



# Islamabad POST

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**Pakistanis being deprived of basic rights of democracy**

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**SC stands with Constitution, says Justice Isa**

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**Jabeur downs Bencic to win Charleston Open**

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## After president's refusal Parliament passes SC reform bill amid Opp uproar

The bill clips CJP's suo motu power, gives additional powers to all judges; bill to again to the President for signatures

Resolution for polls on same day adopted

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The joint session of Parliament on Monday adopted a resolution, stressing for the holding of general elections of the National Assembly and the provincial assemblies in the country simultaneously to strengthen the federation. The two identical resolutions were moved by Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi and Senator Kamran Murtaza aimed to promote political stability and foster unity among the provinces. The resolutions called for organising general elections of all the assemblies simultaneously across the country. The resolutions emphasised the significance of appointing neutral

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Amid strong protest from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the federal government Monday got the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023, passed in the joint session of parliament after President Arif Alvi returned the bill seeking to curtail the chief justice's suo motu powers last week. Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar presented the SC bill in the joint sitting of the house held with National Assembly Speaker Raja Perwaiz Ashraf in the chair.

The president had returned the bill for reconsideration to parliament as per the provisions of the Article 75 of the Constitution, stating that the bill prima-facie travels beyond the competence of parliament and can be assailed as colourable legislation. The bill was aimed at curtailing the powers of the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) – including the suo motu and the formation of benches. During the much-anticipated sitting, the house approved an amendment to the SC bill, under which the judges committee meeting will be

SC stands with Constitution: Justice Isa

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senior Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court Justice Qazi Faez Isa has said that the constitution is their identity and that of Pakistan. Expressing his views on the golden jubilee ceremony of the National Constitution Day in the National Assembly on Monday, he said that the constitution coexists with the parliament. "In my opinion, human rights articles of the constitution are the most important. We should understand that the state and the constitution are our basis. We are guardians of the constitution. However, I do not agree with the political conversation," he opined. Qazi Faez Isa has reassured the people by emphasizing the commitment of the



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addresses the joint session of Parliament. – DNA

**4 dead, 18 injured in Quetta blast**

Deceased also included a minor girl

DNA

QUETTA: At least four people – including two police personnel – were killed and 18 others sustained injuries in a blast near a police vehicle parked next to Qandhari Bazar on Shahrah-i-Iqbal in Quetta on Monday, police and hospital officials said. Quetta Civil Hospital spokesperson Dr Wasim Baig confirmed the number of victims, saying that the deceased also included a minor girl. According to SSP Operations Captain (retd) Zohaib Mohsin, the target of the blast was a police vehicle. "The explosives were planted in a motorcycle," he said, adding that the injured also included women and children. "According to initial information, three to four kilos of explosives were used in the blast," the police official said. "Due to the blast, two vehicles, including the police van, were damaged." TV footage showed a damaged police automobile surrounded by a number of personnel. Several ambulances were also seen leaving the site of the explosion. A day earlier, two cops were martyred and one was injured in an attack by unknown assailants in the Killi Spine area of the Kuchlak district. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the incident and prayed for the deceased while extending his condolences to their families. He directed officials to provide medical facilities to the injured and sought a report about the attack from the authorities. Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudus Bizenjo also strongly condemned the blast and expressed his grief over the loss of lives.

## 'Unconditional dialogue' PPP urges PM to hold talks with opposition

Zardari, Bilawal slam PTI Chairman while stressing dialogue

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari – whose party is a crucial ally in the federal government – Monday suggested Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hold talks with the opposition party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). The development comes as the political temperature in the country is on the rise and the government has locked horns with the Supreme Court, which will likely intensify the situation in the days to come. In such a situation, PPP's core committee last week resolved to approach all parties in the coalition government to discuss the issue of dialogue among the political parties, including the PTI. PTI Senior Vice-President Fawad Chaudhry applauded the PPP's move to hold dialogue with the political

PM stresses on collective efforts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has stressed that the country can be steered out of challenges by working together. Speaking at the National Constitutional Convention in the National Assembly Hall in Islamabad today, he said each political party will run election campaign on their respective manifestos, but when there is a realization of the importance of working collectively then matters can be addressed. The Prime Minister paid glowing tributes to the framers of

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**Briefs**  
**Maryam leaves for Umrah**  
DNA  
LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz has left for Saudi Arabia on Monday to perform Umrah in the holy month of Ramadan. The PML-N's chief organiser has left for the Kingdom at 2pm from the Lahore airport as she is expected to spend the last 10 days of the holy month there. Meanwhile, PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif will also be leaving for Saudi Arabia on April 11 (tomorrow) from London and join his daughter.

## Complainant of attack dies Imran seeks probe into SHO's death

Sub Inspector Aamir Shahzad died on Monday

GULZAR NOSHI

GUJRAT: The complainant in the case of attempt on the life of PTI Chairman Imran Khan in Wazirabad died of cardiac arrest on Sunday. Sub Inspector Aamir Shahzad Bhabar was the station house officer of the Saddar police station in Wazirabad when Imran Khan was attacked in November 2022. According to his family sources, he was at his native village Bhadar near Kharian Town when he complained of uneasiness. He was taken to the Combined Military Hospital in Kharian where doctors pronounced him dead on arrival. Aamir, 35, is survived by a wife and a son. His funeral prayers were attended by a number of senior district administration officials, police officers and people from all walks of life. He was buried in the local graveyard on Sunday night. Sub Inspector Bhabar was the complainant in the case registered against the Nov 2 gun attack on Imran Khan's rally. He has since been serving at the Saddar police station where he was posted days before the attack. Meanwhile, PTI chief Imran Khan demanded a probe into the



PM, cabinet to be disqualified, says Fawad

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: PTI senior leader Fawad Chaudhry said on Monday that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his cabinet members will be disqualified for five years if they fail to release funds for the upcoming Punjab elections. The former information minister took to Twitter and said "according to the Constitution, funds for elections are provided directly from the treasury," adding that the "Parliament has constitutionally dissociated itself from this process". "This process is called (Direct Charge on Consolidated funds), in this regard only the approval of the federal cabinet is required," added the PTI leader. Fawad furthered that if "the federal government does not comply with the Supreme Court's (SC) decision and does not release funds today, the prime minister and cabinet members will be disqualified for five years."

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**Constitution must be respected**  
DNA  
ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday congratulated the nation on the completion of 50 years of the 1973 Constitution. "It is the book of the rights of the people and the duties of the state institutions, it is the guarantor of unity and consensus, justice and fairness, equality and freedom", she said in a tweet.

**Sehr, Iftar Timing**  
Ramazan 20, 1444  
Sehr: 04:15 am  
Iftar: 06:40 pm  
Fiqa-e-Jafria  
Sehr: 04:05 am  
Iftar: 06:50 pm

## Palestine highly values Pakistan's vital support

Ambassador says the leadership, brotherly people and army all stand with truth and justice

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabaei has lauded the unwavering support of Pakistani government and nation for Palestine issue. Addressing a peace conference, the Ambassador said, "Pakistan means a lot to us, the Palestinians, as its permanent, steadfast and supportive stand in all international forums to realize our legitimate and historical rights to end the occupation and establish our independent state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Historically, the leadership of Pakistan, its brotherly people, its mighty army and all its parties



stand with the truth and justice, and stand against injustice and against occupation, and courageously and strongly stand with Palestine and its great people". The ambassador said that we all remember the will of the founder of Pakistan, the great leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah, about the Israeli occupation, "This is a dagger in the heart of the Islamic nation, and that Israel is illegitimate and Pakistan will not accept it." Allama Muhammad Iqbal's visit to the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1931 and the words he expressed still hover and reverberate in the skies of Palestine and in the skies of Pakistan. We also remember the visit of the greatest Mufti of Palestine to the city of Lahore in 1937 when the name Pakistan was established, as well as his

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Saudi Arabia-Iran rapprochement !!

CEO Serena Hotels hosts Iftar dinner  
Turkish Airlines Golf Championship  
Ch Oman new office inaugurated

## 6th meeting of board CDA approves various projects

### STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The sixth meeting of the Capital Development Authority Board of the year was held here on Monday under the chairmanship of Chairman Capital Development Authority Captain Noor ul Amin Mengal at the CDA headquarters. The meeting was attended by Members of the board. In the meeting, the proceedings of the previous meeting were approved. CDA board approved establishment of Building and Housing Control Wing. The board decided that rainwater harvesting has been made mandatory in residential and commercial buildings in Islamabad. It was decided that no building map shall be approved without construction of water recharging well and tank. It should be noted that the Building Housing Control Wing has been made fully empowered. Establishment of Building control wing will help prevent illegal

constructions and enforce building by laws. Similarly, fifty teams of field staff will perform their duties in the building control wing. The building control team will consist of one assistant director and two surveyors. Moreover, the Capital Development Authority Board also the rules and regulations for strengthening Sanitation Directorate and Environment Wing. According to the details, the Sanitation Directorate and Environment wing has also been given the authority to impose fines and punishments. The CDA Board has delegated the authority to determine the fee to the Chairman CDA. Apart from this, the CDA Board has also approved the amendments in the ICT Building Control By Laws Regulation 2002. While building bylaws have also been approved for construction on IJP and Murree Road. In the board meeting, the ratio of Mouve area to floor area was increased from

3000 yards to 15000 yards. Similarly, the floor area ratio for H series Sector Institutional Building has been increased. The CDA Board has also decided to increase the floor area ratio of the educational plots of Zone 2, 4 and 5 of Islamabad. In the meeting of the board, approval has also been given to rent plots for the establishment of schools in Islamabad. Similarly, school plots will be leased for 33 years at concessional rents. These schools will be opened to facilitate middle class. It was also decided that all approved housing societies, community centers, dispensaries and school plots will be under the Estate wing inventory. The CDA Board has also approved the AGOSH-II Housing Society. Apart from this, in the board meeting, Chairman CDA Captain Noor Ul Amin Mengal issued instructions and said that the concept plan of Islamabad Bus Terminal I-II should be presented in two weeks. He issued further instructions that work should

be started on Islamabad Bus Terminal within two months. Similarly, CDA board also decided to resume the work on the cultural complex which had been satled since 2010 and also approved the re-naming of cultural complex Shakarparian to Al-Hamra Islamabad. Similarly, the decision to change the name of Ladies Club located in Sector G-10 to Citizen Center G-10 was also taken in the CDA board meeting. CDA Board has also approved the establishment of Green Fund. 2% of the total cost of all major projects to be started in Islamabad will be deposited in this fund. All important projects will contribute to this fund under CSR. The senior officer of the environment and finance wing will be signatories for the use of these funds. It has also been decided to establish CDA Pension Fund and Endowment Fund in the Capital Development Authority Board meeting. Five percent of the income will be kept in these funds.



Vice Admiral Naveed Ashraf, Vice Chief of Naval Staff called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar in Islamabad.—DNA

### Country's progress linked with agriculture development

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker Minister for Communication and Works, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha on Monday held a meeting with officers of the Agriculture Department Swat at his office. At the meeting, the minister was briefed in detail regarding ongoing projects including in agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors, besides soil conservation, poultry farming, dairy farming, veterinary, water reservoirs and river bankment. The minister said Pakistan was primarily an agricultural country and its progress and prosperity were only possible by focusing on its agriculture sector. He said the fruits produced by Swat orchards were supplied to the entire country and abroad. The minister directed the agriculture officers to pay a special focus on enhancing the production of fruits in Swat. He also laid emphasis on the development of the poultry industry and dairy farming. The caretaker PM said climate change was also affecting the country's water resources which could be dangerous for the agriculture sector. He emphasised on the need for protecting water reservoirs for future generations. Bacha said the government would try to further improve the agriculture sector, adding the issues faced by the farmers would be addressed on a priority basis. On the occasion, the Soil Conservation and Water Management officers also briefed the minister on the construction.—APP

## PBS collects 97% census data; extends fieldwork till April 15

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on Monday said around 97 percent of data-collection of listed households had been completed across the country, announcing a five-day extension in the 7th Population and Housing Census till April 15 aimed at ensuring smooth completion of three percent remaining fieldwork in 19 major cities. The cities where the census timeline has been extended include Quetta, Pishin, Khuzdar, Panjgur, Kech, Kohlu, Washuk, Gwadar, Zhob, Lasbella, Chagi, Nushki Mastung, Hernali, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Karachi and Gilgit, said a press release issued here. Currently, the PBS which has been executing the 7th Population and Housing Census digitally for the first time in the country's history successfully collected the data of over 97 percent of listed households through tablets across the country and only less than 3 percent of census fieldwork had left particularly in metropolitan cities of various prov-

inces and other few cities of Balochistan. "The census fieldwork has been completed over 99% in Punjab, 98% in Sindh, 90% in Islamabad and 82% in Balochistan while the census work has almost been completed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir." The PBS said the census work had been completed 100 percent in 131 districts out of 156 districts across the country while 70 to 80 percent of census work was accomplished in the remaining 25 districts where the field operations were in full swing. "It is pertinent to mention that work completion percentage may slightly increase after synchronization of data from some completed blocks which fall in the offline zone," the PBS said adding the completion of 97 percent of census work across the country was a landmark achievement that would usher in a new era of national prosperity and development. The PBS advised the citizens to inform the Bu-

reau using the toll-free number 0800-57574, operating 24/7, if enumerators have not visited their localities yet. "The citizen can also send their complete address through SMS on 9727 for lodging complaints of non-coverage. They can also visit or contact PBS Regional Offices or the 495 Census Support Center established at the Tehsil level for lodging their complaints regarding non-coverage. Simultaneously, the Bureau said the quality of data was being ensured through Post Enumeration Survey by using Computer Assisted Telephonic Interview (CATI) and urged the citizens to extend cooperation with the visiting teams to verify their data through randomly generated calls through CATI. "The citizens of Pakistan, being the most important stakeholders and beneficiaries of the census, are urged to ensure their full participation and cooperation with field staff visiting them and the call center officials who may call them for data verification for quality control.—DNA



### CM' aide proposes establishment of Indus like hospital in KP

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to KP Caretaker CM on Labour, Malik Meher Elahi has proposed the establishment of a big hospital on the pattern of Indus Hospital on the available land of the labour department to provide free health facilities to the people. He was presiding over a meeting of the Labour Department here on Monday during which the CM aide was given a detailed briefing regarding different sections, operational management, the daily performance of the subsidiary organizations and challenges faced by the department. Besides, Secretary Labour, Mohammad Fakhare Alam Khan, Director Labour Irfanullah, Director General (DG) Employees Social Security Institute (ESSI), Aaeenullah, Director (Admn) Dr Bilal and Secretary Workers Welfare Board, Irfanullah Wazir, others authorities were also present on the occasion. On this occasion, DG ESSI Aaeenullah gave a detailed briefing regarding the role, budget, hospitals, laboratories, social security officers and other sections of the department.—APP

## Two-day Master Trainer Workshop of ECP concludes

### QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: District Election Commissioner Attock Mr. Noorul Khattab while addressing the participants of two-day 'Master Trainer Workshop' of presiding officers and assistant presiding officers has said that the master trainers would further impart training to other polling staff to conduct the elections of provincial assembly Punjab in free, fair and transparent manner. He was talking to

media on Monday said that the master trainers would further impart training to the polling staff, adding that the training of polling staff, which includes 1,069 presiding officers and 3,550 assistant presiding officers and polling officers, would be started at the tehsil level as soon as the instructions are received from the Election Commission. The Election Commission Attock was in contact with journalists to share information with the people of the district, he

said, adding a WhatsApp group of active working journalists had also been formed to inform the media in a timely manner, DEC Attock added. **District Health Council meeting** Deputy Commissioner (DC) Attock Rao Atif Raza during his surprise check of the Asfandyar Bukhari Hospital Attock has directed the health authority to utilize the funds of the health council as per rules and any kind of negligence or carelessness will not be tolerated.

