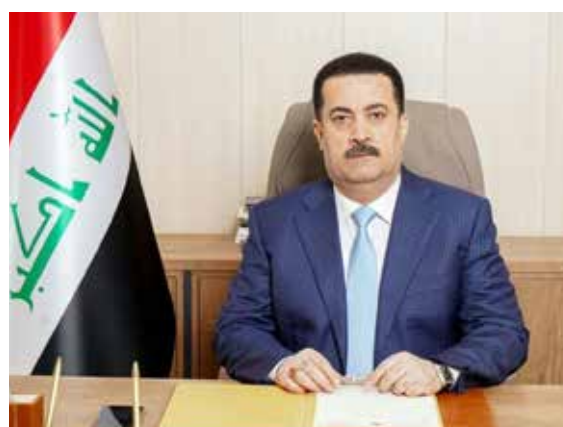
# No need for US forces in Iraq: PM Sudani

The US military declared the end of its combat mission in Iraq in December 2021, but it still maintains a number of troops there under the guise of playing an advisory role

DNA

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani says the Arab country does not need US-led foreign combat troops on its soil, as the Iraqi forces are fully capable of preserving Iraq's security. Sudani said in an interview with Al Jazeera that Iraqi security forces have the necessary capability to ensure security throughout the country after the elimination of the Daesh terrorist group. In early 2003, the US invaded Iraq under the later debunked pretext that the regime of Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. The US withdrew soldiers from Iraq between 2007 and 2011 but redeployed them in 2014 along with

other partners to allegedly counter the threat of Daesh. Iraq managed to end the territorial rule of the Takfiri outfit in the country thanks to the sacrifices of the national army as well as the anti-terror Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), which had the backing of Iran. However, Washington kept its forces inside Iraq in defiance of a resolution that required its withdrawal. The US military declared the end of its combat mission in Iraq in December 2021, but it still maintains a number of troops there under the guise of playing an advisory role. Also in his remarks, Sudani said attacks on any country from Iraqi territory are unacceptable, noting that Iraq, as a legal and moral obligation, does not allow



the use of its soil for invading neighboring states. The Iraqi constitution does not accept the presence of armed individuals in camps, where they receive military training, as well as their infiltration into Iranian soil, he said, adding that no one is meddling in the country's national decisions and

independence. Also in his comments, the Iraqi prime minister described a recent agreement between Tehran and Riyadh to revive ties as "very important". The deal will help boost regional stability, he said, adding that development and economic growth can only be realized through

cooperation between the countries of the region. Last month, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to resume their diplomatic relations and reopen their embassies and diplomatic missions after seven years of estrangement. China mediated the rapprochement between the two Middle Eastern powers. The Iraqi premier underlined the need for Syria's return to the Cairo-based Arab League as well as interaction with the Damascus government, emphasizing that the most serious security challenge now is the security situation in Syria. The Arab League suspended Syria's membership in November 2011 following the outbreak of foreign-backed militancy in the country. Currently, after more than

a decade, reports say Saudi Arabia is planning to invite Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to an Arab League summit hosted by Riyadh next month. Sudani also said the main challenge now facing the Iraqi government is corruption, with much of it perpetrated by political or official sides. He assured that the Iraqi judiciary will issue arrest warrants for the officials who were involved in a corruption case dubbed the "theft of the century" regardless of their position and affiliation with different parties. Last October, the Iraqi Finance Ministry found that almost 3.7 trillion dinars (about \$2.5 billion) had been stolen from the country's tax authority between September 2021 and August 2022.



## Briefs

## OIC strongly condemns Israeli crimes

DNA

JEDDAH: The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) strongly condemned the continuation of the Israeli aggression against the city of Nablus, which resulted in the death of two Palestinian citizens, and held Israel, the occupying power, fully responsible for the repercussions of the continuation of these crimes and repeated attacks on the Palestinian people.

The OIC also called on the international community, especially the UN Security Council, to assume its responsibilities in putting an end to these ongoing Israeli crimes and to provide international protection for the Palestinian people.

## Libya rejects UN report on migrant rights

TRIPOLI: Libya's Tripoli-based government has rejected a UN report about violations of migrant rights in the war-torn country.

