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Biden announces 2024 Republican presidential bid

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Meloni urges unity on Liberation Day anniversary

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Man City game will not decide title: Mikel Arteta

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Briefs

Latest leak amounts to theft: Saqib

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Former chief justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar on Tuesday issued a rebuttal, saying that the latest audio clip – purportedly of a conversation between him and PTI legal adviser Khawaja Tariq Rahim regarding a high-profile case currently being heard by the Supreme Court – was a “theft” as he questioned its authenticity. Speaking to media, Nisar termed the audio clip a violation of his right to privacy, adding: “This is a theft of my fundamental rights.” “I am a citizen of Pakistan, an ex-CJP and I give free advice to those in office.”

Khawaja Asif to skip Delhi trip

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif will attend the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) defence ministers virtually while skipping the event in person at a time when his counterparts from China and Russia will be in New Delhi this week. The two-day meeting of the SCO defence ministers will kick off on April 27 in the Indian capital. India had invited the Pakistani defence minister as well as other SCO members for the meeting. However, Asif will join the meeting via video link, according to official sources.

IMF deal to be inked next week

DNA

ISLAMABAD: With all eyes on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for their final nod, Interior Minister Rana Sanaulah has said the agreement with the lender would be inked formally during next week, media reported on Tuesday. The two sides are engaged in tough talks to reach a consensus on multiple conditions since late January before signing the deal which also includes external financing from friendly countries.

Indian propaganda slammed No favorites in political arena: Army

DG ISPR says army focused on rooting out terrorism, has “non-political” relationship with govt

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

RAWALPINDI: In his maiden press conference after assuming the post of Director-General (DG) of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Major General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry Tuesday reiterated the army's stance that it does not have a leaning towards any political party or ideology as the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) calls on the establishment for intervening in politics. “The Pakistan Army is a national army. All political parties are respectable for us [...] but we do not lean towards any political party or ideology,” the ISPR DG said while addressing the presser at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi. The army's spokespersons have repeatedly denied that the military is leaning towards anyone as political parties blame each other for having the establishment's backing. “If any army was used to further a specific political ideology anywhere in the world, it led to anarchy,” the ISPR DG said and called upon Pakistan's political leadership to support the military's professional thinking. The ISPR DG added that the government and the military have constitutional and



COAS in China on four-day visit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir is in China on a four-day official visit aimed at enhancing bilateral military relations with the neighbouring country, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). “COAS is on a four-day official visit to China for enhancing bilateral military relations,” the military's media wing said in a brief statement released on Sunday. During his visit, the army chief will hold meetings with the Chinese leadership, Radio Pakistan reported. This is COAS Munir's fourth overseas visit ever since he took charge as the army chief. Earlier this year, he undertook a week-long official visit to UAE and Saudi Arabia and held meetings with the top leadership of the Gulf states. During the visit, the officials reviewed Pakistan's bilateral ties with the two countries and discussed ways to strengthen the relations.

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Kabal blast death toll mounts to 17

BDS defuses explosives at CTD's police station Kabal

SHAMIM SHAHID

SWAT: The death toll of the twin explosions at the police station of the counter-terrorism department at Kabal here Tuesday mounted to 17 and injured 51 others. According to a district police spokesman, three more critically injured expired in hospitals and 14 others died including policemen and two civilians. The dead policemen included Constable Khalilur Rehman, Sub-inspector Ashraf Ali, Constable Ambar Khan and Sub-inspector Abdullah. The injured were being treated at different hospitals including Saidu Sharif Hospital while the critically injured were shifted to Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar. The collective funeral of the martyred policemen would be offered at Police Lines Swat at 11 am today. DIG CTD Khalid Sohail told the media that the blast was not a suicide attack. He said there was no attack or firing on the police station and the explosion occurred at a place where ammunition, arms and mortar shells were stored. He said that bomb disposal squads were also investigating the explosion that caused the collapse of the station.

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Funeral of nine policemen offered

DNA

SWAT: The collective funeral of the nine martyred policemen were offered at Swat Police Line here Tuesday. Besides others, the IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Gandapur, DIG Counter Terrorism Department, Tauseef Khalid, District Police Officer Swat, senior civil and military officers, and relatives of the victims attended. Later, their bodies were shifted to their native villages and towns for last rituals where they were laid to rest in full police honour. According to IGP KP, 15 people were martyred including nine policemen and six civilians, and

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ISLAMABAD: Charge d' Affaires, Embassy of the People's Republic of China, Ms. Pang Chunxue calls on Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. – DNA

Chinese Charge d'Affaires calls on Ishaq Dar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Charge d'Affaires Pang Chunxue called on Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar here on Tuesday and discussed bilateral relations between the all-weather and time-tested friends, China and Pakistan. Highlighting deep-rooted historical bilateral relations between the two countries, Ishaq Dar commended the Chinese support for Pakistan and underscored the need for further deepening the existing ties in economic and trade as well as financial sectors. Extended Eid greetings to the people of Pakistan and the Finance Minister, Ms. Pang Chunxue praised close and shared friendly relations between the two countries. She assured the Finance Minister of the continuous support of the Chinese government to the people of Pakistan. The two sides discussed bilateral relations between the two countries and avenues to enhance existing cooperation in multiple fields. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar appreciated Charge d' Affaires Pang Chunxue for all the support and cooperation which Pakistan had been receiving from the leadership of China. It is pertinent to mention here that Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir has kicked off on a maiden visit to China, which is being seen by many as a crucial one against the backdrop of recent geo-strategic developments. “The COAS is on a four-day official visit to China for enhancing bilateral military relations,” a terse statement issued here by ISPR said.

Ghumman targeted to spread fear: Khan PML-N creating hurdles over talks Qureshi says no progress made yet

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: The PTI leadership on Monday accused the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) of creating a smokescreen about offering talks on elections in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, saying the government's attitude was non-serious as no one from the PML-N or the ruling alliance approached their leaders nominated for holding talks. PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi told media that Chairman Imran Khan had nominated him and PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry for holding talks with the government but no one from the PML-N approached him nor Fawad yet, following the Supreme Court's proposal to the political parties to sit together and find a way out of the political impasse. To the news that the PML-N leaders had approached PTI leader Asad Qaiser, the former foreign minister questioned what was the purpose of reaching out to someone who was not tasked with the

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MQM-P seeks resignations from lawmakers

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: As a rift between Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) and the coalition government continues over the ongoing digital census, the party has sought resignations from its members of national and provincial assemblies and Senate, sources told media on Tuesday. According to the sources privy to the development, the party has reservations over the procedure of the census in Karachi and Hyderabad. In January, MQM-P Convener Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui iterated that his party had withdrawn a contract of saving and forming governments in their bid to break away from

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Pakistan reports first monkeypox case

Health ministry officials said the person was deported from Saudi Arabia and landed in Pakistan on April 17 with symptoms of monkeypox

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has detected its first case of monkeypox in a person who travelled to the country from abroad, the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination confirmed

Tuesday. Health ministry officials said the person was deported from Saudi Arabia and landed in Pakistan on April 17 with symptoms of monkeypox. The samples of the person, whose identity has been kept confidential, were then sent to the National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad, and a day earlier, the facility confirmed that he was a carrier of the infectious virus. The officials added that the person is a resident of either Rawalpindi or Islamabad, and his relatives are now being screened and asked to remain in quarantine to ensure the virus does not spread. The authorities have also begun contract tracing.

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Govt, allies sit today to devise future strategy

Supreme Court to resume hearing tomorrow; audio leaks continue to cause ripples

ANALYSIS

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has convened a meeting of the allied parties on Wednesday to chalk out future strategy. The Prime Minister is also likely to chair the cabinet meeting today. The government perhaps has a clear understanding that the apex court may not give it more time if it fails to release Rs 21 billion funds for the Election Commissioner of Pakistan. The apex court had ordered the government to release these funds by April 27. The PM, during his meetings with allies and cabinet members, intends to take them into confidence before making any decision. Legal experts strongly believe that non-issuance of funds to the ECP shall constitute a perfect case of contempt of court against the sitting prime minister and a few ministers if not against



the entire cabinet. The Supreme Court, hitherto, has exercised restraint by not initiating the contempt proceedings despite the fact, prima facie, contempt was committed when the government had refused to release funds and referred the matter to the parliament. It was ostensibly a delaying tool on the part of the government to get some time although this gimmick seems to have proved counterproductive. The apex court in its last hearing had pointed out that defeat of the money bill in the parliament would mean that the prime minister has lost majority in the House. The court observation came as a shock for the government, which, probably, had not mulled this consequence while managing defeat of the bill in the Parliament. In that backdrop, the prime minister announced on April 24 that he will seek a vote of confidence in the National Assembly, however after a few hours the Information Minister appeared on the national hook-up to rule out this possibility. Any attempt to get a vote of confidence may prove fatal at this particular stage when the allies and the so-called opposition led by Raja Riaz, may not be on the same page. So, at

least from the government point of view it was a wise decision. As time passes by, the possibility of holding elections in Punjab on May 14 is becoming uncertain. While there is no denying the fact that all elections should take place at the same time, the stakeholders need to show flexibility in order to make it happen. The PTI may agree for a date other than May 14 however the ruling alliance is loath to show any leniency, for reasons known to everybody. The Supreme Court proposed holding elections somewhere in July, which appears to be a plausible option. Constitutional experts believe the court may not allow elections to be delayed beyond July or maximum August. But the real question is even if all stakeholders agree on a date either in July or August, will the elections still take place? This is of course a big question and there is only one party that could solve this riddle and that party is PTI. Undoubtedly, PTI is in a much better position to win a majority as compared with other parties. But the question is, can PTI victory rid the country of crises while remaining at the loggerheads with the Establishment? The answer is an affirmative No.

It is an open secret that the Establishment happens to be a key player in Pakistani polity hence it is simply not possible to ensure a smooth governance without its participation. The PTI leadership therefore have to develop a working relationship with the Establishment if it really wants to run government businesses smoothly in case it is able to form government as a result of general elections victory. On the other hand, it looks as if the government is banking chiefly on the audio leaks for building its ‘anti-judiciary’ narrative. It is trying to prove that the judiciary has already made up its mind about what to do with the government. The government presumption is nothing but just a whim. The Constitution is clear about holding of elections within 90 days after dissolution of an assembly. The PTI has hinted at another march in case elections do not take place on May 14 or parties fail to evolve a consensus on a July or August date. Already under too much pressure from the court orders and PTI criticism, the PPP volte face that it has nothing to do with the government's performance seeks to have added to the woes of the Shehbaz regime. The Co-Chairman of PPP Asif Zardari has

made it clear that he wants to see Bilawal as the next prime minister of Pakistan. And as a matter of fact the PPP special three member committee comprising Yousaf Raza Gillani, Naveed Qamar, Qamar Zaman Kaira met with the PDM parties in this regard. To begin with, the move indicated as if the PPP had jumped into the fray in order to bail out the Shehbaz government vis-à-vis Judiciary however the inside sources revealed that the main purpose of the drill was to gather support for Bilawal as the next prime minister in case Shehbaz Sharif had to leave office in contempt case. The PPP nevertheless was told point blank even if Shehbaz goes home, somebody from the PMLN would replace him. Summing up, the only viable option to pull the country out of political and economic quagmire turns out to be holding of elections. People should be allowed to choose their future government. And perhaps so is the wish of the international donors and brotherly countries. A government with full five year term can surely be held accountable in case it fails to deliver. All stakeholders therefore need to leave obstinacy aside and think about the future of this country.

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RCCI to submit budget proposals to FBR: Saqib

Traders have severe concerns on Point of Sales installation especially with respect to the size of the shop. He suggested that the POS matter should be implemented after consultation with stakeholders and building consensus

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has asked for proposals from businessmen for the federal budget for the year 2023-2024 which will be submitted to the Ministry of Finance and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

RCCI President Saqib Rafiq while addressing the executive committee meeting said that the Chamber's Standing Committee on Tax affairs is finalizing the budget proposals. These proposals will take into account the current economic challenges, particularly the depreciation of the rupee, problems faced by exporters and importers, rising inflation, increase in cost of doing business, income tax, sales tax, point of sales, FBR powers, SMEs, renewable energy and industrialization. The emphasis will be on broadening the tax



net, overreach and harassment by tax authorities, documenting the economy, he added. Saqib Rafiq said that at present the current account is in surplus. He appreciated the efforts of the Ministry of Finance, however, he stressed on increasing exports, protecting local industry and industrialization will have to be promot-

ed. Chamber President Saqib Rafiq said that Rawalpindi Chamber has always been insisting to find new taxpayers and increase the tax net, the burden on existing taxpayers has been increased. "The inflation has increased many times, we also demand that our sales tax, interest rate, income tax and duties are very high compared to the neighboring countries, we are far behind in the competitive environment," he added. He said that currently the rate of sales tax is 18 percent, and in the recent mini-budget, the rate has been increased to 25 percent on certain items, this rate should be reduced to single digit in a phase wise. He demanded that double taxation shall be eliminated. Traders have severe concerns on Point of Sales installation especially with respect to the size of the shop. He suggested that the POS matter should be implemented after consultation with stakeholders and building consensus.

APHC denounces India's ruthless actions in IIOJK

DNA

SRINAGAR: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, All Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders have strongly reacted to harassment of Kashmiri people during cordon and search operations and house raids in Srinagar and other areas of the territory.

APHC leaders including Abdul Ahad Parra, Muhammad Saleem Zargar, Bashir Ahmed Andrabi, Yaseen Attai and Dr Musab in their separate statements in Srinagar said the continued search operations and summoning of the youth to the police stations are being used as harassment tactics by the Indian forces in the territory.

They said that such tactics were being employed to provoke the youth so as to arrest them. The statement while divulging the details said that India's ruthless actions particularly after the August 2019 act of illegally revoking the IIOJK's special status by India including arrests of thousands of political leaders and activists under draconian laws, was Modi's wicked agenda to dilute the Muslim character of the territory.