## Meeting held to discuss CPEC projects

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Chinese authorities on Monday held a 'progress review' meeting to discuss important CPEC projects and minutes of the 11th JCC sitting, following a crucial visit of Planning Minister Professor Ahsan Iqbal to Beijing and interaction with Vice Chairman of National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Li

Chunlin. Chief Economist of Planning Division at the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Secretariat Nadeem Javaid and his Chinese counterpart NDRC Director General Pan Jiang co-chaired the meeting, which was attended among others by senior officials from Ministries of Planning, Energy, Industry, Commu-

nication, Agriculture, Interior, Science & Technology, Information Technology & Telecommunication and Board of Investment, a news release said here. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the smooth implementation of various CPEC projects and agreed that all the pending issues would be resolved amicably in the spirit of traditional cooperation, mutual understanding, complete trust and brotherhood. The two sides expressed satisfaction on the progress made in the four priority Special Economic Zones (SEZs) namely Rashakai, Allama Iqbal Industrial City, Dhabeji and Bostan, agreeing to 'further expe-

dite' the progress to attract relocation of high-quality industries. The signing of the Framework Agreement for Industrial Cooperation was highly appreciated and both sides committed to holding bi-annual meetings to review the implementation of the framework. Chief Economist Nadeem Javaid also requested strong support from the NDRC and other relevant Chinese government institutions to advance the implementation of important projects like Main-Line (ML-1), Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) and key energy projects in line with the consensus reached between the leadership of the two countries.—Agencies

## Denial of salaries to UoP Muslim, Christian employees on Easter and Eid condemned

He urged the KP Governor and Chancellor of provincial public sector universities Ghulam Ali and the Chief Minister to take notice of this act by the VC of KP University

PESHAWAR: All employees of the University of Peshawar (UoP), civil society, and minority communities on Monday strongly condemned the denial of salaries to Christian employees of the varsity on the eve of Easter and Muslim employees in Ramadan and ahead of Eid ul Fitr by the Vice Chancellor and termed it a sheer violation of human rights. Since all the university employees were on a strike against the Vice Chancellor for a month, therefore the VC denied the salaries to Christian employees on Easter, said Dr. Salman Khan, General Secretary Peshawar University Teachers' Association (PUTA). He deplored that the university administration on the will of the VC had also not paid salaries to other employees including

teachers in the month of Ramadan, which, he said, was a violation of human rights and the issue would be taken up with the Human Rights Commission. Dr. Salman further warned that all the protesting employees of the varsity would extend the scope of their protest against corrupt practices and irregularities committed by the VC and take to the streets, adding that the Chancellor, provincial government, VC, and university administration would be responsible for any law and order situation. He said that the protesting employees had time and again brought to the notice of the Governor and the Chief Minister the issue of irregularities and illegalities against the VC and requested his immediate removal and an impartial

inquiry against him. "If the VC proves himself innocent before the inquiry committee then the Chancellor can restore his contract otherwise he should be punished under the law," the PUTA secretary said. Advocate Nawaz Khosa referring to an order of the Supreme Court said that salary was the right of an employee and it is not a donation that any public institution or its head can stop anytime, adding that the apex court ordered strict legal action against the officer responsible. Jatinder Singh, Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter of the National Peace Council for Interfaith Harmony, condemning non-payment of salaries to Christian employees by the UoP said that it was the basic right of every individual to

stage a peaceful protest and under the constitution, nobody could deprive anyone of salary. He urged the KP Governor and Chancellor of provincial public sector universities Ghulam Ali and the Chief Minister to take notice of this act by the VC of KP University. "In the month of Ramadan the minority communities host Iftar dinners for fasting Muslims and despite being a Muslim the VC was not releasing salaries to its Muslim employees," he deplored and condemned. Dr. Muhammad Naeem of the Computer Science Department, University of Peshawar said that VC UoP was trying to convert the prestigious institution of higher education into a private school and intended to take more work from employees

on low or no wages, adding that he was allegedly involved in the exploitation of daily wagers and visiting faculty of the university as well. He assured that the teachers are committed to arranging extra classes for the period of protest for students to save their precious time, however, he said, that in presence of the sitting VC the teachers and all other employees of the varsity were not ready to work. Registrar UoP Saifulah Khan in a video message said that all the university employees were on a protest, therefore, the salaries could not be prepared and transferred to the accounts of the employees. He said that on the directives of VC Idress Khan, an advance of Rs 30,000 was given to each Christian employee a day before Easter.—APP

## BoAJK's remittances crosses highest level Rs. 5.55 billion

MUZAFFARABAD: Remittances of the State-run Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir have crossed the highest level of Rs. 5.55 billion, more than 55 thousand transactions, special desks established in the branches for prompt and timely payment, it was officially announced. "Crossing another milestone, increases remittances by nearly Rs.5 billion in

three years, the Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir crossed another milestone in home remittances while continuing to make significant progress towards development. Remittances increased to the highest level of Rs.5.55 billion due to the strong trust of overseas diaspora around the world and the efficient strategy of the organization which is a record", a spokesperson of the bank

told APP here Monday. The valued customers did more than 55 thousand transactions during this time, the spokesperson said. In a review meeting held yesterday regarding the business promotion of the bank, President and Chief Executive Officer Khawar Saeed said that special desks have been established in the bank's branches for prompt and timely payment.—APP

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Main Boulevard, Lahore.  
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**Pakistan**  
Office No. C4, 3rd Floor, Zuhra Plaza,  
Lafic Atrium, Ring Road, Faisalabad.  
Tel: (+92 31) 2562771  
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**Kabul**  
House # 4, Street # 4,  
Charaf Anwar Road, Shahr-e-Nepal,  
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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 Pa-  
pacy of his Pontificate
- April 25/DPR Korea  
Armed Forces Day
- April 26/Tanzania  
National Day
- April 27/Sierra Leone  
Independence Day
- April 27/South Africa  
Freedom Day
- April 30/Sweden  
Birthday of His Majesty
- April 30/Netherlands  
Birthday of Queen



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Met Office.....9250360-6  
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TMA.....5770886  
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD-April10: A view of cracks in the newly constructed Khayaban-e-Margalla Road as it is start destroying before opening properly for the traffic, which is the open sign of the usage of Low quality material during construction. —Online

## Wildlife facing human violence across the country

The Asian elephant was shifted to a sanctuary in Cambodia to spend rest of his life in peace and free to roam for miles in a jungle near other rescue elephants

ISLAMABAD: The wildlife in captivity in various zoos across the country is facing the worst human violence at the hands of incompetent and poorly trained caretakers with no trained veterinarian or animal pathologist to help reclaim captive animals in agony and serious mental trauma causing their deaths.

A recent incident of African elephant Noor Jahan of Karachi Zoo in poor health has again revived the tragedy of maltreated Kavaan of Islamabad Zoo, the loneliest elephant in the world that after spending years of solitude due to the demise of his female partner Saheli developed serious psychological issues and health complications including injured feet and fatigued behavior. The Asian elephant was shifted to a sanctuary in Cambodia to spend the rest of his life in peace and free to roam for miles in a jungle near other rescue elephants. The story of Noor Jahan of Karachi Zoo is similar to that of Kavaan but with a tinge of callous carelessness of the department concerned as the female elephant got injured at the start of this year after the two females had a confrontation that damaged the kidneys and left leg of the elephant leaving her unable to walk and pass urine. Four Paws, the same organisation that helped in sending

Kavaan to Cambodia after necessary rehabilitation had brought four experts to help the ailing Noor Jahan and save her from death as she has developed serious health complications. Talking to APP, founder of the Society for the Protection of Animal Rights Zain Mustafa said all happening in the Karachi Zoo was predicted by him several years ago when he witnessed the animal management and caretaking by the staff in a highly unprofessional manner sans any remedy available to protect, treat and improve the animal physical, mental and emotional health.

He had been engaged by the Sindh government in the previous tenure in 2017 to redesign the Zoo with better species-appropriate natural habitat, enrichment program-infused enclosures, and trained staff that help relieve the animals' agony and pain with a holistic improvement in their captive living environments.

Mr. Mustafa alleged that the Karachi Zoo project was shelved when the government changed and it has not been revived yet, leading to the problems being exacerbated today. While discussing the Karachi Zoo tragedy, he said there were four elephants in captivity in Karachi, who are all siblings including three females and a male. The

problem is the attitude of our system and its bureaucrats who do not bother about animals as they are considered lesser beings than humans. Their cruel exploitation for entertainment and gaining of wealth is not seen as a crime, he added. This attitude perpetuates unbridled exploitation of captive wild animals dying not only of physical but also severe mental torture after developing complex psychological and behavioral problems, he added.

"Noor Jahan and her siblings are African elephants who are difficult to rehabilitate in captivity as compared to the Asian elephants who are docile and less aggressive. Moreover, a chimpanzee and a few monkeys are in serious depression after being poorly handled in captivity and are seen often licking their cages' bars. They are slowly suffering due to psychological issues," he said. He also decried the incompetence of Karachi Zoo's veterinarian care which was unable to cater to the elephants' needs as Noor Jahan's liver got damaged and now has only a 30% chance of survival. Zain Mustafa believed that this whole episode would have a negative impact on the minds of the juvenile who come to see wildlife

to learn about exotic animals and ended up with spectacles of dying animals in pathetic health and living conditions.

"This child will never learn about the animal but will realize only that he can control anything if humans are able to control massive wild animals. Due to witnessing animal cruelty and assault, mental illnesses are on the rise in our society like child abduction, rape, and many other heinous crimes. Behind every such crime there will be some account of animal torture or beating by that individual either male or female," he noted.

He added that throughout the country there was no trained vet that could provide professional services to handle wildlife properly in such instances.

Vice President of Pakistan Wildlife Foundation Safwan Ahmed said it was very difficult to keep wild animals in captivity as they were habitual of living in a free environment. However, prolonged stay in captivity turned those animals into highly distressed creatures developing different psychological complications like monkeys shouting and aggressive behavior before humans, lions, or tigers strolling to and fro in the cage without any response or reaction and bears fighting each other. —Agencies

## Workers' remittances surge 27.42 % on MoM basis

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: The overseas workers' remittances posted an increase of 27.42 percent, surging from \$1.987 billion in February 2023 to \$2.532 billion in March 2023.

On a year-on-year basis, the overseas workers' remittances recorded an inflow of US\$2.532 billion in March 2023, posting a decrease of 10.65 percent as compared with the same month of the previous year's inflow of \$2.834 billion, according to the latest data released by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Monday.

The overseas workers' remittances posted a decline of 10.82 percent from July-March (2022-23) as the remittances decreased

from \$23.018 billion in July-March (2021-22) to \$20.526 billion in the period under review.

According to the remittances' inflows during March 2023 was mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia (\$563.9 million), the United Arab Emirates (\$406.7 million), the United Kingdom (\$422.0 million) and the United States of America (\$2532.6 million). During the corresponding month, the overseas Pakistanis living in Bahrain sent \$42.5 million, from Kuwait \$77.9 million, from Qatar \$83.6 million whereas \$93.5 million were dispatched from Oman.

Similarly, the inflows from Germany, France, The Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Greece, Sweden,

Denmark, Ireland, and Belgium were recorded at \$58.2 million, \$42.3 million, \$9.7 million, \$44.7 million, \$78.3 million, \$30.2 million, \$7.3 million, \$7.5 million, \$11.4 million and \$9.1 million respectively.

Likewise, from Malaysia, Norway, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, and Japan, the workers dispatched \$7.1 million, \$10.6 million, \$4.4 million, \$51.6 million, \$52.6 million, and \$6.7 million respectively.

Remittances from South Africa during the month under review stood at \$13.5 million while that from South Korea stood at \$8.5 million. Similarly \$72.8 million were received from other countries.

## NUP unique public project to assist youth

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Defence, Ali Zahid briefed the House that the National University of Pakistan (NUP) was a unique model of public sector project which was intended to extend equal opportunities to the youth of lower and middle-income families.