A report by a UN fact-finding mission cited evidence on crimes against humanity committed against migrants in Libya, including women being forced into sex slavery. The UN mission said its investigators collected nearly 2,800 items of information documenting numerous cases of abuse against migrants, including arbitrary detention, murder, torture, rape, enslavement, sexual slavery, extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearances.

In a statement, the Libyan Foreign Ministry called on the UN mission to present its information about the victims of violence and sex slavery to the authorities. The ministry said the UN report casts doubts on the ability of the Libyan institutions to deal with the issue professionally.

"The situation in the detention centers where migrants are held requires international support, and not to leave the Libyan government alone on this issue," it added. Libya is considered a main transit point for migrants on their way to Europe seeking a better life.—Agencies

## 7.0-magnitude quake hits western PNG

SYDNEY: A powerful 7.0-magnitude earthquake shook a remote region of northwestern Papua New Guinea before dawn Monday, toppling a few homes but with no immediate reports of casualties.

The quake struck at a depth of 62 kilometres (38 miles) near the Chambri Lake system in the sparsely populated region of East Sepik Province, the US Geological Service said.

"So far, we have lost a few houses, it is fortunate for us that no life (is) lost," a member of parliament in the area, Johnson Wapunai, said in a message on social media. "Chambri lake is boiling and the continuous quake is still happening right now," he wrote more than five hours after the quake, which occurred at about 4:00 am local time. The lawmaker urged people to watch out for falling objects or trees and to be on alert for further seismic activity. No tsunami warning was issued. The quake cracked interior floors and lifted outside paving stones at a new regional hospital that was nearing completion about 60 kilometres away, photographs taken by a doctor at the scene showed.

Loosening of soft ground in the quake zone can cause substantial subsidence and horizontal sliding of the ground and result in major damage, the USGS said.

The earthquake shook an area about 100 kilometres east of the border with Indonesia on the island of New Guinea. The remote New Britain region, part of an archipelago in eastern Papua New Guinea, was struck by a magnitude 6.2 earthquake in late February.—Agencies

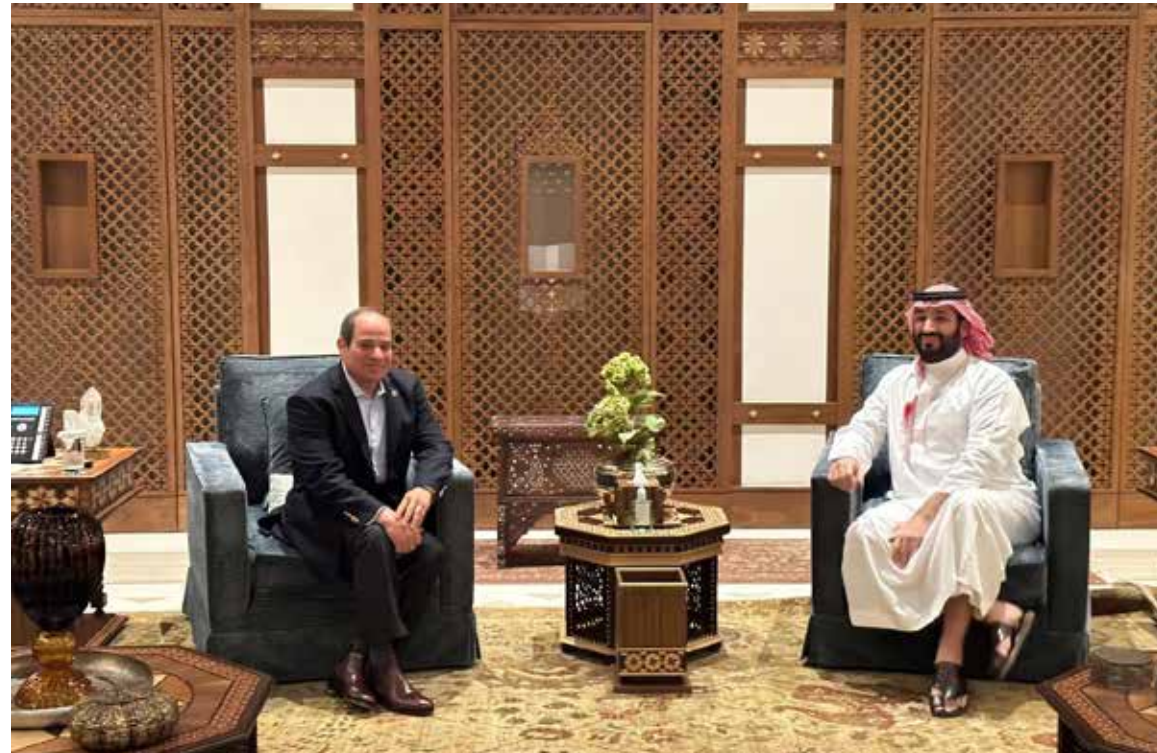
## Egypt's el-Sisi on surprise visit to Saudi Arabia

