



Islamabad POST

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US deceives, not implements its promises

Detailed News On Page-07

Suo motu powers lie with the SC, not just CJP

Detailed News On Page-02

Martial's chance to salvage United career

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Dar lauds economic policies

NEWS DESK



MEDINA: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Ishaq Dar Wednesday credited the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government's "best strategy" for steering the country out of the economic crisis. The minister's comments at an event in Madina, Saudi Arabia, come as the \$350 billion economy faces one of its worst economic and political crises, with a persistent threat of default. Hitting out at the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), he said the previous government had "brought the country to the brink of default", but the current rulers "preferred" to save the nation instead of its votes.

KP Governor visits Torkham broder

APP



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali and Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan visited the spot of the landslide incident at Torkham and reviewed the ongoing rescue operation. Besides, officers of the district administration and authorities of the other concerned departments were also present on the occasion. The concerned authorities briefed the Governor and CM regarding human and financial losses that occurred due to the incident. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor and Chief Minister directed the district administration to the speedy completion of the rescue operation and make arrangements for the required heavy machinery for the purpose.



Sehr, Iftar Timing

Ramazan 29, 1444

Sehr: 04:02 am

Iftar: 06:47 pm

Fiqa-e-Jafria

Sehr: 03:52 am

Iftar: 06:57 pm

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President directs SLICP to pay death insurance claim to widow - Page 04

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Lions B wins Federal Cup 3x3 Women's Basketball Tournament - Page 06

ICC invites French investors to focus on Pakistan markets - Page 07

'Turkey indebted to Pakistan for whole-hearted support' - Page 08

Elections in Punjab SC says will not backtrack from order

Declares defence ministry's plea inadmissible; Notices issued to political parties for today's hearing



Asif Zardari welcomes CJ's call for dialogue

NAZIR SIYAL

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday made it clear that the court will not backtrack from its April 4 order as it issued notices to all political parties, including the Jamaat-e-Islami, for the hearing on Thursday. The three-member bench was hearing the defence ministry's plea against elections in Punjab, scheduled for May 14.

At the start of the hearing, the chief justice said the issue has dragged on for too long and asked the attorney general of Pakistan to read the finance ministry's report out loud in the courtroom. The chief justice said the government had stated that the funds required for the elections would be issued via a supplementary grant, however, the "matter was sent to the parliament". The AGP replied that the finance committee had referred the matter to the cabinet and the parliament. Justice Akhtar asked how could the government be barred from approving the grant and added that the premier

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari has welcomed the chief justice of Pakistan's advice for political parties to engage in dialogue. In a statement on Wednesday, Mr Zardari expressed his appreciation for the chief justice's suggestion and called on political parties to sit together and end the ongoing crisis in the country. The advice for dialogue was given during the hearing of the Punjab election case, where the attorney general of Pakistan had requested that political parties be given some time as all political leaders were not present in Islamabad. In response, the chief justice emphasized the importance of a serious approach to the matter. Meanwhile, Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's spokesman Zulfiqar Ali Bader said in his statement that Pakistan People's Party and its Leadership believes that the door of negotiations should never be closed. Pakistan People's Party always believes in

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Imran sees country in throes of fascism

"Our people are abducted, and afterwards sham FIRs registered"

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan claimed on Wednesday that the entire country was in the throes of fascism. Taking to Twitter, the deposed premier lamented, "The way we have descended into becoming a banana republic where there is no rule of law and only the law of the jungle. It is clear that this reign of terror is not controlled by PDM puppets but by another force that sees itself totally above the law. Our people are abducted, and afterwards sham FIRs are registered." Ruing the cases lodged against him, Mr Khan said, "As bail in one FIR is granted, another FIR pops up. I have over 145 FIRs filed against me. Its a circus of FIRs. My Bani Gala caretaker, my Zaman Park cook, our social media's Mashwani, Waqas, and my security incharge, Ghumman, - all abducted and tortured to try and update their software." Speaking about the arrest of PTI stalwart



Ali Amin Gandapur, Mr Khan said, "Ali Amin got bail in one sham case, and another FIR popped up. Now another one with the police taking him to Lahore. "Despite falling ill on the way and being taken to the hospital, Ali Amin was removed from the hospital before he had stabilised", Mr Khan maintained. On Monday, Mr Khan said the constitution could not prevail in the country if the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) did not release funds for the Punjab Assembly elections.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar presenting a cheque of Rs 8 million donated by Sialkot Chamber of Commerce for PM's Relief Fund for Earthquake Victims of Turkiye and Syria to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

President refuses to sign SC bill

States that the matter is already in Supreme Court

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi returned the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023 without signing for the second time on Wednesday. In a notification, the president said the "competency of legislation and validity of the bill is subjudice before the highest judicial forum of the country. "In deference to the same, thereto no further action is required." Despite the president's refusal to sign the bill,

Ruet-e-Hilal Committee to meet today

STAFF REPORT

KARACHI: The Ruet-e-Hilal Committee will meet today (Thursday) evening to look for Shawwal moon, which will mark the beginning of Eid month. While the people are expecting Eid ul Fitr to be on April 21, Ruet-e-Hilal Research Council Secretary General Khalid Aijaz has ruled out the possibility, saying that the moon will not be sighted on April 20. Speaking to media, the official said that the crescent marking beginning of Shawwal will be sighted after the completion of 30 days of Ramadan, according to which Eid ul Fitr will fall on April 22, Saturday. Aijaz also predicted the time of the moon sighting, saying that new crescent will be born at 9:13am on April 20 and its age will be less than 10 hours that day.

Minister presents 8mn cheque Service delivery sole criteria to compete for public office: PM Shehbaz says Pakistan's politics suffers from 'structural flaw'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said politics in the country has been reduced to "meaningless rhetoric" and termed service delivery as the main criterion to compete for public office. The premier made the remarks on Twitter and maintained that "our politics suffers from a structural flaw", adding that it has been "reduced to a shorthand for grandstanding and meaningless rhetoric." In an early morning tweet, Shehbaz furthered that "service delivery alone should govern competition for public office. Politics is an arena where people compete to serve fellow citizens." Meanwhile, Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar presented a cheque worth eight

PM talks to Kuwaiti leader

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif holds telephone call with the Prime Minister of Kuwait extending warm greetings on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif telephoned Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf al-Sabah, to extend his best wishes and warm greetings on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. PM Sharif recalled the historical brotherly ties between the two countries and

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Sudan: Residents flee capital as fighting rages

Witnesses in Khartoum reported heavily armed RSF fighters patrolling the city on pick-up trucks

NEWS DESK

KHARTOUM: Thousands of civilians have fled Sudan's capital and foreign nations are trying to evacuate their citizens, amid a fifth day of fierce fighting. Witnesses reported people leaving Khartoum in cars and on foot on Wednesday morning, as gunfire and deafening explosions rocked the city. Meanwhile, officials in Japan and Tanzania say they are considering mis-

sions to evacuate their citizens. The exodus follows Tuesday's collapsed ceasefire between the warring factions. The Sudanese military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) had agreed a 24-hour humanitarian ceasefire on Tuesday, but the truce collapsed within minutes of its proposed 16:00 GMT launch. A new ceasefire has now been put forward by the RSF for 18:00 local time (16:00 GMT) on Wednesday, but the army has yet to commit to the proposal. Civilians began to flee the capital early on Wednesday morning after fighting resumed and Khartoum was enveloped in thick black smoke following explosions near the army headquarters.

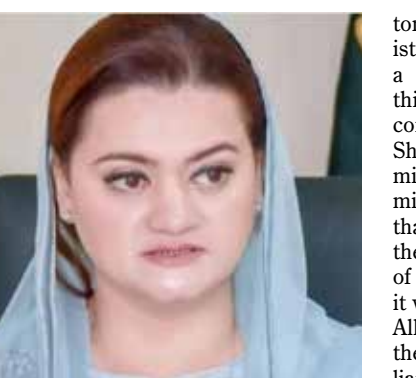
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Mariyum slams 'PTI's smear social media campaign'

"This campaign is being run from the same social media accounts which were used to run a malicious drive over Lasbela incident," Mariyum said while recalling the demise of some Army officials in a helicopter crash

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday strongly condemned an "organized campaign" run by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on social media over demise of former religious minister Mufti Abdul Shakoor who was recently died in a road accident. "For the last three days, it has been observed that some elements on social media are linking the accident either with some conspiracy, terrorism or a planned killing which is totally wrong," the minister said while responding to a calling attention notice raised in the National Assembly. She deplored the "irresponsible behavior" shown by the PTI workers and social media activists who allegedly shared some posts to mislead the masses on the death of late Mufti Shakoor. "This campaign is being run from the same social media accounts which were



used to run a malicious drive over Lasbela incident," Mariyum said while recalling the demise of some Army officials in a helicopter crash. She said the PTI workers and leaders were driven by a mindset which even did not spare deaths and accidents for hatching conspiracies. Mariyum said that a complete report on the demise of Mufti Shakoor would be presented before the Parliament

tomorrow. She said that Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah had already given a policy statement and clarified that this incident had nothing to do with any conspiracy, adding that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had directed the interior minister to constitute a fact finding committee and present a complete report in that regard. "I am personally monitoring the matter pertaining to the martyrdom of Mufti Abdul Shakoor" she said adding it was a tragic incident. All parliamentarians have expressed their deep grief and sorrow in the Parliament over his demise and honored him by passing a resolution to award him Halal-i-Imtiaz posthumously for his outstanding and remarkable public service, the minister added. Meanwhile Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said politics in the country has been reduced to "meaningless rhetoric" and termed service delivery as

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Parvez vows to continue supporting Imran

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Chaudhry Parvez Elahi said on Wednesday that he will continue to extend support to former prime minister Imran Khan. Former Punjab Assembly speaker Chaudhry Afzal Sahi called on the former Punjab chief minister, during which Mr Elahi said, "Right now Imran Khan is the nation's only hope. The current situation will be decisive in terms of the country's future." Firing a fresh salvo at the political opponents, Mr Elahi said, "The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)

cannot put obstacles on Imran's way. The government resorts to negative propaganda by which in the international community, the country's image is suffering badly." He claimed that the government was sending a message to the world that the country had been taken hostage by terrorists. "The incumbent government was of the view that the country was not in a position to hold elections in one province. When the government itself resorts to such a negative propaganda, who in the country will invest," Mr Elahi berated the coalition government.

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Rain, thunderstorm expected in most parts

ISLAMABAD: Rain and wind/thunderstorm is expected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Islamabad and Upper/Central Punjab during the next twelve hours. Heavy falls and hailstorm is also likely in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan during the forecast period. Meanwhile, heavy rain has led to land sliding at Upper Kohistan district in Hazara Division of KPK. The Karakoram highway has been completely closed for 22 hours due to the weather condition. A large number of foreign and local tourists have been stuck in their vehicles because of the road closure. The administration has not been able to take road maintenance measures yet. The people, who have been bound to their vehicles, demand immediate construction of a temporary bridge to help them through the situation. Light rain accompanied by wind in different parts of provincial capital Lahore in the wee hours of Wednesday turned the weather pleasant. Rain broke the spell of extremely hot weather in the city. However, it also caused disruption of electricity in parts of the provincial capital. —APP

IIUI President announces grant of arrears before Eid

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr Hathal Homoud Alotaibi, President, International Islamic University, Islamabad chaired an important meeting and announced that keeping in view the ongoing inflation and upcoming Eid, the university has decided to grant the next installment of arrears to the employees before Eid ul Fitr. Chairing an online meeting that was attended by the Vice Presidents and all the relevant officials, the IIUI President thanked Custodian of the two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman for the funding that has been provided to IIUI.

Dr. Hathal said the Saudi funding has helped IIUI in the time of the financial crisis as the university managed its previous month's salaries and installment of arrears through this funding. Dr Hathal said that welfare of the IIUI community and facilitation of the students are top priorities that is why the decision has been made to provide installment of the arrears to all the employees before Eid. He added that in the same manner, earlier, the Finance department was directed to release installment of arrears so that all university employees may not face any financial issues during the Holy month of Ramadan. Talking about the importance of students' facilitation, the IIUI President said that no stone shall be left unturned to provide an ideal environment of learning to the IIUI students. Referring to the IIUI future plans and development of the university, Worthy President said that the university is working on a comprehensive business plan in wake of a prosperous future.

Suo motu should reflect collective wisdom: Isa

He said "arrogance and ego are two worst traits. If you are sitting at a high position, you should not be egoistic. The day I will become egoistic, I will not be a judge. Ego has nothing to do with disagreement," he concluded

DNA

ISLAMABAD: says a wrong decision is wrong even if majority endorses it. "Two wrongs don't make a right," he quipped. Justice Isa was speaking at a ceremony held here on Wednesday to celebrate the golden jubilee of the 1973 Constitution. The theme is "Pakistan's Constitution as a Symbol of National Unity". In a possible reference to the ongoing constitutional tussle regarding formation of bench on holding elections, he said "if a decision is wrong, it will remain wrong even if a majority endorses it. A lie cannot be turned into truth by a number game," he observed. Justice Isa said the word 184(3) had been used in the Constitution, and not suo motu. "This article 184(3) empowers the Supreme Court with conditions to do something for the imple-

mentation of fundamental rights. This article secures those who cannot afford to hire services of a lawyer. This article has been used extensively in Pakistan, sometimes in good faith and sometimes bad."

He said 184(3) could not be used to benefit an individual. "This article should be used in public interest. Extreme care should be taken while using this article," the justice declared.