The leaders said that now New Delhi is holding G20 meeting in Srinagar in an attempt to divert international community's attention from the actual issue of Kashmir, which is yet to be resolved as per the UN resolutions. They said that Jammu and Kashmir is passing through a crucial phase as the people are deprived of their democratic and political right to self-determination.

Tarar for transparency to ensure rule of law



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Law Azam Nazeer Tarar on Tuesday said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) believed in the supremacy of law and the constitution and wanted transparency in all matters as it was utmost necessary for ensuring rule of law in the country.

Addressing a press conference flanked by SAPM Malik Ahmed Khan here, he said that peoples' confidence in the national institutions could be ensured through transparency.

Parliament being the legislature and supreme institution of the country, was mandated to make legisla-

tion as per the constitution, he said and added that Practice and Procedure Act was passed by the upper and lower houses of the Parliament by using its constitutional right, however a ruling was given to stop the act before its imposition. He said the Parliament and the political fora were the right place to discuss political matters. In the past, courts have tried to avoid questions being raised on political matters, Tarar said, adding when political matters were taken to court, it only harmed the country and the nation. Tarar said that an audio leak between former chief

justice Saqib Nisar and the PTI lawyer Khawaja Tariq Rahim had raised questions as various political matters and cases which were in the courts had been discussed in the audio tape.

The conversation in the audio leak was aimed to create rifts among the institutions and to further deepen the prevailing crisis, he alleged. The country was passing through a tough situation, whereas, the audio leak was referring to further intensify it. Matters pertaining to future were discussed in the call, he said adding that the perception regarding ousting of prime minister of elected PML-N government in 2016-17 was getting strengthened that it was pre-planned. SAPM Malik Ahmed Khan said that interpretation of the constitution was a right and duty of the courts, however, they could not rewrite the constitution. He said various powers were abundantly misused in the courts including the suo moto powers particularly in political matters.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chairs a meeting on revenue performance of FBR, at Finance Division.—APP

KP's hilly resorts, lakes attract influx of tourists

KAGHAN: The hilly resorts and lakes in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have attracted an influx of tourists during five days of Eidul Fitr enjoying its mesmerizing natural and mountainous beauty amid hide and seek between sun and clouds with great fun and excitement in the lap of birds chanting snow-clad valleys. Arrived in a 'carry van' with hands clapping on the national song 'Dil Dil Pakistan' at Saiful Malook and Anso lake in Upper Kaghan valley in Manshera district on last Sunday, the family of Professor Ehtisham Khan of Peshawar was over the moon after visiting the famous oval shape lakes located in the lap of the snow-clad mountains of Malaka Parbath, enjoying the delectable cuisines of KP under an open sky amid laughter all around. Impressed by the crystal greenish-blue water of the oval-shaped Saiful-Malook

lake, the tourists with a big smile on their faces went around the natural wonder after enjoying lunch at 'Dastarkhwan' under an open sky amid cold breeze and pleasant weather.

"We have first explored the historic Saiful Malook lake through boats that doubled my family's joy," said Ehtisham Khan, who came here along with her sisters and mother while talking to APP. He said Saiful-Malook's gripping natural beauty with its crystal clean-water emanating from the lofty glaciers of Malaka Parbath on its northeast was amazing and beyond one's imagination. Khan said that he had visited many lakes in Pakistan and abroad but the fairytales of prince Saiful Malook and prince Badri Jamal associated with the Saiful-Malook lake were unique and impressive. "The Malook-Jamala fairy-tale leaves mesmerizing

effects on the minds of tourists and forces them to come again and again here." Terming Saiful-Malook lake as his ideal tourist place due to its better road connectivity than other lakes of KP, he said that it was his third trip to Saiful-Malook lake and first with his family that doubled their joy of Eidul Fitr. He said families could easily come here to spend some time in its relaxed environment before exploring the nearby Anso and Dudipatsar lakes in Upper Kaghan through jeeps and horse riding. Like Khan's family, the lake takes thousands of visitors into pipe-dream with fairy world's thoughts popping up with peace and serenity after entering the natural wonder spreading on 1.06 square miles having 113 feet depth and 3,224 meters height from sea-level following completion of boredom of tedious

journey from plain areas of Pakistan to Kaghan valley. Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, a noted historian and poet in his book 'Fairytale of Saiful Malook' had narrated about prince Saiful-Malook and fairy prince Badri Jamal during his visit to the lake. He explained about the epic romance of Prince Malook when he fell in love with fairy prince Jamal during his visit to this famous lake of Pakistan. Prof Ehtisham mother said Saiful-Malook was the identity of Pakistan and urged visitors to ensure its cleanliness and put all waste in dustbins placed by the government in its vicinity.

"I am disappointed to see garbage and polythene bags thrown by visitors at premises of Saiful-Malook and Anso lakes despite dustbins," she said. She said it was the collective responsibility of Kaghan

Development Authority (KDA), wildlife department and district administration to maintain its cleanliness and make it pollution-free. The tear-shaped Anso lake is being considered the highest lake of Himalaya region with 4,126 meter height of the sea level, Payala lake with 2,895 meters elevation, Pyala lake with 3,410 meters height Siri lake with 2,590 meters altitude, Dudipatsar lake with 3,800 meters elevation and Dudibach Star lake in Kaghan valley, which captivate adventure sports enthusiasts.

In international practice, she said vehicles were parked outside of the lakes' premises in order to maintain its ecology and protect it from plastic pollution. She underscored the need for construction of parking areas outside of the premises of Saiful-Malook, Mahudhand and other national lakes to protect it from environmental and water pollution.—APP



ISLAMABAD: People are visits tourists spot Pakistan Monument to enjoy, on the last holiday of Eid-ul-Fitr in Federal Capital.— Online

Govt policy to reduce imports successful

KARACHI: President of United Business Group (UBG) and former president of FPCCI, Zubair F. Tufail, has said that after the government lifted the ban on the recent regulatory duty, the imported goods will be imported into the country. The domestic market and exports will be seriously threatened and foreign exchange will also be transferred abroad.

According to the central spokesperson of United Business Group, Gulzar Firoz, Zubair Tufail said that the government should immediately ban the import of non-essential items, finished products and locally produced items, the government should encourage local industry and LC margin on the import of raw materials. Do not ask for money. Zubair Tufail said that the current account surplus of 654 million dollars in the third month of this year, March 2023, has been welcomed. President UBG said that the government's policy of reducing imports has also been successful, which is the reason why the current account has become surplus. Zubair Tufail said that although there has been a decrease in exports due to the ban on imports and non-issuance of LCs, but if the government continues to import raw materials, the shortfall in exports can be met. President UBG Zubair Tufail expressed hope. If the government takes steps to promote the import and export of non-essential items.—DNA

Tanveer blames Khattak for govt's ouster in AJK

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: Former prime minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Sardar Tanveer Ilyas, has pinned blames of the ouster of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government on party stalwart Pervez Khattak. In a video statement from Muzaffarabad, the former AJK premier said the party lost its government twice in the region, the president, and the speaker were re-elected, but never did the PTI lose even a single seat. "We got a clear majority in the local body elections," Ilyas said. Mr Ilyas, who was disqualified from holding

any public office in a contempt case, made the statement after he was removed as president of the PTI's AJK chapter and PTI forward bloc and opposition's joint candidate Chaudhry Anwarul Haq became new prime minister of the region. The former premier claimed that it was for the first time that a government in AJK was toppled and it all happened due to interventions by Mr Khattak. He added that the PTI government was weakened through a pre-planned conspiracy.

Mr Ilyas said he would bring the issue in knowledge of party Chairman Imran Khan, adding that there would be differences with party fellows

but "we are united under PTI's flag". Taking a dig at the ruling coalition, he said those trying to establish their government in the region will also face defeat. Earlier, no member of the assembly got sick or suffered from Covid-19, he claimed, adding all the dots related to the situation existed, and he will bring them to the fore. Earlier this month, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas was disqualified from holding office in a contempt case. He was charged with using "threatening tone" against the judiciary. The clips featuring the premier finding fault with the judiciary were played during the proceeding.

Researchers warn of threats posed by Cryptosporidium

PESHAWA: Research scholars of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry have warned of threats posed by Cryptosporidium, scientifically recognized as an opportunistic zoonotic parasite that infects both humans as well as animals and is considered a major cause of diarrhea often resulting in death due to severe dehydration. In a study conducted in three districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Bannu, Lakki Marwat and Kohat, the researchers found higher prevalence of Cryptosporidium among children (30/180) 16.66 per cent as compared to adults (10/180) 5.55 per cent. The study is conducted by several scholars including Naimatullah Khan, Muhammad Hassan Saleem, Aneela

Zameer Durrani, Nisar Ahmad, Ayesha Hassan, Sultan Ayaz, Sajid Umar, Muhammad Luqman Sohail, Muhammad Shafeeq, Ikrumullah Khan, Mumtaz Ali Khan, Azmat Ullah Khan, Naimat Ullah Malik and Abdul Razzaq. "Cryptosporidium infects a wide range of livestock animals and humans, causing substantial economic losses and serious public health concerns," observed the researchers.

Exposure to animals, poor sanitation and hygienic conditions are the factors responsible for transmission of the parasitic diseases and these factors are highly prevalent in the study area, where poor sanitation, open toilets, shared water sources of animals and humans causes its spread among

the human population, they added. This is the first study addressing one of the main causes of neonatal mortality in Southern KPK by Cryptosporidium and its zoonotic potential. A total of 360 stool samples were collected from the District Headquarters Hospitals of all three districts and were screened through microscopy. Results yielded an overall prevalence of 11.11% in all three districts. Prevalence was highest in district Bannu (11.66%), followed by district Lakki Marwat and Kohat with 10% in each district. Statistical analysis revealed significant differences among children of different age groups with highest disease prevalence in children of less than 5 years of age (21.40%).—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

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

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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 Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
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: People are enjoying a ride of electric train at Lake View Park during the celebrations of Eid-ul-Fitr in Federal Capital.—Online

Safe City project playing effective role to check crime

Seven criminals arrested, weapons with ammunition recovered Islamabad capital police apprehended seven outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police Safe City Command and Control center has crackdown on suspicious persons, vehicles with black glasses, non-pattern number plates and motorcycle riders, during the last week, and shifted 05 motorcycles, 04 vehicles and 54 beggars to different police stations for legal proceedings, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police Safe City project is playing an effective role against traffic rules violators and maintaining law and order in the federal capital. Under the supervision of CPO Safe City Shoaib Khurram, not only all suspicious activities are being monitored with Safe City high tech cameras, but the safety of life and property of citizens is also being ensured.

During the last week, through Safe City high-tech cameras 723 motorcycles were checked out of which 05 bikers were challan for violating traffic rules, while 171 motorcycles without number plates were shifted to different police stations. During the monitoring, 439 vehicles were found suspicious and having black papers, out of which black papers of 170 vehicles were removed, while 07 vehicles were also impounded at different police stations on the basis of fake number plates. 45 vehicles were issued challan tickets for zebra crossing violation, 17 suspicious people were checked during monitoring while 54 beggars were shifted to police stations for legal proceedings. Liquor recovered Islamabad capital Police Aabpara police team raided a distillery and recovered 60 liters of liquor, a police public relations officer said. He said that, fol-

lowing the special directions of Inspector General of Police Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directions, the Aabpara police team headed by SHO Aabpara conducted a successful raid at the distillery and recovered 60 liters of alcohol. Police team also nabbed a former jailbird liquor dealer namely Shahid Anwar during the raid. Cases have been registered against those running this distillery and further investigation is underway. On the instructions of CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari a special campaign is already in progress to make Islamabad a "drug-free" city and strict action is being ensured against those involved in drug pushing activities or using drugs. "We are committed to eliminate the

drug menace from the city and no one would be allowed to ruin the future of our young generation" he added.

Seven criminals arrested, weapons with ammunition recovered Islamabad capital police apprehended seven outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directives, the Aabpara police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Waqas possessing illegal weapon and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. Similarly, the Khanna police team arrested

two accused namely Muhammad Hanif and Muhammad Hassan possessing illegal weapons and recovered two 30 bore pistols with ammunition from their possession. During the crackdown against proclaimed offenders and court absconders, the Islamabad capital police teams arrested four absconders and proclaimed offenders from different areas of the city. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling and possessing illegal weapons and said that the safety of the lives and property of the citizens is our prime responsibility. The performance of police officials in this regard would be reviewed on a continuous basis, he maintained.—DNA

Sanjrani condemns terrorist attack at CTD police station in Swat

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Tuesday strongly condemned the recent explosion at the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) police station in Swat. He expressed his deep sorrow over the loss of precious lives.

In his condolence message, he said that this cancer of terrorism should be eradicated from its roots. The Chairman also expressed concern over the impact of terrorism on Pakistan's development and paid tribute to the sacrifices of the security forces for the defense of the country.

Senate Deputy Chairman Mirza Muhammad Afridi, Leader of the House Senator Dr Shehzad Waseem, and Leader of the Opposition in the Senate Muhammad Isaq Dar also condemned the incident. They expressed their condolences to the bereaved families of the victims and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured.—APP

Tunnel of 969MW-Neelum Jhelum collapse of 150 feet length restored

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A significant development at the block-ade in the tail race tunnel of the 969MW-Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHP) was achieved on Eid day, as the tunnel collapse of 150 feet length was restored. To witness the construction activities on the remedial works, Chairman WAPDA Engineer Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd) visited NJHP on the second day of Eid and appreciated the efforts of Project Team WAPDA, China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC) and consultants of the Project. According to Gwadar Pro, the hydraulic lining shutter is being installed inside the tail race tunnel for concrete lining, while the allied works are also continuing side by side. The risk analysis report by the consultants is expected to be finalized in May while the resumption of electricity generation from the project is expected by the end of July. Similarly, the construction of the 220-kilometer-long Thar-Matiari Transmission Line also continues uninterrupted during Eid Holidays. The 500 KV Transmission Line is being constructed to connect HVDC Converter Station Matiari with the 1320 MW Shanghai Electricity Coal Plant at Thar Block-I.