"Reality may be different from what we see in the media or what we hear from politicians ... even when it's politicians who think they are in control," he said

## NEWS DESK

CAIRO: The leaders of Egypt and Saudi Arabia have met in the kingdom, officials said Monday. It's the first visit by top officials in months as Egypt battles a domestic economic crisis. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto leader of Saudi Arabia, held talks late Sunday that focused on ties between the two heavyweights, according to Egyptian presidential spokesman Ahmed Fahmy. Fahmy said in a statement that the two leaders "affirmed mutual concern for promoting common cooperation in all fields." They also agreed to continue "coordination and consultation" on regional and international topics, he added. The statement did not give further details. The meeting came as el-Sisi's government is struggling to overcome an economic crisis blamed on the war in Europe, but what critics say is resulting from mismanagement of the economy. The two heavy powers are also both seeking to mend their frayed ties with other regional powers, including Iran and Turkey. "I affirm the depth and strength of the bilateral relations between Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," el-Sisi tweeted after returning to Egypt early Monday.

Bin Salman, widely known in the west by the acronym MBS, received el-Sisi in the Saudi coastal city of Jeddah on the Red Sea. Images aired by state-run media in the two countries showed the crown prince waiting for the Egyptian president on the tarmac.



Other officials from both countries attended the talks, including Abbas Kamel, head of Egypt's General Intelligence Authority, and Mused bin Mohammed Al-Aiban, Saudi national security adviser, according to the Saudi official news agency. The surprise trip was the first announced encounter between the two leaders since they met in Qatar during the opening of the

World Cup. El-Sisi also received bin Salman in Cairo in June 2022 ahead of President Joe Biden's Mideast trip. Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf states have been the main suppliers of aid to the Egyptian government, which has been struggling to overcome a staggering economic crisis. In 2022, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates pledged a total

of \$22 billion in deposits and direct investments in Egypt, in a bid to stabilize its battered economy after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, in recent months, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states seemed increasingly reluctant to help cash-strapped Egypt. They urged el-Sisi's government to make economic reforms to receive aid. Egypt has already begun

to make changes as part of a \$4 billion deal with the International Monetary Fund. "We need to see reforms. We are taxing our people. We are expecting also others to do the same, to do their efforts. We want to help, but we want you also to do your part," Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed al-Jadaan said at the World Economic Forum's annual gathering in Davos, Switzerland, in January. The veiled criticism to the Egyptian government's handling of the economy has strained ties between Cairo and Riyadh. An online spat between public figures in the two countries erupted after an opinion piece was published in an Egyptian state-owned newspaper in February, arguing that Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states had no right to criticize the Egyptian government's handling of its economy. Speaking at the World Government Summit in Dubai in February, el-Sisi watered down the spat and praised Gulf monarchies for their financial support over the past years. "Reality may be different from what we see in the media or what we hear from politicians ... even when it's politicians who think they are in control," he said.

## Italy's govt wants to ban English words with fines

ROME: The right-wing party led by Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, has pushed forward proposed new legislation which will punish the use of English and other foreign words in official communications with fines between 5,000 and 100,000. The goal of the legislation, which has received wide condemnation in the country even by Italy's most renowned scholars of Italian linguistics and philology, the prestigious Accademia della Crusca, is "to defend and promote the Italian language" and protect the national identity, according to Meloni's party. The new proposal, supported by Meloni, was introduced by Fabio Rampelli, a member of Italy's lower chamber of deputies. In a tweet pinned to his Twitter profile, the MP gives an example of the so-called "Anglomania" which will get Italian politicians and bureaucrats fined if the law