"In my opinion, the authority to invoke 184(3) rests with the Supreme Court. My friends are of the opinion that the chief justice has the authority to take suo motu notice. There is also an opinion that if 184(3) is invoked, all the judges of the Supreme Court should hear it. Tell me under which article, I will be corrected and I will follow your theory," Justice Isa observed. Tracing the background of the wrong decision by the judiciary, he said the main



reason for dismemberment of Pakistan was a wrong judicial decision. The justice opined that dismemberment of Pakistan was not a sudden incident, but its seeds were sown [way back in 1950s]. Justice Munir of the Federal Court sowed the seeds that broke the country through a wrong judicial decision. The poisonous seeds grew and the country was divided into

seven times," he continued. The senior judge termed the Constitution a gift. Criticising dictators, Justice Isa said every dictator realised after some time that he was a democratic person. "The dictator [a possible reference to Gen Ziaul Haq] conducts a referendum and the results is 98%." Unlike the referendum, the results of the general election in Pakistan never exceeded 60 per cent, he maintained. He said that despite the differences, the government and the PNA sat at the negotiation table and resolved the issues. But on July 4, 1977, one person seized power. On Oct 12, 1999, another government employee took over power. Musharraf's second strike was on Nov 3, 2007 when he imposed emergency. The justice called himself an optimist. He said the judges were burdened by the Constitution "as we have taken an oath to defend and pro-

tect it". "Unless people understand the constitution, it will have no value." He said every tyrant says my will, but the constitution says it's will of the people. In a dynamic society, there are differences of opinion. If everyone starts nodding in support, then it will become a monarchy and a dictatorship. Justice Isa said Article 58-2b was added to the Constitution to remove an elected government on one's whim. The article was used and the self-picked government of Muhammad Khan Junejo was removed. The article was removed through 18th Amendment and provinces were empowered, he said. He said "arrogance and ego are two worst traits. If you are sitting at a high position, you should not be egoistic. The day I will become egoistic, I will not be a judge. Ego has nothing to do with disagreement," he concluded.

The other side of the coin in Pakistani politics

KARACHI: During an in-house discussion at the Pakistan Policy Institute (PPI) in New Jersey, Professor Dr. Gholam Mujtaba, Chairman of Pakistan Policy Institute USA and Senior Leader of the Republican Party, provided a rebuttal to a particular doctor's lobbying efforts on behalf of a group of doctors of Pakistani origin in the US. The doctor was presenting a misguided perception of Pakistani democracy and freedom to US policymakers. Dr. Mujtaba pointed out that perceptions are not always reality and that there is a second side to the coin in the current campaign launched against Pakistan.



He emphasized that supporters of Imran Khan, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, should also present the case of his anti-American rhetoric before the members of Congress. Dr. Mujtaba made it clear that he is not a sympathizer of any political outfit in Pakistan, unlike the few doctors who are actively

lobbying against the current political government of Pakistan. To support his argument, Dr. Mujtaba provided several examples, highlighting previous governments' performance, policies to deal with the economy, law & order situation, and relationship with other countries. He reminded the audience of Imran's conspiracy in dislodging his government, which provoked anti-American street protests in Pakistan. He further talked about Imran's removal from office in conformity to the constitution of Pakistan. Dr. Mujtaba concluded

his remarks by emphasizing that he is a strong proponent of the Pak-US relationship above partisan politics. He urged the need to understand the ground realities before making any judgments and highlighted that intruding into the domestic politics of Pakistan by hearing one side of the story damages the repute and credibility of the current political government in Pakistan. The discussion provided a different perspective to the ongoing campaign against Pakistan and emphasized the need for a balanced approach to understand the ground realities.—DNA

Kenyan girls rescued from captivity make startling revelations

In his statement, Lule Abidi said that Haider pressed her neck hard and said, "I will cut your throat." She further said on request, Haider let her talk to her mother and Lule texted her brother after which they were rescued

KARACHI Two Kenyan girls, who were rescued from captivity in Karachi have recorded their statements under section 164. According to details, two foreign girls recovered from Karachi's Scheme 33 Private Society Punjabi Sodagarhan have made startling revelations in their statements. Teresa Wingi in her statement said that is a Kenyan citizen who came to visit Pakistan on a month-long visit visa last year in February. Teresa said she told Haider Rahman and his wife before her visit visa was expired, Haider Rahman and his wife said they would extend the visa period and show me more places. "I was looking after their children while visiting for visa extension," Teresa said. took care of her children? The Kenyan girl said in a statement that Haider Rahman took her phone and she was not allowed to talk to anyone and when she asked Rahman's wife when she will go to Kenya, she threatened her with a knife. Teresa said that Haider along with his brother Faseeh and friends Raja Hussain and Agha locked her in a dog cage for three hours and later kept her hostage at a construction building. Another recovered Kenyan girl Lule Abidi Kale said she came to Pakistan after a friendship with Haider Rahman in Nairobi and decided to do business in Pakistan jointly but as soon as she arrived in Pakistan Haider snatched her passport and said he will kill her if she complained to anyone? In his statement, Lule Abidi said that Haider pressed her neck hard and said, "I will cut your throat." She further said on request, Haider let her talk to her mother and Lule texted her brother after which they were rescued. —DNA

Textile exports plummet 12.4pc to \$12.47bn

LAHORE: The country's textile group exports plunged by around 12.40 per cent to \$12.476 billion during the first nine months (July-March) of the current fiscal year 2022-23 as compared to \$14.242 billion during the same period of last year. Data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) showed that the country's textile group exports witnessed a decline of 22.61pc in March 2023 on a year-on-year basis and remained at \$1.257bn as compared to \$1.625bn during the same month of last year. On a month-on-month (MoM) basis, textile group posted 6.55pc growth compared to \$1.180bn in February 2023. Cotton yarn exports registered 36.92pc negative growth in 9MFY23 and remained \$573.084 million compared to \$908.48mn during the same period of the last year. —APP

Lahore largest district in terms of registered voters

LAHORE: Lahore is the largest district in terms of the registered voters who are almost 6.6 million. Kolai Palas district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the smallest with almost 42,850 voters. The figures have been released by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Punjab is the largest province in terms of registered voters. In Punjab, Lahore is the biggest province with nearly 6.6 million voters; of these, 3.5 million are male voters and 3.1 million are female voters. Faisalabad is on second spot with 5.1 million people able to vote; of these 2.7 million are male voters and 2.3 million are female voters. Rawalpindi is the third largest district with almost 3.5 million registered voters; of these 1.8 million are male voters and 1.7 million are female voters. Hafizabad is the smallest district in terms of the registered voters in Punjab with almost 0.7

million voters; of these, 0.4 million are male voters and 0.3 million are female voters. In Punjab, 54 per cent registered voters are men while 46 per cent are women. Separately, Karachi central is the largest district in Sindh having almost 2 million registered voters; of these, 1.1 million are male and 0.9 million are female. East Karachi is on the second spot where almost 1.6 million are registered voters; of these 0.8 million are male and 0.7 million are female. In Balochistan, Harnai is the smallest district with almost 45,108 voters. Men constitute 56 per cent of the total registered voters. In capital, almost one million people are the registered voters; of these almost 0.5 million are men and 0.4 million are women - both having percentages of 53 and 47, respectively. There are almost 120 million registered voters in the country as per the list released by the ECP, with 60.7 million men and 50.7 million women.—DNA

Various road extension projects approved

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An important meeting of CDA Development Working Party (CDADWP) was held on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Chairman Capital Development Authority Captain Nour ul Amin Mengal. Several public welfare projects were approved during the meeting. The CDA Development Working Party has approved PC-I of the Margalla Avenue Extension Project from N-5 to M-1. Similarly, the PC-I of Lehtarar Road from Khana Pull to PINSTECH was also approved. In addition, in the meeting, PC-II of hiring consultancy service for Kuri Enclave Mixed Use Housing Project was also approved. Similarly, PC-II of project consultancy service for Orchard Heights was also approved in the meeting. Similarly, PC-II of project consultancy services to conduct Road Safety Audit in Islamabad was also approved in the meeting. Under this project, the consultant will formulate recommendations for smooth and secure traffic on roads. Road safety audit will help reduce the number of accidents on the roads. This project will enhance the importance of road safety in road planning and design. Chairman Capital Development Authority Captain Nour ul Amin Mengal directed to include the preparation of PC-I in the scope of PC-II.

IHC annuls ECP order on recount of six UCs

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday annulled the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) order on the recount of votes in six union councils (UCs) of Karachi. IHC Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan pronounced the decision on Jamaat-Is-lami (JI) request to stop the recount, stating that the reasons for annulling the order of the electoral watchdog will be given in a detailed decision. JI lawyers Qaiser Imam and Hasan Javed Shorosh, and ECP officials and lawyers of other candidates appeared in the court. On March 22, the ECP's decision was challenged in an application by JI Karachi's Naib Ameer, Raja Arif Sultan. Following the petition, the IHC had stayed the implementation of the ECP's orders regarding the recount in the six union councils of Karachi until the next hearing.—DNA

Session held on "Recent trends in Indian foreign policy"

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG of ISSI, made the concluding remarks

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) organized an In-House Session focused on "Recent Trends in Indian Foreign Policy." The Session was attended by practitioners, former diplomats, academics, scholars and researchers affiliated with think-tanks, including Ambassador Zamir Akram; Ambassador Masood Khalid; Ambassador Asif Durran; Mr. Ilyas Mehmood Nizami, Director General (SA & SAARC); Dr. Asma Shakir Khawaja, CISS, AJK; Dr. Salma Malik, QAU; Dr. Altaf Hussain Wani, KIA; Ms. Humera Iqbal, IRS; and Ms. Nur-ul-Ain, IPRI. Participants from the ISSI included DG Ambassador So-hail Mahmood and Director and members of the India Study Centre. The participants covered a wide range of themes - including continuity

and change in Indian foreign policy; traditional and new drivers of Indian foreign and security policies; the impact of Indian economy and its present growth trajectory; the relevance and efficacy of 'strategic autonomy' in the current context; India's quest for 'ma-

nor power' status; New Delhi's posture and positioning in the great-power competition; the status of 'Neighbourhood First' policy and gaps in regional engagement; slackening of commitment to multilateralism and drift towards 'mini-lateralism'; continued

intransigence in peacefully resolving the Jammu & Kashmir dispute; and stalling of the SAARC process for regional cooperation. The pursuit of 'Hindutva' ideology in the internal and external dimensions also assessed and its implications

for regional peace and security were evaluated. Besides this ideological drift, the participants highlighted the propensity in India to use certain foreign policy issues for domestic political gains, especially in the run-up to elections.



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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



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

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

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: April 19- A large number of the vehicles are stuck in massive traffic jam at Faisal Avenue as people are trying to reach home before Iftari, in Federal Capital. — Online

Ahsan Iqbal rejects 'negative perception' against China's BRI

"Wherever the BRI has gone, the local people can testify that it has had a very positive impact,"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday strongly rejected the negative perception about China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) dubbed as a 'debt trap,' saying stories were concocted to spread propaganda in global geopolitics of competition. "I don't think it's a 'debt trap' as I believe it's a fact trap to distort the spirit of BRI," the minister said in response to negative perceptions against the BRI while talking to international media representatives here.

"Wherever the BRI has gone, the local people can testify that it has had a very positive impact," he added. The BRI initiative was taken for the first time in 2013, when the then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif met Chinese premier Li Keqiang in Beijing. The focus was on connecting China with the Chinese-invested Pakistani port of Gwadar through highway, rail and pipeline infrastructure. Ahsan Iqbal appreciated China for extending the BRI to Pakistan in the shape of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which gave Pakistan a great opportunity in areas of energy, infrastructure, telecommu-

nication, industrial cooperation and in unlocking hidden treasures like massive coal deposits in Thar desert. He described the significance of the project, saying "Gwadar Port City is set to become a major trade and commerce hub in the region with its Free Zone and investment from Chinese companies." The planning minister highlighted the strategic location and potential for trade in Gwadar, stating that goods could be shipped to China through Gwadar in almost one-tenth distance from the South China Sea. He said the progress and implementation of CPEC projects were being personally super-

vised by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and despite negative perceptions, the government had reiterated its commitment to completing the projects on time. "The government's top priority is to attract more private sector investment in Pakistan, particularly in the mining sector which holds tremendous potential for value addition and development," said the planning minister while commenting on future CPEC development projects. Regarding potential partnerships between Pakistani and Chinese companies, Ahsan Iqbal said the government was promoting exports to third countries through joint ventures

and seeking Chinese companies' cooperation to set up industries in Pakistan for joint production and export. "As the year 2023 marks the decade of CPEC and the strong partnership between Pakistan and China, both Pakistan and China will be celebrating 10 Years of the BRI and CPEC on July 5, 2023," he said recalling a decade-long saga of undeterred cooperation between the two countries. In line with the 10th anniversary of CPEC, a flagship project of BRI, he said high-level Chinese delegations were scheduled to visit Pakistan to witness the achievements made since the inception of CPEC.

PM for ensuring minimum power load-shedding in summer

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed to ensure minimum load-shedding of electricity during the summer season. Chairing a meeting to review the situation of electricity load-shedding during summer, and the consumption and production of urea fertilizer, he said the pace of restoration of the Neelum Jhelum project should be increased. The meeting was informed about the production of electricity and the expected demand during this

summer. Furthermore, with regard to the revival of Neelum Jhelum power project, it was told that the project would be fully restored and start generating the cheap and clean electricity in July this year. The meeting was also informed in detail about the provision of gas to the urea industry, besides data of its production and consumption in the country. The prime minister directed the relevant authorities to ensure timely production of urea fertilizer and its supply to the farmers.