He added that the federal cabinet had already approved the Bill which was also vetted by the Law Division. Zahid informed that the President of Pakistan would be the Vice Chancellor of the University whereas the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) or his nominee would be the chairman of its board of directors. He added that the University would offer multidisciplinary programmes ranging from natural and applied sciences, engineering, emerging technologies.—APP

## ECC declares all received application successful under

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet here on Monday declared all 72,869 received applications under Regular Hajj Scheme successful without balloting and also approved additional financial requirement of \$163 million of foreign exchange for Hajj 2023. The ECC met here with Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Darin chair considered a summary submitted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on the utilization of the Hajj quota and its financing, said a press release. The Ministry presented details on the Hajj Policy-2023, the number of applications received under the Regular Hajj Scheme, unutilized quota under regular and sponsorship Hajj schemes and financial requirements. The ECC after discussion approved the arrangement and modalities for Hajj Scheme-2023 and decided that all received applications under Regular Hajj Scheme shall be declared successful without balloting. Minister for Power Khurram Dasgir Khan, Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Dr Aisha Ghous Pasha, SAPM on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Coordinator to the PM on Economy Bilal Azhar Kayani, federal secretaries and other senior officers attended the meeting.—DNA

## Ahsan stresses for rule of law

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Measures Ahsan Iqbal said on Monday that protection of the state writ was possible only when everyone recognizes the supremacy of the elected parliament and the Constitution of Pakistan.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that the country was built by democratic struggle and its constitution will be the key to ensuring democracy.

He said that the PML-N government always respected the judiciary and its decision, there is no solution to the problem except the formation of a full court bench.

"A full-court bench should be constituted for the importance of the issues and to save the country," he added. Replying to a question, he said that if the election in Punjab will be held first, the National Assembly polls will adversely affected.

In response to another question, he said that during the four-year rule of Imran Khan, the national economy was destroyed due to his ego, but today he calls himself the "savior" of the country.—APP

## Islamabad court extends Qureshi's bail till April 29

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court of Islamabad on Monday extended till April 29 PTI leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi's interim bail in two cases. PTI leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi, along with his counsel Ali Bukhari, appeared before ATC Judge Raja Jawad Abbas in connection with two cases registered against him for alleged violation of section 144.

The judge asked the prosecutor was there any witness to the incident, other than God. Addressing the prosecutor, he asked him why the former foreign minister was made to stand in the dock. Mr Qureshi told the court that he was not present on the incident scene. The judge, in a lighter vein, said then it might have been Mr Qureshi's spirit and the people in the courtroom burst into laughter.

The court inquired from the persecutor was he sure that Imran Khan and Mr Qureshi had asked the PTI workers to breach section 144 in the presence of the SHO. The prosecutor replied the court in affirmative. Later, the ATC extended till April 29 Mr Qureshi's interim bail in both cases.

## Wanted snatcher gang held

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police Khanna police team arrested three wanted members of a snatcher gang involved in snatching activities and recovered three motorbikes, cash, mobile phones and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directions, a Khanna police station team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending three members of a former jaibird snatcher gang involved in looting citizens at gunpoint. The accused were identified as Abdul Majid, Muhammad Bilal and Ehtisham.

Police team also recovered 03 motorbikes, cash, mobile phones and weapons with ammunition from their possession. During the preliminary investigation, the nabbed accused confessed their involvement in looting citizens at gunpoint. Cases have been registered against the 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.—APP

## Lal Chowk massacre completes 30 years

ISLAMABAD: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the Srinagar's Lal Chowk massacre of 1993 which exposed the repugnant masquerade of the Indian government is considered even after completion of 30 years today as one of the grisliest incidents of brutality and gross human rights violations committed by Indian troops and paramilitary personnel. According to Kashmir Media Service, On 10th April 1993, a large section of Srinagar including Lal Chowk was burnt to the ground by Indian paramilitary troops. More than 60 houses, five commercial buildings, 150 shops, two official buildings, shrines, schools were completely burnt to ashes. A total of 47 innocent civilians were burnt alive and over 125 were killed by Indian Border Security Forces (BSF). This massacre was consistent with the policy of repression and subjugation by the government of India and its collaborators to silence the people's resistance against the illegal occupation, according to experts. They were of the view that India had purposefully adopted laws and policies that systematically discriminated against Muslims, turning India into an unsafe place for the Muslims. Besides, Indian judicial system was Hindutva RSS saffronised that failed to provide justice to the people of Jammu and Kashmir mostly Muslims and due to this, convicted criminals of Lal Chowk massacre were still freely moving in India. India has been the biggest violator of the human rights in the occupied territory. Apart from Muslims, other minorities including Christians, Sikhs and Dalits are also prime target of the Modi's Hindutva policies in India.—APP

## NA passes The National University of Pakistan Bill, 2023

The university aims at 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

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Monday passed the National University of Pakistan (The National University of Pakistan Bill, 2023) clause by clause reading.

The bill was tabled by Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi on behalf of Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif.

According to the Statement of Objects and Reasons:- Federal Government Educational Institutions (Cantonments/Garrisons Directorate) which is an Executive Department of MoD administers a large number of educational institutions all over the country. The degree colleges under

Directorate are presently affiliated with seven provincially chartered universities. Variations in the scheme of studies, academic forecast, admission policies, exam schedules, evaluation criteria, grading system and fee structure detrimentally affect the uniformity and surface problems in the migration of students. Against this backdrop, it is imperative to establish a University that will standardize higher education and provide a single platform for the affiliation of degree colleges.

The FGEI Directorate has proposed to set up National University of Pakistan (NUP) in Islamabad. The Univer-

sity will be a unique model and public sector initiative with multi-disciplinary scope, focusing on strengthening and empowering affiliated colleges. The project will provide equal opportunity to civilian youth from lower and lower-middle-income groups in pursuit of their higher education.

The university aims at 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.—APP

## Briefs

**NDU, CAP for efforts to support dwindling economy**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chainstore Association of Pakistan (CAP) and National Defence University (NDU) have pledged to launch joint efforts to support the dwindling economy and modern retail sector by creating a strong linkage between academia and industry, as this close collaboration can tackle the key economic challenges of the country. This was decided in a meeting of CAP and NDU held here today to discuss the challenges faced by the retail industry in particular and the overall economy in general. The delegation of Chainstore Association, led by its top brass Rana Tariq Mehboob, called on the National Defence University President, Lt. Gen. Nauman Mehmood and his team. The other members of CAP's delegates were member EC and Ex-SVC, Asfand Yar Furrkh, Member EC, Ahsen Mehmood, and Member EC Huzaifa Siddiqi. The core areas of bilateral interests were the future of retail in Pakistan and the linkage of NDU with the retail sector regarding policy-making and long-term strategies. Both sides agreed that the documented economy was the only solution to avert looming shadows on our economy. Both sides discussed the impact of retail in the modern economy, navigating through the prevailing economic crises, research and development opportunities, and mutual efforts on human capital development in collaboration with NDU. The meeting agreed to collaborate and make mutual efforts for the development and prosperity of the country through the growth of the retail industry in Pakistan. President NDU Lt. Gen. Nauman Mehmood, in the meeting, vowed to support this vital segment of the economy.

**Decline in confidence of business community alarming**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Monday said the continuous decline in the confidence of businessmen, industrialists and investors is alarming. The business community is troubled by unending economic problems, businesses are closing down and people are losing their jobs, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that for the first time in the country's history, the situation is rapidly deteriorating due to the simultaneous political, economic and constitutional crisis. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that street crimes are increasing and insecurity in the business community is continuously increasing which is causing the flight of capital and exodus of industries from the country. Many business people believe that the country is not moving in the right direction and that things are getting worse instead of better which is detrimental to them, he remarked. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the business community is also worried due to the rising inflation because the majority of the country's population is spending a large part of their income on food and their purchasing power has eroded therefore, they are unable to buy other things. As a result, many businesses have closed down while others continue to shrink. At the same time, the value of the local currency is also continuously depreciating while the bank markup, electricity and fuel prices are continuously increasing, which has made business more difficult and worsened the situation for the people. The business leader added that delay in the IMF loan and the early election controversy have created uncertainty and fears among the public and the business community.

# Three private member bills smoothly sail through Senate

Pollutants have very long-lasting effects on the sustainability of local ecosystems and pose a serious threat to human health. The bill aimed at stopping individuals and factory owners from throwing any amount of untreated wet waste directly into the rivers

ISLAMABAD: As many as three private members' bills including the National Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2022, the Export Processing Zones Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and the Pakistan Environmental Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2023 on Monday smoothly sailed through the Senate. The bills were piloted by Seemee Ezdi and Hidayat Ullah in the House. The Senate approved two bills including the Export Processing Zones Authority (Amendment) and the Pakistan Environmental Protection (Amendment)

unanimously and the National Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2022 with a majority vote. The statement of objects and reasons of the Export Processing Zones Authority bill says that Export Processing Zones Authority is a Pakistan Government venture conceived and designed to increase and improve the exports of the country. Its main objectives are accelerating the pace of industrialization in the country and enhancing the volume of exports by creating an enabling environment for investors to initiate ambitious export-oriented projects

in the Zones which would, as a corollary, create job opportunities, bring in new technology and attract foreign investment. With the passage of time, the need has arisen to establish Private and Public Participated Export Processing Zones under the Export Processing Zones Authority Ordinance, 1980 (IV of 1980). The purpose of this amendment is to define and include Private and Public Participated Export Processing Zones within the definition of Zones to meet the objectives. Whereas, the statement of ob-

jects and reasons of the Pakistan Environmental Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2023 says that Industrial wastewater contains many hazardous organic compounds and inorganic compounds like heavy metals which can cause damage to the delicate aquatic ecosystem. Pollutants have very long-lasting effects on the sustainability of local ecosystems and pose a serious threat to human health. The bill aimed at stopping individuals and factory owners from throwing any amount of untreated wet waste directly into the rivers.

Meanwhile, the amendment in the National Disaster Management Act, 2010 provides a suitable composition for the National Commission, reinstating the befitting rank in order to stream the nation's fight against disasters and a binding provision for the Commission to meet at least once a year. Moreover, the Chairman Senate referred back the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023 to the concerned committee after opposing by the Minister of State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan for detailed deliberation.

**Ample supply of subsidized items ensured at USC**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Utility Stores Corporation is providing special subsidy on 19 basic items under the Prime Minister's Ramadan Relief Package. These subsidized items include sugar, ghee, cooking oil, flour, dates, gram flour, pulses, rice, tea, spices and Squashes/Syrup. All the items are being provided at a lower price than the general market. Apart from the subsidized items, the prices of other standard branded items have also been drastically reduced. In order to make it easier for the people in the blessed month of Ramadan.

## ICCI to hold shopping festival in the Capital

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry has planned to organize a shopping festival in F-7 and F-10 markets in collaboration with ICT Administration, MCI and concerned Market Associations from 21st Ramadan till Chand Raat. The festival will feature many activities including traditional food area, art & crafts corner, mehndi stalls, kids' area, corporate stalls, live music

stage, lucky draws, quizzes, laser lights, lighting displays and first aid medical camp. All entry and exit points of both markets would be decorated with gigantic arches displaying event branding. The shopping festival would increase footfall of customers and provide a good opportunity to the traders of the area to generate more business. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry in his statement, said that shopping festivals

have become increasingly important in the retail world in recent years, as they not only drive sales, they also provide variety of more brands to the customers and help them to purchase items of their choice. He hoped that the shopping festival in F-7 and F-10 markets would boost trade activities and provide customers better choices for shopping. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that shopping festivals are very effective in promoting

trade activities and hoped that the shopping festival in Islamabad would provide good opportunity to the customers to buy different products at affordable prices in a festive environment. Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that the trend of shopping festivals is on the rise in the world and it is important that all relevant institutions should facilitate in organizing shopping festivals in the Capital.

## Kharif crop to face a 27 percent shortage of water

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt on Monday said half of the population of the country with the world's largest canal system is suffering from food insecurity and undernourishment. He said that rising inflation, unemployment and poverty are increasing starvation, which is affecting women and children more than men. The food security situation in 91 countries of the world is better than Pakistan, many of which are not agricultural countries, he added. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that the nutritional needs of half of the population of the country are not being met. The reasons for the collapse of agriculture in Pakistan include government neglect of the sector, low production, poor quality seeds, expensive fertilizers, spurious pesticides and non-availability of loans. Last year crops were damaged by floods and now the country is facing a shortfall of 27 percent in availability of water for the kharif season. He said that the kharif crop season is from April to September, in which cotton, sugarcane, rice, maize and mash are cultivated, which will be affected by the lack of water. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that the per hectare production of wheat in Pakistan is three tons, which is ten tons in New Zealand. If Pakistan can produce six tons of wheat per hectare like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the farmers will be prosperous, wheat will not have to be imported and foreign exchange of seven billion dollars can be earned by exporting it. He informed that in view of the importance of food security, dozens of countries use their army to improve and supervise the agriculture sector.