is passed. "In the lower chamber of deputies we speak Italian," Rampelli writes. "We continue our battle for the use of our language instead of English. We can't understand why we call 'dispenser' the automatic hand sanitizer dispenser." Instead of using the word "dispenser" in English, Meloni's government would have officials use the much more wordy Italian expression: "dispensatore di liquido igienizzante per le mani." The Italian language - like most other languages in Europe - has adopted many English terms in recent years, in part because these were terms indicating 'new' things which did not belong to the Italian tradition (computer, social media, smart working), in part because the English language often offers a more concise, snappier version of terms that in Italian would take quite a roundabout way to

express. In part, because for many the use of an English word even where an Italian term would do just fine - for example, in Italy it is common to refer to work meetings as "briefing" or use the word "deadline" in a professional environment - adds a touch of authority and internationalism. According to the latest data, Treccani, the well-respected Italian-language encyclopaedia, currently contains 9,000 English words and 800,000 Italian words. Since 2000, the number of English words that have inserted themselves in the Italian language has grown by 773 percent. The adoption of English words into the Italian language is an object of endless debate in Italy, where opinions are split between protecting the integrity of the national language and accepting that living languages are fluid and constantly evolving.

Meloni's new proposed legislation takes a strong stance into this debate, pushing for a conservative approach that intends to virtually ban English words from the public administration, schools and universities. Under the new law, "any [university] class that isn't specifically aimed at teaching a foreign language must be in Italian". Courses in foreign languages will only be justified when targeted to foreign students. Anyone holding an office in public administration must have "written and oral knowledge and mastery of the Italian language." According to the draft bill, the use of English words "demeans and mortifies" the Italian language and it's even worse now that the UK is no longer part of the European Union. The proposed legislation still needs to go up for parliamentary debate.—Agencies

## Borissov appears winner of Bulgaria's election

SOFIA: The center-right GERB party of ex-premier Boyko Borissov appeared to be the winner of Bulgaria's parliamentary election, the country's central electoral commission said Monday, with 99% of the ballots counted. Results showed the GERB party receiving 26.6% of the vote, nearly 2% more than the pro-Western reformist bloc led by the We Continue the Change party. Four other parties also appear to have gained seats in the 240-seat chamber, according to the latest results. Riding a wave of pro-Russian sentiment that many in this former communist nation share, the ultra-nationalist Vazrazhdane party, which opposes any actions against Putin's Russia, boosted support to come in third with 14.2% of the vote. The ethnic Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms came in fourth with 13.4%, followed by the Socialist party and the There is Such People party, led by a popular TV entertainer, with 9% and 4.1% respectively. It could take days before the final official results are announced. If confirmed, Borissov will be handed a mandate to form his fourth government. But it seems Borissov will face an uphill struggle to cobble together a governing coalition in a fragmented parliament. Political analysts predicted that the results, which do not differ significantly from the previous four elections held within the last two years, will be followed by difficult coalition talks. They don't rule out another election. Ruzha Smilova, program director at the Center for Liberal Strategies in Sofia, said that although the two leading political groups share the same strategic foreign policy goals, their visions of the country's future as part of the Western alliance diverge.—Agencies

## Trump indictment pulls GOPs back to MAGA fold

HENDERSON: Larry White, a self-described Republican conservative, was thinking of voting for Ron DeSantis in his party's presidential nominating contest, believing the Florida governor had a better chance of winning back the White House from the Democrats than former President Donald Trump. Then came news on March 30 that Trump had been indicted in New York on charges related to a hush money payment to a porn star, making him the first former U.S. president to face criminal prosecution. "Now I am absolutely voting for Trump," said White, 75, a composer and musician in Nevada. "The indictment was the last straw for me, because Trump has suffered so much political abuse. I think he's the strongest candidate to contest what the left is doing. I'm all in." White's anger and return to supporting Trump over DeSantis reflected the sentiment of many Republican activists and voters Reuters spoke to in Nevada. The western state votes early in the presidential nominating process, giving it an outsized role in deciding which candidate gains momentum in the 2024 election. Until the indictment, a majority of the 35 Republicans Reuters interviewed had been willing to turn their backs on Trump and go with a different candidate for the 2024 election, believing he was too flawed and bombastic to win the general election for Republicans next year.—Agencies



BEIJING: Minister for Planning, Development and special initiative, Ahsan Iqbal holds an interactive session with Pakistani professionals and students residing in China.—DNA