"The transmission line has entered its final completion with 93% of works having already been completed," reads a statement of National Transmission & Despatch Company (NTDC). Special foods were prepared for the workers under the direction of MD NTDC. Meanwhile, on the first day of Eid-ul-Fitr, Thar Block-I Integrated Coal Mine Power Project carried out the "Send Warmth" activity to its Pakistani employees. Several goats, watermelons, drinks, and other 2,500 pieces of life empathy were sent to the employees as gifts.

Baroness Warsi, SAPM prioritize gender equality

ISLAMABAD: Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, a current Member of the House of Lords and former co-Chairwoman of the UK's Conservative Party, recently discussed with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Muhammad Jawad Sohrab Malik the importance of serving the public interest and expanding the scope of charitable work for the betterment of humanity. At a reception hosted by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Muhammad Jawad Sohrab Malik at his residence in Islamabad, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi and SAPM Malik, exchanged ideas on how to enhance the impact of charitable initiatives and address the needs of the community more effectively. They exchanged ideas, goals, and visions for providing equal opportunities to the masses at all levels. The meeting was an opportunity for both dignitaries to discuss their shared commitment to promoting equality and serving the public interest. SAPM Malik, who comes from Gujar Khan - the ancestral home of both individuals - also runs a charity organization called the Sohrab Foundation. During the reception, he praised Baroness Warsi for her philanthropic work in the Gujar Khan district, where she has been working towards poverty alleviation and promoting girls' education through the empowerment of women. The two discussed the importance of such efforts and the need to continue supporting initiatives that uplift marginalized communities. The British MP Sayeeda was in Pakistan on a philanthropic visit to Gujar Khan, while running a charity foundation based in village of Bewal in Gujar Khan which is focused on supporting various charitable initiatives aimed at promoting community development and social welfare.—APP

Action against signal violators

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police has decided to accelerate efforts to ensure implementation of traffic laws and take strict action against those involved in violation of red-signal, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police have decided to assign a task to the traffic congestion unit for taking stern action against those violating red signals while additional squads would be constituted for the purpose.

A special campaign is underway to check violations while various squads are performing duties at main roads and boulevards of the city and taking action against the violators.—DNA

WhatsApp users can now unlock three free upgrades

ISLAMABAD: There are three tricks that all app-chatters need to know about. If you're a serial texter, you'll want to add these hacks to your arsenal. Simply open your WhatsApp on iPhone, enter a chat and type out a message. Then highlight a word (or sentence, or an entire message) and hold your finger down. An app pop-up menu will appear: now tap the BIU symbol. This lets you change the style of your font - potentially confusing pals. Of course, that's not the only way to achieve this effect. To make text bold, all you need to do is place an asterisk either side of the word or phrase you're trying to embolden, like so: *text goes here. Similarly, it's also possible to make WhatsApp message italics, which is great for emphasis: italics. It works in exactly the same way as the bold trick, but using different symbols. You need to place an underscore on either side of the word or phrase you're trying to edit, like this: _text goes here. The strikethrough features draws a line all the way through your text: strikethrough. It's usually used to signify that something is wrong, or should be ignored. To get a strikethrough, place a tilde (that's that squiggly line symbol) either side of your message, like this: ~text goes here. Simply open WhatsApp and then go to a chat. If you hold your finger down on a specific message, you'll get the option to Star it. Then go into your Settings and look for Starred Messages. That's where all of your favourite messages will be stored. It's an easy way to keep track of important messages - maybe an address, travel directions or even a clever WhatsApp trick. Another hack to learn is pinning chats. This is an easy way to prioritise your favourite people in WhatsApp. If you have a busy WhatsApp, sometimes loves one can get buried below groups and work chats. But it's actually possible to pin several chats so that they stay at the top of your main conversation feed. Go into your chat list and then swipe right on a conversation. You can then tap Pin and that specific chat will stick to the top of the feed. And if you change your mind later on, you can unpin at any time.—DNA

EST posted in educational institutions across country, including federal capital

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad, managed by Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad and Federal Government Educational Institutions Cantonment Directorate, have demanded Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif to upgrade to grade 16. The Elementary School Teachers (EST) of educational institutions run by the FDE and FGCI Cantonment Directorate across the country have demanded that they be upgraded from Grade 14 to Grade 16. The EST teachers of Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad and Federal Government Educational Institutions, Canton Garrison Directorate, Rawalpindi said that the government has deprived them even under the special dispensation given by

the Prime Minister to the employees of grades 1 to 15. Grade 16 should have been given while they are being given grade 15. They said that they have not been promoted for many years, so they should be promoted and given upgradation to grade 16. The teachers say that along with the upgradation in grade 16, EST teachers should be given three to five additional annual increments and this facility should also be given to all TGT and SST teachers. The teachers say that the Federal Government Educational Institutions the formula created by Directorate of Institutions for the promotion and induction of EST teachers is 25% teacher promotion and 75% recruitment of new teachers which is unfair.

They said that thousands of teachers have been waiting for promotion for the past 16 years, while the department continues to recruit new teachers every year. According to the teachers, the FGCI directorate has not promoted EST teachers since 2007, while hundreds of new teachers have been recruited until 2022. In this way, thousands of teachers are deprived of their basic rights. Malik Gulzar Ahmed, Arif Abbasi, Osama Mumtaz Qureshi and others said that inflation in the country has increased so much that they cannot live on their current salaries, so the government should give them their basic rights.—DNA

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Briefs

World Intellectual Property Day to be marked on April 26

ISLAMABAD: World Intellectual Property Day will be observed on April 26 across the globe including Pakistan with the aim to increase people's awareness and understanding of intellectual property (IP). The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) works together with various government agencies, non-government organizations, community groups and individuals to hold different events and activities to promote World Intellectual Property Day each year.

WIPO is a specialized agency of the United Nations. It is dedicated to developing a balanced and accessible international intellectual property (IP) system, which rewards creativity, stimulates innovation and contributes to economic development while safeguarding the public interest.

WIPO decided in 2000 to designate an annual World Intellectual Property Day to address the perceived gap between IP as a business/legal concept and its relevance to people's lives. April 26 was chosen as the date upon which the convention establishing WIPO first entered into force in 1970.—APP

PFC team to participate in Canton Fair

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Furniture Council's delegation Tuesday left to participate in the world's top 133th Canton Fair to showcase Pakistan's products and explore new export markets besides attracting foreign investments. Chief Executive Officer PFC Mian Kashif Ashfaq said today that it's efficient trade platform for global business opportunities which is being held since 1957.

It will provide an opportunity to present a world class range of Pak made furniture products and all other allied services including import and export mainly with various and flexible pattern of trade. He said PFC and Chenone will both hold a series of meetings with other multinational and exchange their professional expertise with each other for further improving the quality of their products at par with international standards in order to bolster the rate of trade in the field.

He said nearly more than 25000 Chinese's best foreign trade companies and about 6000 overseas companies are likely to participate which he added will help determine market potential and evaluate competition besides initiating joint ventures and project partnerships. Mian Kashif urged the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan to manage single-country expos in all major countries for the effective and result-oriented promotion of Pak products which can compete globally with their competitors in terms of its best quality.—APP

Author, journalist Tarek Fatah dies at 73

ISLAMABAD: Well-known Pakistani-Canadian author, journalist and activist Tarek Fatah died at 73. The activist died after a prolonged illness, his daughter Natasha Fatah said on social media. "Lion of Punjab. Son of Hindustan. Lover of Canada. Speaker of truth. Fighter for justice. Voice of the downtrodden, underdogs, and the oppressed," she wrote on Twitter. Born in Pakistan in 1949, Fatah was a journalist and political activist who wrote several books. He was known for his progressive views on Islam and terrorism and his stance on Pakistan. Fatah began his journalism career as a reporter on the Karachi Sun in 1970 before becoming an investigative reporter with Pakistan's state-broadcaster Pakistan Television. He even went to jail when he was a leftist leader in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1977, he was charged with sedition by General Zia-ul-Haq's government.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Outgoing Ambassador of Iran Ali Hosseini and his spouse pay farewell call on the President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi and Mrs Samina Alvi. The Iranian ambassador is leaving Pakistan after completing his tenure.—DNA

Int'l Chinese Language Day celebrated across Pakistan

More than 30,000 students in these institutes are learning the Chinese language

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The International Chinese Language Day was celebrated across Pakistan over the weekend as more and more Pakistanis enrol to learn one of the most popular languages in the world. Pakistanis are also interested in the Chinese language due to the massive investments by China in Pakistan, mainly under the China-Pakistan Eco-

conomic Corridor (CPEC). According to Gwadar Pro, this year, International Chinese Language Day was celebrated in Pakistan under the theme "Chinese Language: Facilitating Dialogues across Civilisations". The China-funded Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms across Pakistan held a series of activities, providing a language and culture feast for language lovers. In Pakistan there are five major Confucius schools

operating including the ones in National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Islamabad, the

University of Sargodha, the University of Punjab, the University of Agriculture and the University

of Karachi. More than 30,000 students in these institutes are learning the Chinese language. The Chinese language is one of the most spoken languages in the world. It is the language of the second-largest economy in the world. Therefore, many people from developing countries are learning this language. This language has a very rich heritage that has existed in the world for thousands of years. Chinese is one of the official languages of the United Nations. To give

honour to this language, the UN observes Chinese language day every year on April 20. Initially, it was celebrated in 2010 to boost multilingualism and cultural diversity. Moreover, the United Nation wanted to promote the equal use of all of its six official languages which are English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish. The first UN Chinese language day was celebrated on November 12, 2010. However, in 2011, the date was changed to April 20.



Pak students talk with Taikonauts

He said such events will pave the way for the two countries to further enhance cooperation in space science and technology

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani students expressed deep interest in getting space science knowledge from Chinese Taikonauts in an online interaction organized by the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, Gwadar Pro reported. Dozens of Pakistani school students, the majority of them girls, attended an online event "Talk with Taikonauts of Shenzhou-15", co-hosted by the Embassy. "Talk with Taikonauts of Shenzhou-15" event was significant for broadening horizons for the youth and lighting up their dreams about exploring the mysterious and diverse universe. Ms. Pang Chunxue, Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy said, Pakistan and China are collaborating in a number of fields and this time it is about space science.

She said youths are young ambassadors of China-Pakistan friendship and hope of the two countries, the iron-clad relationship between China and Pakistan should be passed from generation to generation. A student of Beachonah School Islamabad said it was a great opportunity for her to witness this historic event where she listened to the astronauts talking to students from the space center. She said she is encouraged to become an astronaut in the future. Another student of Islamabad Model College, who got an opportunity of asking a question to Chinese Taikonaut said, the Taikonaut responded to her question about how they breathe in space and that a specific human suitable environment is built for astronauts in space where they can breathe. "For me, it's not less than

a miracle and a lifetime opportunity to speak to the astronaut based in the space center," said the student. This year is the tenth anniversary of BRI and CPEC. Science and Technology cooperation is an important part of it, which will provide strong support to the high-quality and sustainable development of CPEC. Prof. Dr. Shahid Mahmood Baig, Chairman of Pakistan Science Foundation said Pakistan and China's collaboration in space science has made remarkable gains. He said recently Pakistani seeds sent into space in collaboration with the Chinese space mission provide an example. "It's a big jump for Pakistan with the help of China," he said. He said such events will pave the way for the two countries to further enhance cooperation in space science and technology.

World Malaria Day marked

DNA

ISLAMABAD: World Malaria Day is marked on April 25 across the globe including Pakistan to highlight preventive measures to reduce Malaria around the world. Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected mosquitoes. About half of the world's population is at risk of malaria, particularly those in lower-income countries. It infects more than 500 million people each year and kills more than one million people, according to WHO. However, Malaria is preventable and curable. The World Health Assembly instituted World Malaria Day in May 2007. The purpose of the event is to give countries in affected regions the chance to learn from each other's experiences and support one another's efforts. World Malaria Day also enables new donors to join in a global partnership against malaria, and for research and academic institutions to reveal scientific advances to the public.

Powerful profiteer mafia above the law

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Monday said the profiteer mafia is looting masses in such a way that it seems to be above the law. The influential hoarders have completely escaped the writ of law due to their connections with the influential, and they are constantly robbing the public. The entire system of food supply has been hijacked, and arbitrary prices are being charged which have broken the back of the public and for millions of people flour has become more important than their life and dignity, he added.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that tens of millions of people are unable to feed their families due to increasing inflation and shrinking income, but the government considers that it has fulfilled responsibility by providing free flour to some poor. Those who claimed to end inflation have raised inflation to the highest level in the country's history, pushing millions of people below the poverty line, he observed. He said that the price of fuel is increasing continuously, which is exhausting the patience of the people, and that can become a big threat to the law and order situation. Dr. Murtaza Mughal observed that crimes are increasing due to increasing poverty and people have lost faith in the country's system. The government has no program to improve the economic conditions of the people, as it is focused on politics. He noted that cotton production is at a 40-year low, the textile sector is collapsing, the economy is reeling due to an appreciating dollar, delayed IMF programs and dwindling foreign exchange reserves have raised concerns and there is a shortage of life-saving medicines. Seven percent of wheat production has been affected by rains, opportunities to earn more foreign exchange through rice and sugar has minimized, and important officials are busy in an unending political circus. He said that economic bragging by top officials does not improve the country's economy and if the situation remained the same, the country may face risk of a civil war.—DNA

People paying high cost of economic failure

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Vice President of FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh on Tuesday said that Pakistan is grappling with a monumental crisis due to the wrong priorities of our leaders while regional countries are growing rapidly.

Pakistan is facing a serious food crisis, inflation and unemployment are at a record high while the global community seems uninterested in supporting the country to get rid of these problems, he said. Atif Ikram Sheikh who has also served as President ICCI and Chairman PVMA said in a statement issued here today that unprecedented flash flooding in 2022 distressed 33 million people, killed over 1,600, and injured another 12,800.

