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Detailed News On Page-08

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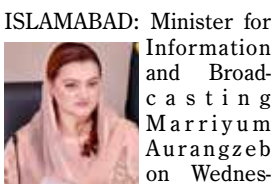
Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Marriyum slams Khan's narrative

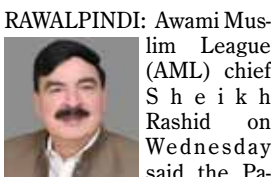
DNA



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday rejected Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan's narrative of "helplessness" while being in the government for more than three years. She also lashed out at him for blaming the former army chief for every blunder he made during his government tenure which was marred by corruption, loot, plunder and inefficiency. "Bajwa made his (Imran) government in 2018 and it was again Bajwa who implemented conspiracy against the (PTI) government," the minister said in a series of tweets.

Thursday will be the victory day

STAFF REPORT



RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid on Wednesday said the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) had been using political negotiations with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as a guise for buying time.

In a video message shared on Twitter, Mr Rashid, a key ally of the PTI, said negotiations were a trick adding that the government lavished five-day Eid holidays [to buy time]. "PDM's political fate has been sealed," he claimed.

Collective will vital for polls: Siraj

AZIZ MUJAHD



KHARIAN: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Chief, Sirajul Haq, on Wednesday stated that the upcoming elections should be held on the collective will of all political parties and not just on one party's will. He criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for making a person (Parvez Elahi), who was previously called a big da'it by Imran Khan, their party president. He also criticized PPP for making Shehbaz prime minister

Same-day polls

PDM, allies united in their stance: PM

Says arbitration not SC's job; deems Oct-Nov 'appropriate' for polls

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said "arbitration" was not the Supreme Court's (SC) job and such matters should be discussed in parliament, asserting that the federal coalition was united on its stance that polls should be held across the country on the same day. The premier passed these remarks while addressing the federal cabinet hours after holding an important meeting with coalition partners to discuss the possibility of talks with the opposition PTI and the date of the Punjab polls set by the top court. The meeting was attended by JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Foreign Minister and PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and other important members of the federal coalition. At the outset of his speech, PM Shehbaz said the challenges faced by the government in the last few months were taken to parliament. "The National Assembly and the joint house have dealt with these challenges, regarding the matters of the SC, through constitutional and legal measures," he said. "But the situation remains challenging." The premier recalled that parliament had rejected the decision of a three-member SC bench in the Punjab elections delay case and asserted that the federal government's stance had not changed even today. During his address, the PM said: "The government believes in the

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NA Speaker writes letter to CJP

Bilawal says parliament is being insulted

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said Wednesday that he would write a letter to Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial after the legislators stressed the parliament's supremacy. The lawmakers unanimously said that the authority of parliament should not be undermined by any individual or entity and stressed that the legislative should exercise its power of enacting crucial legislation. The development comes as the government and the Supreme Court remain at loggerheads over the elections to the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies. The court – which will resume hearing on elections tomorrow – had before Eid ul Fitr asked parties to sit down at the negotiating table to decide a day for the elections, but that

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MPs barred from entering NA

PTI says govt not sincere for talks

Govt should change constitution or hold polls as per law: Fawad

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership reiterated their resolve that they were willing to sit down with the government for talks in order to develop political consensus to get the country out of the prevailing quagmire; however, they cast aspersions on ruling parties' intention in this regard, which were hell-bent on disobeying constitution to avoid the polls, which was unacceptable. In a statement on Wednesday, PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi and PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry stated that Shehbaz Sharif's statement clear the little doubt if any that the imported government was in no mood either to hold talks with the opposition or conduct elections in the constitutionally mandated timeframe. Shah Mehmood Qureshi said that in the best interests of the country and people, they were willing to sit down for talks to develop political consensus within ambit of the Constitution. However, he stated that clearly this government was not sincere, as it neither

Continued on Page 06

SC to hear Punjab polls case today

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday announced that a three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial, would hear the case regarding the elections in Punjab. The case is scheduled for Thursday at 11:30am. The new cause list was released by the registrar Supreme Court. The three-member bench comprises Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Ijazul Ahsan. However, it should be noted that Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial is reportedly unwell and will not hear

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BEIJING: COAS Gen Asim Munir with Chinese counterpart salute as they inspect at the PLA Army Headquarters after his warm welcome during his four-day official visit in China. —DNA