He said the government was taking all possible steps to minimize per acre cost of the farmers. He said during the last year, the government had given top priority to the agriculture development and prosperity of the farmers. "I will not let anybody to grasp the rights of the farmers through smuggling of urea fertilizer," he added. The prime minister also directed to keep an eye on the demand and supply of the fertilizer. Keeping in view the consumption and produc-

tion of the fertilizer, he directed to present a comprehensive plan for buffer stock and the provision of gas to the industries. Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, federal ministers Tariq Bashir Cheema, Makhdoom Syed Murtaza Mehmood and Khurram Dastgir Khan, Minister of State Dr Musaddiq Malik, PM's Advisor Ahad Khan Cheema, special assistants to the PM Jehanzeb Khan and Tariq Bajwa, and other authorities concerned attended the meeting.—APP

Chinese investors a key role in Pak RE sector

ISLAMABAD: Chinese investors play a pivotal role in supporting Pakistan in its journey to privatise distribution and modernise transmission," said Tauseef H. Farooqi, Chairman of National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA). Addressing a webinar on accelerating Chinese investment in the renewable energy market in Pakistan, the chairman pointed out that renewable energy is an inexhaustible source of green energy and the most cost-effective option in the current economic crisis in Pakistan. According to a Gwadar Pro's report, Chinese investors are welcome to explore the infinite possibilities of various renewable energy sectors in Pakistan, including hydro, thermal, solar, etc. Pakistan is a country with an enviable advantage in renewable energy. In the case of solar energy, Pakistan alone has almost 1,900,000 megawatts of solar potential. Starting from 2023, Pakistan will conduct the first round of competitive bidding for the upcoming Solar Fast Track program, which seeks to induct 10,000 MW of solar power. Chinese investment in Renewable Energy (RE) can provide a significant boost in Pakistan's efforts of transition to a low-carbon energy mix. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), China has been the largest global investor in RE, with a total investment of \$758 billion from 2010 to mid 2019. China's RE industry is among the global leaders, especially in wind and solar PV, providing about 5 million jobs across the globe. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has contributed generously to Pakistan's power sector with more than 20 projects close to 10,000 megawatts, an investment of more than \$20 billion, the chairman noted.—DNA

Iranian envoy calls on Pirzada



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan H.E. Mr. Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini held a farewell meeting with Federal Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirza-

da here Wednesday on the completion of the Ambassador's term in Pakistan. The minister expressed his appreciation for the dedicated services of the Ambassador for strengthening the bilateral ties in multiple areas between Pakistan and Iran. He said that Pakistan and Iran were two brotherly countries having long political and economic ties ingrained in our century's old common religious and cultural affinities. The minister said that Pakistan had suffered a lot in its relations with the neighboring countries, as this region has been the international political arena for decades. We have much better human rights situation in Pakistan and other Muslim countries than the so-called champion countries of human rights. Currently, only Pakistan, Iran and Türkiye are extending their unwavering support for the people of Kashmir and Palestine.—DNA

IESCO issues power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: IESCO on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to the IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 07:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Islamabad Circle.—APP

Mariyum condemns PTI's 'organized social media campaign'

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday strongly condemned an "organized campaign" run by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on social media over demise of former religious minister Mufti Abdul Shakoor who was recently died in a road accident. "For the last three days, it has been observed that some elements on social media are linking the accident either with some conspiracy, terrorism or a planned killing which is totally wrong," the minister said while responding to a calling attention notice raised in the National Assembly. She deplored the "irresponsible behavior" shown by the PTI workers and social media activists who allegedly shared some posts to mislead the masses on the death of late Mufti Shakoor. "This campaign is being run from the same social media accounts which were used to run a malicious drive over Lasbela incident," Mariyum said while recalling the demise of some Army officials in a helicopter crash. She said the PTI workers and leaders were driven by a mindset which even did not spare deaths and accidents for hatching conspiracies. Mariyum said that a complete report on the demise of Mufti Shakoor would be presented before the Parliament tomorrow. She said that Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah had already given a policy statement and clarified that this incident had nothing to do with any conspiracy, adding that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had directed the interior minister to constitute a fact finding committee and present a complete report in that regard. "I am personally monitoring the matter pertaining to the martyrdom of Mufti Abdul Shakoor" she said adding it was a tragic incident. All parliamentarians have expressed their deep grief and sorrow in the Parliament over his demise and honored him by passing a resolution to award him Halal-i-Imtiaz posthumously for his outstanding and remarkable public service, the minister added.—DNA

Floods caused Rs 7 bln revenue loss to railways'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique on Wednesday apprised the National Assembly Pakistan Railways suffered Rs 7 billion revenue loss due to last year's devastating flash flood in the country as railways operation remained suspended for 42 days.

Replying to a point of order raised by Aliya Kamran, the minister said Pakistan Railways did not receive a single penny despite efforts to get some funds from the finance ministry or federal government due to financial constraints. Despite the financial crunch, an amount of Rs 650 million was arranged to link Quetta with other parts of the country, he added.

He said Quetta railways track was severely damaged by devastating floods last year. However, operation from Balochistan has been fully restored.

He said Railways was among those organizations which pay salaries and pensions to the employees from its own resources and the government only bridged the gap. The federal government has also been requested to arrange some funds for railways.

AIOU extends admissions' date till May 4

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has extended the last date for admissions of postgraduate programs offered in the second phase of Spring semester 2023 without late fee charges until May 4th. Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr.



Nasir Mehmood has approved the extension on the requests of students and recommendations of Director Admissions.

Programs offered in the second phase of Spring Semester 2023 include Associate Degree (BA/B. Com, BBA), BS (ODL), B.Ed, and postgraduate diploma programs, as well as certificate courses. All admission forms and prospectuses for these programs are available on the University's website. Meanwhile, the University has rescheduled the exams for Associate Degree/BA/BS and B.Ed programs which were scheduled to be held on April 25 and 26.

According to the Examination Department, these papers will now be held on June 20 and 21 respectively.

No changes have been made to the examination centers, and the roll number slips issued earlier will be acceptable for the rescheduled exams.

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Briefs

IRSA releases 118,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 118,000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 125,700 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1434.84 feet and was 36.84 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 41,800 cusecs while the outflow was 35,000 cusecs.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1106.45 feet, 56.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 38,900 cusecs and 38,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 57,200, 33,300, 25,500 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 29,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 7,600 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Ride-Sharing trend on rise among travellers

ISLAMABAD: As people head to their native towns to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, a new trend of sharing-ride witnessed a sharp rise that is allowing commuters to travel between different cities and providing them with an affordable safe ride to reach their respective destinations.

Transporters are charging fares at their own will and the people had no choice to reach their destinations except to share rides and avoid the increased fares, said a report aired by a private news channel. In the modern era of transportation, using a ride-sharing service can add extra value to the lifestyles of women, said a female commuter along with her family. The ride-sharing services are allowing passengers to use smartphones to submit a trip request and giving them a variety of segments in their registered vehicles, said a commuter.

Sharing rise on Eid is a rising trend which is now offering commuters a low-cost option to whiz through traffic jams and to save money, said another commuter. "Instead of transporting travellers one at a time, drivers could transport two to four people at once, resulting in fewer trips, in less time, to make the same amount of money," commented a driver of a ride moving to Lahore city. Ride-hailing services and downloading apps have helped people in providing on-demand and flexible mobility choices to the riders, said a youngster.

These sharing services are providing offering advantages such as affordable pick-up and drop, co-passenger information, economical rides fares and higher convenience as compared to the traditional transport service providers on Eid, said a female commuter.—APP

SC contradicts news reports regarding its audit

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court on Wednesday clarified a news item published in a section of press regarding its audit wherein it has been alleged that the said audit has not been conducted for the last ten years and that the Public Accounts Committee has summoned the Registrar Supreme Court accordingly.

In a clarification issued here, it has been said that to set the record straight, the audit of Supreme Court of Pakistan has been conducted and completed upto June 30, 2021.

Audit for financial year 2021-22 is under process and can be confirmed from the office of Auditor General of Pakistan. "It is, hereby, clarified in concrete terms that such reports are contrary to the facts, incorrect, misleading and are based on erroneous information placed before Public Accounts Committee."—APP

President directs SLICP to pay death insurance claim to widow

The President held that since the maladministration stood established on the part of SLICP, therefore, SLICP was directed to pay the death insurance claim to the complainant within thirty days of receipt of the President's order and report compliance to the Wafaqi Mohtasib

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has directed the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLICP) to pay the death insurance claim worth Rs 300,000 to the widow of a deceased policyholder who was denied payment on the ground that her husband's death was not the direct consequence of road accident but he was a known patient of epilepsy. He also upheld the orders of the Wafaqi Mohtasib directing SLICP

to adopt proper procedure/rules/regulations which were violated by it resulting in maladministration.

The President gave this decision while rejecting a representation filed by SLICP against the decision of the Wafaqi Mohtasib (WM). Mr Akram Masih, the late husband of Mst Rehana Bibi (the complainant), had obtained a life insurance policy from SLICP for the sum assured of Rs 300,000 for a period of 20 years. He died in a road accident and, after his death, his wife filed a death insur-

ance claim which was rejected by SLICP claiming that he fell down due to an epilepsy attack and his death was not a direct consequence of the road accident as reflected in the FIR and was a known patient of epilepsy. Feeling aggrieved, she approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib which passed the order in her favour. SLICP, then, filed a representation with the President against the order of WM. In his decision, the President observed that the record showed that SLICP

had not produced anything to establish that the death of the deceased was a direct consequence of epilepsy despite having all resources at its disposal. He added that the Ombudsman had rightly observed that SLICP had merely relied on Police Roznamcha without producing any corroborative evidence to support its claim. The President further pointed out that the Confidential Report of the Field Officer of SLICP depicted that the said officer at the time of issuance

of the policy had declared the insured as healthy and categorically stated therein that he knew the deceased policyholder since the last two years, thus, the plea of SLICP was hit by the principle of estoppel. The President held that since the maladministration stood established on the part of SLICP, therefore, SLICP was directed to pay the death insurance claim to the complainant within thirty days of receipt of the President's order and report compliance to the Wafaqi Mohtasib.



ISLAMABAD: General Manager Turkish Airlines Ali Battal, Muhammad Umer Khan and others attending Iftar dinner hosted by the Turkiye Ambassador—DNA

Sino-Pak Hybrid wheat cooperation increases

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Sino-Pak Hybrid wheat cooperation will enhance risk resistance in agri sector, says a report published by China Economic Net (CEN) on Wednesday. It is learned that so far, the Chinese team's hybrid wheat demonstration fields in Pakistan have been maintained at about 3,000-5,000 hectares, extending from Peshawar and Islamabad in the north, Lahore in the center to Karachi in the south," Prof Zhao Changping, Chief Scientist of Hybrid Wheat Research Institute, Beijing Academy of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences (BAAFS) told CEN "it is true that we have only taken first step for a country's wheat indus-

try, but ensuring Pakistan's food security through variety improvement is our long-term strategic task." "Although hailstone is an occasional extreme weather that cannot be effectively resisted from the perspective of breeding, it can at least minimize the impact of disasters by promoting production and increasing yield," added Prof Zhang Shengquan, Deputy Director of the Hybrid Wheat Research Institute of BAAFS. Pakistan is embracing wheat harvest season. However, in some areas, unexpected climate disasters wiped out farmers' toil for a whole year. Not all of Pakistan's wheat industry has been hit, but for farmers in the affected areas, "the rotting straw can't even be used as silage. I

have no idea how many other farmers are like me because there is no accurate assessment report yet. The southern part of Punjab, Layyah, Kot Addu and other areas have been hit sorely by hailstones. Relevant departments must do something to solve the food shortage. We are in desperate need of help," Nasar Gondal, District President of local agriculture enterprise Kissan Ittehad, said in an interview with CEN. "Dreadful. I've never seen such violent hailstones in my life," Majid Rafiq, a wheat farmer from the Mandi Bahauddin district in Punjab province, sighing sadly as he gazed at the lodged wheat ears in his field. "Whole harvest has been destroyed. The wheat was supposed

to be harvested in less than a month, but now the hail has broken stalks, then the broken places will rot downward rapidly. So sad to say, it's worth nothing." Official projections showed that wheat production in Punjab, main producing area that produces 77 percent of wheat, is set to witness a major blow during the current FY 2022-23, amid negative impacts of climate change as well as crop substitution, sowing other crops than wheat for profitability. Crop substitution was towards maize and oilseeds mainly due to better prices, Secretary Ministry of National Food Security & Research Zafar Hassan stated. Because of the lack of good varieties and low yields, it is hard for farmers to sell their wheat at a good price.

Capital starts to wear a deserted look

ISLAMABAD: The capital city has started to wear a deserted look as most of the natives, settled here due to jobs, are moving to their native hometowns to celebrate the religious festival of Eid-ul-Fitr with their families and relatives. The typical hustle and bustle of the city usually fades away during the Eid days as a large number of residents prefer to proceed to their hometowns after taking a couple of leaves or so from their offices and jobs, and this Eid is also not different. The government has already announced five Eid-ul-Fitr holidays from Friday to Tuesday, the natives have clubbed Wednesday and Thursday before Eid and were seen moving to their hometowns. "I'm leaving for my hometown in Bhakkar through public transport to celebrate Eid with my parents. I've taken a two-day more leaves from my office to stay with my par-

ents for maximum days", Zubaida Abid, who works in an office in the Capital told APP. "I've purchased all the essentials, including clothes, shoes but could not manage to buy bangles and henna till the last minute due to rush in markets. Now I'll buy these from my hometown," she said while mentioning the huge rush in the markets. "The festival of Eid-ul-Fitr is very important for me as I get more time to spend with my parents after remaining busy in job here", she said. Azhar Ali, another resident of the Capital said that Eid was the only occasion when he finds time with his friends but most of them have left for their native hometowns to celebrate the festival with their relatives. "I feel again I'll not be able to enjoy the occasion fully." "We've planned to arrange a barbecue party out door by inviting our relatives who live in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.—APP

PIA's flights to Chitral to be scheduled with increase in traffic load

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Railways Kiran Imran Dar on Wednesday informed the National Assembly that Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flights would be scheduled to Chitral with an increase in passengers' traffic load. In response to a calling attention notice about the non-inclusion of tourist spots in the flight schedule of PIA issued in March, raised by Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali, she said that PIA's flight schedule was linked with passengers' traffic load.—APP

PM lauds Sherry

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has lauded Federal Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman for effectively highlighting the challenges faced by the country in the wake of climate change. "Incredible public service, Minister Sherry. The way you have presented Pakistan's case on climate change after the devastating floods last year is truly remarkable," he wrote on his Twitter handle. PM Shehbaz expressed words of appreciation as the prestigious Times magazine placed Sherry Rehman on its list of 100 influential people of the year 2023. "It is a well-deserved honour," he said. Sherry Rehman, in a tweet, expressed gratitude to the prime minister for acknowledging her services in the field of climate change.—APP

PM's youth initiatives carving paths for immense potential

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has inaugurated a string of mega initiatives for the huge young bulge of the country, providing them opportunities to amply explore their innate talents and potential for shaping the country's future. Under the prime minister's vision, the Federal Government had launched the PM's Youth Development Initiatives by unveiling 15 mega programmes for empowering the younger generation and equipping them with modern education. According to a report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), currently 64 percent of the nation is younger than 30 and 29 percent is between

15 and 29 years. Pakistan now has more young people than it has ever had, and this is increasing to continue increasing until at least 2050. Considering this key factor, the Federal Government had unveiled the Prime Minister's Youth Development Package worth Rs 150 billion to empower the youth, who are the 'biggest asset' of the country. These programmes included Ba-Ikhtiyar Nujawan Internship Programme, PM's Youth Laptop Programme; 5,000 scholarships for the students of Balochistan & Ex-FATA; 75 National Top Talent Scholarship Programme; Establishment of Seerat Chairs; Establishment of Sub-Campuses of

Public Sector Universities in the least Developed Districts of Pakistan; Youth Skills Training Programme; Young Development Fellowship Programme; 7 Centers of Excellence; Pakistan Innovation Fund Young Development Leader Award; Special Development Scheme for the Uplift of the 20 poorest districts of Pakistan; Young Peace and Development Corps and 250 Mini Sports Complex across Pakistan. These initiatives also included 2,000 internships for young engineers, 20 under-developed districts transformation programme, Pakistan Innovation Fund, and 75 National Top Talent Scholarships Programme. Similarly to enable a vast

young segment, the prime minister also launched the Youth Business and Agri Loans Scheme which provides opportunities to the youth to earn their livelihood through different business and agriculture initiatives. According to details, the initiative is aimed at promoting entrepreneurship among the youth by providing business loans on simple terms and with less mark-up through 15 commercial, Islamic and SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) banks. All Pakistani residents, aged between 21 and 45 years with entrepreneurial potential are eligible to apply for the loan. Loans provided under the scheme are segregated

into three tiers. People in the age group of 21 and 45 years can avail the loan facility of up to Rs 7.5 million under these schemes. For IT and E-commerce businesses, the lower age limit is 18 years. Microfinancing through small business loans will promote a norm of jobs creation rather than job seeking among the country's youth bulge. The prime minister, during the inauguration ceremony, had remarked that the programme was also launched during former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's tenure at the federal level and Rs 75 billion worth loans were provided to 5,400 youth which had not only benefited them.—DNA

'Floods caused Rs 7 bln revenue loss to railways'

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique on Wednesday apprised the National Assembly Pakistan Railways suffered Rs 7 billion revenue loss due to last year's devastating flash flood in the country as railways operation remained suspended for 42 days.