The unprecedented floods destroyed millions of acres of agricultural land and crops and caused immense damage to livestock, the basic source of income for most of the population, he added. The business leader said that this has led to a scarcity of basic food items, with their prices skyrocketing, triggering widespread food insecurity, hunger, and malnutrition.

To ensure food security, the policymakers must take proactive policy steps to enhance the quality and quantity of crops, which seems difficult in the current scenario, he said.

Atif Ikram Sheikh said that on the other hand, India is making headlines. The country that was only seen as one of the fastest-growing IT hubs, or one of the most lucrative consumer markets, will now be trading with 18 countries in the Indian rupee.

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are termed as BRICS due to their unmatched potential to become the dominant supplier of services, manufacturing goods and raw materials. These countries represent 42% of the global population, 23% of the world's GDP, and 17% of world trade.

Now with BRICS countries coming together and other economies joining them, it is considering the idea of creating an international reserve currency which would be a new world order.

Saudi Arabia and Iran are also rewriting history, but after 75 years of political turbulence, we are still figuring our way around democracy at the cost of our economic future.

The world continues to shrink and operate in connectivity through commerce and trade, international supply chains, digital platforms, data sharing, and transportation. But where does Pakistan stand?

Pakistan is caught in a domestic feud that serves only the greed and personal benefit of a handful of politicians which is extremely unfortunate, especially in the evolving global context.

GB govt prioritizes education sector

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Gilgit-Baltistan has prioritized the education sector by allocating a significant portion of its budget on the non-development side (Salary + Non Salary) as well. Out of the total budget of Rs. 61,440,640 million, the education sector has been given the highest share of Rs. 12,929,869 million, which is 21% of the total budget.

Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Muihudeen Wani in an official statement to the media claimed that this allocation exceeds the federal and other provincial governments' shares, reflecting the government's commitment to uplifting the education sector in the region.

Other sectors that received notable shares are the Home & Prison Department (13.58%), Health Department (11.51%), Works Department (8.59%), and Water & Power Department (6.86%), he added. Despite the challenges of ensuring access to education in remote areas, he said that Gilgit-Baltistan was determined to provide quality education at the grassroots level. He said Gilgit-Baltistan has also introduced advanced teaching techniques by using the latest technology in various educational institutions.—APP

'Dialogue only way to steer country out of crises'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed on Sunday said only political dialogue can steer the country out of present crises. Mushahid Hussain Syed prayed for the success of efforts being made by PM Shehbaz Sharif, JI Chief Sirajul Haq and FM Bilawal Bhutto for consensus on the election. "The only way to get Pakistan out of the quagmire is through dialogue." The PML-N senator said he has always been a supporter of consultation and dialogue between political leadership and parties. Mushahid Hussain Syed further said he was the first who highlighted the need for a political dialogue to defuse tension in the Senate. "If we can talk to Modi, the terrorists, why can't we talk to the opposition, he asked. Earlier, JI chief Sirajul Haq held meetings with PTI Chairman Imran Khan and Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif at their residences in Lahore with an agenda to bring the government and opposition closer and end the ongoing political crisis. Sirajul Haq along with a three-member delegation held separate meetings with PM Shehbaz Sharif and Imran Khan and urged both parties to sit on the negotiation table.—APP

Pak-China collaboration advances Pakistan's automobile transition

DNA

ISLAMABAD: At the ongoing Automobile Shanghai 2023, global industry visitors are awestruck by the dizzying array of the latest vehicle models, experience various functions and learn about advanced technologies. According to Gwadar Pro on Monday, Nayyer Chaudhary, who has more than 20 years of experience working with China, noticed the growth of intellectualization and modernization of the auto industry at the auto show. He hoped to avail of this platform to form partnerships with more Chinese electric vehicle manufacturers, especially manufacturers of small cars and their com-

ponents, to develop such a market for Pakistan. As a pillar industry of Pakistan's national economy, the automobile industry is growing with every passing day. In terms of vehicle categories, fuel-efficient vehicles, battery electric vehicles (BEV), plug-in hybrid EVs (PHEV), etc. have been upgraded to allow consumers to have more awareness and choice. The constant influx of brands has also driven the application and development of high technology. "As the world's largest auto market, China is far more advanced than any other country in new energy vehicle production, research and development. Partnering with China is the best path for Pakistan's auto industry to grow and

gain access to new opportunities to keep up with global trends," highlighted Nayyer. The 2023 Shanghai auto show provides a great opportunity for Nayyer and dealers around the world to grasp new trends in the auto industry. It is boosting confidence and breathing life into the global auto market. The theme of the auto show is "Embracing the New Era of the Automobile Industry", and prominent features of this new era are more vehicle design options and the transition towards new energy.

Automobile, a Chinese auto brand that started to engage in the field of new energy technology in 1999, released the third-generation PHEV technology at the scene, showcasing its latest development path in the face of opportunities in the era of electrification and intelligence to global users. Song Huaifu, country director of Chery Automobile in Pakistan, explained that Chery's third-generation hybrid platform adopts the fifth-generation ACTECO high-efficiency hybrid dedicated engine, integrating advanced technologies such as deep Miller cycle, i-HEC fourth-generation combustion system, high-efficiency turbocharger, intelligent thermal management system, etc.—DNA

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India at a crossroads

Becoming the world's most populous nation allows India to burnish its credentials as a global economic and political heavyweight. With a population that is much younger than those of China, the US and the EU, there will be renewed interest in India's potential to be a beacon of liberal values. The west is eager to draw a democratic giant into its orbit. China and India will together account for about half of all global growth this year. But India risks emulating its bigger northern neighbour's economic ascent under tight political control by a dominant authoritarian party. Hindu nationalism in India is writing an epitaph for the country's experiment with multi-ethnic secular democracy. Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) has weakened institutions meant to keep the state both transparent and accountable. Information is censored, civil society hounded and protests suppressed. It is absurd that opposition leaders have been targeted to the extent that Mr Modi's main rival - Rahul Gandhi - is currently disqualified from parliament. Such is the polarisation in politics that India's last parliamentary session was the least productive since 1952. Modi's party has bent state institutions to service its ideology. This has effectively rendered minorities second-class citizens. The suppression of the civil rights of the world's largest minority group, about 200 million Muslims, is unlikely to be viable over a long period without giving up on democracy. This would be a terrible outcome for India and the world. Until 1990, India's per capita income was higher than that of China; now it is only about a fifth of China's. Beijing's success was to integrate into the world economy without losing control of its domestic one. This was more about economics than politics. Mr Modi's bet is that a single Hindu identity can transcend Indian society's faultlines of religion, caste, region and language. Yet his parliamentary majority rests on the votes of just a quarter of the electorate. Large parts of India, especially its more developed regions, are resistant to his polarising politics. His crackdown on dissent is about weakness, not strength. India's democratic reversal is also rooted in a development model that suits global concerns rather than domestic ones. Because of its economic heft, India is a member of the G20. Its citizens, however, are the poorest in this group. The richest 5% of Indians can consume the same goods as the average Briton. Therefore the outside world tends to be interested in Indian success as defined by the growth in this class - as the greater their purchasing power is, the larger the market for global goods and services.



UK's anti-China rhetoric

Contrary to United Kingdom Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's portrayal of China as a challenge to the global order, China is instead seen as an attractive destination for investors from his country. In the first quarter of this year, the UK's investment in China increased 680.3 percent year-on-year. Although that remarkable growth is partly attributable to the low base of the same period last year when both sides were fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic, it still highlights China's special importance to the UK as investments from France, Germany, Canada and Japan in China saw an increase of 635.5 percent, 60.8 percent, 179.7 percent and 47.4 percent respectively. That further consolidates China's position as the second-largest investment destination for the UK, and China has been the second-largest investor in the UK for years. No wonder Dominic Johnson, minister of business and trade of the UK, stressed to the media in an interview last week that the Chinese investments in the UK - infrastructure, offshore wind and clean energy, for instance - are "a vital component of the future of our economy", and the two sides are "symbiotically linked" in investment and trade. The frosty state of Sino-UK relations, thanks to the Sunak government's blind following of Washington's China-containment strategy, goes against the grain of the close economic and trade relations between the two countries. The total volume of trade in goods between the UK and China increased by 20.5 percent last year over 2021. That means the Chinese side still keeps its door open to UK companies and investment, and this despite the great lengths the UK has gone to in setting restrictions for Chinese companies and investments. Sunak claimed last year when he took office that the "golden era" of Sino-UK relations was over, and he has left no stone unturned to toe Washington's line to contain China - the UK is a member and participant in almost all the parts of the anti-China framework the US has established, ranging from the AUKUS security grouping to the "Indo-Pacific" strategy. However, the UK's poor economic situation and financial instability only highlight China's irreplaceability to the UK, making Sunak's anti-China discourse a hollow show. With the European Union and other major countries in Europe considering a more pragmatic approach to their relations with China, the UK should also review its China policy. To build a sound China-UK relationship, mutual respect is the foundation, objective understanding is a prerequisite, and proper handling of differences is the key. It has not affected and will not conflict with the development of UK-US relations. It is to be hoped that the Sunak government will discard its ideological blinkers and view China and China-UK relations from a strategic and long-term perspective so as to keep them on the right track.

'No war with the fuelless rusted tanks'

Qamar Bashir



Hamid Mir's interview with Channel 24 was heart-breaking, unbelievable, and demoralizing for the entire nation when he quoted former Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa as saying that he cannot go to war with rusted tanks and no diesel to power them. He added insult to injury by saying that the former army chief sold out Kashmir to India, and he finally hammered the depression into the entire nation by saying that Bajwa arranged a visit of Indian Prime Minister Modi in 2021 by bypassing the foreign office or even keeping the prime minister in full picture, but pursued it vehemently until foreign affairs dug it up after hearing from other sources. He held a grudge against those who did not obey his orders and used it as one of the reasons for instituting regime change. The stunning and surprising revelation that our army is incapable for fighting any battle or war gave the entire nation bouts of depression, betrayal, and disappointment. This has broken my heart and the hearts of my countrymen like nothing else can. I witnessed the shift in emphasis on the Kashmir issue while serving as Press Minister at Pakistan's Embassy in France. From 2016 to 2020, our undercover diplomat used to motivate the community by providing psychological and patriotic motivation as well as resources such as banners, transportation, pocket money, and protection to stage agitation across Europe so frequently that it sometimes resulted in over fatigue to the community, but later, we saw a visible slow down in such pursuit, which has now almost halted. The local media, which was forced to air Indian atrocities and create videos of human rights violations in the newly renamed Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, lost almost all of its steam, and hostility along the line of control ceased completely. When the army was romancing and flirting with India, the civilian leadership continued to pursue a belligerent attitude toward India, oblivious to the fact that the army had changed its heart toward India and had allegedly sold Kashmir. It was ironic that while on the civilian side any association with Indian politicians was still considered an unforgivable crime, a taboo, our Director General Inter Services Intelligence was warning up its relations with his counterpart, selling out Kashmir, planning a visit by the Indian Prime Minister to Pakistan, and restoring trade and business relations without even looping in civilian leadership. Does it vindicate the truth in what Mr. Hamid Mir said in his interview? If not proven with authentic qualification otherwise, his assertion still raises many eye-

brows and everyone is now connecting the dots on the army slowing down its rhetoric against Indian aggression in IJ&K and Indian leadership and an attempt by them to restore full diplomatic, trade, and business relations. Like many of my countrymen, I believe that a clarification from the army based on tangible, irrefutable, and authentic documentary evidence, rather than usual verbosity, boosting, unfounded claims of bravery, and unsupported rhetoric, is required. It was also disheartening to hear the pathetic, unbelievable, and disappointing aspect of the interview, which, if true, had let down the entire nation and insulted and betrayed all those direct and indirect tax payers, including laborers, who give away a large portion of their earnings in the hope and expectation that the country's defense is impregnable. I hope it is nothing more than a bunch of lies concocted, but if there is even an iota of truth, it is a betrayal of the entire nation, politicians, businesspeople, traders, civil society, and the media who were twisted to adopt a belligerent attitude against India. I hope and pray that this interpretation is incorrect, and that the truth remains that the army was fully committed to playing its constitutional role and was subservient to the constitution and the institutions under it. The terrifying part of the interview, which gave me and the entire nation bouts of depression and shudders was the alleged statement in which Mr. Bajwa stated that the army is incapable of fighting any battle or war. I, and perhaps the entire nation, want to believe and maintain that our army is formidable, unbeatable, and fully capable and ready, both in terms of human resources and top-notch equipment, to defend every inch of the motherland. I want to reiterate my belief that the army is the only world class institution in terms of professional competence, bravery, morale, and unwavering commitment to defending every inch of the country. Let us pause for a moment to take a bird's-eye view of our defense budget for fiscal year 2022-23. Net federal revenue was Rs 3,803 billion, plus non-tax revenue of Rs 1,315 billion, for a total of Rs 5,118 billion. Debt servicing consumed Rs 3,144 billion, defense expenditure Rs 1,450 billion, and an additional Rs 513 billion paid as pension to retired armed forces personnel from the "civilian kitty" since 2011. The total defense expenditure is Rs. 3553 billion (outright allocation 1450+ debt apportionment to defense 1573+pension to armed personnels 530 billion). This is colossal when compared to the Rs. 530 million spent by the entire civil administration, which manages the whole 230 million people, and when the strength of both is almost equal, with defense personnel at 560,000 and civilians at 581,755. The amount spent on civilians is 6.7% less than the amount spent on the armed forces. What do we get in exchange, rusted tanks and no fuel to power them? This enormous sacrifice by the nation was acceptable when we had the self-serving illusion that the army is always ready to defend the country, but if the content of the interview is true, then the entire nation is exposed to imminent external and internal threats that, like me, the entire nation is not ready to believe but will eventually wake up from falsely induced sleep and dreams. According to Hamid Mir, this poor, dilapidated, and crumbling state of the army was painted by none other than the former army chief, whose declared assets were worth more than Rs. 13 billion (approximately USD 80 million), and since the revelation, there has been no rebuttal or refusal, only arrest and punishment of those allegedly involved in leaking General Bajwa's asset detail. This poor state