Two Army Jawans embrace Shahadat



DNA

RAWALPINDI: Two Pakistan Army soldiers were martyred in the Tirah area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Khyber district during a gunfight with terrorists, the military's media affairs wing said on Wednesday. The statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) identified the martyrs as 26-year-old Sepoy Waqas Ali Shah from Charsadda and 24-year-old Sepoy Basir Ali from Peshawar. "On April 25, 2023, an exchange of fire took place between own troops and terrorists in general area Tirah, Khyber district. Own troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location," the ISPR said. "Resultantly, two terrorists were sent to hell and four terrorists were injured. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists," it stated, adding that sanitisation of the area was being carried out to eliminate other militants in the area. "Security forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the military's media wing added. In his maiden press briefing a day earlier, ISPR Director General Maj Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry revealed that at least 293 people were martyred and 521 were injured in 436 terrorist incidents over the past year.

Pakistan, China vow to bolster defence ties

COAS visits PLA headquarters, meets with PLA Commander

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Asim Munir visited the headquarters of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and met its commander on Wednesday. They discussed regional stability and military cooperation. The army chief, who is in China on a four-day official visit, arrived in the neighbouring country on Tuesday. In a press release, the military's media affairs wing said. These inaugural meetings are expected to be followed by further discussions on enhancing military cooperation and promoting greater collaboration in the areas of defence and security, it added. This is COAS Munir's fourth overseas visit ever since he took charge as the army chief.

need to maintain peace and stability in the region while promoting military-to-military cooperation, the ISPR stated. The army chief also observed a demonstration of the PLA troops' operational capabilities and commended the high standards of training and professionalism demonstrated by the soldiers. COAS Munir's four-day visit to China includes a series of meetings with military leaders aimed at strengthening the longstanding relations between the two armed forces, the military's media affairs wing said. These inaugural meetings are expected to be followed by further discussions on enhancing military cooperation and promoting greater collaboration in the areas of defence and security, it added. This is COAS Munir's fourth overseas visit ever since he took charge as the army chief.

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SERENA HOTELS

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The use of explosive weapons in urban areas must stop – Page 05

CDA decides to build Sports Enclave in Shah Allah Ditta – Page 06

Sergey Lavrov warns of EU militarisation, similar to NATO – Page 07

Zelensky holds first war phone call with China's Xi – Page 08

Taliban kill IS 'mastermind' of Kabul airport attack, says White House

The blast killed some 170 Afghans and 13 US troops

WASHINGTON: Taliban government forces have killed the militant Islamic State group mastermind of a devastating suicide bomb attack at the Kabul airport during the chaotic withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in 2021, the White House said on Tuesday. The bomber detonated a device among packed crowds at the airport's perimeter as they tried to flee Afghanistan on August 26, 2021. The blast killed some 170 Afghans and 13 US troops who were securing the airport for the traumatic exit. It was one of the deadliest bombings in Afghanistan and prompted a wave of criticism of President Joe Biden for his decision

to pull American forces out of the country nearly 20 years after the US invasion. The leader of the militant group that planned the attack has since been killed by Taliban authorities, White House national security spokesman John Kirby said in a statement. "He was a key ISIS-K official directly involved in plotting operations like Abbey Gate, and now is no longer able to plot or conduct attacks," Kirby said, referring to the spot outside the airport where the attack took place. ISIS-K refers to the Islamic State Khorasan, the branch of "He was killed in a

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Two TTP terrorists arrested

KARACHI: The Special Investigation Unit (SIU) of Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) Karachi Police on Wednesday arrested two alleged terrorists affiliated with proscribed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Arrested accused were involved in killings and extortion, according to spokesman for SIU. They were identified as Muhammad Kamal Khan and Abdul Qadir. The accused have confessed their involvement in killings and extortion collection on the orders of TTP leadership in Afghanistan. The arrested accused demanded extortion for TTP from a trader in Saddar area, a case of which was registered at Preedy

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Court extends Buzdar's interim bail till May 3

LAHORE: An accountability court on Wednesday extended pre-arrest interim bail of former chief minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar till May 3 in an assets beyond means inquiry. Accountability Court Judge Sheikh Sajid Ahmad conducted the proceedings on the bail petition of the former chief minister. Usman Buzdar, along with his counsel, also appeared before the court and got his attendance marked. During the proceedings, the judge addressed Buzdar's counsel and questioned whether the bail should be administered casually? At this, the counsel responded that a reply to the questionnaire had been prepared and it would be submitted to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) office today [Wednesday]. However, the judge observed that Usman Buzdar should take the court seriously, adding that the matter would be decided on merit and relief would be given if he deserved it.