Replying to a point of order raised by Aliya Kamran, the minister said Pakistan Railways did not receive a single penny despite efforts to get some funds from the finance ministry or federal government due to financial constraints.

Despite the financial crunch, an amount of Rs 650 million was arranged to link Quetta with other parts of the country, he added.

He said Quetta railways track was severely damaged by devastating floods last year. However, operation from Balochistan has been fully restored.

He said Railways was among those organizations which pay salaries and pensions to the employees from its own resources and the government only bridged the gap. The federal government has also been requested to arrange some funds for railways.—DNA

Motorway Police to strictly deal with overloading

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General of National Highways and Motorway Police Muhammad Yousuf Malik has said that the motorway police had taken steps to strictly deal with transporters involved in overloading and fleeing commuters on the account of Eid-ul-Fitr.

In a statement on Wednesday, he said that traffic pressure on the highway increases when people leave for their native towns for Eid celebrations.

Orders had been issued to increase the number of personnel, establish a special squad, the DIG said, adding briefing and patrolling officers present at the toll plazas had been directed to be on high alert. He advised the transporters to avoid overloading and overcharging and follow the traffic rules. Otherwise, strict legal action would be taken, he maintained. Malik said that people travelling in private vehicles should ensure that they have complete sleep and rest while driving on the highway. He further advised that while driving, drivers should focus on the road, avoid using mobile phones, and use seat belts. During the journey, they should ensure that the condition of the vehicle was good, and carry extra water and tyre and tyre changing tools in the vehicle, the DIG stressed. In case of any emergency, travellers can contact Motorway Police Helpline 130, he added.

SDPI marks Earth Day 2023 titled 'Developing Sustainable Policies for a Circular Economy'

ISLAMABAD: Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here on Wednesday organized the theme day of Earth Day 2023, titled "Developing Sustainable Policies for a Circular Economy". Delivering a special lecture on the theme day, Dr Walter Stahel, Founder and Director, Product-Life Institute, Geneva and Member of the Strategic Foresight Board of Circular Economy Alliance said new records for coal production and global carbon emissions were set in 2022 which paints a picture completely opposite to the concept of circular economy, said a press release.

The sustainability and circular economy are two sides of the same coin with the objective of managing capitals, he said and added that humans neglected that nature itself was circular by evolution with no waste, but nature can't deal with man-made waste, which resulted in contemporary environmental issues.—APP

Confiscation of vehicles with expired Carnet-de-Passage limit

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the authorities concerned to immediately confiscate the luxury vehicles being used illegally in the country despite the expiry of the Carnet-de-Passage.

A Carnet-de-Passage is an international agreement between two countries that allows the temporary importation of a car without having to pay the custom duties.

The prime minister, who took notice of such vehicles and chaired a special meeting on the subject, questioned as why the relevant department failed to act against such vehicles well in time.

He also directed the formation of an inquiry committee to take strict action against the officials found involved in misuse of the scheme or those who showed negligence in this regard.

The prime minister asked the Federal Board of Revenue to compile the data on such vehicles which had completed their allowed limit under the scheme.

He was briefed on the method of entry and exit of such vehicles. During the meeting, the luxury vehicles were also pointed out which were still being used despite the expiry of the Carnet-de-Passage limit.

Federal ministers Rana Sanaulah, Syed Naveed Qamar, Special Assistant to PM Tariq Bajwa and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.—APP

Out of magic books straight to the screen

Directed by Azfar Jafri under the production of VR Chili Production, Umro Ayyar is featuring a talented set of cast & crew to make the star power to the production which can enthrall the audience in its true sense along with filling the screens with magic, thrill and fantasy

ISLAMABAD: The most fascinating childhood tale is anticipated to enchant the audience very soon as the lead cast of the fantasy film recently left hints via their social media accounts.

The intriguing novels of Umro Ayyar and his magic-filled journey were always go-to bed must-haves that 90s kids still remember and reminisce about. The character of 'tumour ayyar' is not just childhood folklore but also a part of the literary heritage which has travelled centuries as being part of "Dastan-e-Amir Hamza" filled with adventures & evil sorcerers. While PACTV has a great contribution to putting these characters into real life through its majestic series 'Ainak Wala Jin' in which umro year appeared as part of a few episodes but to give this marvellous character its due recognition and bring back the nostalgic hero for its admirers a Pakistani film is set to make its appearance with a renewed look. Although the project named 'UmroAyyar - A New Beginning' had earlier announced its launch in November 2021 but was delayed. Now finally after a long wait fans are anticipating the release of this much-awaited film as its lead cast recently hinted at the final countdown to release. Famed as Altamash of Anaa, Uman Mukhtar shared motion graphics of the said film along with a caption, in which he is appearing as a lead star which made his fans eager to know the final date of the film's release. "The Countdown to the ultimate battle has begun", captioned Mukhtar under his Instagram post.

Along with Mukhtar, another leader of the legendary project 'Sanam Saad' also shared the same snippet via her official Instagram account which intrigued the fans about the grand release of this masterpiece magical tale. Directed by Azfar Jafri under the production of VR Chili Production, Umro Ayyar is featuring a talented set of cast & crew to make the star power to the production which can enthrall the audience in its true sense along with filling the screens with magic, thrill and fantasy.—APP

Pakistan envoy's return to Kabul

Pakistan Embassy's chargé d'affaires in Afghanistan Ubaid Ur Rehman Nizamani assumed charge of his office five months after he was attacked in Kabul. Ubaid Ur Rehman Nizamani survived unhurt then but one security guard suffered critical injuries in the attack on December 2. The Foreign Office had then confirmed that the target of the attack was Nizamani. Later, the Khorasan chapter of the banned militant outfit Daesh accepted responsibility for the attack, which happened a month after the Pakistani diplomat had taken charge of his office. Until November 4, 2022, before him, Mansoor Ahmed Khan had been the head of the Pakistani mission in Kabul. Diplomatic sources said on Tuesday that the resumption of office by the Pakistani diplomat in Kabul was an important development prior to a visit by Afghanistan's acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, who is scheduled to arrive in Islamabad with his country's delegation in the first week of May. It is also important to note that Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari had a telephone discussion with his Afghan counterpart last week. Pakistan has blamed Afghan leaders for failing to fulfil their commitment to stopping terror attacks originating from their soil and warned of taking action. After assuming the charge, the Pakistani diplomat called on the Afghan foreign minister and "discussed a wide range of issues of mutual interest". The diplomat also presented Quranic calligraphy by renowned Pakistani artists Asghar Ali and Naqash e Masjid-e-Nabvi. In a separate statement, Afghan Foreign Office Spokesperson Abdul Qahar Balkhi said that Ubaid ur Rehman met Amir Khan Muttaqi after returning to Kabul. "Welcoming the Pakistani diplomat, FM Muttaqi expressed hope that his return will positively impact bilateral diplomatic relations," he said. It is the need of the hour that both the neighbors give priority to each other's concerns and with effective border control and management, the prospect of cross border attacks can be lessened. Afghan Taliban government needs to keep up with its promises and hunt down terrorists residing in safe havens so that the atmosphere of trust can be maintained.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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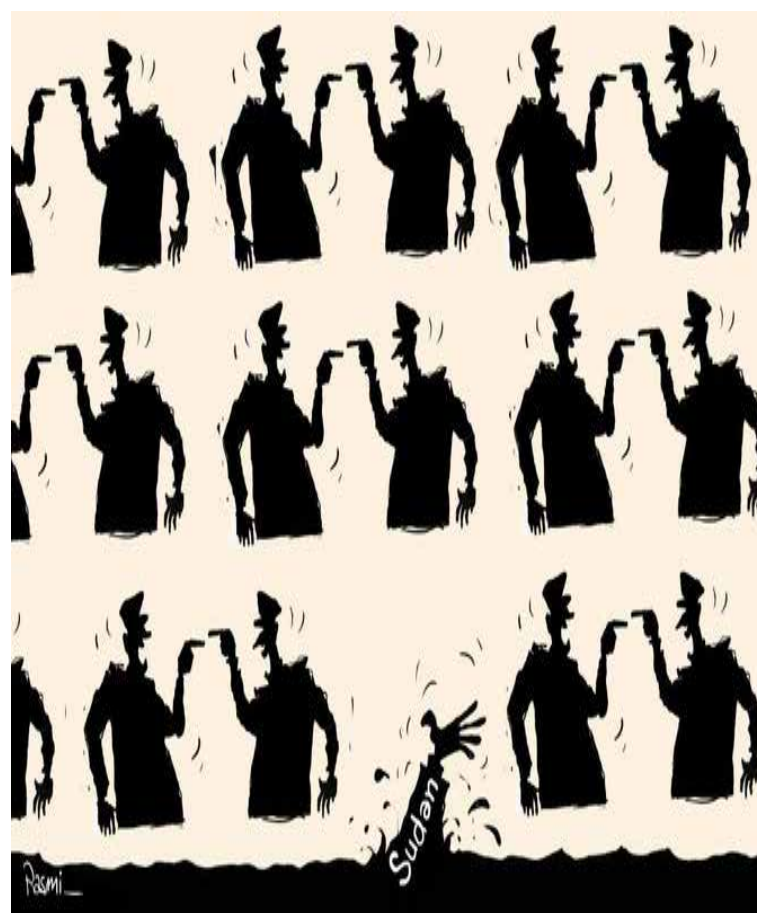
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Sudan's conflict

First they turned upon Omar al-Bashir, the strongman they had served, when the Sudanese people rose up against the president. Then, in a coup, they turned upon the civilian politicians who had risen to power subsequently. Now they have turned upon each other. Many feared that Sudan's General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the de facto leader and army chief, and Lt Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the vice-president who controls the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and is known as Hemedti, would soon clash. But the explosion of violence last weekend, its scale and the rapidity with which it spread across the country, including to Darfur and eastern border regions, was nonetheless shocking and frightening. Both men have a grim track record, playing leading roles in the brutal counterinsurgency campaign against rebels in Darfur, with the conduct of the RSF particularly notorious. The current conflict between them was triggered by plans to integrate Hemedti's RSF - fostered by Mr Bashir as a counterweight to the army - into the regular military, under controversial plans supposed to bring about the country's return to civilian rule following 2021's coup. The two men appear to regard their fight as a matter of survival. Hemedti said that General Burhan would "die like any dog" if not brought to justice. The army has declared Hemedti a "wanted criminal". Meanwhile, terrified families have sheltered at home as the conflict rages around them, trapped without water or power and with dwindling food supplies. More than 180 people have been killed and 1,800 wounded, hospitals have come under attack, essential services have been cut and the World Food Programme has suspended desperately needed assistance after three of its employees were killed. An end to the fighting would be the first step. United and sustained international support for a ceasefire is needed. Under Donald Trump, the US effectively outsourced Sudan policy to regional players. Its re-engagement is overdue and welcome. Carefully targeted sanctions could play a role. Hemedti has portrayed himself as a protector of the 2019 revolution and some civilian leaders have, unenthusiastically, seen him as a possible defence against dictatorship under General Burhan. Yet the people are more politically conscious and organised than they have ever been, and for many at the grassroots, the last few days have confirmed that a shallow political process in a system dominated by two warlords cannot bring progress or even stability. Even in these grim times, those who have fought bravely and persistently to be heard will not abandon their ambitions.