## Railways plan to upgrade two passenger trains

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways was planning for upgrading two passenger trains to provide maximum facilities to passengers and generate more revenue for the department aiming to drive it to self-sufficiency. "Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique had already issued directions to the officials concerned to make all the necessary arrangements in that regard to renovate Karachi bound trains to facilitate the masses," an official in Ministry told APP. He said the upgradation of trains including Karakoram Express and Pak-Business Express would help the department to earn more revenue and that would be renovated on the pattern of the Green Line Train. Replying to a question the official said that Pakistan Railways was planning to consider various options for branding several passenger trains and railway platforms to generate maximum revenue for the department. He said the branding of the trains and platforms would address the increasing deficit of Pakistan Railways and allow private firms to advertise their products for this purpose. The official said that initially Pakistan Railways would be offered five trains and two railway stations for branding their seat covers, internal walls of the passenger coaches, and even toilets as a pilot project. "The deficit of the department to decrease after starting this project and the minister has already directed the concerned to complete all the formalities in this regard as soon as possible," he added.—APP

## Shazia Marri criticizes PTI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Shazia Marri has strongly criticized the former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) government for removing the name of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto from the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), which was originally launched by the PPP government to assist the impoverished population of Pakistan. Speaking on the Senate floor, Marri expressed her astonishment at the removal of Bhutto's pictures from the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, and called on the former PTI government to fund their own self-promotion instead. Marri also noted that Rs. 404 billion had been reserved for the BISP, and that the Sindh government had provided flour to 7.8 million deserving people. Meanwhile, the House rejected a resolution introduced by the PTI Senators to restart the Ehsaas Roshan Riayat program to address food inflation.—APP

## Two major hydropower projects receive funds

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Two major hydropower projects have received funds, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. While Pakistan's energy sector is highly dependent on fossil fuel imports and the foreign exchange reserve has always been an issue for the country, two developments this week are highly encouraging in the green and sustainable energy sectors of the country. First, the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) has signed a US\$240 million loan agreement to support Pakistan's Mohmand Multipurpose Dam Project (MMDP). Second, the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) of Pakistan has approved the Diamer Basha Power Generation Project (DBPGP) at a cost of over Rs. 1.2 trillion. Chinese hydropower companies are already engaged in the

construction of these two major hydropower projects in Pakistan, helping the country overcome its energy crises with low-cost, green, and sustainable energy. China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC) in a JV is constructing the Mohmand Dam while Power China in a JV with Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) is constructing the MW-1 Dam part DBPGP. MMDP will enhance water and food security, and improve the living standard of for the people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), where almost 80% of the population resides in rural areas, boosting the region's socioeconomic development by creating employment opportunities and reducing poverty. By using renewable energy sources, the project will generate 800 MW of electricity production capacity, contributing to Pakistan's energy security. In addition, the storage of 1.6 million m3 of water will support sustainable

agricultural practices, enable irrigation of 6,773 hectares of new land, and increase the total cropping area from 1,517 hectares to 9,227 hectares in the province, facilitating agricultural activities. Similarly, on April 6, ECNEC approved Rs. 1.24 trillion against the original estimates of Rs. 933.6 billion, owing to currency depreciation for the 4,500 MW Diamer Basha Dam Project. POWERCHINA and FWO are already working on the dam component of the project. DBDP, which is expected to be completed in 2029 will save US\$ 2.5 billion every year and will irrigate 1.2 million acres of land. WAPDA is implementing a multi-pronged strategy for unprecedented hydropower and water storage development in Pakistan under the vision of a "Decade of Dams". The Government plans to uplift its existing 30% of low-cost hydro electricity to at least 50% in the National Grid.

## Masses fed up of political, economic turmoil

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Economy Watch on Monday said masses are tired of continued political, and economic turmoil while the business community is experiencing sleepless nights. If the situation remains the same, it will compel many to relocate their businesses to other countries, it said. Many investors are investing billions in Dubai due to uncertainty at home which is a factor behind erosion of the local currency, said Hanif Mughal, SVP of PEW. The first crisis came in 2018-2019 when the government delayed a deal with the IMF after which the coronavirus pandemic started, during which funds were used mercilessly. Hanif Mughal said that the then government tried its best to please the voters at the cost of the economy which emptied the treasury. After that another government came to power which in its effort to control the dollar damaged the economy beyond repair.—DNA

## 'Thar Coal is future of Pakistan,' says Dastagir

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Division Khurram Dastagir Khan on Monday said that Thar Coal was the future of Pakistan and can fulfil the electricity demand of the country. Winding up the discussion on motion moved by the Senator Taj Haider to discuss failure to tap into true potential of Thar Coal inordinate delay in construction of second transmission line and Islamabad-Chor Railway line that has left national grid deprived of affordable electricity and many coal power plants reliant on expensive imported coal. Sharing the details of Thar Coal project, the minister said that former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif along with former President Asif Ali Zardari had laid down the foundation of Thar Coal project in 2014 and extended it by establishing four more plants in 2015 and 2016 with total number of five plants. He said that 2640 megawatt electricity was being produced from Thar Coal Power Plants. He also criticized the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf for delaying completion of these projects.—APP

## April 10 National Day for constitution adoption

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf has suggested that April 10, the day when the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was unanimously adopted by the Parliament, should be commemorated as a national day. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Yadgar-e-Dastoor monument, which celebrates the Constitution's 50 years of existence, Raja emphasized the importance of honoring the Constitution's adoption day. The Speaker also praised the founding father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for their contributions to the creation and passage of the Constitution. Earlier, Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf, along with the members of the Parliamentary Committee for the Golden Jubilee of the Constitution of Pakistan, jointly inaugurated the construction of the Yadgar-e-Dastoor monument.

The event marked the beginning of the building of this historic monument in honour of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The Speaker and the committee members laid the foundation brick together, emphasizing the significance of the Constitution's 50th anniversary. Raja Pervez said Yadgar-e-Dastoor is set to be a landmark tribute to the Constitution, celebrating its 50 years of existence.

A countrywide architecture competition will be held to select a design for the monument, (Yadgar-e-Dastoor) and the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has been instructed to complete its construction before August 14, 2023. The idea of constructing the Yadgar-e-Dastoor monument was conceived by the Parliamentary Committee for the Golden Jubilee of the Constitution of Pakistan, which is chaired by Senator Raza Rabbani.—APP

## Govt strictly controlling human trafficking

ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Interior Abdul Rehman Khan Kanju on Monday said that human trafficking was serious issue being strictly monitored by the government through relevant institutions and it had taken numerous steps to control people's harbouring. Winding up the discussion on motion moved by the Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, to discuss on marked increase in human trafficking, domestic as well as international, especially in relation to women and children and steps taken by the Government to address the issue, he said that this was internal matter which is being monitored by the police department. He said that Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in collaboration with relevant international institutions was making all-out efforts to control the human trafficking. He also diffused the figures of human trafficking presented by the mover, stating that most of the people travelled to foreign countries through illegal means on their wish.

## ANF recovers 820 kg opium

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Intelligence Department and Frontier Corps have recovered 820 kg of opium during a joint operation conducted in the difficult mountainous area of Mashkel, nearly 530 km from Quetta, Balochistan, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. The recovered drugs were stored at a secret place, 'Gorbander Nulla' in the mountainous area. During the operation, the drug traffickers managed to escape from the spot by taking advantage of the hilly terrain during an exchange of fire with the ANF and FC for about half an hour, he said. A case has been registered under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigation is under process. He informed that the operation conducted by ANF against drug trafficking was the biggest during this year. The spokesman further informed that about 3700 kg of seized opium recovered in different operations was burnt on the spot due to the difficulties in transporting the drug from the hilly areas and the absence of required resources with the department.—APP

## IRSA releases 67,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 67,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 47,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1435.55 feet and was 37.55 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,000 cusecs while outflow as 10,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1112.60 feet, which was 62.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 22,000 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 24,500, 28,600, 35,200 and 6,500 cusecs respectively.—APP

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

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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

## Israeli Occupation forces' brutality

Israeli occupation forces' brutality and fascism continues as the raids on Al-Aqsa Mosque as well as attacks on neighboring Syria and Lebanon have killed multiple people and injured dozens. The Palestinians have been subject to extreme torture and violence since decade, but now the cycle has become very often, with dozens being killed by occupation forces every month. Israeli jets hit Syrian military targets on Sunday in response to rockets launched towards Israeli controlled territory overnight, Israel's military said, as violence flared again following cross-border exchanges of fire during the week. State media in Syria reported explosions in the vicinity of the capital Damascus as Israel said its forces continued to hit Syrian territory after six rockets were fired overnight towards the Golan Heights. Israel said artillery and drone strikes hit the rocket launchers and were followed by airstrikes against a Syrian army compound, military radar systems and artillery posts. The Israeli military "sees the State of Syria responsible for all activities occurring within its territory and will not allow any attempts to violate Israeli sovereignty," the Israeli Defense Forces said in a statement. The Syrian defence ministry said its air defences had responded to the Israeli attacks and intercepted some Israeli missiles. It said no casualties had been reported with only material damage caused by the strikes. Only three of the rockets crossed into Israeli-controlled territory, with two falling on open ground and a third intercepted by air defence systems, the military said. The silence of the world on Israeli aggression demonstrates the dual faced justice and democracy the western politicians talk so often about. The whole world is rallying in support of Ukrainians, however the violence and brutality bestowed upon Palestinians by the illegally occupied forces does not seem to bother the world. Even the Arab and Muslim nations are not doing enough other than just issuing a carefully constructed condemnation press release.



## Keep channels of communication open

Senior officials with the United States Department of Commerce are reportedly to visit Beijing and Shanghai in preparation for a potential trip by Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo sometime this year. The advance visit is meant to make sure a meeting between Raimondo and her Chinese counterpart, should it happen, would produce "deliverables". US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby revealed late last month that the White House was discussing a visit by Raimondo to "talk about economic issues", saying "keeping those lines of communication open is still valuable." Since the so called Chinese meteorological research balloon further escalated ill feelings between Washington and Beijing and indefinitely postponed a planned China visit by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, keeping the lines of communication open has become an outstanding challenge for both sides. A visit by the US commerce chief, however, might be even trickier than previously, following French President Emmanuel Macron's trip to Beijing, during which a deal was struck to purchase 160 Airbus planes. High on Raimondo's agenda is Beijing's alleged failure to proceed with a 2020 agreement to buy more planes from Boeing, the US rival to Airbus. She told the press in 2021 "China is holding up the purchase of tens of billions of dollars in Boeing airplanes that Chinese airlines have already ordered. That's a lot of American jobs on the line." She certainly was not being fair blaming the whole thing on China. She is among those best placed to have knowledge about the recent changes in bilateral trade relations. Washington's persistent moves to decouple from China, pivot US and key international supply chains away from China, and implement an industry and technology blockade against China have substantially rewritten the rules of bilateral interaction. So much so that nothing is business as usual. Washington's obsession with export controls and its explicit attempt to throttle Chinese technology advancement, for one, would be an unavoidable topic between Raimondo and her Chinese counterpart, should the proposed meeting take place.

## Follow the constitution or set aside

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



A series of events has persisted nearly a year in his quest to return to the Prime minister office. Khan's campaign is enjoying widespread popular support and has succeeded in mobilizing the public, which is building pressure on the ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif who is not agree for early elections. The coalition government

Pakistan's soaring political tension is an opportunistic struggle for power. It has pushed the country in a political tinderbox. Not any regard is displayed on either side for the ongoing suffering of ordinary Pakistanis, who continue to pay the price for the country's long history of political instability.

Today's deadlock between Pakistan's federal government and the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) over the conduct of elections is continuing. The PTI has held a big meeting at the famous Minar-e-Pakistan Tower grounds in Lahore as the opening of election campaign. Addressing to a large gathering of supporters, party workers and former parliament members, Former Prime Minister Imran Khan has announced a program to save Pakistan's failing economy.

A series of events has persisted nearly a year in his quest to return to the Prime minister office. Khan's campaign is enjoying widespread popular support and has succeeded in mobilizing the public, which is building pressure on the ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif who is not agree for early elections. The coalition government, however, is determined to hold off polling as long as possible for provincial and national assembly elections. To justify the delay, the embattled government has referred to the country's unpreparedness for the elections because of security threats from the Tehreek-e-Tal-

iban Pakistan (TTP) militant group in the coming months. It has justified the possibility of terrorist attacks against officials and innocent civilian population.

But behind this argument lies what has been a unfamiliar constitutional dilemma for Pakistan. There is a question, in which circumstances and by whose authority should national security concerns take precedence over constitutional obligations and the rule of law?

Confrontational views intensified when the Electoral Commission of Pakistan, claiming its inability to hold fair and just elections in light of the security situation and financial problems, mandated late April to early October and ignored the constitution by postponing the given provincial elections.

This came after the army announced its failure to provide security for the polls due to continued engagement in counter-terrorism operations. Khan, who is currently dealing with multiple government-initiated charges for alleged criminal behavior, has sought the intervention of Pakistan's Supreme Courts.

In the recent moves of the PTI leader stated that the Election Commission and the Sharif government are engaging to break the constitution.

To pushing back the government, PTI went to the Supreme Court to get legal support. Through a suo motu notice the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan sus-

pending the Election Commission and government's extra-constitutional measures.

Now, what did the Supreme Court Chief Justice Umar Atta Bandial play his role to break the political deadlock in Pakistan is whether acceptable for all stake holders? Against a backdrop of such questions about the rapprochement and impartiality of the judiciary among bar associations and senior judges, the chief justice has emerged as a central character in the political drama but many believe that the verdict of the Chief Justice is controversial.

Khan has become a victorious in the Supreme Court; however, there is a possibility that the government and the security establishment will play a significant role in the game of Pakistani politics, whether or not they choose to implement their decision.

For the first time in Pakistan's history, the ruling coalition government appeared to be trying to implement the country's infamous "ideological necessity" without formally announcing it or seeking the approval of the Supreme Court.

In response to the question of who has the authority to make extraordinary changes in the timing of general elections in Pakistan, in the past, there is not any precedent, it is the military establishment and the political elite are responsible that will determine when the situation is constitutional and we have to follow the constitution or to set aside.

## Israel will be incinerated by these fires Netanyahu ignites

Baria Alamuddin

Attacks by Israeli security forces on Ramadan worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque, in which about 40 Palestinians were injured and 350 arrested, are symptomatic of these escalatory tendencies.

Why was the mosque raided when there was no credible security threat? Simply because Israeli officials currently calling the shots are wedded to an approach of maximum harassment and kneejerk overreaction. About 1,000 radical settlers then stormed Al-Aqsa on April 9, and Jordan warned Israel of the "catastrophic consequences" of deliberately inflaming the situation around Jerusalem's holy sites.

As three of the world's great faiths celebrate the festivals of Ramadan, Easter and Passover in the cradle of those religions, various parties have been deliberately provoking tension toward all-out conflict. Exchanges of rockets across the Lebanon-Israel-Syria borders are evidence of an inflammatory situation that nobody has control of.