## South Korea, US, Japan hold submarine drill

SEOUL: The South Korean, U.S. and Japanese navies began their first anti-submarine drills in six months on Monday to boost their coordination against increasing North Korean missile threats, South Korea's military said. The two-day drills come as North Korea's recent unveiling of a type of battlefield nuclear warhead prompted worries the country may conduct its first nuclear test since 2017. The maritime exercises in international waters off South Korea's southern island of Jeju involved the nuclear-powered USS Nimitz aircraft carrier and naval destroyers from South Korea, the U.S. and Japan, South Korea's Defense Ministry said in a statement. The training was arranged to improve the three countries' capacities to respond to underwater security threats posed by North Korea's advancing

submarine-launched ballistic missiles and other assets, the statement said. South Korean defense officials said the three countries were to detect and track unmanned South Korean and U.S. underwater vehicles posing as enemy submarines and other assets. Submarine-launched missiles by North Korea are serious security threats to the United States and its allies because it's harder to spot such launches in advance. In recent year, the North has been testing sophisticated underwater-launched ballistic missiles and pushing to build bigger submarines including a nuclear-powered one. Last month, North Korea performed a barrage of missile tests in response to the earlier South Korea-U.S. bilateral military drills. The weapons tested included a nuclear-capable underwater drone and a submarine-launched cruise missile, which

suggest North Korea is trying to diversify its underwater weapons systems. Photographs in North Korea's state media last week showed leader Kim Jong Un standing near about 10 red-tipped warheads called "Hwasan (volcano)-31" with different serial numbers. A poster on a nearby wall listed eight kinds of short-range weapons that can carry the "Hwasan-31" warhead. The previous test flights of those weapons show they are capable of striking key targets in South Korea, including U.S. military bases there. Some observers say the warhead's unveiling may be a prelude to a nuclear test as North Korea's last two tests in 2016 and 2017 followed the disclosures of other warheads. If it does conduct a nuclear test, it would be its seventh detonation overall and the first since September 2017. During the warhead-related event

last week, Kim also ordered officials to ramp up bomb fuel production to achieve his stated goal of expanding his country's nuclear arsenal "exponentially." On Saturday, 38 North, a North Korea-focused website, said that recent commercial satellite imagery of the North's main Yongbyon nuclear complex indicates a high level of activity, such as the continued operation of its 5-megawatt reactor and new construction around the uranium enrichment plant area. Foreign experts debate whether North Korea has functioning nuclear-armed missiles. But South Korea's defense minister, Lee Jong-sup, recently told lawmakers that the North's technology to build miniaturized warheads to be mounted on advanced short-range missiles was believed to have made considerable progress. North Korea could carry

out new missile tests to protest the South Korea-U.S.-Japan drills because it views such training as a security threat. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called the recent South Korea-U.S. exercises "reckless military provocations" that disregarded North Korea's "patience and warning." In remarks carried in the Defense Ministry statement, Rear Adm. Kim Inho, chief of the South Korean forces involved in the trilateral drills, said "We'll decisively respond to and neutralize any type of provocation by North Korea." In addition to the anti-submarine drills, the three countries will practice humanitarian search-and-rescue operations, including saving people who fall into the water and treating emergency patients. It would be the three countries' first such training in seven years, the Defense Ministry statement said.—APP

## Paris vote in favor of banning rental e-scooters

PARIS: Paris residents have voted for the prohibition of self-service electric scooters in the French capital, the mayor announced. On Sunday, a referendum has been held whether to ban the rental e-scooters which triggered a public row in the past months. Anne Hidalgo in a news conference said: "As of Sept. 1, there will be no more scooters in Paris." Paris municipality in a statement noted that 103,084 voters participated in the referendum, and 89% of them voted in favor of a ban. The participation rate in the public consultation was very low as 1,382,322 electors were registered on the electoral lists - so only 7.45% of them expressed their opinion. The use of electric scooters in France stirred controversy due to accidents, sidewalks being crowded by randomly parked vehicles, and drivers not following traffic rules. In 2022, police recorded 337 accidents in Paris, including a lethal one, according to the local broadcaster Franceinfo. Lime, Dott, and Tier are companies operating in Paris, with a total of 15,000 to 22,000 electric scooters, broadcaster BFMTV said.—DNA