Exec-Legislature assault on the judiciary

Qamar Bashir



In all wisdom, the Constitution has bound the government, legislature, and judiciary in their respective spheres, and none is above or beyond it. "Every law enacted by the parliament is subject to interpretation by the Supreme Court in light of the ideals and purposes of the constitution. It is the prerogative of the legislature to amend the constitution and pass laws; it is the responsibility of the judiciary to determine whether such laws violate the fundamental structure of the constitution. Most countries have settled the question of which pillar is superior to the other shortly after their establishment, but in Pakistan, forced by our vested interest, we bring up the issue whenever and wherever it suits the authorities who matter in Pakistan. Despite the fact that the constitution has assigned each pillar a distinct function, jurisdiction, and that contradicts the fundamental structure of the constitution until the constitution is amended and the amendment is in harmony with its fundamental structure of the constitution. Once a law is enacted, the parliament gets out of it and the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court starts which has the exclusive and final authority and a last resort to evaluate it against the constitution and declare it constitutional or invalid. The constitution so zealously protects the independence of the judiciary that even the parliament cannot amend the constitution to clip the review powers of the judiciary. The matter was decided in the case of *Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India* in 1980. The Indian Supreme Court was asked to decide whether the government had the power to amend the Constitution to curtail the power of judicial review. The court held that the power to amend the Constitution did not include the power to destroy its basic structure, which included the power of judicial review. The court held that the Constitution was supreme and that no branch of government, including Parliament, could override its basic structure. In the *Marbury v. Madison*, 1803 case, the US Supreme Court was asked to decide whether a law passed by Congress was constitutional. The court held that it had the power of judicial review and that it could strike down laws passed by Congress if they were unconstitutional. The court also held that the Constitution was supreme and that no branch of government, including Congress, could violate its provisions. In this sense, the judiciary is seen as a co-equal branch of state with the legislative and executive branches. In India, there have been several instances where the Su-

preme Court has overruled decisions taken by the government or the legislature. For example, in 2016, the court struck down a law passed by the parliament that allowed convicted lawmakers to continue holding office. The court held that the law violated the constitutional principle of separation of powers and undermined the integrity of the political system. Sadly, even after more than seventy-five years of this beleaguered nation's existence, we as a nation continue to struggle to define and redefine the jurisdiction and superiority of the parliament over judiciary, or the executive and vice versa not on the basis of merit, objectivity, national interest, or welfare of the people, but rather swaying every now and then in the direction best suited to the vested interests. When in power, the parties conveniently pursue one position, but when in opposition, they perform a complete 180 and develop the exact opposite narrative. This war of imposing superiorities of one pillar over the other pillar has taken an ugly turn in Pakistan, where the entire opposition sits outside the assemblies and the legislature has become an extension of the government. They, both motivated by the similarity and unity of their vested interests, have joined hands to arm-twist the judiciary, reduce it to a state of irrelevance, and erode its power to the point where it becomes an extension of the executive-parliament incapable of making independent decisions. Parliament and the Executive have adopted the same tone and tenor when criticizing the superior judiciary on trivial accounts and matters and questioning each and every action taken by the chief justice, including formation of benches, allocation of business to the judges, and transfer of cases from one judge to the next, despite the fact that it is the sole prerogative of the chief justice to allocate business to the judges and run the superior judiciary as he or she deems appropriate. Perhaps this is only occurring in Pakistan, where we are unable to resolve fundamental questions about our existence and the purpose of our institutions. In Pakistan and everywhere in the world, the chief justice has the authority to form court benches to hear and decide cases, determine the composition and number of judges on each bench, and transfer cases from one bench to another and to assemble larger benches to hear cases of great public importance. In the United States, the Chief Justice has the authority to assign judges to different circuits and panels of the U.S. Courts of Appeals, as well as the power to temporarily assign judges from different circuits to sit on another circuit when necessary. In India, the Chief Justice has the authority to form Supreme Court benches, assign cases to these benches, transfer cases between benches, and refer cases to larger benches for hearing and decision. In the United Kingdom, the Lord Chief Justice assigns judges to different cases and circuits in the High Court and Court of Appeal, transfers cases from one court to another, and establishes new courts or tribunals as needed. The truncated and opposition less parliament, which even perhaps lacks the moral authority or justification to make laws, is hell-bent on reducing the powers of the chief justice and handing them over to its hand-picked and cultivated judges without considering the grave and far-reaching consequences of removing the power, which is

a crucial aspect of judicial administration around the world and plays a vital role in ensuring the fairness, efficiency, and independence of the judicial system. If the Chief Justice loses the authority to form benches and assign cases, there may be delays in the hearing and resolution of cases leading to confusion and inefficiency in the court system and resultant delay in the administration of justice for litigants. Without central authority, benches will be formed with biases or favoritism based on personal or political affiliations rather than qualifications and experience. In all established democracies however, in general, Parliament cannot overturn the decisions of the courts related to the allocation of funds for organizing elections if it is required by the constitution. The separation of powers principle, which is a fundamental principle of most democratic systems, means that the judiciary is an independent branch of the state with the power to interpret the law and make decisions based on it. Therefore, if a court decision is made in accordance with the constitution, the Parliament cannot overturn it through legislative action. However, Parliament may have the authority to amend the constitution to change the provisions related to the allocation of funds for organization elections. This would however, require a vote by a majority of members of Parliament. The case in hand is the allocation of funds to the Election Commission for holding elections for the Punjab Assembly which triggered an onslaught of judiciary by Executive-Legislature. Unlike the current constitutional deadlock in Pakistan, in such situations in many other countries, the orders of the courts were obeyed without any reservation. In 2019, the Philippine Commission on Elections (COMELEC) requested the court to order the government to provide additional funds to cover the expenses for the May 2019 midterm elections. The request was granted, and the funds were released in time for the elections. The court's decision was also endorsed by the legislature. In 2020, the Supreme Court of India directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to conduct elections in the state of Bihar by November 2020. The ECI requested additional funds from the government to cover the expenses for the elections, and the government immediately released the funds. The legislative branch also passed a resolution supporting the government's decision to provide the funds for the elections. I have not the slightest doubt that the competent legal aids of the executive and legislative branches are fully aware of the fundamental and unavoidable need to uphold the provisions of the constitution, which provide the basis and foundation of a civilized society as opposed to the law of the jungle. Then, what are the stakes that motivate the Executors-legislatures to band together against the constitution and the judiciary, which is making every effort to uphold the relevant provision of the constitution? In an interview that aired today (18 April 2023), the Defence Minister elaborated on what makes Punjab elections so exceptional and high-stakes. If elections are held, the entire effort to change the regime will be in vain. According to him, whichever party in this case PTI won the elections in Punjab, which accounts for 65% of the country's population, the same party would certainly sweep the gen-

eral elections whenever held and may even won two third majority of the parliament, which would be death knell for constituent parties of the PDM especially PML(N), as PPP would most likely retain Sindh and PML(L) would be left with nothing in the center or punjab for the next five years. This will even neutralize Nawaz Sharif, who is eagerly awaiting his return to Pakistan as a celebrity rather than a convict in the hopes of becoming prime minister for a fourth and likely final time, given his age and failing health. This revelation of the truth by a PMN(L) stalwart is ample evidence as to why PML(N) with the tacit support of the establishment is fighting tooth and nail, against every political, administrative, and judicial move which endorses the constitutional provision to hold elections within 90 days in case assemblies are dissolved prematurely, even though they know in their hearts that by doing so they would be trampling the constitution and breaking the law, they are also aware that if they lose this battle, they will lose the opportunity to govern the country for at least the next five years, which is too big a risk to take, even bigger than violating the constitution and facing the contempt of court. In this war of survival of PDM and especially PMN (N), the constitution and the people of Pakistan are the biggest casualties. This war is not fought on the question of the superiority of one pillar of the state over the other but on the basis that everything is fair in love and war. It is a question of the very existence of PML(N) which is facing imminent routing first in Punjab and later in the center, if the elections are held as per dictates of the constitution. They are using all arrows in their bow to remain in power, buy time, neutralize Imran Khan by hook or by crook and bring Nawaz Sharif back to pro-pun PMLN. In their desperation, they have pushed the constitution away, knowing full well that constitutionality is supreme, not the pillars of the state that operate under the constitution's dictates or the vested interests. According to the constitution, neither the judiciary nor the legislative or executive branches may exceed their respective limits. The Judiciary should be free from the influence of the executive and the legislature in order to advance the goals of justice. Where the judiciary protects the rights of the people against the encroachment of the government or any other organization or person, the superior courts enforce the fundamental rights of the people through the appropriate writs judicial order-of the nature of Habeas Corpus, Mandamus, Certiorari, Quo Warranto, etc. To render the judiciary impotent is akin to abolishing the constitution and law in the nation, which can only be restored by popular movements. Now that civil society has awakened once more, we are observing all the necessary signs of civil movement to uphold the constitution and protect the judiciary from the combined assault of the Executive and the legislature. Let us hope and do everything in our individual and collective power to uphold the country's constitution and rule of law, which are the foundation of a civilized society.

—The writer is the Former Press Secretary to the President, Former MD, SRBC, Former Minister Press, Embassy of Pakistan to France

Importance of Industrial Linkages for universities or HEIs in Pakistan

Dr. M. Suleman Tahir

Last but not least, industry partnerships can assist universities in making an impact and adding value to society. Universities can provide cutting-edge answers to social problems like climate change, health, and energy by collaborating closely with industry. This cooperation may also result in the development of fresh ventures, goods, and services that can boost the economy and provide employment. Simply, access to industry knowledge and resources, funding opportunities

A university's mission in research and development (R&D) is to generate new knowledge and discover creative solutions to problems that arise in many academic disciplines. Researchers, students and professors work together to perform basic and applied research in a variety of subjects, including science, engineering, medicine, social sciences, humanities and more. Commonly universities serve as centers of learning and academic inquiry. In universities or Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the basic function of scientific and scholarly research is to design and test new products or services. It is necessary to develop new technologies and to create innovative solutions to real-world problems. Universities can contribute to economic growth, social & cultural development and discoveries & innovations by conducting activities related to research and development. The outcomes of such research activities can benefit society as a whole. Universities are essential in encouraging interdisciplinary research and cross-disciplinary collaboration, which can help to provide new knowledge and innovative solutions. The next generation of scientists and researchers, who will spur future innovation and aid in resolving societal problems, can be trained on these platforms. Simply, a university's job in research and development is to produce new knowledge, develop original ideas, and educate the next generation of scientists and researchers to advance human progress in a variety of academic subjects. A collaborative partnership between universities and industries is called "industrial linkage". It aims to advance knowledge transmission, technology transfer, and research & development. It entails collaborations between academic researchers and industry executives to tackle real-world issues, develop novel technologies, and come up with ground-breaking ideas that can benefit society. The benefits of industrial linking to universities are numerous. The first one is that it gives universities access to knowledge, resources, and experience

from the industry that they may use to expand their research and development efforts. This collaboration may result in the creation of fresh research initiatives, as well as useful goods and solutions for the market. Secondly, Industries may be eager to sponsor research programs or offer research grants to support particular fields of study, opening up financing prospects for universities. The research infrastructure, new employee hires, and student scholarship programs can all be supported with the help of this funding. Thirdly, exposure to industry professionals and chances for hands-on learning can help students develop their knowledge and abilities and increase their employability after graduation. Students can see the most recent technology and practices utilized in their disciplines directly through internships, research collaborations, and industry visits. Last but not least, industry partnerships can assist universities in making an impact and adding value to society. Universities can provide cutting-edge answers to social problems like climate change, health, and energy by collaborating closely with industry. This cooperation may also result in the development of fresh ventures, goods, and services that can boost the economy and provide employment. Simply, access to industry knowledge and resources, funding opportunities, opportunities for students to gain real-world experience, and chances to contribute to society through research and innovation are all advantages of industrial linkage for universities. To build and strengthen linkages with industry, Pakistani universities must overcome several obstacles. In Pakistan, there is a comparatively weak culture of industry-academia partnership. Universities are not often considered viable partners for research and innovation by many industrial organizations in the nation. Similarly to this, many institutions don't take a proactive stance to forge connections with Industry, which makes it challenging to forge close bonds between the two. In comparison to developed nations, Pakistan's

research and innovation ecosystem is comparatively underdeveloped. The inability of universities to carry out high-quality research that is pertinent to industrial needs is caused by a lack of funds, infrastructure, and facilities for research and development. The culture of investing in R&D is lacking in many industrial organizations in Pakistan. They may not recognize the importance of funding long-term R&D partnerships with universities since they are more concerned with short-term earnings. The needs of industry and university research priorities are frequently out of sync. While the industry is more interested in applied research that can result in the development of new products and services, universities may concentrate on basic research. Many university professors in Pakistan lack the knowledge and expertise needed to work with industry. Additionally, there aren't many incentives for faculty members to collaborate with the industry, which may deter them from doing so. There is no entrepreneurial culture in Pakistani universities that supports the commercialization of research and innovation. Because of this, it is challenging to turn academic research into profitable products and services. In conclusion, there are several obstacles that Pakistani universities must overcome to build and strengthen industrial ties, including a weak culture of collaboration, a weak ecosystem for research and innovation, a lack of industry support for R&D, a misalignment of industry and academic priorities, a lack of faculty-industry collaboration, and a lack of an entrepreneurial culture. To overcome these obstacles, universities, industry, and policymakers must work together to foster an atmosphere that encourages cooperation and innovation because the industrial linkage is one of the effective life-line for Pakistani universities.

—The writer sits he Vice Chancellor Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology, Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan

Briefs

SC says will not backtrack...

FROM PAGE 01 should have a majority in the NA as it is mandatory to have a majority in financial matters. He added that the government had a right to issue a supplementary grant under the Constitution and asked how could the assembly intervene in the matter. The bench member further said that the finance ministry's team had stated repeatedly that the approval for the supplementary grant could be sought later and wondered how the grant could be rejected by the lower house. The chief justice, in reply to the AGP's reply that funds need to be approved or are otherwise classified as "unconstitutional," said that there was no previous instance of referring such administrative matters to the standing committee and funds spent on polls were a "necessary" expenditure. CJ Bandial also noted that the ECP had stated that polls in the two provinces of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) could not be conducted till October as the watchdog had stated security concerns. "Terrorism has been present in the country since 1992," said the chief justice as he observed that polls have been held in the country despite terror threats. Giving an example of the elections in 2008, shortly after the assassination of former premier Benazir Bhutto, Justice Bandial asked what new danger was present to not hold polls in the country. To this, AGP Awan replied that the security forces performed election duty at one time before and now, "elections will take place in two provinces separately".

PM talks to Kuwaiti...

FROM PAGE 01 reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to fortify the fraternal ties by transforming them into mutually rewarding economic relationship. PM Nawaf warmly reciprocated Prime Minister's Eid greetings and conveyed best wishes for the people of Pakistan. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the two nations. Both leaders agreed to celebrate it in a befitting manner, with the aim of further solidifying the bilateral ties in all areas of mutual interest.

Sudan: Residents...

FROM PAGE 01 Witnesses in Khartoum reported heavily armed RSF fighters patrolling the city on pick-up trucks, while fighter jets loyal to the military conducted strikes on targets believed to be held by the paramilitary forces. A shortage of fuel and a lack of public transport has seen many of those fleeing forced to do so on foot, with some seeking to get passage to central and western Sudan - where their families live - on flatbed trucks. One local fleeing the capital told the BBC that the RSF had set up checkpoints on roads around the city and some of its fighters had robbed him, stealing his phone and some money.