Attacks by Israeli security forces on Ramadan worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque, in which about 40 Palestinians were injured and 350 arrested, are symptomatic of these escalatory tendencies. Why was the mosque raided when there was no credible security threat? Simply because Israeli officials currently calling the shots are wedded to an approach of maximum harassment and kneejerk overreaction. About 1,000 radical settlers then stormed Al-Aqsa on April 9, and Jordan warned Israel of the "catastrophic consequences" of deliberately inflaming the situation around Jerusalem's holy sites. We see the same gratuitously provocative approach applied to settlement expansion, demolition of homes, and security crackdowns in Palestinian areas. Newly appointed extremist Israeli ministers enjoying their first taste of power are spoiling for a fight, even castigating Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for not going far enough. Tensions have been further exacerbated by the killing of two British Israelis in the Jordan Valley and a car ramming in Tel Aviv.

In the lead-up to Easter there was a surge in hate crimes against Christians and Christian holy places by Jewish fanatics who increasingly feel that they can act with impunity - including desecrating graves and carrying out violent attacks against Palestinian Christians. In his Easter message, the Pope made a general reference to Jerusalem tension, but global Christian institutions should be taking up this cause more vigorously.

Who fired 34 rockets into Israel from Lebanon? Israel appears happy to buy into the fiction that it was Hamas, but these strikes certainly emanated from locations where nothing happens without Hezbollah's blessing. And who believes that Hamas would

have embarked on such adventures without Hezbollah approval, even if the latter would prefer a fig leaf of deniability for the time being? Iran and Hezbollah have been losing personnel to daily airstrikes in Syria, but they play make-believe that these humiliations have little to do with them. Based on strategic calculations alone, Netanyahu should be 100 percent focused on the encroaching nuclear and paramilitary threat from Iran; instead he has been allowing his pyromaniac political stablemates to ignite one bushfire after another, fueling a situation of anarchy and volatility in Israel that has little precedent. Hundreds of thousands of protesters rightly believe that Netanyahu's latest efforts to eviscerate the judiciary and turn his extremist allies into omnipotent paramilitary warlords pose an existential threat to Israel's future. Hassan Nasrallah likewise has become a prisoner of his own evermore bellicose rhetoric, threatening to unleash war with Israel at the slightest provocation - a war that Hezbollah and Lebanon are in no position to wage. Hezbollah may possess far greater missile capabilities than in 2006, but we should be under no illusions that Israel's military would make short work of Lebanon. The civilian loss of life would be horrific - and no country is set to rush to Lebanon's aid. These developments demonstrate the fundamental long-term weakness of Israel's position. As long as it refuses to make peace with an ever-multiplying Palestinian population, it can only futilely run around in circles igniting fires and putting them out. Israel could easily win a war against Hezbollah, but in doing so it would create a new generation of implacable enemies. Israel says it wants peace with Arab states, but shows no readiness to do what it would take to stimulate genuine peace and put a halt to the endless cycle of conflict.

Israeli officials are unnerved by the recent Saudi-Iran deal, and partial Arab rapprochement with Bashar Assad in Syria. Meanwhile Iran-backed paramilitary forces encircle Israel from numerous states, and Tehran gets ever closer to the nuclear and ballistic capacity which it gloats

could wipe Israel off the map. Last week the US deployed a guided missile submarine to the Gulf region after specific Iranian threats to Israeli and regional shipping.

Because Israel has got away with killing and oppressing Palestinians in the past, it believes that its ongoing repression won't carry a cost. This is a dangerous mistake, as the situation has been transformed in ways that Netanyahu apparently fails to comprehend - not least the likelihood of triggering a new intifada.

Furthermore, Israel's increasingly radicalized and anti-democratic trajectory will ultimately lose it the international friends it has always relied upon for financial and military support. Through America and Europe condoning and facilitating its actions, Israel became the over-demanding spoilt child of the West. If the West really is still a friend, it is morally obliged to draw Israel back from the brink of self-destruction. Israel can deny the historic reality of Palestine all it wants, but this only blinds it to the demographic fact that Palestinians are trending toward being the majority. If Israel refuses to make peace now from a position of relative strength, a time will come when it is compelled to beg for peace while it still possesses some remnants of a state to negotiate with. There is likewise a growing awakening throughout Lebanon, and specifically among Hezbollah's supporters, that this Tehran-backed entity is less an agent of protection and "resistance," and more a catalyst for Lebanon's destruction.

Many media commentators look at these recent escalations and complacently tell us that war is unlikely because the parties don't desire it. Instead they should be warning that these parties are not rational actors, are not fully in control of events, and have done much to fan the flames through their incompetence and self-interested agendas. Following the chaos of recent days, war is an increasingly likely prospect. We should collectively be doing everything in our power to halt these maniacs before they take us all to hell.

Courtesy: Arab News

## Briefs

## Parliament passes SC reform bill amid Opp uproar

FROM PAGE 01

convened to devise rules and regulations regarding the suo motu matter. The amendment was proposed by PML-N lawmaker Shaza Fatima Khawaja. As per the amendment, the chief justice of Pakistan or any other member of the committee can call the meeting until the rules and regulations are finalised. Now the bill will be presented before the president once again for his assent. If the head of the state does not give his approval within 10 days, it would be deemed to have been given. Addressing the joint session, the law minister said that voices against the chief justice's suo motu powers were arising from within the top court. The passed bill – the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023 – aims at giving the power of taking suo motu notice to a three-member committee comprising senior judges including Chief Justice. It also aims to have transparent proceedings in the apex court and includes the right to appeal. Regarding the constitution of benches, the bill states that every cause, matter or appeal before the apex court would be heard and disposed of by a bench constituted by a committee comprising the CJP and the two senior-most judges. It added that the decisions of the committee would be taken by a majority. Regarding exercising the apex court's original jurisdiction, the bill said that any matter invoking the use of Article 184(3) would first be placed before the committee. The bill says that if the committee is of the view that a question of public importance with reference to the enforcement of any of the fundamental rights conferred by Chapter I of Part II of the Constitution is involved, it shall constitute a bench comprising not less than three judges of the SC of Pakistan which may also include the members of the committee, for adjudication of the matter.

## Resolution for polls on same day...

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caretaker set-ups to ensure impartiality and fairness during the elections. The resolutions also argued that holding separate elections in Punjab, the largest federating unit with over 50 per cent of the National Assembly seats, would inevitably impact the outcome of general elections to the National Assembly seats in Punjab. Therefore, it could potentially marginalise the smaller provinces' role in the federation. The lawmakers belonging to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) staged a token walkout from the House chanting, "Hold elections and save the country".

## SC stands with Constitution: Justice Isa

FROM PAGE 01

apex court judges to uphold the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in order to safeguard principles of democracy and constitutionalism in the country. "Let me assure you on behalf of my institution that the apex court stands with this sacred document of the Constitution. After the blessings of Allah Almighty, we have the blessings of the Constitution, and it is recognized by all of us," he said. He stated that the Constitution had been passed unanimously by the elected representatives at that time, with no negative votes except for four absentees. He urged everyone to acknowledge and understand the sacred document of the Constitution, and to implement it in its true spirit. He also shared details about his induction as a judge of the Balochistan High Court (BHC) and highlighted the contributions of his late father, Qazi Muhammad Isa, who was a leader of Pak Movement. The bureaucracy, judiciary, and Parliament existed to serve and facilitate the people.

## US struggles to discover source of top secret intel leak

Officials are also looking into the possible motivations a US official or a group of officials would have in leaking such sensitive information, said one of the officials cited in a Reuters report

WASHINGTON: American officials are scrambling to pinpoint the source of the latest online leak of highly classified military and intelligence documents, including intel about Ukraine's air defenses and the Israeli regime's infamous Mossad spy agency. US officials further state that the span of topics discussed in the leaked files – which address the Ukraine conflict, China, the Middle East and Africa – suggest that the breach may have been perpetrated by an American rather than a foreign ally, Western media outlets reported on Sunday and Monday. "The focus now is on this being a US leak, as many of the documents were only in US hands," a former senior Pentagon official, Michael Mulroy, emphasized in an interview with Reuters. The Pentagon has referred the case to the Department of Justice, which has opened a criminal investigation. Two US officials, speaking on

condition of anonymity, said that while there was concern about the leak at the Pentagon and intelligence agencies, the documents showed a snapshot in time from more than a month ago, rather than more recent assessments. The two officials said the military and intelligence agencies were looking at their processes for how widely some of the intelligence is shared internally. Officials are also looking into the possible motivations a US official or a group of officials would have in leaking such sensitive information, said one of the officials cited in a Reuters report. The official said investigators were looking at four or five theories, from a disgruntled employee to an insider threat who actively wanted to undermine US national security interests. US officials also underlined that the investigation is in its early stages but have already alleged

– without evidence – that pro-Russian elements may be behind the leak, which is seen as one of the most serious security breaches since more than 700,000 documents, videos and diplomatic cables appeared on the WikiLeaks website in 2013. This is while a number of Western news outlets also allege that some of the documents addressing battlefield casualty estimates in the Ukraine conflict appeared to have been altered to minimize Russian losses. One of the documents, dated February 23 and marked "Secret," outlines in detail how Ukraine's S-300 air defense systems would be depleted by May 2 at the current usage rate. Such closely guarded information could be of use to Russian forces, and Kiev declared its president and top security officials met on Friday to discuss ways to prevent leaks. According to a Reuters report, two American officials insist-

ed on Sunday that they have not ruled out that the documents may have been doctored to mislead investigators as to their origin or to disseminate false information that may harm US security interests. Pentagon also released a statement on Sunday, saying it was reviewing the validity of the photographed documents that "appear to contain sensitive and highly classified material." Another document, marked "Top Secret" and from a CIA Intel update from March 1, says the Mossad spy agency was encouraging protests against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plans to tighten controls on the Supreme Court. The document said the US learned this through signals intelligence, suggesting Washington had been spying on one of its closest allies in the Middle East. Another document gave details of internal discussions among senior

South Korean officials about US pressure on Seoul to help supply weapons to Ukraine, and its policy of not doing so. The office of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said on Monday that fact checks on the documents are a priority and that it would request the US to take "appropriate" steps after confirming details. Some lawmakers of South Korea's main opposition Democratic Party expressed "strong regret" over the spying allegations, calling them a clear violation of national sovereignty and a major security failure of the Yoon administration. "We strongly demand a thorough investigation and urge that similar incidents do not occur," the lawmakers said in a joint statement. The Pentagon has not addressed the contents of any specific documents, including the apparent surveillance of allies. – Agencies

## Jabeur downs Bencic to win WTA Charleston crown

LOS ANGELES: Ons Jabeur defeated defending champion Belinda Bencic in straight sets to win the WTA Charleston Open clay court tournament on Sunday. Jabeur, the world number five from Tunisia, avenged her defeat to Bencic in last year's final with a hard-fought 7-6 (8/6), 6-4 victory in just under two hours. Switzerland's Bencic was forced to make a quick turnaround on Sunday, completing a 7-5, 7-6 (7/5) win over weather-disrupted semi-finalist Jessica Pegula before returning to the final around 30 minutes later. There was no immediate sign of weariness from the Swiss player as she started strongly to take a 5-3 lead in the opening set.

However, Jabeur held and then conjured a break to level at 5-5 before holding again for a 6-5 lead. Bencic was soon in trouble on her serve, but fought back brilliantly from 0-40 down to hold and force tie-break. Again momentum swung back and forth, with Bencic holding two set points after opening up a 6-4 lead in the tie-break before Jabeur reeled off four straight points to take the set. Jabeur then raced into a 4-1 lead in the second set, and although Bencic responded well, Jabeur was soon serving for the match at 5-4 up.

Bencic squandered three break points that would have levelled the set at 5-5 before Jabeur eventually converted her second match point to seal the fourth title of her career. April 9 (Reuters) - Ons Jabeur has set her sights on capturing a first Grand Slam title this year after the world number four beat Belinda Bencic 7-6(6) 6-4 at the Charleston Open on Sunday to win her first trophy of the season. Jabeur came up short in two major finals in 2022, losing to Elena Rybakina at Wimbledon and Iga Swiatek at the U.S. Open, but the Tunisian is rediscovering her best form again this year after minor knee surgery in February. Victory against holder Bencic was Jabeur's 38th on clay since the start of the 2020 season - the most by any women's player in that period - and makes the 28-year-old a strong contender for the French Open starting next month. "I'm glad that I'm finding my rhythm and I hope my body will allow me to play," Jabeur told Tennis Channel, looking ahead to the European claycourt swing. "I'm excited to go to Stuttgart, Madrid, Rome. Clay is really amazing and I love it. I'm working on a lot of things and it's going my way, so for me: step by step, and I'm going for the Grand Slam this year." Jabeur, who missed tournaments in Doha and Dubai earlier this year and made early exits in Indian Wells and Miami, said self-belief had helped her rise to the challenge of facing Olympic champion Bencic.