of the army cannot be explained by General Asim Saleem Bajwa's alleged accumulated wealth, which includes a business empire that established 99 companies in four countries, including a pizza franchise with 133 restaurants worth an estimated \$39.9 million. His wife was a shareholder in 85 companies, including 82 foreign companies (71 in the United States, seven in the United Arab Emirates, and four in Canada). His wife has also made real estate investments, and she owns 13 commercial properties in the United States, including two shopping centers worth \$52.7 million. It is the same army where former naval chief Admiral Mansurul Haq was caught red handed for receiving commissions and kickbacks worth \$3.369 million in defence deals. This is the same army that allegedly sits on assets and companies worth more than \$20 billion in 2016 and must have more than doubled by now. These assets were never subjected to the effects of any economic downturn. The army declared 50 housing projects, oil and gas drilling projects, stud farms, an aviation company, a diesel producing company in collaboration with the world's largest US-based oil and gas company, Exxonmobil, and over 120 high value entities in virtually every aspect of life, from phosphorus, aviation, sugar, and apparels to academic institutions and even security guards in 2016. All of these and many other companies, whose capital has been generated by Pakistan's top generals over the years, are managed by the "Army Welfare Trust" (AWT), a conglomerate founded in 1971 and entirely managed by Pakistan army officials. There have also been numerous allegations leveled against serving and retired generals of accepting handouts from foreign potentates, taking jobs in foreign companies, being hired by local businessmen to peddle influence, assisting family members in dodgy deals, using their positions to trade favours, particularly with businessmen under a cloud, engaging in good old-fashioned extortion and protection rackets, particularly in troubled areas like Balochistan, and taking commissions on defence contracts (even with the Chinese). It is the army that former military dictator Gen Pervez Musharraf used to buy apartments in Dubai and London with millions of dollars from the Saudi king. Another former army chief, Pervez Kiyani, was accused of shielding his brothers' shady land deals while in office and amassing a massive real estate portfolio. Kayani's successor, Raheel Sharif, was given 90 acres of prime agricultural land near the border with India, as well as a post-retirement job as the commander of a new international force formed by the Saudis, which raised eyebrows in Pakistan. After retiring, former ISI chief and 'super patriot' Ahmad Shuja Pasha took a job in Dubai and received ex-post facto clearance after the Supreme Court questioned how he and Raheel could take up these jobs without government clearance. Given the preponderant influence of Pakistan Army in virtually every sphere of national life, businesses in the country have figured that employing generals on fat salaries is the surest way to get work done, obtain clearances, browbeat rivals and even clients. A former ISI chief along with other 3-star generals were booked for leasing the land of Pakistan Railways on throwaway price for a golf club in Lahore causing a loss of around Rs 200 Crore by investing funds of the National Logistics Cell (NLC) in the stock market in exchange of commissions and kickbacks. While the two 3-star generals were let off by a military court, the 2-star general was punished by being 'dismissed from ser-

vice'. The 3-star general, Obaidullah Khattak, was alleged to have made Rs 1500 Crores in his three years as IGFC. His successor, Maj. Gen. Ejaz Shahid was made to deposit Rs 5 Crores with the GHQ as punishment. Ejaz Shahid had procured a non-custom duty paid fancy sports car for his son and it was an accident of this car that blew the whole scam in public - protection rackets, extortion, and every other illegal activity possible, the business arms of the military - banks, logistics firms, real estate development, construction companies, bakeries, marriage halls, industrial concerns - have a virtual run of the country, landing lucrative government contracts and having the ability to edge out competition. Allegedly, in Karachi, the modus operandi is different. Every Corps Commander is believed to turn into an overnight stock market genius. The way this happens is that one or more of the top stock market players offer to invest a modest amount of money for a new Corps Commander. Within months the money starts to grow exponentially and by the time the tenure ends, the general is a billionaire. It is also alleged that if it were left to the generals - whom they refer to as real estate agents - they would even extend their lucrative Defence Housing Authority (DHA) Schemes beyond the border with India. No Pakistan Army general is alleged can afford a war with India to save their properties. I recall Qazi Husain Ahmed, the then-Emir of the Jamaat Islami (JI), saying in late October 1998 that the generals are not Corps Commanders but 'Crore Commanders who allegedly have captured Pakistani state, society, and economy is not only the largest and most powerful political party in Pakistan and the de facto government, but also the country's largest and most diverse business conglomerate and land owner. I want to believe that all of these allegations of corruption are false and without merit, but if they are, it is cause for great concern and a clear indication that our defenses against both external and internal threats are severely weakened. It also exposes the naked fact that the civilian government has always been a stooge of the armed forces, with no say in major decisions, key appointments, allocation of national resources, and fiscal prudence in spending public money. It also reveals that the army believes it is fully capable of making decisions on foreign affairs and diplomacy on its own, and that it treats civilian leaders as wax noses that it can turn in any direction and at any time. It considers itself above the constitution and the law, and it violates the law with total impunity. If this is true, it means that all army and national resources are being diverted to increase the personal wealth of generals, their accomplices, and their families, while leaving the army and the nation poorer, and tanks without fuel and guns without ammunition. It is up to the army to take stock of the interview content, separate fact from fiction, bring all material facts bearing on the security and safety of the country to the fore, and take severe punitive action wherever either the constitution or the law of the land was violated, an incident of corruption was noted, and any army officer was found to have built assets worth more than his or her known source of income. It is also now necessary to shift all spying assets from monitoring and profiling civilians to monitoring and profiling generals and their subordinates in order to create some deterrence for the entire army, from Jawan to General, to stay within the constitutional framework at all times and return to the federal government any asset accumulated through illegal means.

Russia-China togetherness for regional peace

Munir Ahmed



Russia has been waging a hybrid war against the NATO bloc for more than a year now. China is just preparing for its own special operation to separate Taiwan from the US neocolonial capture. Under these circumstances Russia and China need mutual support, including military and technical. They are talking about it in hushed tones

Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin have made a sweeping affirmation of their alignment across a host of issues - and shared mistrust of the United States - in a lengthy statement following talks between the two leaders in Moscow, reported CNN on 22 March 2023. Their meeting, which took place under the shadow of Russia's war in Ukraine, left no question about Beijing's commitment to developing its rapport with Moscow, despite Putin's growing isolation on the global stage, the CNN correspondent highlighted the concerns. There is a change now that has not been seen in a hundred years. When we are together, we are driving this change, Chinese President Xi Jinping said to Vladimir Putin as he left Moscow. Indeed, the beacons testifying to a completely new level of relations between Russia and China abound. Just seeing Comrade Xi off at the airport to the strains of the Chinese military song 'When This Day Comes'. The composition speaks of an imminent and inevitable war. Russia has been waging a hybrid war against the NATO bloc for more than a year now. China is just preparing for its own special operation to separate Taiwan from the US neocolonial capture. Under these circumstances Russia and China need mutual support, including military and technical. They are talking about it in hushed tones, trying not to attract accusations of aggressive "bloc", but they are talking about it all the same. The forthcoming visit of the Chinese defence minister to Moscow will probably be the "last stone" in the edifice of the Russian-Chinese anti-American alliance under construction. Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu made his first foreign visit a week back, and Russia was chosen as a priority destination which speaks for itself. The visit is a long, non-passable one, three whole days. Li Shangfu has been under US sanctions since 2018, when he was head of the Arms Development Department of China's Central Military Commission, and specifically for military cooperation with our country. The restrictions were imposed by Washington under the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act. The justification is the deal with Russia for the

supply of Su-35 fighter jets and S-400 surface-to-air missile systems. The appointment of Li Shangfu as head of the defence establishment was perceived by the Western press as an unequivocally unfriendly move towards the collective West. The visit of the Chinese defense chief is clearly aimed at the practical implementation of the agreements reached during the personal talks between Putin and Xi. The main topics of conversation between Sergei Shoigu and Li Shangfu were based on an analysis of recent news reports and the provision of Chinese military assistance to Russia and the assistance of the Russian Pacific Fleet to the Chinese Navy in the future Taiwan operation. Just before Li Shangfu's visit, The Washington Post published leaks from the Pentagon citing allegedly intercepted conversations with foreign intelligence officials about China's agreement in principle to provide Russia with Chinese lethal weapons. At the same time, the deliveries, the Americans claimed, would be disguised as civilian cargoes. The White House stated that Chinese military aid to Russia was "unacceptable", but kept saying that the United States had "no proof" of such supplies. If the "leaks" from the Pentagon are true, it is clear that Washington is trying to keep a low profile and is trying to influence China through persuasion. If relations between the US and China are not normalized, China is not going to go along with it, much less be afraid of threats from Washington. Today both Russia and China have all the resources and power to put any aggressor, including the United States together with the entire North Atlantic Alliance, in his place and force him to abandon aggressive actions in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. The EU looks on with dismay and fear at Russia's growing sympathy in Beijing. European capitals are not particularly keen to quarrel with China, and the motivation to strain now, repel the Russians and then start peace talks is immediately multiplied by zero after China's involvement in the Ukraine crisis. Two days before Li Shangfu's arrival in Moscow, a surprise inspection of the Russian Pacific Fleet's combat readiness began amid escalating tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Chi-

na is evidently preparing for a military solution to the Taiwan issue. Beijing's rhetoric is getting tougher and tougher. On April 12 [2023], Xi Jinping publicly called on the troops of the People's Liberation Army of China to "step up training for real combat action and adhere to combat-oriented training". This is where Russia comes in handy. Moscow is unlikely to get directly involved in hostilities. But the Pacific Fleet is highly combat-ready. Last December, at an expanded meeting of the Military Council, it was named the best in combat training in the entire Russian Navy for the sixth year in a row. In the event of a Taiwanese air defense, the Pacific sailors could take control of all critical Chinese maritime communications and guarantee their inviolability, thus freeing up the entire Chinese fleet for the operation in Taiwan. Russia and China are standing shoulder to shoulder and are breaking American hegemony in the world. Both Moscow and Beijing have a vested interest in mutual success. That is why rhetoric from across the ocean about Russia's "vassal position" vis-à-vis China and Russia's becoming a "politico-military satellite" of China is nothing more than naive and primitive propaganda. The two countries have an obvious and conspicuous interdependence. Americans are used to the vassal type of relationship. That they are hegemon and will dictate terms to everyone. They do not see any cooperation other than colonial or neo-colonial. They are unaware that there could be other forms of cooperation. If Russia has abandoned the West, then it has gone "under China" - it is ridiculous to think so. The opposite is true; there are other forms of cooperation. Apart from hegemony, there is a multipolar world with many centres. Russia believes that there is no domination of one civilization over another. This can be clearly seen in the interaction within the SCO, BRICS and in the bilateral relations between Russia and the Global South.

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Briefs

No favorites in political arena: Army

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non-political ties – a stance that the army has long stood by. “This non-political relationship should not be given a political colour.” With several retired army men supporting PTI, the ISPR DG said that the veterans’ organisations should not become political as their purpose was to ensure veterans’ welfare and highlight their issues. During his presser, Major General Chaudhry said India’s propaganda still continues against Pakistan as he slammed the neighbouring nation for ceasefire violations. The ISPR DG said that India had committed several ceasefire violations along the LoC this year and Pakistan had also taken down six Indian spy quadcopters. He noted that Pakistan had taken United Nations observers to the Line of Control (LoC) several times, while India had not done the same. “India’s aggressive designs and baseless allegations cannot change history. India cannot change the historical status of Kashmir. If India plans any adventure, Pakistani forces will give a strong response.” Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir visited the LoC on his first tour after becoming army chief, he recalled. “Pakistan has fought the war against terrorism for two decades. Every Pakistani soldier is devoted to faith, piety and jihad in the cause of Allah.” Referring to Operation Swift Retort in 2019 – in which PAF shot down two Indian aircraft inside Pakistani airspace and arrested an Indian pilot on the ground – the military spokesperson said that Pakistan could defend its territory. Pakistan’s situation holds importance in India’s internal matters, he said, adding that the Indian government talks about Pakistan’s politics also to divert attention from its own problems. India has been conducting false flag operations and propaganda against Pakistan, he iterated. “Some local elements advance India’s agenda knowingly or unknowingly,” he said without elaborating. In response to a question, he said the Ministry of Defence had already given a briefing to the Supreme Court regarding the deployment of troops for elections, which was based on “ground realities”. The defence ministry briefed the apex court last week on why the government could not provide army personnel for elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – and the report has not been made public yet. To a question about what was in the report that the defence ministry had submitted to the top court, Maj Gen Chaudhry said that had there been a need to make the briefing provided to Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial public, then it would have already been disclosed. “Those talks were held just between the institutions,” he said. “It is not in the interest of the nation, country, and the army to push the armed forces into politics,” the military’s spokesperson remarked, a position that his predecessors have also maintained. The ISPR DG added that it is the government’s prerogative to summon the Pakistan Army under Article 245 for election security or during natural disasters. At the start of the news conference – his first after taking over the post – he said the purpose was to elaborate on the army’s professional activities, including analysing its counterterrorism operations. “The contacts between the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Baloch [insurgent] organisations and foreign intelligence agencies has been proven.” Pakistan’s civil and military agencies took great steps against terrorists, he said.

COAS in China on four-day visit
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Later in February, the COAS visited the United Kingdom for meetings on defence-related issues. He also attended a conference at Wilton Park, an executive agency created by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office to foster open dialogue between govts.