President refuses...

FROM PAGE 01 it will become law on April 20, according to Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar. The bill was passed by both the National Assembly and the Senate last month amid a standoff between the government and the judiciary over elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, after which it was sent to the president for assent. However, President Alvi returned the bill for reconsideration to parliament, stating that it prima-facie "travels beyond the competence of parliament" and could be assailed as "colourable legislation". The government then got the bill passed by a joint session of parliament on April 10 despite strong protest from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), after which it was again sent to the president to sign.

Lions B wins Federal Cup 3x3 Women's Basketball Tournament

Federal Basketball Association President Ijaz Butt was the chief guest of concluding ceremony who along with former coach Malik Riaz and FBBA Secretary Ouj E Zahoor distributed prizes among the players

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Lycans B becomes champion after defeating Lycans A by 11-5 point in the final of Federal Cup 3x3 Women's Basketball Tournament, organised by Federal Basketball Association (FBBA) here at Multipurpose Court F-6 Islamabad. According to the secretary of Federal Basketball Association Ouj E Zahoor, the purpose of organizing women's tournament along with men's event is to encourage female basketball players so that they can get opportunities to show their skills as six teams competed in the one-day event. Federal Basketball Association President Ijaz Butt was the chief guest of concluding ceremony who along with former coach Malik Riaz and FBBA Secretary Ouj E Zahoor distributed prizes among the players. In the final of the tournament, Lycans "B" defeated Lycans "A"



by 11 points against 05 with support of Sana Mahmood scored 5 points and Asma Shehryar scoring 4 points while Rehana Naz of Lycans A scored two points. Earlier in the semi-final round, Lycans "B" defeated AK "A" by 11-7 points, while Lycans A defeated AK B by 13-6 points. The matches of the event were supervised by Moazzam Naveed and Muhammad Mudassar.

Carlos Alcaraz brushes aside Borges in Barcelona

BARCELONA: World number two Carlos Alcaraz began his belated build-up to the French Open with an emphatic second-round win over Nuno Borges at the Barcelona Open on Tuesday. The Spanish teenager was back in action after hand and back problems forced him to pull out of last week's 2023 debut on European clay at the Monte Carlo Masters. The top seed swept aside the world number 79 from Portugal 6-3, 6-1 to set up an all Spanish last-16 clash with Roberto Bautista Agut after the 13th seed beat Bernabe Zapata Miralles 6-2, 6-2. "I feel great," said Alcaraz, playing on the surface for the first time since Rio de Janeiro in February.



Alcaraz pulled out of Monte Carlo with the injuries that had hampered his last appearance, in the semi-finals in Miami where he succumbed to Jannik Sinner. Alcaraz arrived in Miami as the world number one after success at Indian Wells, but was knocked off the top of the ATP rankings by Novak Djokovic after the loss to Sinner. The 19-year-old's bid to successfully defend a tour-level title for the first time got off to the best possible start, as he despatched Borges in 63 minutes on the court named after Rafael Nadal, another absentee from Monte Carlo.

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France bans Basel football fans from Nice

PARIS: French authorities on Tuesday banned Basel fans from the second leg of the Europa Conference League quarter-finals in Nice to avoid confrontations between rival supporters. The mayor of Nice, Christian Estrosi, last week urged that fans of the Swiss club be banned from Thursday's game. On Tuesday, the Ministry of the Interior issued an official order, stating that Basel away games are "frequently sources of disturbance to the public order". "Relations between supporters of the two teams, who share an opposing political ideology, are marked by animosity," the ministry said. The first leg on April 13 ended 2-2. The ministry said that ahead of that game in Basel, "high-risk supporters of both teams made contact and planned to confront each other". On the day of the match, there was "a massive use of pyrotechnic devices" and "incidents and provocations were relayed on social media, but without the planned clashes taking place", the statement read. "It is feared" that the return match on Thursday "will be the scene of clashes", it added. Last year, when Basel visited Marseille, further down the Mediterranean coast, in the Europa Conference League last-16, opposing ultras clashed. Nice fans were involved in violent confrontations with visiting Cologne supporters last September, with 32 people injured. - DNA

Burnley made to wait for title

LONDON: Burnley were made to wait for the Championship title after being held to a 2-2 draw at Rotherham, while Sheffield United's 1-0 win against Bristol City moved them a step closer to the Premier League on Tuesday. Goals from Scott Twine and Manuel Benson either side of Vitinho's own goal pushed Vincent Kompany's promoted side to the brink of clinching the second-tier silverware. But Georgie Kelly equalised to earn the Millers a deserved point and with second placed Sheffield United winning, it meant the champagne celebrations will have to wait until Saturday, where a win against QPR will secure top spot for the Claret. Sheffield United should join Burnley in the top-flight next season after substitute James McAtee's second-half goal gave the Blades a win that moved them eight points clear of third placed Luton with four matches remaining. Lukas Jutkiewicz's first-half strike put a dent in fifth placed Millwall's play-off push as Birmingham claimed a 1-0 win at the Den. Blackpool slipped closer to relegation with a 2-0 defeat against West Bromwich Albion, who moved up to sixth place. Will Keane's goal kept alive Wigan's faint hopes of avoiding relegation as their 1-0 win at Stoke moved them within five points of safety. Sunderland's play-offs charge was hit by a 1-1 draw against lowly Huddersfield. The Black Cats have closed to within one point of the top six, but with the two sides directly above and below them in the table all having at least one game in hand, Tony Mowbray's men will feel they have lost ground in the promotion battle. A draw was a better result for Huddersfield, who saw Josh Koroma's second-half strike cancel out Joe Gelhardt's opener, as it has moved them two points clear of the drop zone ahead of this weekend's trip to fellow strugglers Cardiff. - Agencies

Enemy seeking to polarize Iranian nation: Khamenei

TEHRAN: Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the enemy has always sought to polarize the Iranian nation, calling on the country's student community to adhere to the principles of realism in its demands. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks on the 27th day of the holy fasting month of Ramadan on Tuesday in an address to a group of university students and campaigners of student movements. "Student activities should not polarize the student community and the country. Polarization is the will of the enemy. Students' demands must be accompanied by realism and providing scientific and practical solutions," the Leader said. Ayatollah Khamenei dismissed the idea that any dismay about the resolution of the country's problems has an internal origin, saying it is the enemy's strategy to make the Iranian nation feel disappointed about itself. - APP

Martial handed chance to salvage Utd career

MANCHESTER: Anthony Martial was shipped out on loan to Sevilla last season with his Manchester United career seemingly at an end, but the Frenchman has returned to prominence in time for a Europa League reunion with the Spanish club. An injury to Marcus Rashford means Martial will likely lead United's attack on Thursday with a place in the Europa League semi-finals on the line. Two late United own goals in the first leg at Old Trafford have left the tie against the Europa League specialists finely poised at 2-2. Martial played a major part as United shot into a 2-0 lead thanks to Marcel Sabitzer's double inside the first 21 minutes. But the Austrian midfielder could be one of a number of players unavailable to Erik ten Hag for the return leg, putting pressure on Martial to step up. Sabitzer pulled up with an injury in the warm-up prior to Sunday's 2-0 win at Nottingham Forest. First-choice centre-backs Raphael Varane and Lisandro Martinez are also missing for the trip to Spain after picking up injuries in the first leg. The biggest blow of all, though, could be the absence of Bruno Fernandes due to suspension. Fernandes shone as he was reunited with Christian Eriksen and Casemiro in midfield at the City Ground. In 17 matches where all three have started, United have won 15 and drawn two.

Injury problems have also minimised Martial's impact this season and been the story of his United career. The world's most expensive teenager when he was signed from Monaco in 2015, the 27-year-old has never truly realised his potential despite scoring 86 goals for the club in 288 appearances. His time at Sevilla was even less fruitful. Having been pushed down the pecking order by Cristiano Ronaldo's return for a second spell at United, Martial sought first-team football in Spain, but scored just once in 12 appearances in the second half of last season. Ronaldo's departure last year has given Martial a final chance to rekindle his career at Old Trafford. But fitness problems have limited his impact to just 19 appearances in United's gruelling 51-match campaign to this point. United boss ten Hag, though, has remained steadfast in his support as he desperately seeks a firing number nine. Rashford's 28 goals - his best ever return in a single season - have papered over the cracks for United. However, the England international has spoken of his preference to start from a wide left position rather than through the middle. Ten Hag's patience with Wout Weghorst has also run out in recent weeks after the Dutch international scored just twice in 22 games. "When he is fit our team plays better," said Ten Hag on Martial's impact. - DNA

Giroud seals Milan's passage past Napoli

Victor Osimhen scored in stoppage time but it was not enough for Napoli who are creaking as they come towards the end of what has been a phenomenal season

NAPLES: AC Milan reached the semi-finals of the Champions League on Tuesday after Olivier Giroud struck the crucial goal in a 1-1 draw at Napoli which completed a 2-1 aggregate victory over their fellow Italians. Giroud tapped in what turned out to be the decisive goal two minutes before the break after a blistering run from Rafael Leao, who was once again key as Milan beat Napoli for the third time this month. The France striker's 13th goal of the season saved his blushes after he missed a penalty midway through the first half. Stefano Pioli's side now have the prospect of a local derby in the last four as Inter Milan hold a two-goal lead ahead of their

second leg with Benfica on Wednesday night. "I'm very proud of this team, with that spirit we can dream of anything," said Giroud to Mediaset. "In the next round there will be another hard match whether it's against Inter or Benfica, but if we keep this spirit we can go anywhere." After the match Mediaset showed Leao a video of Ruud Gullit setting up a goal with an almost identical run at Napoli in 1988. "It's the same," said a shocked Leao. "It's what I try to do, go at players, it's how I can make difference. If I can't score I look for my teammates. I saw Giroud there." Milan have not contested a Champions League



semi-final since they were crowned kings of Europe for the seventh and most recent time in 2007. Victor Osimhen scored in stoppage time but it was not enough for Napoli who are creaking as they come towards the end of what has been a phenomenal season. Luciano Spalletti's once freewheeling team are struggling for goals and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia also had a penalty saved with 10 minutes remaining, a miss which condemned his team to defeat. Napoli are on the verge of their first league title since 1990, but

after being placed on the easier side of the draw Tuesday's exit was an underwhelming end to their European adventure. Their hardcore fans had agreed a truce in an ideological battle with owner Aurelio De Laurentiis which had made the atmosphere at home matches poisonous, and on Tuesday a packed Stadio Maradona was initially in fine voice. Their team went straight at Milan, dominating possession and pushing the opposition back towards the vibrating stands. However, the best they could muster was two long-distance efforts from Matteo Politano which crept wide. On Milan's first serious attack Mario Rui clattered into

Leao and handed Giroud the chance to give the away side a huge advantage from the penalty spot. However Giroud's weak effort was easily stopped by Alex Meret, whose save unleashed a roar from the stands, a colossal racket repeated when he prevented Giroud netting a more than presentable chance shortly afterwards. Napoli had scored at least three goals in all of their previous Champions League home games this season but looked short on ideas against a well-organised Milan defence which kept a tight lid on Osimhen. And as the hosts pushed to level the scores on aggregate, Milan pounced at the end of the first half. - Agencies

Asif Zardari welcomes...

FROM PAGE 01 political consultation and believes in dialogue and also takes decisions with mutual consultation with all political forces, which is the beauty of democracy. Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will try his best to convince all the stakeholders in PDM to come on the table of dialogue and bring Pakistan and its People out of crises. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari mentioned some time ago on the floor of the National Assembly that after we passed the 18th Amendment we were pressured and were blackmailed on the reason that 18th Amendment will be abolished by the court. After which the 19th Amendment was passed and the discretionary power of the Parliament were transferred to the Supreme Judicial Council and today we realize this mistake.

Marriyum slams...

FROM PAGE 01 the main criterion to compete for public office. The premier made the remarks on Twitter and maintained that "our politics suffers from a structural flaw", adding that it has been "reduced to a shorthand for grandstanding and meaningless rhetoric." In an early morning tweet, Shehbaz furthered that "service delivery alone should govern competition for public office. Politics is an arena where people compete to serve fellow citizens."

Parvez vows to continue...

FROM PAGE 01 Accusing the government of "betraying the masses", Mr Elahi claimed, "The government is escaping the elections and dodging 220 million people of the country." "India is reaping the benefits of the Shehbaz Sharif-led government's anti-state narrative. This is India's narrative that Pakistan has become the most dangerous country of the world," he maintained. Speaking about the United States, Mr Elahi claimed, "The United States too realises its mistake." On Tuesday, Mr Elahi called on Mr Khan, during which both leaders held discussions on the matter of tickets for the Punjab Assembly elections and the country's political situation. Mr Khan also inquired after Moonis Elahi's health. Subsequently, after meeting with Mr Khan, Mr Elahi went on to say that on the matter of candidates in Punjab, he had a detailed consultation with Mr Khan. Tickets will be issued by Mr Khan himself, he added. He bashed the political opponents, claiming, "Every unconstitutional tactic is being used to delay the elections. The inept rulers will be held accountable for their every unconstitutional move."

Service delivery...

FROM PAGE 01 million rupees from Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry for earthquake victims of Türkiye and Syria. The Prime Minister appreciated the Chamber's efforts for brothers of Syria and Türkiye. The remarks by the premier come as the government failed to reach any consensus on the issue of holding negotiations with the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), met separately the parties met with one another to break the current political impasse. In the meeting, chaired by PM Shehbaz, sources said that the coalition parties took a stand that the supremacy of parliament would be maintained at any cost, saying the ruling alliance vowed that they would resist any attempt to undermine the authority of parliament. During the meeting, the sources said, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari insisted on holding negotiations with the PTI on the issue of elections, contending that closing the doors to talks was not only against his party's principles but also undemocratic and unpolitical. The sources maintained that Bilawal added that it was the need of the hour to take the path of dialogue to bring the country out of its current crises.