"If you want to do something, believe in it and only you can really manifest it," Jabeur added. "I was doing that, imagining myself holding the trophy. I was imagining myself in the photoshoot after, putting the image that I won that title already, and it happened. "I'll manifest the big trophy sets, the Wimbledon one and other Grand Slams that I want to win." – Agencies



## Tiafoe beats Etcheverry to win Houston title

HOUSTON: Frances Tiafoe has become a bona fide star on the ATP Tour with his performances over the past year, and the American now has his second tour-level title to underline his undeniable progress. The fan favourite showed style and substance in his 7-6(1), 7-6(6) victory against Tomas Martin Etcheverry in Sunday's final at the Fayeze Sarofim & Co. U.S. Men's Clay Court Championship to return to the winner's circle for the first time since his maiden trophy run in 2018 at Delray Beach. Addressing his Argentine opponent during the trophy ceremony, Tiafoe said: "I don't know you that well, but I know you real well after today. It was an absolute war and an unbelievable final. I hope you guys [in the crowd] all enjoyed it, because that's what it's about." After sharing that his girlfriend, Ayan Broomfield, surprised him by showing up in the stands for the title match, Tiafoe soaked in the moment. "My second title, here in Houston on U.S. soil, so thank you!" he said to the supportive crowd. The top seed at an event for the first time in his career, Tiafoe completed the entirety of his Houston run in two days after persistent rain delayed play for three days during the week. After winning two matches on Saturday, the 25-year-old repeated the feat on Sunday with a semi-final win against Gijs Brouwer before his final victory. Tiafoe did not lose a set en route to the title at the ATP 250 and dropped serve only once at the event, when a few nervy misses prevented him from serving out the final at 5-4 in the second set. His trophy run will lift him four places to a new career high of No. 11 in the Pepperstone ATP Rankings on Monday. Tiafoe thrilled the Houston fans with spectacular shotmaking throughout the one-hour, 53-minute championship match, producing some of his best points at the most crucial moments. After the opening set passed by without a break point, Tiafoe broke open the tie-break with a running backhand passing shot that gave him a 5/1 lead. In set two, after aggressive returning brought him to 0/40 at 2-2, the American hit the shot of the match to secure his first and only break – a half-volley from the baseline that left Etcheverry stranded and stunned. Tiafoe was in attack mode from first ball to last on the red clay, his power tennis matched only by his stylish flair. While his level briefly dipped late in the second set, the American regrouped from 1/3 and 3/5 down in the second-set tie-break, winning lengthy rallies at 5/5 and 6/6 before clinching victory on his second match point with his 12th ace of match. – Agencies

## Norrie loses but Jack Draper through

LONDON: Cameron Norrie fell to an early exit at the Monte Carlo Masters as he lost to Francisco Cerundolo in the first round. The British number one, ranked 13th in the world, was beaten 6-3 6-4 by Argentina's Cerundolo on the Mediterranean clay. Fellow Briton Jack Draper returned from injury with a 6-3 7-5 win in his opening tie against another Argentine, Sebastian Baez. The 21-year-old faces 10th seed Hubert Hurkacz of Poland in the second round. Draper was forced to retire during a fourth-round match with world number two Carlos Alcaraz in Indian Wells last month because of an abdominal problem. He then pulled out of the Miami Open as he did not want to make the problem worse. He was given a strong test against Baez in Monte Carlo but saved 11 of the 12 break points he faced while taking three of his own four chances. In his match, Norrie looked unsettled throughout and had 18 unforced errors compared with only eight winners. World number 33 Cerundolo, 24, gained the decisive break in the ninth game of the second set when 27-year-old Norrie netted a forehand. Norrie started the season with a run of 21 wins from 25 matches but also lost his opening match at Miami Open last month when he was defeated by France's Gregoire Barrere. – Agencies

## Bayern boss threatens City's UCL dream once more

MANCHESTER: Manchester City and Pep Guardiola have a Champions League score to settle against Thomas Tuchel, when the newly-appointed Bayern Munich boss visits the Etihad in Tuesday's quarter-final, first leg. Tuchel emerged victorious as Chelsea manager in City's first, and so far only, run to the Champions League final in 2021. That was also the closest Guardiola has come in 10 tries during spells at Barcelona, Bayern and City to land his third European Cup as a coach. Chelsea's 1-0 win in front of largely empty Estadio do Dragao in Porto due to coronavirus restrictions two years ago was a case of the apprentice outshining the master. As a young coach Tuchel studied and admired Guardiola's dominant Barcelona side that won 14 trophies in four years from 2008 to 2012, including two Champions League titles. Their paths then crossed during Guardiola's three years in charge at Bayern, while Tuchel was coach of Mainz and then Borussia Dortmund. Two football obsessives, the pair even talked long into the night at a Munich bar in 2014, using glasses and salt and pepper shakers to mimic formations. "I was such a huge admirer of Pep when he was a player

and then when he became a coach it was like learning on the job for me," said Tuchel prior to the 2021 Champions League final. "I was an academy coach and then in the Bundesliga with Mainz, but I don't think I missed a game (of Guardiola's Barcelona) because there was so much to learn." The respect is mutual. Guardiola described Tuchel last season as "one of the few managers I learn from to develop (into) a better manager myself." Guardiola has tended to have the upper hand in clashes between the two. Three Chelsea wins in the space of six weeks towards the end of the 2020/21 season are Tuchel's only victories in 10 meetings between the two to Guardiola's six. But he won the most important one and his Champions League pedigree played a large part in Bayern's swoop to secure his services and sack Julian Nagelsmann in a shock move last month. Tuchel also took Paris Saint-Germain to their maiden final in Europe's premier club competition in 2020 and took eventual winners Real Madrid to extra-time in the quarter-finals last year despite Chelsea being thrust into crisis by sanctions imposed on then owner Roman Abramovich. – Agencies

## UN food agency: \$800m needed for Afghanistan

The UN said Monday that its Afghan operations remain severely under-funded, with \$249mln reported to be confirmed for 2023, nearly one-third of the amount received for the same period in 2022

ISLAMABAD: The U.N. food agency said Monday it urgently needs \$800 million for the next six months to help Afghanistan, which is at the highest risk of famine in a quarter of a century. Aid agencies have been providing food, education and health care support to Afghans in the wake of the Taliban takeover of August 2021 and the economic collapse that followed it. But distribution has been severely impacted by a Taliban edict last December banning women from working at national and international nongovernmental groups. The U.N. was not part of this ban but last week it

said the Taliban-led government has stopped Afghan women from working at its agencies in the country. Authorities have yet to comment on the restriction. The World Food Program said women aid workers play a vital role in delivering the agency's food and nutrition assistance and that it will make "every possible effort" to keep this going, while also trying to ensure the active involvement of female staff. "The WFP urgently needs \$800 million for the next six months to continue providing assistance to people in need across Afghanistan," the organization said. "Cat-

astrophic hunger knocks on Afghanistan's doors and unless humanitarian support is sustained, hundreds of thousands more Afghans will need assistance to survive." The U.N. said Monday that its Afghan operations remain severely under-funded, with \$249 million reported to be confirmed for 2023, nearly one-third of the amount received for the same period in 2022. It said Afghanistan is dealing with its third consecutive year of drought-like conditions, a second year of crippling economic decline, and is still suffering from decades of conflict and natural disasters.

"The total 'immediate' funding requirements to address critical gaps for the coming three months is \$717.4 million," according to a statement from the agency's office for humanitarian affairs. "This is all part of an overall funding gap of \$4.38 billion across the humanitarian response for 2023." It previously said that Afghanistan is its lowest-funded operation globally, despite being the world's biggest humanitarian crisis. The Taliban takeover drove millions of Afghans into poverty and hunger after foreign aid stopped almost overnight. Sanctions on Tal-

iban rulers, a halt on bank transfers and frozen billions in Afghanistan's currency reserves restricted access to global institutions and the outside money that supported the country's aid-dependent economy before the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces. The country's acting foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, said Afghanistan's assets have been illegally and unjustly frozen. He called for Afghanistan's seat at the U.N. to be handed over to the Taliban-led government. It is still held by the government of former President Ashraf Ghani. In a video statement shared

Monday by the Foreign Ministry's deputy spokesman, Hafiz Zia Ahmad, Muttaqi said U.N. offices and other international institutions are open in Kabul. He did not directly address the ban on female Afghan U.N. staffers in his remarks. "They are active here, so our relationship is good so far," said Muttaqi. "We are trying to represent Afghanistan at the United Nations, it is the right of Afghans. But now (Afghanistan's seat) is in the hands of someone who does not represent Afghanistan, does not represent the people, and there is no other group that represents them." – Agencies

## Palestine highly values...

FROM PAGE 01

visit to Pakistan in 1947 congratulating the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and his presence in Kashmir in the year that followed....." "We also keep in mind that the brotherly relationship between Pakistan and Palestine is historical, deeply rooted and strong. On its part, Palestine and its people have always affirmed and appreciated the unlimited political support for the Palestinian cause in all fields and through statements and official statements that strongly express condemnation of the brutal terrorist acts committed by the Israeli occupation, as well as the statements supporting the Palestinian people and refusing to recognize Israel", said the ambassador. Also, we all remember the multiple statements of His Excellency President Dr. Arif Alvi, His Excellency Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, His Excellency Foreign Minister Blazal Bhutto Zardari, His Excellency Parliament Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf, and their Excellency, former Presidents of the Republic and former Prime Ministers of Pakistan as well.

As we discuss the subject of this kind invitation in this good meeting, we must express appreciation and praise for the sincere and fraternal stances of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia towards our Palestinian people and issues, and its support for our rights in all forums, since the time of the founding king to the time of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and his Crown Prince, His Highness Prince Muhammad bin Salman, where the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques affirmed, "The Palestinian issue is our first issue and will remain so, until the brotherly Palestinian people attain all their legitimate rights, on top of which is the establishment of their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital, and let everyone know that Palestine and its people are in the conscience of Arabs and Muslims."

## Imran seeks probe into SHO's death

FROM PAGE 01

death of Sub Inspector Aamir. In his tweet, Imran wrote: "He had registered the FIR of Wazirabad assassination attempt on me & was a critical witness in unearthing the conspirators behind this assassination plot being inquired into by the JIT."

## PPP urges PM to hold talks with...

FROM PAGE 01

parties as the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) rejected the idea. "PPP refused to become part of a campaign against the judiciary. Secondly, PPP said that political parties don't end the way of dialogue," Fawad said last week during a press conference. In his speech during the National Constitutional Convention in the National Assembly, Zardari – in the presence of PM Shehbaz – said the prime minister has the authority for holding dialogues with the opposition. "But, I will request Shehbaz Sharif to hold talks with the opposition and set no conditions before they begin talks. I will also ask the opposition to call on Shehbaz for talks as he is the prime minister."

## PM stresses on collective efforts

FROM PAGE 01

the 1973 Constitution including Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto saying they pursued the course of consultation instead of confrontation and gave the country a constitution which is keeping the federating units united. He said this is such a historic achievement which will always be written in golden words. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif vowed to ensure the sanctity of the Constitution by making Pakistan economically developed and independent and by facilitating common people

## Briefs

## Israel no match for Iran's Army

TEHRAN: The chief commander of the Iranian Army says the Israeli military, which heavily relies on sophisticated Western-built munitions, is no match for Iran's Armed Forces, dismissing hostile remarks by the Israeli army's chief of staff that Israel is "ready" to attack Iran even without US support.

Major General Abdulrahim Mousavi said on Monday that such comments are merely meant to boost the morale of the Israeli soldiers and fix the internal problems of the regime. "Anyone already familiar with the military capabilities of both sides knows well that the updated size and scale of the Zionist regime's military would maximally correspond only to one of the plentiful operations that Iran's Armed Forces undertook during the 1980-1988 Iraq-imposed war on the Islamic Republic," Mousavi said. "The Zionist regime, which is sinking and the signs of its collapse are now becoming more evident than before, is too feeble to be viewed as a threat to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The actions of its leaders, which are far from rationality and prudence, will only accelerate the downfall of the regime," the top General added.

"We are ready to act against Iran. The Israeli army has the ability to strike both in distant countries and near home," Israeli army's Chief of Staff Herzli Halevi said on Wednesday. —DNA

## Thousands rally in Georgia against govt

BELGRADE: Thousands of protesters rallied in the Georgian capital Tbilisi to press the government to keep the country on its EU membership path. Demonstrators gathered in front of the parliament on Sunday and urged the government to implement the reforms required for Georgia's integration with the EU. The rally was organized by the United National Movement (UNM), the main opposition party founded by jailed ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili. The crowd waved Georgian and EU flags as they chanted slogans for closer ties with the European bloc. Protesters also carried banners with messages of support for Saakashvili, who is serving a six-year jail term for abuse of power, as well as several more condemning Russia. Opposition leaders from the UNM addressed the crowd, accusing the government of backsliding on democracy and acting under Russia's influence. They criticized the government led by Prime Minister Irakli Gariashvili for failing to secure Georgia's EU candidate status last year because it did not fulfill the 12-point criteria set out by the EU. —APP

## Italy's Berlusconi steadily improving

ROME: Italian former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, who has been in hospital for leukaemia and a lung infection, is getting progressively better, doctors said Monday, expressing "cautious optimism" over his condition. Berlusconi, a billionaire and larger-than-life figure in Italian politics, has been in intensive care at Milan's San Raffaele Hospital since Wednesday. "The last 48 hours have seen a progressive and steady improvement in monitored organ function," his doctors said in a bulletin Monday. Treatment was producing "the expected results, allowing us to express cautious optimism". He remains in the intensive care unit, they said. Doctors revealed Thursday that Berlusconi was being treated for a lung infection and was suffering from chronic myelomonocytic leukaemia (CMML), a rare type of blood cancer affecting mainly older adults. The three-time premier - who currently serves as a senator and leader of the Forza Italia far-right party - has been in declining health in recent years, marked by frequent hospital stays. —APP

## Taiwan independence incompatible with peace

The Chinese actions follow President Tsai Ing-wen's delicate mission to shore up Taiwan's dwindling diplomatic alliances in Central America and boost its U.S. support, a trip capped with a sensitive meeting with U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California