If counteroffensive fails Ukraine risks losing Western countries support: Report

A “Everything hinges on this counteroffensive,” Alexander Vershbow, a former US ambassador to Russia and senior NATO official, said of the future operation. “Everybody’s hopeful, maybe over-optimistic

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Ukraine is far from guaranteed to succeed in a counteroffensive against Russia despite receiving Western weapons, training, and intelligence support, the New York Times has stated. An underwhelming outcome would likely prompt Kiev’s backers to press it to negotiate for peace, the newspaper predicted. Kiev has long touted an upcoming push as the next decisive phase of the conflict with Russia. The NYT claimed on Monday that the offensive could be launched as early as

May, although Ukrainian Prime Minister Denis Shmigal recently assessed that it might not get underway until the summer. According to classified documents shared as part of the Pentagon leaks, Ukraine is planning to use 12 combat brigades of about 4,000 troops each in its renewed campaign against Russian forces. The US and its allies have helped train nine of those units, with soldiers being taught to use Western-provided equipment and receiving tactical advice at American military facilities in Germany. Ukraine’s partners are also expected to

provide it with intelligence for the proposed assault. “Everything hinges on this counteroffensive,” Alexander Vershbow, a former US ambassador to Russia and senior NATO official, said of the future operation. “Everybody’s hopeful, maybe over-optimistic. But it will determine whether there is going to be a decent outcome for the Ukrainians.” Kiev has ruled out negotiations with Moscow until it recaptures all the territories that it claims as its own. However, even with all Western help, “big gains are not guaranteed, or even neces-

sarily likely,” the NYT warned. The newspaper cited Ukrainian battlefield losses, heavy expenditure of munitions, and Russian troops digging in and preventing the enemy from using Western-taught warfare as working against Kiev. After the push is over, “there is little chance that the West can recreate the buildup... for the foreseeable future” the report argued. The US and its allies have largely exhausted their military inventories after flooding Kiev with military aid, causing gaps that are unlikely to be filled until next year, experts assessed.

Meanwhile, Russia is ramping up pressure against Ukraine despite previous setbacks, meaning that “the window to make significant gains... may not remain open indefinitely,” the NYT stated. With larger reserves at its disposal, Moscow could emerge victorious in the conflict, it acknowledged. Politico previously reported that the White House was bracing itself to mitigate the fallout from a potentially poorly-executed Ukrainian counteroffensive. A temporary truce could give Kiev time for a military buildup before another offensive at a later point, US officials claimed to the outlet.

Danish wants Pakistan to regain lost glory in squash

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan’s top player Danish Atlas Khan has offered his unconditional services to put the country once again on the path to success, saying there was no shortage of talent in the country but a stern roadmap was needed to help gain lost glory in game. Danish, who is the nephew of former world squash champion Jan Sher Khan, speaking about his plan for the revival of the game, said the Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) was making all-out efforts to promote and encourage the game and players in the country.

“However, other stakeholders must also come forward to help encourage and promote, not only squash but all sports. We should take all departments on board to promote all sports in the country. Wapda, PIA, NBP, Railway, banks, all government departments should include senior and junior players to support the games,” he told APP. He was of the view that in the past, departments used to support players which resulted in giving us many world champions in squash, hockey and cricket. “Sports cannot grow or flourish, without the support of departments. We should form academies from the grassroots level as well,” he said. Danish, who has won 32 gold medals for Pakistan, said PSF was providing players with squash facilities and spending hefty amounts on making squash courts. PSF funds should also be increased so that it can be utilized for the betterment of players. He said there should be squash courts in schools as to promote the game at the grassroots level. “The more courts and academies there will be, the more talent will come to fore. In Egypt, players are picked from schools to train in academies with modern techniques and skills and improve their physical fitness.” – APP

ers as to support the games,” he told APP. He was of the view that in the past, departments used to support players which resulted in giving us many world champions in squash, hockey and cricket. “Sports cannot grow or flourish, without the support of departments. We should form academies from the grassroots level as well,” he said. Danish, who has won 32 gold medals for Pakistan, said PSF was providing players with squash facilities and spending hefty amounts on making squash courts. PSF funds should also be increased so that it can be utilized for the betterment of players. He said there should be squash courts in schools as to promote the game at the grassroots level. “The more courts and academies there will be, the more talent will come to fore. In Egypt, players are picked from schools to train in academies with modern techniques and skills and improve their physical fitness.” – APP

Pogacar counts his blessings after 'crash'

PARIS: Slovenian cycling star Tadej Pogacar said Monday he counted himself “lucky” to have only broken a wrist in a “crazy crash” in the Liege-Bastogne-Liege classic. His UAE team said recovery would take around six weeks which will curtail Pogacar’s preparation for the Tour de France which starts on July 1. The 24-year-old suffered a fall after 85 kilometres on Sunday and underwent an operation later that day in Belgium. Team medical director Dr. Adrian Rotunno, speaking Monday, said Pogacar had sustained a “scaphoid fracture which required a small screw to realign the bone fragments. The procedure was successful and he will begin his recovery period at home”. “Due to the nature of the injury, it’s approximately six weeks recovery. Though he will start with immediate rehab, and some training on an indoor trainer in the coming days.” – Agencies

Man City game will not decide title

LONDON: Manchester City’s Phil Foden challenges Arsenal forward Bukayo Saka for the ball at Emirates Stadium Manchester City beat Arsenal 3-1 in the Premier League at Emirates Stadium in February Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta says their top-of-the-table game against Manchester City will not decide the Premier League title. League leaders Arsenal are five points above Pep Guardiola’s side before Wednesday’s match at Etihad Stadium. However, City have two games in hand on the Gunners who have drawn three league matches in succession. “We knew we had to go to Etihad, it will be difficult, but will it decide the season? No,” Arteta said. – Agencies

Moscow talks discuss Türkiye-Syria normalization

Russia’s long-standing effort to open a channel of dialogue between Türkiye and the Bashar Assad regime paid off last year, as the defense ministers and intelligence chiefs of Türkiye, Russia and the Bashar Assad regime met in Moscow

MOSCOW: A quadrilateral meeting in Moscow on Tuesday between Türkiye, Russia, Syria and Iran discussed “concrete steps” that can be taken to normalize Turkish-Syrian relations, the Turkish Defense Ministry said. The parties also discussed “the fight against terrorist organizations and all extremist groups on Syrian territory,” the ministry

added. Stepping up efforts to return Syrian refugees to their countries was another issue on the agenda of the four countries. The Defense Ministry’s statements come as the defense ministers and intelligence heads of Ankara, Moscow, Tehran and Damascus met on Tuesday in the Russian capital. Russia’s long-standing effort to open a channel of dia-

logue between Türkiye and the Bashar Assad regime paid off last year, as the defense ministers and intelligence chiefs of Türkiye, Russia and the Bashar Assad regime met in Moscow. Any normalization between Ankara and Damascus would reshape the decade-long Syrian war. Turkish backing has been vital to sustaining moderate Syrian opposition in their last sig-

nificant territorial foothold in the northwest after Assad defeated opponents across the rest of the country, aided by Russia and Iran. However, according to statements from the Bashar Assad regime, Damascus wants to end the Turkish presence on Syrian territories. Since 2016, Ankara has launched a trio of successful counterterrorism oper-

ations across its border in northern Syria to prevent the formation of a terror corridor and enable the peaceful settlement of residents: Euphrates Shield in 2016, Olive Branch in 2018 and Peace Spring in 2019. The PKK terrorist group’s Syrian wing, the YPG, has controlled much of north-eastern Syria after Bashar Assad’s forces withdrew in 2012. Turkish officials

have voiced that Ankara and Damascus could cooperate in returning Syrian refugees in Türkiye and counterterrorism efforts as the PKK/YPG still controls much of the war-torn country’s east. Bashar Assad can’t establish territorial integrity. Conversely, normalization has also been ongoing with the regime and the Arab world. – Agencies

Bring hockey back Former Olympians want stern measures

Pakistan also has three gold medals in Olympic Games field hockey tournaments in Rome in 1960, Mexico City in 1968 and Los Angeles in 1984

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Olympians have asked for stern measures to be taken in bringing the national game back on track through proper planning from the grassroots to the top level, so as to regain hockey’s lost glory.

There were times when Pakistan was the most successful team in World Cups, Olympics and Champions Trophy winning four World Cups in 1971, 1978, 1982 and 1994. Pakistan also has three gold medals in Olympic Games field hockey tournaments in Rome in 1960, Mexico City in 1968 and Los Angeles in 1984. Then its downfall began and an always-winning team that played all World Cup editions, could not qualify for the 2014 and 2023 mega-events. Speaking on the revival of the national game, Olympian Shahbaz Ahmed Sr emphasized proper education of players as he deems that an illiterate cannot carry on in international sports without education. “There is also a need to build four to five hockey centres in the country directly operated under the federation,” he added. “Youth must be spotted from grassroots, educated and fed prop-

erly and trained at these centres according to international standards.” Shahbaz further pleaded that the PHF must have a proper annual budget and the federation should itself manage its affairs. “Every time we have to request the government for grants to participate in national and international championships or preparation of training camps abroad.” He said, “Young players must also be offered regular jobs as was happening during our times when all players had jobs in different departments.” Shahbaz advocated organizing Pakistan Hockey League (PHL) as he believes it would prove a key step towards reviving the national game. “Besides providing financial support to PHF, the league will help explore new talent for regaining our lost glory.”

Once an unbeaten center-forward and a star Olympian Shahbaz Shaikh pleads to blend young players with experienced hands for forming a squad that owns the potential to beat any team in the world. “Players need to improve their movements and points marking in the D area. They

should avoid counterattacks and improve the conversion of penalty corners. If we get three to four penalty corners at least two must be utilized,” Shahbaz said. “We need to strongly work on all these things if we want to improve our game. Our players must play with unity and avoid individual point scoring in any game,” he commented. Further suggesting measures for improvement, he said there were around 28 Education Boards in the country with hundreds of schools affiliated with each Board. “Therefore, if each government school is allowed to participate in tournaments, the total number of participating teams would be in the hundreds. This practice would be a sort of talent hunt bringing new players to the national squad.” He also suggested designated hockey fields to promote the game as he recalled, “in our times plentiful of national and district tournaments were held annually for improvement of players mental and physical strength.”

“Then there were different departments, offering jobs to players. But, rapid changes in the hockey setup affected the game badly. At present, the Pakistan national hockey team holds the 16th spot in International Hockey Federation (FIH) rankings which is painful,” he said.

Meloni calls for unity on Liberation Day anniversary



ROME: Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni on Tuesday called for unity among political forces in celebrating the anniversary of the liberation from the Nazis and their Fascist allies on April 25, 1945. Meloni, whose hard-right Brother of Italy party traces its roots to the wreckage of Italian fascism at the end of World War Two, firmly rejected accusations of fascism nostalgia within the party. In an open letter to Italian daily Il Corriere della Sera, Meloni wrote she hoped that the celebrations could be an

occasion of “renewed national concord,” strengthening Italy’s role in the world as “essential stronghold of democracy.” Allies and aides of the 46-year-old premier have been accused in several occasions of downplaying atrocities carried out by the Nazis and Fascists, or distorting historical facts concerning the partisan movement that fought to liberate the country. Six months after she took office, Meloni’s presence at the official remembrance event at Rome’s Altar of the Fatherland on Tuesday morning, alongside Italian President Sergio Mattarella, was seen by many observers as a turning point. Meloni herself used the word “watershed” to remember April 25, 1945 in her letter, defining it a crucial moment in Italian history, as it paved the way to the victory of those “democratic values, that Fascism had crushed and that we find carved into the Italian Republic’s constitution.” Meloni has repeatedly sought to allay concerns about her party’s neo-fascist roots, insisting that the Italian right had handed fascism over to history and unambiguously condemned the suppression of democracy and anti-Jewish laws. Some critics, however, have stressed that she has never clearly declared her party’s “anti-fascist” stance since she stepped into power at the helm of the most conservative government since WWII. – DNA

Kabal blast death toll mounts to 17

FROM PAGE 01
KP Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Gandapor said security officials were on high alert throughout the province and the incident would be investigated. KP Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir said that the leaves of all health-care staff have been cancelled and hospitals of Swat were kept at a high alert position. The Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar was also put on high alert to cope with emergencies. He said all staff was directed to report to their duty stations while the regional blood centre Swat was mobilized to provide blood immediately to the hospitals. He said medicines have been pooled-up to all the hospitals across Swat and all medicals and paramedics plus auxiliary staff was available and well-equipped to provide relief to the victims. He said that ICUs and Critical Care Units of Saidu Group of Teaching Hospital (SGTH) Saidu Sharif were put on red alert with all the needed medicine and machine availability ensured. Aslam Wazir directed all the District Health Officers and medical superintendents to keep a good buffer of medicine and commodities at the respective health facilities under their jurisdiction and to respond well to any untoward situation.

Funeral of nine...

FROM PAGE 01
about 43 others injured in the last night explosions at Counter Terrorism Department police station’s ammunition depot. As a result of huge fire and blasts, the police station was razed to ground besides caused damages to the nearby buildings where rescue operations started. The people started coming to the residences of the victims and were offering fatiha for eternal peace of the deceased.

PML-N creating...

FROM PAGE 01
responsibility of holding talks, saying PML-N leaders Saad Rafique and Ayaz Sadiq were former colleagues, they had their contact numbers and the correct thing to do was contacting the right persons. At the outset, Qureshi said there was “zero progress” in connection with the government-PTI talks initiative and whatever was being presented as talks offered by the PML-N leadership was only a “smokescreen” as no serious efforts had so far been made by the government to advance negotiations that had not even started.

Qureshi said, “The PML-N leadership may have conducted an internal meeting and presented it as talks offered to the PTI. I have heard that the ruling alliance has called a meeting on April 26 where they are likely to take some decision regarding talks with the PTI. “Until now, no one has approached me or Fawad Chaudhry Sahib. This shows how serious they are about talks.”

MQM-P seeks...

FROM PAGE 01
the conventional tactics to pressurise governments. “Streets are our house [assembly]. Now, we will settle and build it,” he added. Dr Siddiqui’s comments came during a presser held to rejoice over the “low turnout” in local government polls earlier this year, which it termed “rigged” in the Karachi and Hyderabad divisions. The party was against conducting local body elections in the two divisions until new delimitation was done and had also threatened to quit the coalition government.

Pakistan reports...