Briefs

Kiev to ask West for anti-air missiles

KIEV: Ukraine will ask its Western backers to provide it with more surface-to-air missiles, the Financial Times reported on Wednesday, citing three people familiar with the matter. According to the outlet, it will happen during a meeting at Ramstein Air Base in Germany this week, as Kiev prepares an anticipated counteroffensive against Russian troops.

"Short-range air defense has been a topic that has been raised increasingly by the Ukrainians," a European official was quoted as saying. "If they use them all up, it opens the space up for air forces."

According to FT, a Pentagon document from late February that was leaked online in the spring assessed that Kiev's ability to protect its forces from aerial attacks would be "completely reduced" by May 23. The leaked files reportedly specified that Ukraine might run out of ammunition for "five critical air defense systems." NATO members have received intelligence that Russia is amassing warplanes and attack helicopters along the frontline with Ukraine, FT added.

The US will host a summit of nations that are supplying Kiev with weapons on Friday. Ukrainian officials have said previously that the success and timing of any major advance against Russian forces will heavily depend on deliveries of equipment from the West. Ukraine shells Donetsk during Easter service.

The West has been sending Ukraine various air defense platforms, including shoulder-fired Striker missiles. Germany announced this week that a more advanced US-made Patriot system had been delivered to Ukraine. Russia has repeatedly accused Kiev of using Western arms to target civilians. On Sunday, Ukrainian troops shelled Donetsk, with some projectiles landing outside a church as worshippers were celebrating Orthodox Easter, according to local officials. At least one person was killed in the attack and six were injured.

No 'magic wand' for Ukraine: UK

LONDON: The conflict between Russia and Ukraine will likely continue into next year, UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said on Tuesday.

"I'm optimistic that between this year and next year, I think Ukraine will continue to have the momentum with it and a position of strength," Wallace told reporters during a trip to Washington, DC, as quoted by the New York Times.

Wallace warned, however, that "there is not going to be a single magic-wand moment when Russia collapses." The UK has been one of Kiev's main backers, supplying the country with heavy weapons, including Challenger 2 tanks. Britain has trained 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers, according to the Defence Ministry, and pledged to train 20,000 more this year. For the past several months, Kiev has been outspoken about its planned counteroffensive, but has not publicly revealed the timetable. Ukrainian officials have said, however, that the schedule and success of the endeavor will heavily depend on the supply of Western tanks and other equipment.

Aleksey Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, told AP on Monday that the push will start at an appropriate time when the country is ready. Prime Minister Denis Shmigel recently said that the offensive will start "in the nearest future." Shmigel stated that the recent leaking of the Pentagon files, which included reports about how Western countries were training and equipping Ukrainian troops, will not change the plans for the counteroffensive.

However, a source close to President Vladimir Zelensky told CNN that Kiev had altered some of its plans because of the leak. Some Western leaders, including NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, warned that the conflict, which broke out in February 2022, could last for years. US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said Washington is determined to support Kiev "for as long as it takes." —APP

ICCI invites French investors to focus on Pakistan markets

Zafar Bakhtawari former President ICCI Faizan Shahzad also shared useful ideas to promote trade and economic relations between Pakistan and France

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) leading a delegation called on H.E. Nicolas GALEY Ambassador of France and discussed with him matters for further improving bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and France. Laurent Chopin, Economic Counselor of France Embassy was also present on the occasion.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the current volume of bilateral trade of around USD 2 billion between Pakistan and France is not up to the actual potential of both countries as they have good potential to further enhance it. He stressed for strong business linkages between the private sectors of Pakistan and France to explore new vistas of mutual cooperation. He said that France had supported Pakistan for EU's GSP Plus scheme and



it can cooperate with Pakistan in many sectors including energy, IT, agriculture, livestock and tourism. He said that Pakistan is a huge market of around 223 million consumers and France should focus on Pakistan for business and investment. He said that ICCI plans to organize a Pakistan-France Business Forum to improve business relations between the two countries. He said that the French companies

working in Pakistan should also be invited to share their experiences and said that the Embassy should cooperate with ICCI for the Forum. He invited the Ambassador to visit ICCI for an interaction with the business community. Addressing the delegation, H.E. Nicolas GALEY, Ambassador of France in Pakistan said that France considers Pakistan an important country and wants

to have more business relations with it. He said that Pakistan should focus on the EU's parliament for the continuity of the GSP Plus scheme. He said that a French Alumni group would be activated to enhance the cooperation between the two countries. He said that whenever a French business delegation visits Pakistan, he would connect them with ICCI. He said that close cooperation

between ICCI and French Chambers of Commerce & Industry can help to explore untapped areas of business cooperation between the two countries. He said that Pakistan's current difficult economic situation is transitory and Pakistan can attract more investment by addressing the issue of its currency fluctuation. He said that France and Pakistan have signed a roadmap for bilateral cooperation to

strengthen relations in all fields of mutual interests including economic development, science & technology, education, culture, tourism, defence, climate change and hoped that it would produce good results for both countries.

Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that Pakistan France Business Alliance is working in Karachi and its Chapter should also be opened in Islamabad to promote mutual understanding and friendly relations between the business communities of Pakistan and France. Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar said that many French companies are already working in Pakistan and more should come to explore joint ventures and investment in areas of interest. Zafar Bakhtawari former President ICCI Faizan Shahzad also shared useful ideas to promote trade and economic relations between Pakistan and France.

'Indigenous referendum an important reconciliation opportunity'

NEWS DESK

CANBERRA: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday said that the proposed referendum on constitutionally recognizing the country's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people is an "important opportunity" for his country to promote "reconciliation."

"The proposal that will be before the Australian people would do two things. One, it would recognize Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first peoples in our Constitution. Secondly, it would provide for them to be consulted on matters that affect them," Albanese said in an interview with



col Radio 2SM Sydney. The main opposition Liberal Party has supported the recognition of Indigenous people in the constitution but opposes the establishment of an Indigenous consultative group to parliament, called the "Voice," that will be decided in a referendum expected later this year. Since the col-

onization of Australia by British settlers in 1788, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have faced hardships, ranging from the loss of traditional culture and homelands to the forced removal of children and denial of citizenship rights, according to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

"This history of injustice has meant that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been denied access to basic human rights, such as rights to health, housing, employment, and education," it added. The prime minister said: "We know that there's big gaps in education, in health, in infant mortality, in incarceration rates, in so many areas between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. And what the Voice would provide is the opportunity to make representations to the government of the day." Following Albanese's center-left Australian Labor Party's election victory in May last year, he announced that his government would include Indigenous peoples as original inhabitants in the constitution.

US more often deceives than implements its promises: Lavrov

MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov criticized the US on Tuesday, calling it untrustworthy and unreliable. "It is well known that the US may deceive at any moment, and much more often it deceives than implements its own promises and obligations," Lavrov said at a joint press conference in Caracas with his Venezuelan counterpart Yvan Gil when asked about US promises to improve relations with Venezuela if it joins anti-Russian sanctions. Lavrov said he informed Gil about the situation in Ukraine, noting that the conflict has to be resolved based on the principle of indivisibility of security. For his part, Gil said Caracas does not accept unilateral sanctions and that Venezuela also suffers from them. "The US constantly attacks us and is trying to suffocate our economy. The US is constantly speaking about improvement of relations, but we haven't seen any alleviation of sanctions," he said. Gil stressed that all sanctions, both US and European, have to be lifted and until then, Venezuela cannot speak about normalization with Western countries. He noted that Moscow and Caracas are developing an alternative to SWIFT, the system that enables global financial transactions, in order to bypass Western sanctions. Lavrov arrived in Caracas from Brazil earlier Tuesday as part of his Latin American tour from April 17-21. He also plans to visit Nicaragua and Cuba. —DNA

Medvedev suggests supplying arms to N. Korea

MOSCOW: A Russian official Wednesday suggested Moscow could supply arms to North Korea against a similar step by South Korea to Ukraine.

"I wonder what the inhabitants of this country (South Korea) will say when they see the latest designs. Russian weapons from their closest neighbors — our partners from the DPRK (North Korea)? What is called (a) quid pro quo," said Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of the Russian Security Council. His remarks on Telegram came after South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol reportedly said Seoul could provide aid beyond humanitarian or financial support if Ukraine "comes under a large-scale attack against civilians" in its war against Russia. Seoul has not supplied any weapons to Kiev since the Russia-Ukraine war began last year. It has, however, shipped humanitarian aid to the war-hit nation. "If there is a situation the international community cannot condone, such as any large-scale attacks on civilians, massacres, or serious violations of the laws of war, it might be difficult for us to insist only on humanitarian or financial support," said Yoon. "I believe there won't be limitations to the extent of the support to defend and restore a country that's been illegally invaded both under international and domestic law," he added. However, Seoul dismissed any speculation on its position regarding the Russia-Ukraine war. "The government's position (on Ukraine) has not changed," a South Korean presidential official told Seoul-based Yonhap News agency. "The international community has high expectations of South Korea's role, and his (Yoon's) answer was given in that context," the unnamed official added. Yoon is set to visit the US later this month for a bilateral summit with his US counterpart Joe Biden. —Agencies



In the presence of Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain, Russian Federation, Ministry of Education signed a MoU with Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training for strengthening of long-term and constructive relationships in Education between both countries. —DNA

'Won't allow' US to stockpile weapons at joint military bases

The Philippines had agreed in January to allow the US military access to four more military bases in the country, which will take the number of bases to nine

FOREIGN DESK

MANILLA: The Philippines said Wednesday it "won't allow" the US to stockpile weapons at joint military bases in the Southeast Asian nation for use in operations in Taiwan. Enrique Manalo, Filipino foreign affairs chief, told a Senate hearing that the "Philippines will not be allowing the US to stockpile weapons for use in operations in Taiwan at sites American troops have access to under a 2014 defense agreement between Manila and Washington," the daily Phil Star reported. His comments came as Manila has approved four more military bases for joint use with Washington under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), signed in 2014. Whether Manila will let "the US store weapons at selected sites in the country will be guided by the main purposes

of the defense deal," Manalo added. He was responding to Philippines Senate Foreign Affairs Committee chair Imee Marcos who pointed to the possibility of "the US caching weapons at EDCA sites in the Philippines" as she referred to the 2023 US National Defense Authorization Act "which allows for the creation of a contingency stockpile in Taiwan."

"We would not agree to any kind of activity or even material not consistent with these agreed activities," Manalo said. Senator Marcos is the elder sister of Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Manalo said: "Our view is that EDCA is not aimed at any third country." Interrupting Philippines Department of National Defense officer-in-charge Carlito Galvez Jr., Marcos asked: "Why have we forgotten (armed forces modernization) and we are just re-



lying on foreigners to defend us while the armed forces remain rotten, old, under armed and completely abject in the face of external threats?" "With regards to the purpose of EDCA and modernization, it appears to us, to reiterate, that in fact modernization no longer appears to be the primary (purpose) of EDCA but disaster preparedness, maritime security, and counterterrorism," Marcos said,

according to the Filipino Daily Inquirer. Early this month, Manila announced four new military bases for joint use with the US under the EDCA, drawing ire from China which warned of "more tensions" in the region, urging neighboring countries to "make choices" favorable to "their own interests and regional stability."

Currently, Manila and Washington jointly run five bases under the EDCA, which allows deployment of the American soldiers in various parts of the Philippines. The Philippines had agreed in January to allow the US military access to four more military bases in the country, which will take the number of bases to nine. The EDCA, a military deal signed between Manila and Washington during former Filipino President Corazon Aquino's government, allows for the increased rotational pres-

ence of US troops, planes, and ships in Philippine military bases, as well as the construction of facilities to store fuel and equipment. However, it is not a permanent presence.

Manila is the oldest ally of Washington in the region and is also the largest recipient of US military assistance, equipment, and training.

Last week, during a 2+2 meeting with Filipino counterparts, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin had said the two sides "reaffirmed" that a 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty between them "remained the bedrock of our cooperation." "The Mutual Defense Treaty applies to armed attacks on either of our armed forces, our aircraft, or public vessels — including our Coast Guard — anywhere in the South China Sea," Austin emphasized, after a meeting in Washington attended by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Manalo, Austin and his Filipino counterpart Carlito Galvez Jr.

Wilson confirmed as NY first Black chief judge

NEW YORK: New York's Senate on Tuesday confirmed Rowan Wilson as the state's first Black chief judge to lead its top court. Wilson will lead the Court of Appeals in New York and replace Janet DiFiore, who stepped down seven months ago. Known to be a liberal-leaning judge, Wilson has served as an associate judge on the court since 2017. "Judge Wilson will bring honor to our court and will help lead our court in a new direction that will stand up for all New Yorkers," Senate majority leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said. —APP

German union announces fresh rail strike

BERLIN: German railway workers will stage a nationwide warning strike on Friday, a transport union announced on Wednesday. The strike will last from 3 a.m. local time (0100 GMT) to 11 a.m. (0900 GMT), according to a statement by the EVG union.

"By calling for a limited warning strike in the early morning hours, we're sending a clear message that our action is not directed against passengers, but the companies," EVG board member Cosima Ingenschay said.

The strike action is expected to cause delays and cancellations in regional and long-distance passenger trains across the country throughout Friday. The EVG, which has more than 200,000 members, is currently in wage negotiations with the national rail operator Deutsche Bahn, and some 50 other railway companies. The union is demanding a 12% and no less than 650 (\$712) wage increase per month, amid high inflation and the cost-of-living crisis. —DNA

India surpasses China in population: UN data

New York: The latest UN data showed India, with 1.4286 billion, has surpassed China in population. Data available on the UN Population Fund website shows China's population at 1.4257 billion.

It came a few days after the UN had projected India's population to surpass China's this year. The UN forecast had said India's population will reach 1.429 billion this year, while the expectation for China was 1.426 billion. China's population a decade ago was 1.385 billion, while India's was 1.307 billion. During the 10-year period, China's population increased by 2.96%, while India's population rose by 9.33%. India's population has increased by 122 million since 2014, around 1 million per month. —Agencies

Russia detects cases of new coronavirus subvariant

MOSCOW: Russian health watchdog Rospotrebnadzor announced on Tuesday that it detected several cases of the new coronavirus subvariant Arcturus. Regional healthcare bodies were informed about the XBB 1.16 subvariant and the genetic sequences attributed to it were added to the database, the authority said in a statement. "According to preliminary data, Arcturus may have greater contagiousness, but is not characterized by high pathogenicity. That is, the disease caused by it proceeds in a mild form," it said. Any anti-epidemic restrictions in connection with the detection are not required, the body said. In general, the incidence of COVID-19 in Russia decreased by 14% compared to last week and amounted to 49,500 cases, and the omicron strain remains predominant, the watchdog said.