BEIJING: Peace in the Taiwan Strait and the island's independence are incompatible, the Beijing government warned on Monday. China's military declared Monday it is "ready to fight" after completing three days of large-scale combat exercises around Taiwan that simulated sealing off the island in response to the Taiwanese president's trip to the U.S. last week. The "combat readiness patrols" named Joint Sword were meant as a warning to self-governing Taiwan, which China claims as its own, China's military said earlier. "The theater's troops are ready to fight at all times and can fight at any time to resolutely smash any form of 'Taiwan independence' and foreign interference attempts," it said Monday. The exercises were similar to ones conducted by China last August, when it launched missile strikes on

targets in the seas around Taiwan in retaliation for then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, but have been smaller and less disruptive. Military experts say the exercises serve both as intimidation and as an opportunity for Chinese troops to practice sealing off Taiwan by blocking sea and air traffic, an important strategic option the Chinese military might pursue in the event it uses military force to take Taiwan. The Chinese actions follow President Tsai Ing-wen's delicate mission to shore up Taiwan's dwindling diplomatic alliances in Central America and boost its U.S. support, a trip capped with a sensitive meeting with U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California. A U.S. congressional delegation also met with Tsai over the weekend in Taiwan after she returned. China responded immedi-

ately to the McCarthy meeting by imposing a travel ban and financial sanctions against those associated with Tsai's U.S. trip and with increased military activity through the weekend. "China wants to use any increase of diplomatic interactions between the U.S. and Taiwan as an excuse to train its military," said Kuo Yu-chen, a defense studies expert and director of the Institute for National Policy Research in Taiwan. Beijing says contact between foreign officials and the island's democratic government encourages Taiwanese who want formal independence, a step China's ruling Communist Party says would lead to war. The sides split in 1949 after a civil war, and the Communist Party says the island is obliged to rejoin the mainland, by force if necessary. After Pelosi visited Taiwan, China conducted missile strikes on targets in the

seas around Taiwan, while also sending warships and war planes over the median line of the Taiwan Strait. It also fired missiles over the island itself which landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone, in a significant escalation. The live-fire exercises disrupted flights and shipping in one of the busiest shipping lanes for global trade. This time, shipping and maritime traffic have largely continued as normal, Kuo said. The exercises this time have focused more on air strength, with Taiwan reporting more than 200 flights by Chinese warplanes in the past three days. Chinese state broadcaster CCTV, citing the People's Liberation Army, said the exercises are "simulating the joint sealing off" of Taiwan as well as "waves of simulated strikes" at important targets on the island. On Monday, the PLA said its Shandong aircraft carrier was taking part in

the exercises encircling Taiwan for the first time. It showed a video of a fighter jet taking off the deck of the ship in a post on Weibo, the social media platform. The appearance of the Shandong aircraft carrier in the Pacific Ocean suggests that it could be used to prevent foreign militaries from coming to help Taiwan, said Han Gan-ming, a research fellow at the government-backed Institute for National Defense and Security Research. "In the future if there's a similar military maneuver, then Taiwan will have to face it alone," Han said. Between 6 a.m. Sunday and 6 a.m. Monday, a total of 70 planes were detected and half crossed the median of the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial boundary once tacitly accepted by both sides, according to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense. Among the planes that crossed the median

were eight J-16 fighter jets, four J-1 fighters, eight Su-30 fighters and reconnaissance planes. Taiwan also tracked J-15 fighter jets, which are paired with the Shandong aircraft carrier. By Monday evening, Taiwan's defense ministry reported another 91 flights by bombers, as well as multiple fighter jets, early warning aircraft and military transport planes. That followed a full day between Friday and Saturday in which eight warships and 71 planes were detected near Taiwan, according to the island's Defense Ministry. It said in a statement that it was approaching the situation from the perspective of "not escalating conflict, and not causing disputes." Taiwan said it monitored the Chinese moves through its land-based missile systems, as well as from its own navy vessels. —Agencies

## Tesla to build new 'mega factory' in China

BEIJING: US-based electric carmaker Tesla will build a new mega factory in China's financial hub Shanghai to manufacture the company's energy storage product Megapack, Chinese media reported on Sunday. "The new plant is scheduled to break ground in the third quarter of the year and start production in the second quarter of 2024," reported China's state-run news agency Xinhua, citing Tesla from a signing ceremony for the project in Shanghai. According to the report, the new factory will initially produce 10,000 Megapack units every year, equal to around 40 GWh of energy storage. The products will be sold worldwide, it added. Tesla has a "mega factory" in the US state of California with the capacity to produce 10,000 Megapacks per year. Last year, reports said that Tesla planned to expand one of its most productive automaking plants, the Gigafactory Shanghai, in an attempt to add an annual capacity of 450,000 units. —DNA

## Sixth body after French Alps avalanche

LYON: Emergency workers found two more victims of an avalanche near Mont Blanc in southeastern France on Monday, bringing the death toll from the tragedy to six. A massive body of snow swept down the Armanette glacier in the Alps on Sunday, killing two mountain guides and four of their clients. Searchers recovered the bodies of the guides and a couple in their twenties on Sunday, and the remaining victims were found on Monday morning, said prosecutor Karline Bouisset. They were a 39-year-old woman and a man in his early forties who was "probably" her partner, she said. One person also suffered slight injuries in the avalanche while eight others also swept up were unharmed, the prefecture said. The avalanche occurred without warning on a sunny day, covering an area of 1,600 metres (nearly one mile) by 500 metres. Skiing conditions had been "good" on Easter Sunday, the mayor of the town of Contamines-Montjoie, Francois Barbier, told AFP. "I think it's the most deadly avalanche this season." Weather authority Météo France had not issued any avalanche alert for the region, but a combination of warmth and wind may have been behind the disaster, local authorities said. "It's a particularly alarming tragedy in such good conditions," said Dorian Labaey, president of France's mountain guide union. —APP

## Russia remains India's top oil supplier

MOSCOW: India's purchases of Russian oil reached an all-time high of 1.64 million barrels per day (bpd) in March, Bloomberg reported on Sunday, citing energy cargo tracker Vortexa. Russian crude exports to India slightly exceeded the shipment volumes of 1.62 million bpd recorded in February. Russia has now been India's leading oil supplier for six consecutive months. Data also showed that India's imports of Russian oil in March saw significant year-over-year growth. In March 2022, the South Asian country purchased just 68,600 bpd, around 24 times less than the same month this year. Russia's share of Indian oil imports reached 34% in March, double the figure for traditional top supplier Iraq. Iraq reportedly sold 821,952 bpd, making it India's third biggest supplier after Saudi Arabia, which exported 986,288 bpd to the country. The UAE overtook the US to become the fourth largest source of crude for India, with the Gulf nation exporting 313,002 bpd in March. The US supplied 136,464 bpd last month, down from 248,430 bpd in February. India is the world's third-largest oil consumer. It began to boost purchases of Russian oil offered at a discount after Western states shunned direct supplies in response to Moscow's military operation in Ukraine. —Agencies



TOKYO: Japanese Cooperative "Rerise", signed technical intern training agreement with the Overseas Employment Corporation of Pakistan. Ambassador Raza Bashir Tarar assured the President of the Cooperative of all possible cooperation. — DNA

## Taliban ban restaurant gardens for families, women

KABUL: The Taliban have banned families and women from restaurants with gardens or green spaces in Afghanistan's northwestern Herat province, an official said Monday. The moves followed complaints from religious scholars and members of the public about mixing of genders in such places, he said. It was the latest in a slew of restrictions imposed by the Taliban since they took power in August 2021. They have shut girls out of classrooms beyond sixth grade and women from universities, most types of employment, including jobs at the United Nations. They are also banned from public spaces such as parks and gyms. Authorities say the curbs are in place because of gender mixing or because women allegedly are not wearing the hijab, or Islamic headscarf, correctly. The outdoor dining ban only applies to establishments in Herat, where such premises remain open to men. Baz Mohammad Nazir, a deputy official from the Ministry of Vice and Virtue's directorate in Herat, denied media reports that all restaurants were off limits to families and women, dismissing them as propaganda. It applied only to restaurants with green areas, such as a park, where men and women could meet, he said. —APP

## Police arrest 50 in eastern India

NEW DELHI: More than 50 people were arrested Monday in India's eastern state of Jharkhand after communal clashes erupted between Hindus and Muslims. The district authorities have temporarily suspended the internet and banned the assembly of more than five persons in the Jamshepur area in a bid to quell further unrest. On Sunday, communal violence erupted in the area over the alleged desecration of a Saffron flag, used for Hindu festivals. A local Hindu organization alleged that they found a piece of meat wrapped in the flag. Many pious Hindus look down upon the consumption of meat. Soon, Hindu protesters were out on the streets demanding action against those involved in the incident. According to the police, protesters hurled stones at shops and vehicles in the area. Prabhat Kumar, a senior police officer in the area, confirmed the arrests to reporters. "Police force and surveillance teams with drones have been deployed in sensitive areas and the situation is under control," Kumar told ANI news service. At least five Indian states have witnessed communal violence during Hindu religious festivities last month. At least two people were killed in these incidents. Communal clashes have been on the rise in India since 2014 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office with a Hindu nationalist agenda. —APP

## 2 migrants dead, 20 missing in Mediterranean

This incident is the latest in a series of disasters in the Mediterranean Sea, where dozens of migrants attempting the crossing have drowned and dozens more have had to be rescued from flimsy vessels.

BERLIN: At least two migrants have died and around 20 others are missing after their vessel sank in the Mediterranean between Tunisia and Italy, German aid group ResQship told AFP Sunday. The group's ship, the Nadir, rescued another 22 people and took them to the Italian island of Lampedusa, said Stefan Seyfert of ResQship. Their boat sank overnight Saturday to Sunday. Among those rescued were men, women and children from Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Mali, Ingo Werth, captain of the Nadir, told AFP. A pregnant woman was among those saved, while the boat's crew also recovered the bodies of

two men. In all, around 40 migrants were on the boat when it left Sfax in Tunisia, said Seyfert. "We did everything we could to save more people, but didn't manage to," he added. He acknowledged the "good cooperation" with the Italian coastguard. According to the Italian news agency ANSA, nine women were among the survivors. It put the number of missing at 18. The migrants are believed to have paid 3,000 Tunisian dinars (about \$980) each to get passage on the vessel. Describing their operation earlier Sunday on Twitter, ResQship said that when they arrived at the scene of the wreck, the migrants had

already been in the water for about two hours. As well as rescuing 22 people, they had recovered two bodies, they said. "This is an unspeakable tragedy that could - and should - have been prevented by a humanitarian approach to migration instead of barb-wiring the European borders," the group added. In the last few days, thousands of migrants have landed on Lampedusa, which lies only about 150 kilometres (90 miles) from the Tunisian coast. This incident is the latest in a series of disasters in the Mediterranean Sea, where dozens of migrants attempting the crossing have

## Azerbaijan is fraternal state for Kazakhstan: Tokayev

"Today we are building our future on this solid foundation. The areas of cooperation that we have already discussed have great potential, primarily energy, transport and transit," Ilham Aliyev noted

## NEWS DESK

Astana: Addressing the meeting, President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said: I would like to note that Azerbaijan is a fraternal state for Kazakhstan, a very close state. From our side, everything possible is being done to develop comprehensive cooperation in the trade, economic and investment fields and, of course, to facilitate interaction in the political arena - be it a bilateral format or international organizations. A lot has been done. I think we will talk about this in an expanded format. Moreover, we will listen to the reports of relevant ministers, who should report on the work done, and outline plans for the further development of cooperation. We have made preparations for your visit. You have probably heard that the TV and radio corporation "Kazakhstan" has prepared a special documentary dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the birth of outstanding statesman Heydar Aliyev on my instructions. Tonight, it will be shown in the Kazakh and Russian languages. I would like to present the film to you today. I hope there is also an opportunity to show it to Baku, to Azerbaijani TV viewers, and, in general, to the Azerbaijani public. Of course, we are focused on very serious work to develop economic cooperation, cooperation with Azerbaijan, which plays a leading role in the Caucasus region. There are no problems between us. There is only a desire to move forward in this direction. Thank you. At the occasion President of Azerbaijan, President Ilham Aliyev said: - Dear Kassym-Jomart Kemelevich, first of all, thank you for the invitation and for the hospitality. I would like to immediately express gratitude on my own behalf and on behalf of the entire Azerbaijani people for your respect for the memory of Heydar Aliyev. You noted what is being done on your instructions in Kazakhstan in order to express your attitude towards the memory of Heydar Aliyev and the Azerbaijani people. I am grateful to

you for the fact that one of the central streets of the capital will be named after Heydar Aliyev, and also for the film. In general, we have always felt the good attitude of the entire people of Kazakhstan towards our country, and, for sure, you also felt it during your official visit to Azerbaijan. The fact that we meet so often during official visits speaks both of the nature of our relations and of the fact that there is a need to be in contact. Because our meetings are of regular nature at various international venues, but the bilateral format is the most effective. Less than a year has passed since your visit, but there is already a need to go over the agenda in terms of monitoring the implementation of our instructions and taking new steps to strengthen our interaction. As you noted, our countries have sincere and brotherly feelings for each

other. During the meeting, the sides described a 40 percent increase in trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan as a positive step. The heads of state underlined that there are possibilities for increasing the trade turnover between the two countries to a billion dollars. At the same time, they also discussed export of Kazakhstan's crude oil through the territory of Azerbaijan, further increase of transport and logistic capabilities as well as joint investment projects, and noted there is rapid development in laying of fiber-optic cables under the Caspian Sea. The parties hailed bilateral political dialogue and successful cooperation within international organizations between the two nations. During the conversation, they also exchanged views on the regional issues.