## Finland's right-wing claim victory

HELSINKI: The leader of Finland's right-wing National Coalition Party, Petteri Orpo, has claimed victory in Sunday's tightly-fought parliamentary election. His party got 48 seats in the 200-seat parliament, the right-wing Finns Party got 46 seats and Prime Minister Sanna Marin's left-wing Social Democrats got 42 seats, but less than one percentage point separated the top three parties. Marin conceded defeat, saying the "celebration of democracy is always a wonderful thing." "This is a great day because we have done well in the elections. Congratulations also to the other winners of the elections, congratulations to the Coalition Party, and congratulations to the Finns Party. Democracy has spoken," said Marin. In Finland, the biggest party in parliament traditionally gets the first chance at forming a coalition government, and usually claims the prime minister's office. Orpo told his supporters that the NCP's win was "a great victory." "On the basis of this election result, we will start negotiating a government in Finland," he said. He could choose to build a government either with the Finns Party or the Marin's Social Democrats, though he is at odds with both on various issues. Orpo's pro-business party has made the economy its top priority, saying it wants to address Finland's debt-to-GDP ratio which has risen from 64% in 2019 to 73%. The 37-year-old Marin, who was the world's youngest prime minister when she took office in 2019, is seen abroad as a role model for progressive new leaders, but has faced criticism at home for her government's public spending and increased debt burden.—APP

## Algeria rejects foreign military intervention

ALGIERS: Algeria's army chief, Lt. Gen. Said Chengriha, on Sunday reiterated his country's rejection of any foreign military intervention in the region under the pretext of combating terrorism because it is an approach that has proven to be a complete failure. Chengriha said in a speech during a military meeting. The army chief, however, did not provide any details about parties seeking military intervention in the region. "Algeria's will is to give a new dynamism to efforts to combat terrorism in the Sahel and Sahara region," Chengriha said. Algeria maintains that countries of the region have a responsibility to fight terrorism by themselves. Algeria opposed France's military intervention in its neighbor Mali in 2013.—Agencies



## Briefs

### 'Chinese spy balloon gathered intel on US military sites'

CALIFORNIA: A Chinese balloon that flew across the United States was able to gather intelligence from several U.S. military sites and transmit it back to Beijing in real time, despite the Biden administration's efforts to prevent it from doing so, NBC News reported on Monday.

The high-altitude balloon, controlled by Beijing, was able to make multiple passes over some of the sites before it was shot down on Feb. 4, at times flying in a figure-eight formation, NBC said, citing two current senior U.S. officials and one former senior administration official. The three officials said it could transmit the information it collected back to Beijing in real time, NBC reported.

"The intelligence China collected was mostly from electronic signals, which can be picked up from weapons systems or include communications from base personnel, rather than images," NBC cited the officials as saying. White House official John Kirby told reporters on Monday that he could not confirm NBC's report, but said the US limited the balloon's "ability to be able to collect anything additive." Agencies

### Trump to fly to New York for court surrender

DNA

NEW YORK: Former U.S. President Donald Trump prepared to fly from Florida to New York City on Monday to face charges stemming from a probe into hush money paid to a porn star before the 2016 election, as security tightened in Manhattan.

Trump was due to surrender at the Manhattan District Attorney's Office on Tuesday and likely will be fingerprinted and photographed prior to his appearance before a judge at an arraignment proceeding where he will plead not guilty.

Trump, a Republican who is seeking to regain the presidency in 2024, is the first former U.S. president to face criminal charges. The specific charges included in the grand jury indictment have not been disclosed.

## Battle of Bakhmut

# Wagner raises Russian flag; Ukraine fights on

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said on Sunday evening that while Russia hadn't stopped its assault on the city, "Ukrainian defenders are courageously holding the city as they repel numerous enemy attacks"

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: The head of Russia's Wagner mercenary group says he has raised a Russian flag over Bakhmut's city hall in Ukraine. In a night-time video, Yevgeny Prigozhin said Bakhmut was now Russian "in a legal sense". However he admitted Ukrainian forces were still concentrated in western districts. Ukraine has insisted its army still holds Bakhmut - an eastern city which Russia has spent months trying to capture.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said on Sunday evening that while Russia hadn't stopped its assault on the city, "Ukrainian defenders are courageously holding the city as they repel numerous enemy attacks". President Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, has urged people to "calmly respond to the fakes of those who invent a 'victory' that does not exist in reality".

Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar said the Wagner claim was "a funny fake". In the video, Mr Prigozhin said a tribute to Russian military blogger Vla-

## Poland supplies some of pledged MiG-29s

WARSAW: Poland on Monday said it had already transferred some of its promised MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine, after fellow NATO member Slovakia announced it had shipped an initial batch of its own. "A few MiG-29s have already been sent. They are indeed helpful to Ukraine in its defence of our collective security," Polish presidential aide Marcin Przydacz told local radio station RMF FM. Last month, Poland became the first NATO member to pledge the fighter jets when President Andrzej Duda said it would deliver an initial batch of four. He said at the time that Poland currently has a dozen or so MiG planes that it inherited from the former German Democratic Republic and which they were "on the verge" of sending to Ukraine. Slovakia later announced it would also send MiG-29s to Ukraine, specifying that they would consist of 10 operational fighter jets and an additional three that would be used for spare parts. Late last month, Slovakia said it had already transferred the first four of its promised jets, with the remaining nine to follow in the coming weeks. Ukraine has repeatedly asked its Western allies to send warplanes, primarily modern US-made F-16s. - APP

dien Tatarsky, who died in an explosion at a St Petersburg cafe on Sunday, had been written on the flag. Analysis by the Institute for the Study of War said that, as of Sunday, Ukraine still held much of the city

although Russian troops were attempting to envelop it from the south and east. According to the ISW, the city council building is in part of the city recently claimed by Russia, as it approaches from the east.

Wagner - officially called a private military company - has suffered heavy losses during fighting in Bakhmut. Many of its recruits are convicts released from Russian prisons drafted in to swell the group's numbers. Troops from the regular Russian military are also fighting in Bakhmut, as well as the Wagner troops. Thousands of Russian and Ukrainian soldiers have died in the fight for control of the city - and it's thought Russian losses have been far higher than Ukraine's. Bakhmut has little strategic value, but Ukraine has seen it as an important drain on Russia's military equipment and manpower. Russian commanders hope taking Bakhmut might give them a springboard for further territorial gains.

As the UK Ministry of Defence noted in December, capturing the city "would potentially allow Russia to threaten the larger urban areas of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk". Meanwhile, Ukrainian forces are expected to launch a fresh offensive in the coming weeks to try and regain territory that is currently under Russian occupation. The operation is expected to begin when long-promised Western supplies, including German Leopard tanks, arrive in the country.

## PIA flight makes emergency landing in Oslo

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight PK-783 en route to Toronto from Karachi's Jinnah International Airport made a medical emergency landing at Oslo Airport in Norway, reported media on Monday. According to a PIA spokesperson, the condition of a passenger identified as Syed Javed had deteriorated during the flight. The passenger's low blood pressure and unconscious state necessitated immediate medical attention and the flight had to make an emergency landing at Oslo Airport, the spokesperson said. Three doctors present in the flight attempted to provide first aid to the passenger. However, based on their unanimous opinion, a medical emergency was declared upon which the captain of the flight made the emergency landing.

According to the spokesperson, an ambulance was called next to the aircraft door. Upon landing, the passenger was taken to the hospital for full medical attention.

## Gold price rises; silver hits all-time high

DNA

KARACHI: Gold prices in Pakistan rose on Monday, tracking global trends and a possible push from a retreating rupee that consequently turns dollar-quoted safe-haven metal pricier, forcing traders to err on the side of caution on the eve of monetary policy meeting. According to the data released by All-Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association (APSGJA), the price of gold (24 carats) rose by Rs1,200 per tola and Rs1,028 per 10 grams to settle at Rs209,500 and Rs164,645 respectively. Rupee depreciated 0.44% against the dollar in the inter-bank market on Monday. As per the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the rupee settled at 285.04, a loss of Rs1.25. The State Bank of Pakistan is expected to raise the policy rate by 100-200 basis points as inflation is spiralling out of control. Consumer price inflation in Pakistan jumped to a record 35.37% in March from a year earlier.