First detected in January, Arcturus is an omicron subvariant, according to the WHO and is fueling a recent surge of cases in India. It has since spread to multiple countries, and was designated as a new variant under monitoring on March 22. —Agencies

Briefs

Russian ships accused of North Sea sabotage

MONITORING DESK

KYIV: Russia has a programme to sabotage wind farms and communication cables in the North Sea, according to new allegations. The details come from a joint investigation by public broadcasters in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland. It says Russia has a fleet of vessels disguised as fishing trawlers and research vessels in the North Sea. They carry underwater surveillance equipment and are mapping key sites for possible sabotage. The BBC understands that UK officials are aware of Russian vessels moving around UK waters as part of the programme.

The first of a series of reports is due to be broadcast on Wednesday by DR in Denmark, NRK in Norway, SVT in Sweden and Yle in Finland. A Danish counter-intelligence officer says the sabotage plans are being prepared in case of a full conflict with the West while the head of Norwegian intelligence told the broadcasters the programme was considered highly important for Russia and controlled directly from Moscow.

The broadcasters say they have analysed intercepted Russian communications which indicate so-called ghost ships sailing in Nordic waters which have turned off the transmitters so as not to reveal their locations. The report focuses on a Russian vessel called the Admiral Vladimirov.

Fate of ailing elephant hangs in balance

KARACHI: Animal experts will decide in coming days whether an ailing elephant at the Karachi Zoo needs to be euthanised after it collapsed in its pen last week and has since failed to stand up, officials said. The 17-year-old African elephant underwent emergency treatment for a tumour in Karachi on April 5, but collapsed days later and has since lain stricken on its side. The pitiful plight of Noor Jehan is being shared by animal rights activists on social media in Pakistan and abroad, prompting calls for the zoo to be shut down. Pakistan's zoos are frequently accused of disregarding animal welfare, and in 2020 a court ordered the only facility in the country's capital to close because of its decrepit state. Noor Jehan's fate now lies with a committee waiting for the arrival of Amir Khalil, the Austria-based chief vet of animal charity Four Paws International.

Khalil, who led the team that treated Noor Jehan for the tumour, told AFP he wanted to have "one last try" at helping the pachyderm recover. "We will fight till the last for her recovery, and the rest is in the hands of Allah," said Kanwar Ayub, the director of Karachi Zoo. - APP

Current account in surplus after over 2 years

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan's current account posted a surplus of \$654 million in March after a fall in imports forced due to restrictions and a jump in remittances amid the holy month of Ramadan. It was the first time since November 2020 that the current account was in the surplus territory, with \$654 million being the highest surplus since February 2015, SBP data showed Wednesday. Last month, the current account deficit - the gap between a country's expenditures and income - had clocked in at \$74 million. Overall, in the nine months of the current fiscal year, the current account deficit was recorded at \$3.4 billion, down 74.1% from July-March 2022. However, measures taken to reduce deficit, including restricting imports, have dampened the pace of growth, former finance adviser Dr Khaqan Najeem said.

'Turkiye indebted to Pakistan for whole-hearted support'

Ambassador of Turkiye says we should mention the assistance of the Pakistan Red Crescent, Turkish Red Crescent Pakistan Office the aid campaigns held at NUST and the DESTEK Donors' Conference organized by NUST again, which was personally supported by President Dr. Arif Alvi



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and SAFFRON Senator Talah Mahmood, Chairman NDMA Lt. Gen Imran Haider Malik, Federal Tax Ombudsman Asif Mahmood Jah, Ambassador of Turkiye Mehmet Pacaci and others offering dua before breaking fast. The embassy hosted iftaar dinner, in collaboration with TIKA, for rescue workers who participated in relief and rehabilitation work in the earthquake affected areas in Turkiye. - DNA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Turkiye Mehmet Pacaci has said 7.8 magnitude earthquake occurred in southeastern Turkiye on February 6. This was followed by two more earthquakes of similar magnitude in the following days. This disaster was called the earthquake of the century by scientists. He said, 14 million people in 11 different provinces were affected by this earthquake. Millions of people were left homeless in harsh winter conditions. More than 50 thousand people lost their lives. Over 110,000 people were injured. He expressed these views during an iftaar dinner hosted by the Embassy in collaboration with TIKA. The Religious Minister, Talha Mahmud, Chairman of the NDMA, Inam Heider Malik, Federal Tax Ombudsman Asif Jah, and Addl Secretary Muhammad Humaid Kareen also attended the event. The ambassador further said, what happened in Pakistan when this news of the disaster was heard? 'First of all, I must say that Pakistan, the people of Pakistan,

from seven to seventy years old, as we say in Turkish, felt the pain and sorrow of the disaster effected people in Turkiye as if it had happened to their own relatives'. Everyone in all families, in every household, Mothers, Fathers, children, grandchildren, grandmas, grandpas, shared the suffering of the victims in Turkiye.

'I strongly believe that their brothers and sisters in Turkiye felt their sincere good wishes and prayers from here'. He added, on February 6, during the first working hours of the day, he received a phone call from NDMA Chairman Mr. Inam Heider Malik. Mr. Chairman informed that he called upon the instruction of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sherif and its institution was ready for any kind of help.

Meanwhile, Turkish Disaster Management Authority AFAD had just declared a 4th degree disaster and stated that it was open to receive needed aid from the world. Thus, in the first hours of the disaster, the Pakistan Army Search and Rescue Team already set out for Turkiye. This professional team accomplished great job in Adiyaman and pulled many people alive out of rubble in the disaster effected cities. 'In the first days, the USAR 1122 team, the search and rescue team of the Al-Khidmat Foundation, joined this first team. When Mr. Prime Minister went to the earthquake-affected area in Turkiye to personally express his condolences and support, these teams received him and his delegate there', he added. Ambassador Pacaci said NDMA delivered much needed 70,000 winter tents, tens of thousands of blankets and medical supplies to the earthquake victims in Turkiye until March 23, using land, air and sea routes with a very effective and professional operation. International institutions in Pakistan also played important roles. 'Together with the tents donated by IOM, UNHCR, IFRC, the number of tents dispatched from Pakistan has exceeded 100 thousand. Non-governmental organizations such as Baitussalam, Nisar Amin Fatima Foundation, Muslim Hands, FRGF delivered tons of aid materials to Turkiye, under the coordination of NDMA, the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Navy. Aid campaigns were organized in Pakistan at all levels to help earthquake victims in Turkiye. We should mention the assistance of the Pakistan Red Crescent, Turkish Red Crescent Pakistan Office the aid campaigns held at NUST and the DESTEK Donors' Conference organized by NUST again, which was personally supported by President Dr. Arif Alvi. He said, Cabinet members donated their salaries to the relief account opened by Prime Minister's Office. Members of the Azad Kashmir Parliament and then Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas personally made donations. Civil servants donated their salaries all over Pakistan and Kashmir. In many primary secondary and high schools, students donated their pocket money. 'I would like to express my special thanks for all donors from Pakistan. I thank all the people of Pakistan, all governmental and non-governmental institutions of Pakistan, our brothers and sisters. For us it is impossible to forget their sincere support', the ambassador concluded.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Qamar Zaman Kaira meet Molana Fazl ur Rehman to offer condolences on sad demise of Mufti Abdul Shakoor. - DNA

Saudi FM holds talks with Syria's Assad

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's foreign minister arrived in Damascus on Tuesday for talks with President Bashar Assad amid growing moves toward the readmission of Syria to the Arab community. The visit by Prince Faisal bin Farhan was the first by a senior Saudi diplomat since relations were severed at the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011. The foreign minister and the president discussed steps to "achieve a comprehensive po-

litical settlement that ... contributes to Syria's return to the Arab fold," the Saudi Foreign Ministry said. Prince Faisal told the Syrian president it was important to provide a suitable environment for aid to reach all regions in Syria, and create the conditions for the return of Syrian refugees and displaced persons. Ending their suffering and enabling them to return safely to their homeland would contribute to stability, the minister said.

The Syrian president said: "Sound relations between Syria and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia should be the norm. Such ties not only benefit the two countries, but also the Arab world and the region." The foreign minister's visit to Damascus follows a trip to Jeddah last week by Syria's Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad for discussions with Prince Faisal on his country's unity, security, stability, and territorial integrity. - DNA

The visit by Prince Faisal bin Farhan was the first by a senior Saudi diplomat since relations were severed at the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011

Ukraine: 4 killed, 27 injured in Russian air strikes

DNA

KYIV: Four people were killed and 27 others injured due to Russian strikes in Ukraine's Donetsk, Kherson and Kharkiv regions in the past 24 hours. "In just one day, the Russians killed one resident of Donetsk region and wounded another 13," Donetsk Governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said in a message on Telegram early Wednesday. Kyrylenko said that a rocket hit a hospital building in Druzhkivka, causing minor damage. Kyrylenko further said that the city of Avdiivka was shelled by artillery, noting that despite there being no casualties, there is the destruction of infrastructure. Separately, Kherson Governor Oleksandr Prokudin said on Telegram early Wednesday that one person was killed and 10 injured in the past day due to Russian attacks. "Over the past day, the enemy carried out 79 attacks, firing 350 shells from heavy artillery and UAVs (unmanned aerial

Patriot missile systems arrive in Ukraine

KYIV: Ukraine's defense minister said Wednesday his country has received the U.S.-made Patriot surface-to-air guided missile systems it has long craved and which Kyiv hopes will help shield it from Russian airstrikes during the war. "Today, our beautiful Ukrainian sky becomes more secure because Patriot air defense systems have arrived in Ukraine," Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov said in a tweet. Ukrainian officials have previously said the arrival of Patriot systems, which Washington agreed to send last October, would be a major boost and a milestone in the war against Moscow's full-scale invasion. It's the latest contribution from Kyiv's Western allies, who have also pledged tanks, artillery and some types of fighter jets as Ukraine gears up for an expected counteroffensive. China, on the other hand, insists it won't help arm Russia, one of its key allies, and on Wednesday denied recent reports that Chinese drones have been found on Ukraine battlefields. Beijing maintains strict control over the export of drones in keeping with international standards preventing them from being used for nonpeaceful purposes, the Commerce Ministry said in a statement. China, which has repeatedly criticized the U.S. and other countries' support for Ukraine as "adding fuel to the fire" of the war, has an "objective and fair stance" and seeks peace, the statement insisted. - Agencies

Kim orders launch of spy satellite to proceed

PYONGYANG: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has said his country has completed the development of its first military spy satellite and ordered officials to proceed with a planned launch, according to state media. Kim, who was visiting the country's National Aerospace Development Administration, said developing reconnaissance capabilities was a priority to counter "threats" from US and South Korea and that several satellites were necessary to firmly establish an intelligence-gathering capability, the state's KCNA news agency reported on Wednesday. Kim urged the deployment of the satellite as scheduled but did not elaborate on the launch date. In December, North Korea conducted what it called an important "final phase" test for a spy satellite and said it would complete preparations for the launch by April. "Securing real-time information about the hostile forces' military scenario" is the "most important" task, Kim said. Kim also accused the US and South Korea of expanding hostile military campaigns in the name of bolstering their alliance and claimed the US was trying to "turn South Korea into an advanced base for aggression and an arsenal for war" by deploying military assets like aircraft carriers and nuclear-capable bombers in the region. - DNA

Fox settles Dominion lawsuit for \$787.5 million

WEB DESK

WILMINGTON: Delaware: Fox Corp. and Fox News settled a defamation lawsuit by Dominion Voting Systems for \$787.5 million, averting a trial putting one of the world's top media companies in the crosshairs over its coverage of false vote-rigging claims in the 2020 US election.

The settlement, which legal experts said was the largest struck by an American media company, was announced by the two sides and the judge in the case at the 11th hour.

The jury had been selected earlier in the day and the trial poised for opening statements in Wilmington, Delaware. Dominion had sought \$1.6 billion in damages in the lawsuit filed in 2021. Dominion CEO John Poulos called the settlement "historic." "Fox has admitted to telling lies about Dominion that caused enormous damage to my company, our employees and our customers," Poulos said in a statement. "Truthful reporting in the media is essential to our democracy," Poulos said.

At issue in the lawsuit was whether Fox was liable for airing the false claims that Denver-based Dominion's ballot-counting machines were used to manipulate the presidential election in favor of Democrat Joe Biden over then-President Donald Trump, a Republican.

Twelve held after Beijing hospital fire kills 29

WEB DESK

BEIJING: Twelve people have been detained by police for questioning after a hospital fire in Beijing killed at least 29, most of them patients. The fire, among the deadliest in recent years, broke out in Changfeng Hospital at about 13:00 local time on Tuesday. Angry and concerned relatives rushed to the hospital hours later, only learning of the fire from local news reports.

"Seven or eight hours have passed and I didn't even receive a call," one relative told China Youth Daily. Many said they spent the night trying to locate loved ones. Those who were rescued have now been shifted to other hospitals for treatment. Speaking at a press conference on Wednesday, officials said a preliminary investigation showed that sparks generated during renovation works had ignited paint stored on site. Among those detained are the director and deputy director of the hospital, as well as the head of the firm overseeing the renovation works. Footage on social media showed patients jumping out of windows to flee as dense smoke billowed out of the building. A talking drone urged trapped patients to "stay calm and wait [to be] rescued".

Ex-CJP Nisar rebuffs PM Shehbaz's allegations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Denying allegations levelled by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, former chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar said lies do not suit a premier who takes an oath to the Constitution, The News reported on Wednesday. A day earlier, PM Shehbaz strongly criticised Nisar for "sabotaging" development projects introduced by PML-N government. Nisar, in a statement released after PM Shehbaz lambasted him, slammed the premier, saying that he should not blame the judiciary for his failures. "The construction of the PKL cost billions to the national exchequer, but its operation theatre was not even functional when I was the chief justice. A forensic report is also present on the irregularities in the PKL." The former chief justice said that the prime minister should know the facts before levelling allegations against any individual, rejecting the allegations that he wanted to appoint his brother to the PKL.