**Briefs**

**Meeting held to discuss CPEC projects**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Chinese authorities on Monday held a 'progress review' meeting to discuss important CPEC projects and minutes of the 11th JCC sitting, following a crucial visit of Planning Minister Professor Ahsan Iqbal to Beijing and interaction with Vice Chairman of National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Li Chunlin. Chief Economist of Planning Division at the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Secretariat Nadeem Javaid and his Chinese counterpart NDRC Director General Pan Jiang co-chaired the meeting, which was attended among others by senior officials from Ministries of Planning, Energy, Industry, Communication, Agriculture, Interior, Science & Technology, Information Technology & Telecommunication and Board of Investment, a news release said here. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the smooth implementation of various CPEC projects and agreed that all the pending issues would be resolved amicably in the spirit of traditional cooperation, mutual understanding, complete trust and brotherhood. The two sides expressed satisfaction on the progress made in the four priority Special Economic Zones (SEZs) namely Rashakai, Allama Iqbal Industrial City, Dhabeji and Bostan, agreeing to 'further expedite' the progress to attract relocation of high-quality industries. - APP

**Toll rises to four in French building collapse**

MARSEILLE: Rescue workers on Monday recovered a fourth body from the rubble of a collapsed apartment in France's Marseille, a cabinet minister said, as firefighters raced against the clock to find four people still missing. More than 24 hours after a suspected explosion at the building, where residents reported a strong smell of gas, dozens of civil defence staff and sniffer dogs worked among the debris as a fire still smouldered. "Four bodies have been found," Housing Minister Olivier Klein said, at the site of the accident. But the deputy mayor of the Mediterranean port city, Yannick Ohanessian, said rescue workers still had hope of finding survivors. "Until the very end, we will believe it is possible - even if chances become slimmer with every passing hour," he said. - APP

**PTI chief summoned for probe by ICT police**

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police have summoned PTI chief Imran Khan on April 11 and 12 to join investigation in nine cases. Nine cases were registered against the PTI chairman at different police stations of the federal capital including the CTD. The capital city police have asked Imran Khan to join the investigation in two cases on April 11 (Tuesday) and in seven cases on April 12. In this regard, notices have been sent to Imran Khan at his Zaman Park residence. Imran has been summoned by the Ramna police station on April 11 in two cases. He has been asked by the Police Lines to attend office on April 11 at 12:00 (noon). The PTI chairman has been summoned by the CTD in connection with another case. Imran has been asked to visit the Khunna police station along with all related documents. He has been asked to present his stance on the said dates otherwise, legal action would be taken against him. A district and sessions judge of Islamabad, while issuing notice to PTI chief Imran Khan, asked him on Sunday to appear in person before the court on April 11 in Toshakhana case.

**President for adapting Islamic values, qualities**

The president stressed upon teaching of certain Islamic values to the coming generations including the supreme quality of forgiveness, adding our Holy Prophet (PBUH) was an embodiment of this quality who forgave all his tormentors

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday said that considering the current challenges faced by the Muslim Ummah, it was imperative to draw strength from the Islamic values and qualities. The president said that besides, focusing on economic stability, the Muslim countries should also concentrate on seeking the knowledge, enabling them to address the contemporary challenges. The president was addressing at Paigham-e-Islam Conference as a chief guest. The event was attended by a large number of ambassadors, ulema, parliamentarians and scholars. The president said that he was appalled at the spectacles of macabre aggression and violence unleashed on the innocent people of Indian Illegally Occupied

Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) and Palestine. A danger of genocide was lurking over the Muslims in India as the mosques were being demolished with suppressed religious identity and freedom, he added. He said that it was indeed a difficult time for the Muslim Ummah, but he was optimistic that through collective efforts, cooperation and unity, they would overcome all these challenges. The president further regretted that from human history, it was evident that mankind had not learnt from its bitter experiences of wrangling and tussles. The human race had witnessed large scale massacre. He said the teachings of the Holy Quran were eternal in nature which provided guidance to the human beings. The president stressed upon teaching of certain Islamic values to the coming generations including the supreme quality

of forgiveness, adding our Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) was an embodiment of this quality who forgave all his tormentors. He further emphasized that all political leadership of the country should show magnanimity by burying their bitterness and come forward for the country's progress and prosperity. Pakistan was once a fast-developing country in the region, but now other countries were leading the path which required serious retrospection, he opined. The president also lauded the role of leadership of Saudi Arabia for resuming ties with Iran. Earlier, Ambassador of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki highlighted the significance of fraternal, historic and brotherly ties between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. He said the close and warm ties were rooted deep-

ly and shaped by shared mutual interests, adding the people of Kingdom and the Muslim countries held Pakistan in high esteem. Malki said that both the countries had been working closely to further strengthen their mutual cooperation in diverse fields including trade and investment. He reiterated that Saudi Arabia would continue extending its support to the people of Pakistan through different development initiatives. Ambassador Palestine to Pakistan, Ahmed Rabei conveyed his gratitude on behalf of the Palestinian people for the solidarity and support shown to the Palestinian cause by the Pakistani people, government and political leadership. He also highlighted the recent surge of brutalities by the occupation Israeli forces in the holy month of Ramadan. Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed D, Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi and other speakers also spoke on occasion.



ISLAMABAD: Maulana Tahir Ashrafi presenting souvenir to the President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi while Ambassadors of Saudi Arabia and Palestine look on. - DNA

**'Pakistanis being deprived of democracy'**

MICHIGAN: As Pakistan continues to reel from the repercussions of an unprecedented economic and political crisis, US Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin highlighted the alleged violations of human rights in the nation of 220 million people. The US congresswoman, addressing Pakistani doctors in Michigan, talked in length and breadth regarding the issue stating that the people in Pakistan have been passing through a tough time, and they are being 'deprived of the basic rights of democracy'. "They have lost several basic, fundamental rights, such as the right to speech, the right to assemble, and the right to choose their future," she said. Slotkin further stated that she has been trying to get the support of 100 Congressmen to write to Secretary of State Antony Blinken to improve the deteriorating situation in Pakistan and restore "democratic" values in the country. Last week, a US representative of California's 32nd congressional district, Brad Sherman, had also urged the political parties of Pakistan to abide by the rulings of the Supreme Court. - DNA

**CJP reserves verdict on plea against Justice Isa's case**

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial on Monday reserved a verdict on a petition filed by the government seeking withdrawal of a curative review petition in a case against Justice Qazi Faiz Isa. The chief justice held an in-chamber hearing on the petition when Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan and Advocate-on-Record Anees Muhammad appeared before him. During the hearing, the AGP submitted his arguments in this regard. After which, the top judge reserved the verdict, stating it will be pronounced soon. Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had ordered the withdrawal of the curative review reference against Justice Isa. - DNA

**Ukraine: Russia using 'scorched earth' tactics**

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Russian forces are pressing attacks in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, focusing on two cities and pounding Ukrainian positions with air strikes and artillery barrages. Kyiv said on Monday. The commander of Ukraine's ground forces said the Russians were destroying buildings and positions in besieged Bakhmut in what he called "scorched earth" tactics. Russia's assault on Bakhmut, a small city in Donetsk at the edge of a chunk of Russian-controlled territory, has for months been the focus of the biggest battle of the war, now in its second year.

Ukraine's Armed Forces General Staff said on Sunday fighting was heaviest along the western approaches to Bakhmut. The Russians were also targeting the city of Avdiivka, it said. On Monday, ground forces commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskiy said the defence of Bakhmut continued. "The situation is difficult but controllable," he said in comments quoted by Ukraine's Media Military Centre. Moscow is sending in special forces and airborne assault units to help their attack as members of Russia's private mercenary Wagner group are now exhausted, Syrskiy said. Wagner mercenaries have spearheaded the Russian assault on Bakhmut which has left it largely in ruins.

"The enemy switched to the so-called scorched earth tactics from Syria. It is destroying buildings and positions with air strikes and artillery fire," Syrskiy said. Ukraine's general staff said Russian forces had made unsuccessful advances on areas west of Bakhmut and at least 10 towns and villages had come under Russian shelling. The Russians had also made no headway in attacks on Avdiivka, it said. Donetsk is one of four provinces in eastern and southern Ukraine that Russia declared annexed last year and is seeking to fully occupy in what appears to be a shift in its war aims after failing to overrun the country soon after its invasion in February 2022.

**LHC orders govt to submit Toshakhana records till 2001**

"We are also bound to declare it if anyone gives us a gift," Justice Bilal remarked. At this, the AAG maintained that if anyone is representing a state then he is supposed to declare the gift

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday directed the government to submit the records of Toshakhana from 1947 to 2001 in a week. The directive came during the hearing of government's intra-court appeal challenging the LHC's single bench order to release the state gift depository's records from 1990 to 2001. Taking up the plea, a two-member bench, comprising Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan and Justice Raza Qureshi asked the AAG about the grounds for the government's plea. At this, the lawyer informed the court that the bench had ordered to make the names of individuals who gave the gifts public. "The government itself released the Toshakhana records from 2002 and onwards," he said. He, however, said that the names of those who gave the gifts weren't made public to avoid destroying foreign relations. The AAG further stated that the government had uploaded all the details on the official website but wanted relief to the extent of revealing the names. At this, Justice Qureshi asked whether those people were declaring what they had been gifted or not. "We are also bound to declare it if anyone gives us a gift," Justice Bilal remarked. At this, the AAG maintained that if anyone is representing a state then he is supposed to declare the gift. He said that the government wasn't trying to hide the records but the records before 2002 are not computerised and verified. Later, the court sought records from 1947 to 2001, while issuing notice to the petitioner of the initial case seeking the Toshakhana records, for next Monday. - DNA

**'It's not just about justice but survival'**

RIYADH: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said on Monday it's not just about the provision of justice but it's about the country's survival now. In a statement on Twitter, Sheikh Rashid said today it would be decided whether democracy would prevail or it would be diminished. He underscored that the matter [Supreme Court's decision to hold elections in Punjab] was not confined to the provision of justice anymore, but it would determine the fate of the country. He said a decision had been given and the nation stood behind the Supreme Court. Mr Ahmed criticised the coalition government, saying the ruling body was trying to escape elections and therefore the cabinet in Pakistan created a new spectacle every day. He said the PDM-led government was scared of being defeated. The court ordered that elections should be held and it had not made it binding on anyone to cast vote for some specific party or person. - DNA

**Senate session prorogued sine die**

ISLAMABAD: The Senate session was prorogued sine die by Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Monday after conclusion of its business. "In exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of Article 54 of the Constitution, the president has been pleased to prorogue the Senate session on the conclusion of its business," said the prorogation order read by Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, who chaired the session. - DNA

**Palestinian minor killed by Israeli fire in West Bank**

RAMALLAH: A Palestinian minor was killed and two others injured in an Israeli military raid in the West Bank city of Jericho on Monday, according to the Health Ministry. A ministry statement said Mohammad Fayez Balhan, 15, was shot in the head and was transferred to hospital where he was pronounced dead. The ministry said two other people were injured by Israeli fire in their lower parts and were admitted to hospital for medical attention. According to eyewitnesses, Israeli forces raided the Aqbat Jabr refugee camp, triggering clashes with local residents. An Israeli military statement said army forces were operating in the camp, without providing any further details. Tensions have been running high across the Palestinian territories since Israeli police forcibly removed worshippers from inside the Al-Aqsa mosque complex in occupied East Jerusalem last week. - APP

**India stalls trade talks with Britain over Sikh group**

LONDON: India has "disengaged" from trade talks with Britain after accusing it of failing to condemn the Sikh separatist group that attacked the Indian High Commission in London last month, media reported on Monday, citing British government sources. "Indians don't want to talk about trade until they get a very public demonstration of condemnation of Khalistan extremism in the UK," a Whitehall source told The Times. The incident occurred on March 19, when protesters with 'Khalistan' banners staged a demonstration at the High Commission and took down an Indian flag from the building's first floor balcony to denounce recent police action in Punjab. Khalistan refers to an independent Sikh state sought by some groups but which does not exist.

**Turkey launches its first aircraft carrier**

ANKARA: Turkey launched its first aircraft carrier on Monday, aiming to extend its drone capabilities from land-based to naval operations amid increased regional tensions as war rages in Ukraine on the other side of the Black Sea. The TCG Anadolu can handle only light aircraft, chiefly helicopters and jets that can take off from shorter runways. It is 232 meters long and 32 meters wide, and can carry some 1,400 personnel - one battalion of soldiers - combat vehicles and support units to operate overseas. "This vessel will allow us to conduct military and humanitarian operations in every corner of the world, when needed," President Tayyip Erdogan said at the launch ceremony in Istanbul. "We see this vessel as a symbol that will consolidate Turkey's regional leadership position," he said. The amphibious assault ship was built in Istanbul's Sedef Shipyard by a Turkish-Spanish consortium, based on the design of Spanish light aircraft carrier Juan Carlos I. - Agencies

**China aircraft carrier 'seals off' Taiwan in drill**

The Chinese military said it had "successfully completed" exercises and "comprehensively tested" the capabilities of multiple units under actual combat conditions

TAIPEI: China ended three days of military drills around Taiwan on Monday saying they had tested integrated military capabilities under actual combat conditions, having practised precision strikes and blockading the island that Beijing views as its own. Beijing announced the drills on Saturday, after Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen returned to Taipei following a meeting in Los Angeles with U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy. China has never renounced the use of force to bring the democratically-governed

island under Beijing's control. Taiwan's government strongly disputes China's claims and has denounced the drills. The Chinese military said it had "successfully completed" the exercises and "comprehensively tested" the capabilities of multiple units under actual combat conditions. "The troops in the theatre are ready to fight all the time and can fight at any time, resolutely crushing any form of Taiwan independence separatism and foreign interference," the Eastern Theatre Command of the People's Liberation Army

said in a statement. Chinese state television said earlier on Monday that aircraft, including nuclear-capable H-6 bombers armed with live missiles, and warships staged drills to "form a multi-directional island-encompassing blockade situation". The Eastern Theatre Command said the Shandong aircraft carrier had also taken part in combat patrols, and it showed fighters taking off from its deck. Taiwan has been tracking the Shandong since last week in the Pacific Ocean. Taiwan's defence ministry published a

map on Monday of the previous 24 hours of Chinese air force activities, showing four carrier-based Chinese J-15 fighters operating over the Pacific Ocean to Taiwan's east. The ministry said that as of mid-morning on Monday it had spotted 59 military aircraft and 11 ships around Taiwan, and that the Shandong carrier group was conducting drills in the Western Pacific. The Shandong conducted air operations in waters close to Japan's Okinawa islands on Sunday, Japan's defence ministry said on Monday. Jet fighters and helicopters took off and landed on the carrier 120 times over Friday to Sunday, with the carrier, three other warships and a support vessel coming within 230 kilometres (143 miles) of Japan's Miyako island, the defence ministry said. Japan has been following China's military drills around Taiwan "with great interest", a top government spokesperson said on Monday. Japan has long worried about China's military activities in the area given how close southern Japanese islands are to Taiwan. - Agencies