FROM PAGE 01
They said that airports across the country have been put on high alert after the detection of the virus, while the ministry has sent NIH the samples of suspected patients. Mpox (monkeypox) is a viral illness caused by the monkeypox virus, a species of the genus Orthopoxvirus. Two different clades exist – clade I and clade II.

Briefs

UK begins evacuation of citizens from Sudan

LONDON: The UK has begun evacuating stranded British nationals from Sudan, where fighting between the Sudanese army and paramilitary Rapid Support has left hundreds of people dead. "The Government has begun a large-scale evacuation of British passport holders from Sudan on RAF (Royal Air Force) flights. Priority will be given to the most vulnerable, including families with children and the elderly," Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said on Twitter. The UK will continue to work to end the deadly conflict in Sudan and support a democratic government, he added. Foreign Office Minister Andrew Mitchell said on Monday that some 4,000 UK citizens live in Sudan while 2,000 of them have already requested help. On Sunday, the government announced that the armed forces have completed the evacuation of British diplomats and their families from Sudan. The UK government was being criticized for leaving British citizens in Sudan while evacuating diplomatic staff and families. At least 427 people have been killed and over 3,700 others injured since April 15, when a conflict broke out in the capital Khartoum and other cities between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.—Agencies

France preps to expel irregular migrants

PARIS: France is gearing up to expel irregular migrants from its island department of Mayotte, off southeastern Africa near Madagascar, according to media reports. The country is preparing to launch an operation on Tuesday morning to evacuate slums where the irregular migrants live, mostly from the neighboring island of Comoros, broadcaster France 24 said. They will be moved from Mayotte to Anjouan, the closest island to Comoros, the same source added. Comoros has reportedly refused to admit the expelled individuals, local media said. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin on Monday morning announced the operation on broadcaster France 2, saying: "This is an operation anti-delinquency and anti-slums ... And there are irregular individuals, who we expel classically." On broadcaster Radio Classique, Estelle Youssouff and Mansour Kamardine, members of the French parliament for the Mayotte archipelago, expressed their support for Operation Wuambushu. "The slums are homes of insecurity, violence, hosting traffickers, and gangs who spread terror," Youssouff said. France will deploy 1,800 police and gendarme officers, France 24 also said. Last November, Youssouff accused the government of neglecting years of violence in the region, while Mamoudzou, the biggest city in Mayotte, was facing an unprecedented rise in gang violence.—APP

Moscow threatens to use nuclear weapons

MOSCOW: Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev said on Tuesday Moscow may use nuclear weapons first in case of any aggression against it or its allies.

Opponents should not underestimate Russia's determination, said Medvedev, who also served as the Russian president between 2008 and 2012, during an educational marathon in Moscow called "Knowledge," a platform for open discussions between young people and government representatives. When asked about climate change, Medvedev responded, "Do you really care about the climate to such an extent? In my opinion, this is nothing compared to the prospect of being at the epicenter of an explosion with a temperature of 5,000 Kelvin (scale). Is there such a prospect today? (Unfortunately,) yes. And it is growing every day for well-known reasons," he said. The modern world is "sick," and a world war is possible, but it can still be avoided, he believed.—DNA

Anti-China chorus was dominant at the G7 meeting

The unusual usage of the word "unity" was a reflection of the impending panic and nervousness in the G7 club

DNA

BEIJING: Just-concluded G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Karuizawa, Japan offers a glimpse into the upcoming G7 summit scheduled for May, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Tuesday. Traditionally, the overall tenor of the foreign ministers' gathering is expected to mirror that of the summit itself. There is nothing that should be termed as "new" in the joint statement issued by the G7 foreign ministers. In fact, several media outlets had already leaked the key points of the meeting much earlier than the start of the meeting. The report says, this time, two recent events appeared to have seriously influenced the proceedings and tone of meeting. One, the meeting by Taiwanese regional leader Tsai Ing-wen with U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California which compelled Beijing to conduct large-scale drills around Taiwan, and two, French President

Macron's remarks that the European Union should reduce its dependency on the United States and caution should be exercised against being drawn into a Taiwan crisis.

In fact, Macron's remarks clearly show the emergence of fault lines within the G7 and the EU, the participants were conspicuously using the word "unity" in almost every official and unofficial communication throughout the proceedings of the Karuizawa meeting in a direct attempt to offset the impact of Macron's candid comments about the strategic autonomy of the European countries.

The unusual usage of the word "unity" was a reflection of the impending panic and nervousness in the G7 club. The fact is that Macron's comments have thrown the wrench in the efforts by Japan — this year's G7 chair and the sole member from Asia — to promote unity among members by utilizing the China threat. However, recent comments by Macron



have potentially pushed the entire Western bloc in a difficult position. With tensions rising between China and the West, Japan had hoped to leverage the collective influence of the G7 to achieve its goals. But Macron's words have cast doubt on the group's ability to present a unified front.

That is why, the word "unity" assumed inordinate preference in the communication of the Japanese foreign minister Yoshimasa Hayashi who told the media during the meeting, "The strength of solidarity between the G7

foreign ministers is at a level not seen before." Similarly, the joint communique following a grueling three-day session also underscored the group's unwavering "sense of unity" in the face of the many grave threats currently facing the international system. "Unity" became the rallying cry at the Karuizawa meeting, with member countries eager to present a united front despite their internal fissures. However, this façade of cohesion belies a deeper truth — that the interests of the United States dominate the group's agenda, and that there is growing discontent among Western nations over whether to remain a vassal of Washington or pursue an independent foreign policy.

While the G7 may strive to project an image of unity, the reality is that its future success depends on finding a way to balance the competing interests of its member countries.

Apart from the routine stuff that has traditionally been the part of the previous meetings' agenda, such as the Ukraine crisis and nuclear issues of Iran and the Korean Peninsula, being the host of this year's G7 presidency this time, Japan has injected a unique Japanese flavor into the traditional American-led formula for these gatherings. particular, this has entailed a heightened emphasis on meddling in the Taiwan question and promoting the "China threat" narrative. By bringing these issues to the forefront of the discussions, Japan has signaled its intention to steer the group in a direction that is more in line

with its own interests. However, this approach risks alienating other member nations and could ultimately prove to be a hindrance to achieving the G7's collective goals. As tensions continue to escalate between China and the West, it remains to be seen whether Japan's strategy will pay off in the end. As Japan works to bolster the G7's efforts to contain China at the behest of the United States, it is also quietly pushing its own self-serving agenda within the group. Reports suggest that Japan was instrumental in pushing the Taiwan question to the forefront of the group's agenda for the first time at the 2021 G7 summit in the UK, with US encouragement. One of the key reasons behind Japan's pushing the Taiwan question forward is its attempt to divert the attention from its controversial plan to release the nuclear waste water from the Fukushima plant to the Pacific ocean.

Joe Biden announces 2024 Presidential bid

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden made his re-election bid official Tuesday, capping months of speculation over his plans four years to the day since he announced his 2020 campaign. In a video titled "Freedom" — which opens with a scene of the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, followed by an image of an abortion rights protest — Biden said that after spending his first term fighting for the country's democracy, "MAGA extremists are lining up" to cut the social safety net and take away personal liberties. "Cutting Social Security that you've paid for your entire life while cutting taxes for the very wealthy. Dictating



what health care decisions women can make, banning books, and telling people who they can leave. All while making it more difficult for you to be able to vote," he said. He made the case that his administration still has more to do. "When I ran for president four years ago, I said we are in a battle for the soul of America. And we still are. The question

we are facing is whether in the years ahead we have more freedom or less freedom. More rights or fewer," he said, adding, "This is not a time to be complacent. That's why I'm running for re-election."

The launch is an effort to position Biden as the nation's best hope to defeat a Republican opponent and cement his administration's successes heading into 2024. The symmetry of the fourth anniversary makes a fitting opening for a president who has leaned into history at key moments to pitch his vision to Americans about the road ahead. Biden launched his campaign in 2019 with a video message, as well — warning that four more years of Donald Trump would "forever and fundamentally

alter the character of this nation, who we are," and highlighting the 2017 violence at a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. His 2020 launch video doesn't mention Trump by name, though the specter of a rematch — and an acknowledgment of the forces of Trumpism — was there. The video features an image of GOP Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, one of Trump's staunchest supporters, and a photo of Trump standing beside Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is seen as a chief rival for the Republican nomination. In his State of the Union address in February, Biden used the words "finish the job" more than a dozen times and warned of Republicans who "want to take the economy hostage."

Canadians flock to food banks as grocery prices soar

TORONTO: Hundreds of thousands of people stream in each month to the Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto, its chief executive says, as galloping inflation continues to squeeze Canadians' grocery budgets. "We are absolutely in a food crisis in this country and certainly in the city of Toronto," Neil Hetherington said in a recent AFP interview. His organization saw the number of people using its services double during the Covid-19 pandemic to an average of 120,000 per month, which continued to rise to a record 270,000 in March. Of the newcomers to the 128 food banks across the Toronto area affiliated with Daily Bread, many have full-time jobs but still can't seem to make ends meet, Hetherington said as volunteers sorted through donations at its depot in a suburb of Toronto. Although overall inflation has cooled to 4.3 percent in March from a peak of 8.1 percent last June, food inflation remains stubbornly high at around 10 percent year over year. Hetherington noted that accommodations — both rentals and homes for sale — are also out of reach of many Canadians after a jump in real estate prices last year, compounding cost-of-living woes. According to a report by the real estate firm Urbanation, the average cost of a studio apartment in Canada's largest city is 2,124 Canadian dollars (US\$1,568) per month, up about 380 Canadian dollars from last year. Ryan Patcheson said he started coming to the food bank 18 months ago. He receives disability benefits but says it's not enough to live on.—APP

Yazidis await IS-abducted relatives

SHARYA: After paying nearly \$100,000 in ransoms to free 10 family members, Khaled Taalou, a member of Iraq's Yazidi minority, is still working to free other missing relatives kidnapped by Islamic State group fighters. Despite his efforts, five more relatives, along with thousands of other Yazidis, remain missing after being abducted by the militants. "We are still looking. We do not lose hope," the 49-year-old said. In August 2014, IS swept over Mount Sinjar, the Kurdish-speaking minority's historic home in northern Iraq. They massacred thousands of Yazidi men, enlisted children, and seized thousands of women to be sold as militants' "wives" or reduced to sexual slavery. IS considered the Yazidis, who follow a non-Muslim monotheistic faith, as heretics. UN investigators described as genocide the atrocities carried out by IS. Nineteen members of Taalou's family were abducted, including his brother and sister, along with their spouses and children. "We borrowed money as we could, here and there, to get them out," the journalist and writer said. Now displaced and living in Sharaya, a village in Iraqi Kurdistan, after fleeing his home in Sinjar, Taalou has managed to free 10 relatives over seven years.

Expensive releases are negotiated "via networks of traffickers in Iraq and abroad", he said. The latest was his brother's granddaughter in February 2022, located in a Syrian camp. He has learned that along with five relatives who remain missing, two family members were killed in aerial bombardments in the fight against IS.—APP

Bosnian Serbs adopt action plan

SARAJEVO: The leader of Republika Srpska (RS) said Monday that senior Serb officials had adopted an action plan for working in state institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Milorad Dodik's remarks came after representatives of political parties in the RS National Assembly (NSRS) met in the administrative capital of the entity, Banja Luka, to sign a declaration on the longstanding controversial immovable property law. The officials signed a statement containing the action plan and stance of Serbs working in institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Dodik said the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not protect the constitution but "has destroyed it." He said the Constitutional Court did not fulfill its basic role that it had with the Dayton Peace Agreement and "has misused that role."

"This means that the NSRS will call the judge of the BiH Constitutional Court from the RS to resign from that position," he said.

He said the protection of the Dayton position of Republika Srpska, one of the two political entities making up Bosnia and Herzegovina, will be discussed in the National Assembly on April 26.

Bosniak member of the Presidency Council Denis Bećirović slammed the declaration on social media. "Entities are not states and will never be any states. Milorad Dodik and his partners in his organized group must stop their dangerous attempts to violate international and national law," said Bećirović.—Agencies

Turkey holds 110 over terror links

DIYARBAKIR: Turkey on Tuesday detained 110 people in 21 provinces, including Kurdish majority Diyarbakir, over alleged terror links, police sources told AFP. The sources referred to the mass raids as a "counter-terror" operation. State media TRT reported that police held people suspected of financing the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) or roping in new members to the group. Deemed a terrorist organization by the United States, the European Union and Turkey, the PKK has been waging a decades-long armed struggle against Ankara for greater autonomy for the Kurdish minority.—APP

Fragility of US financial system affect Pakistani banking industry

BEIJING: Fragility of the US banking system also affected the Pakistani banking industry, leading to further non-performing loans and poor credit underwriting. The latest Global Financial Stability Report (GFSR) released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned about the risks in the global economy, particularly the fragility of the US banking system.

According to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Tuesday, this fragility has had numerous spillover effects on socio-economic and financial stability, leading to a decrease in global GDP growth. The report suggests that the US banking system has been further eroded by the irrational fiscal and monetary policies of its financial regulators, particularly the Federal Reserve System. The constant hikes in interest rates have had negative impacts on the domestic, regional, and international banking and financial systems, hindering investment and business activities. The IMF report exposes the deepening flaws in the banking industry of the US, which has led to a lack of trust among depositors in banking industry bosses and regulators. The closure of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and Signature Bank, and the strict supervision of other banks by US financial departments and regulators, have created panic among common depositors. As a result, clients have started withdrawing their hard-earned funds from these banks, which has undermined their solvency. This has affected market confidence and triggered significant emergency responses by the authorities. The 25 biggest banks in the country garnered \$120 billion in deposits following the collapses and subsequent rescues federal regulators announced on March 12 while deposits at smaller banks fell by \$108 billion, as per The Wall Street Journal.—DNA



Copenhagen: Pakistan ambassador to Denmark, Ahmad Farooq attended a farewell lunch hosted by ambassador Thomas Lehmann and Samuel Frimand-Meier (Head of Section-Asia, Latin America & Oceania).—DNA

UNSC failing to protect rights of Palestinians: Expert

LONDON: The UN Security Council passed a series of resolutions after Israel seized the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip during its aggression on Palestine in 1967, demanding that Tel Aviv return to the territorial lines that existed prior to the onset of the war. But the US, already known as Israel's protector, abstained from the major resolutions. In February this year, the Security Council expressed its "deep concern and dismay" over Israel's settlement activity in a presidential statement that replaced a draft resolution and condemned illegal Israeli policies. In the statement, all 15 members of the council including the US also stressed the "obligation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) to renounce and confront terror." The council warned that ongoing Israeli settlement activities "are dangerously imperiling the viability of the two-state solution based on the 1967 lines." Nader Hashemi,

the director of the Center for Middle East Studies and a Middle East and Islamic politics professor at the University of Denver's Josef Korbel School of International Studies, told Anadolu that this symbolic measure is a great idea but in theory, as in reality, it is "extremely difficult" to reform the composition of the UN Security Council because of the way it was structured back in 1945. Despite the previous agreements, international law and UN Security Council resolutions are not implemented due to the council's decision to give "five countries a permanent right to veto any resolution" that comes before the council, said Hashemi.