ISLAMABAD: Neil Hawkins, High commissioner of Australia called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division. - DNA

## Macron says France will prepare 'end of life' bill this year

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday France must improve the availability of palliative care and there would be a draft bill by the end of the summer on whether some form of assisted dying should be allowed. He said the bill would build on the work of a group of 184 randomly appointed French citizens who have debated the issue since December. They concluded their work this weekend with 76% of them saying they favoured allowing

some form of assistance to die, for those who want it. Macron did not say whether he wanted euthanasia or assisted suicide to be allowed in France or if the bill would include either or both. He said thinking on the matter would continue by then but consensus was important on such a sensitive matter. France's national council of doctors, l'Ordre des medecins, has said it opposes involving doctors in helping people kill themselves. Assisted suicide - where medical personnel give someone the means to kill themselves - or voluntary euthanasia - where a physician plays an active role to end a person's life at that person's request - is allowed in several countries in Europe. Assisted suicide has been legal in Switzerland since the 1940s. Euthanasia is legal in Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Spain, and last year an Italian man, paralysed 12 years earlier in a traffic accident, died in Italy's first case of assisted suicide. - Agencies

## Russia arrests woman accused of killing war blogger

MOSCOW: Russia on Monday accused Ukraine of organising the murder of a prominent war blogger in a St Petersburg cafe and arrested a young Russian woman who was shown in a police video admitting planting the bomb that killed him and injured over 30 others. Ukraine, which did not take responsibility for Sunday's attack, blamed "domestic terrorism" for the murder of Maxim Fomin, a Russian military blogger and cheerleader for Russia's invasion of Ukraine who called himself Vladlen Tatarsky. Darya Trepova, the 26-year-old Russian woman arrested over his murder, confessed in a video released by the interior ministry that she had planted the bomb that killed him. But unconfirmed Russian media reports said she had told investigators that she had been set up and had not known she was carrying a bomb. Tatarsky's murder appeared to be the second assassination on Russian soil of a figure closely connected to the conflict in Ukraine, after the car bomb killing of Darya Dugina, daughter of a nationalist ideologue, outside Moscow last summer. Russia also accused Ukraine at the time. Kyiv denied involvement. With over 500,000 followers on the Telegram messaging service that is popular in Russia, Tatarsky - who had himself fought in Ukraine in the past - mixed ultra-nationalist messaging with criticism of the way Moscow is prosecuting what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine. Mourners braved a snowstorm to lay flowers outside the St Petersburg cafe where he was killed, with many saying they were upset and angry. Some Russian commentators said the bombing was the latest sign that violence related to the war in Ukraine is increasingly spilling onto Russian territory. Russia's National Anti-terrorism Committee (NAC) said Ukraine's intelligence services had organised the bombing with help from supporters of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny. - DNA

## Rahul Gandhi appeals against jail sentence

NEW DELHI: Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi has filed an appeal against his conviction and jail sentence in a criminal defamation case. He was sentenced to two years in jail by a court in Gujarat state for 2019 comments about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's surname at an election rally. The Congress leader was also disqualified as a lawmaker later. Opposition leaders have accused the governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of a political vendetta. The BJP has denied this, saying that due judicial process was followed in the case. National elections are due in India next year, and Mr Gandhi will not be allowed to contest until his sentence is suspended or he is acquitted in the case. Mr Gandhi appeared at the court in Surat city with his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and other top Congress leaders on Monday afternoon. Many Congress workers had gathered outside the court in support of Mr Gandhi, holding banners with the words "save democracy" on them. A senior police official told news agency that a large number of police personnel have been deployed in Surat. - APP

## Pak to proceed with second phase of CPEC

LAHORE: Renowned economic commentator, Faiz Ul Haq, has apprised that despite various international pressures, Pakistan has decided to proceed with the second phase of CPEC; which happens to be one of the most crucial strings of China's futuristic One Belt, One Road (OBOR) intra-regional & inter-continental initiative - extending from the Baltics in Europe to Southeast Asia and from China to Africa. Faiz Ul Haq explained that the second phase of CPEC could be the real game-changer vis-a-vis socio-economic uplift; as it shifts focus from basic and prerequisite industrial & communication network provisioning to industrial development & collaborations; technology transfer; foreign direct investment (FDI); joint ventures and inviting other countries for the same - primarily, the friendly & wealthy countries of GCC; namely, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain. It is pertinent to note that the federal cabinet of Pakistan has recently approved MoC to promote industrial cooperation with China; and, sending thousands of Pakistani engineers & technicians to China for training under rigorous, proven and world-class industrial standards of China. This will pave the way for technology transfer and setting up high-end industrial units; which will be the real deal for ushering Pakistan into a new era of industrialization after the long-drawn-out stagnation since the 1960s & early 1970s. - DNA

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