In his opinion, this makes it difficult for any reforms to be passed. He said the dozens of UN Security Council and UN General Assembly resolutions that have been passed throughout the UN's history dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict need "to simply be enforced" before even considering any future

reforms. Under international law, Israel does not have a legal right to build settlements on the territory that was occupied after the 1967 war, and yet it continues to do so. The countries in the international system, especially the US, must back and enforce those resolutions "with serious consequences on Israel" for its longstanding law violations, argued Hashemi.

A shift in US policy in the direction of enforcing international law could open the door for serious negotiations and "possibly a resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict," he said. "Ship has sailed" International law demands that a just resolution of the conflict be based on a two-state settlement, which was defined essentially by UN Security Council Resolution 242. However, many are suggesting that this "ship has sailed" as there are simply too many Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian territory. Instead, there is now what is called a "one-state reality," where Israel effectively

controls all the land from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, Hashemi pointed out.

The problem is that there are "unequal sets of laws and structural discrimination that treat Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs very differently," he added. Mark McDonald, an outspoken critic of Israel and a former British member of parliament, told Anadolu that the two-state solution is still a possibility if there is "a political will on both sides." However, he believes that Israel is not open to it. While Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is in power and as long as "the settlers have the right to control the government of Israel," the two-state solution will not happen, said McDonald. For Hashemi, an ideal solution is a binational state where Palestinians and Israelis are treated equally under the law. This way, they would be able to live a life of "dignity where their own cultural, national and reli-

gious identities are respected in the confines of a single state where both communities are represented," he said. "This is not something difficult to imagine. We have many states in the world that are binational states that represent linguistic, religious and ethnic interests of multiple parties but within the framework of a nation state," he added. However, the two-state solution is a stepping stone before "we can make that huge leap" and "move in the direction of something much better," according to Hashemi. He warned that this will only be possible if the US, "which has an incredible amount of leverage over Israel," is willing to use that leverage to get Israel to make the type of territorial concessions that it must get to a two-state settlement "or perhaps something much better." Netanyahu was always only interested in a set of policies that favor "Israeli settler colonial expansionism," said Hashemi.—Agencies

Briefs

PM greets Erdogan on maiden flight of Hurjet

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday congratulated President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the successful maiden flight of Hurjet, a light combat aircraft. On his Twitter handle, the prime minister, responded to a tweet of President Erdogan, said that it was undoubtedly a huge achievement for Turkey and Turkish defence industries. "I wish greater success to brotherly Turkey in TF-X project," he further added. On Tuesday, according to media reports, the Turkish Aerospace Industries conducted the first successful flight test of its locally produced basic trainer and light-assault aircraft, known as the Hurjet.

PML-N mulls moving Supreme Judicial Council

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Malik Ahmad Khan has said if the Supreme Court of Pakistan is being scandalised, then a suo motu notice should be taken on it. Speaking during a press conference on Tuesday, flanked by Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, Khan said: "If the code of conduct is being violated, we have the right to move the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC)."

The PML-N, while talking about the recent audio leak between former chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawyer Khawaja Tariq Rahim said that they are referring to a "judgement". "We are saying that there is a nexus between Saqib Nisar, Khawaja Tariq, his wife and the chief justice's mother-in-law," Khan said. Another alleged audio leak featuring former CJP Nisar and Rahim has also come to the fore, just days after the leaked audio of a phone call between the incumbent top Supreme Court judge's mother-in-law and Rahim's wife stirred up a political storm in the country.

Sudan: Gunfire heard but uneasy truce holds

The UN is bracing for up to 270,000 people to flee Sudan into neighbouring South Sudan and Chad. Hassan Ibrahim, 91, is among those to have already fled country

DNA

KHARTOUM: A ceasefire in Sudan appears to be holding, although there have been reports of new gunfire and shelling. It is the fourth effort to stop the fighting which began on 15 April, with previous truces not observed. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the 72-hour truce had been agreed between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) after 48 hours of negotiations. The latest ceasefire attempt started at midnight (22:00 GMT on Monday). At least 459 people have died in the conflict so far, though the actual number is thought to be much higher. Both sides had confirmed they would cease hostilities. But Tagreed Abdin, who lives 7km from the centre of Khartoum, said she could hear shelling from her home on Tuesday morning despite the agreement. "The situation right now is that this morning there was shelling and gunfire," she told the media. "Obviously the ceasefire hasn't taken," she added. The RSF has accused the army of violating the truce by "continuing to attack Khartoum with planes". Meanwhile, an army spokesperson has told Sky News Arabia that the RSF was re-

sponsible for "storming prisons" following reports of gunfire at Port Sudan. In other developments, the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned there is a "high risk of biological hazard" after fighters seized a laboratory believed to be holding samples of diseases, including polio and measles. The National Public Health Laboratory is near the centre of Khartoum and not far from city's main airport. The WHO told the BBC that workers can no longer access the laboratory, and power cuts are making it impossible to properly manage the biological and chemical materials that are stored in the lab. Since the violence began, residents of Khartoum have been told to stay inside, and food and water supplies have been running low. The bombing has hit key infrastructure, like water pipes, meaning that some people have been forced to drink from the River Nile. Hospitals are running out of key supplies and struggling to cope, according to secretary general of Sudan Doctors Union Dr Atia Abdalla Atia. Countries have scrambled to evacuate diplomats and civilians as fighting raged in central, densely populated parts of the capital. There will be hopes the latest ceasefire will allow civilians to leave the city. Foreign governments will also hope it will allow for

continued evacuations out of the country. Several EU member states, as well as African and Asian countries, have evacuated hundreds of their citizens, while the UK government has announced it will begin evacuating British passport holders and immediate family members from Tuesday. Germany has said it will conduct its last evacuation flight from Sudan to Jordan on Tuesday evening, with the remaining German nationals to be evacuated by partner nations in the days after. On Monday, Mr Blinken said that some convoys trying to move people out had encountered "robbery and looting". Egypt's foreign ministry confirmed that an attaché had been killed while driving to the embassy in Khartoum. The UN is bracing for up to 270,000 people to flee Sudan into neighbouring South Sudan and Chad. Hassan Ibrahim, 91, is among those to have already fled the country. The retired physician lives near the main airport in Khartoum, where some of the worst fighting has taken place, but has since made the perilous journey into neighbouring Egypt with his family. He told the media they had escaped being caught up in a firefight between RSF fighters and the army but that a van travelling behind them was hit. The family then boarded a bus to the border, which took 12 hours, only for them

to be met by "crowded and chaotic" scenes as people waited to be given entry. "There were so many families with elderly passengers, children and babies," said Mr Ibrahim. "The Sudanese are fleeing the country - it is a sad reality." Eiman ab Garga, a British-Sudanese gynaecologist who works in the UK, was visiting the capital with her children when the fighting began and has just been evacuated to Djibouti on a flight organised by France. Her hurried departure meant that she was not able to say goodbye to her ailing father, her mother or her sister. "The country is dirty, there's rubbish all over it," she told BBC Radio 4's World Tonight programme. "There's sewage overflowing, it smells, so now we're next going to have an outbreak of illness and disease, and there won't be a hospital to go to there." "We're just looking at death and destruction and destitution." Violence broke out, primarily in Khartoum, between rival military factions battling for control of Africa's third largest country. Two military men are at the centre of the dispute - Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the armed forces and in effect the country's president, and his deputy and leader of the RSF, Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as Hemedti.

President greets BD counterpart

ISLAMABAD: The President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi has congratulated Muhammad Shahabuddin on assuming office as the 22nd President of Bangladesh. In his message Alvi said, "I am confident that during your tenure our brotherly ties would be further strengthened. I wish you a very successful term in office and looking forward to work closely with you for the mutual benefit of our countries". - DNA

BDS defuses explosives at CTD's police station Kabal

SWAT: The bomb disposal squad (BDS) here Tuesday afternoon defused an explosive materials at CTD police station's blasts site at Kabal. The undefused explosive materials, which were recovered from the old building of the CTD's police station's rubble, were defused by the experts of bomb disposal squad that rocked the area. The district police spokesman urged people to avoid a visit to the blast site until the completion of the clearance operation. - DNA

Ishaq Dar directs FBR to expand country's tax base



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Ishaq Dar has directed the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to multiply its efforts for expanding tax base in the country. This he said while chairing a meeting in which the revenue performance of the FBR was analysed. FBR Chairman Asim Ahmad briefed the meeting about the FBR's performance on meeting revenue targets during July 2022 and March 2023. He told the huddle that the FBR will try its utmost to chase down its targets during the remaining months of 2022-23 fiscal year. Ishaq Dar while expressing his satisfaction on the FBR's performance assured the chairman of Finance Division's complete cooperation. - DNA

199 more people safely arrive in Jeddah from Sudan

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Tuesday informed that 199 more people had safely arrived in Jeddah from the war-torn Sudan in continuation of the evacuation efforts made by the Kingdom under the directives of its leadership. The evacuees arrived in Jeddah through Saudi Arabian Navy ship HMS Yanbu were included nationals from Saudi Arabia, United States of America, United Kingdom, Sweden, Italy, Qatar, Syria, the Netherlands, Iraq, Turkey, Tanzania, Lebanon, and Libya, said a statement. According to the

statistics, 356 people have been evacuated from Sudan in which 101 are Saudi nationals while 255 are from 26 other countries. The Kingdom is making all out efforts to facilitate the foreign nationals for departure to their native countries. Statement by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on the evacuation of Pakistani nationals from Sudan. In keeping with the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to the welfare of overseas Pakistanis, Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to lead in the relief and rescue of Pakistanis in Sudan. Today, another convoy carrying 211 Pakistanis dispatched from Khartoum has arrived in Port Sudan. With the latest convoy, the total number of Pakistanis who have been evacuated to safety has reached 700. Ambassador Meer Bahrose Regi's team in Khartoum and Port Sudan are working day and night to facilitate the stay of Pakistanis who are still in Sudan until their evacuation to Pakistan. We remain engaged with friendly countries in region especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to facilitate this process. - APP

WHO warns of biological hazard at seized lab

GENEVA: The World Health Organization (WHO) says there's a "high risk of biological hazard" at a laboratory caught up in the ongoing conflict in Sudan. Officials said it was unclear who was behind the occupation of the National Public Health Laboratory in the capital Khartoum. The city has been ravaged by fighting between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The WHO told media on Tuesday that workers can no longer access the lab. And it warned that power cuts were making it impossible to properly manage material at the lab. Officials said that a broad range of biological and chemical materials are stored in the lab. The facility holds measles and cholera pathogens, as well as other hazardous materials. A lack of power is also putting depleting stocks of blood bags stored at the lab at risk of spoiling. The lab is near the centre of Khartoum and not far from city's main airport. - APP

Army chief's China visit to determine foreign policy: Rashid

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid said on Tuesday that visit of Army Chief General Asim Munir to China was very important and would determine the foreign policy of the country. In his tweet on the social networking site Twitter, Sh Rashid said that the government should respect the Constitution and law instead of hurling threats at the judiciary otherwise they had already landed in hot water for disobeying the constitution and the law. He said it was better for the rulers to go for elections rather than committing political suicide. Mr Rashid maintained that Maulana Fazlur Rehman would take the government in a blind alley and rulers would have no way out to save them. He said that Asif Zardari wanted to see Bilawal Bhutto as the Prime Minister. Mr Rashid said in the month of April, 41 people committed suicide in the coastal belt of Thatta due to poverty. The entire Sharif family offered Eid-ul-Fitr prayers inside the forewalls of their house. The former interior minister said that Zardari had put all the onus of failure on Shehbaz Sharif. He (Zardari) himself was sitting aside as a virtuous person. Mr Rashid maintained that election will be held no matter it would be held in Punjab or across the country. Bilawal did not bring even five dollars of aid from the whole world nor did he solve the problem with the IMF, said the AML chief adding, role of the judiciary was being undermined. - DNA



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Pakistan received highest funding in 2022: ADB

ADB and partners have given projects worth \$5.5bn to Pakistan while in 2022, concessional loans of \$2bn and \$60mln have been provided to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has claimed that Pakistan is the only Asian country that received the highest funding last year. The bank said that floods damaged the economy, especially the crops which created an imbalance of supply and demand and increased inflation. According to the annual report released by the ADB, Pakistan received the most funding during 2022. The ADB financed projects worth \$31.8 billion in Asia. "The ADB and partners have given projects worth \$5.5 billion to Pakistan while in 2022, concessional loans of \$2 billion and \$60 million have been provided to Pakistan." According to the report, Pakistan's economy suffered the most damage due to floods, as "crops have been destroyed in Pakistan due to floods, the balance of supply and demand has deteriorated and local inflation has also increased due to destruction of crops in Pakistan". According to the ADB report, 1,730 people were killed, 33.3 million people were affected by floods in Pakistan, while the floods caused a loss of \$30 billion to Pakistan's economy. - DNA



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