Bodies of father, 4 children found

PESHAWAR: The bodies of five persons, including a father and his four children between the ages of five and ten have been found in the Domial area of Bannu district on Wednesday. According to a police spokesperson, the dead bodies were found in the Koshi area of Domial and sent for medico-legal formalities. A pistol was also found near the dead body of the father, who is identified as Aqleem, a resident of Azeem Kaley (village). Close relatives of Aqleem informed the police that he was under mental stress for the last few months and was also on medication for the problem. Some intoxicating drugs were also found at the site of the crime, the spokesperson added. The relatives said that the children had gone to their maternal grandfather's home and were returning home along with their father when this incident took place.

Sherpao demands judicial inquiry

PESHAWAR: Chairman, Qumi Watan Party, Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao here Wednesday demanded a judicial inquiry into the deadly explosions at the Counter Terrorism Department's police station at Kabal in district Swat and compensation to heirs of the martyr's policemen. In a statement here, Aftab Sherpao said that the killing of over a dozen of CTD policemen was a great tragedy and judiciary inquiry was required to identify the exact nature of the explosions. He said residents of Swat had rendered great sacrifices for the protection of the motherland and their sacrifices would not go to waste. Aftab Sherpao demanded compensation to the heirs of the martyrs and free treatment to all injured of the blasts. — APP

Belgian envoy highlights scope of ties with Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Council on Foreign Relations (PCFR), hosted a breakfast meeting with H.E. Mr. Charles Delogne Ambassador of Belgium to Pakistan at a Marriott Hotel, Karachi. The meeting was attended by Mr. Justice Gulzar Ahmed, former Chief Justice of Pakistan and Co-Chief Patron of the Council, Mr. Abid M Husain Trade Commissioner Embassy of Belgium, Ambassador Alam Brohi, Ambassador G R Baluch, Ambassador Syed Hasan Habib, Mr. Ahsan Mukhtar Zubairi, members of business community, patrons, and senior members of the council. H.E. Mr. Charles Delogne highlighted the importance and scope of relations between Belgium and Pakistan. Excellency maintained that both countries enjoy strong trade and economic relations. He further highlighted that Belgium offers scholarships for



Pakistani students and nearly 50 Pakistani students are pursuing PhDs from there. Dr. Khalida Ghaus senior member of

the Council highlighted the need of cooperation between the PCFR and Belgium based think tanks for undertaking

collaborative research projects. H.E. Delogne appreciated the idea and agreed to support such undertakings during his

tenure of the office. The meeting was followed by interactive discussion on various other issues of mutual interest. At

the Mr. Ahsan Mukhtar Zubairi Secretary General presented souvenir to H.E. Mr. Charles Delogne.

Dogar refuses to pass on Wazirabad firing file to JIT

LAHORE: The new joint investigation team (JIT) formed by the Punjab caretaker government could not find the file of the case for investigation into the murder attempt on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan in Wazirabad as former Lahore capital city police officer (CCPO) Ghulam Mehmood Dogar took the file with him. The JIT asked for the file from Ghulam Mehmood Dogar several times. The investigation could not be started as the file was not provided, according to the JIT sources. "I cannot give the file. Yasmin Rashid has filed a writ petition in the High Court. I will give the file when the High Court decides," Ghulam Mehmood Dogar said. It is to be noted here that the JIT had been formed under the chairmanship of Rawalpindi Regional Police Officer (RPO) Khurram Ali Shah. The JIT also approached an anti-terrorism court (ATC) for not getting the file. The current JIT includes DIG Kamran Adil, Ihsanullah Chaudhary and SP Naseebullah. The members of JIT, formed during the era of the PTI, have disagreed with the investigation of Ghulam Mehmood Dogar. — DNA

Census teams will launch verification of data in 11 cities

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: The census teams will continue to launch verification of the data collected by the PBS field team from 11 cities including Attock, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Jhelum, Gujrat, Sheikhupura, Chakwal, Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, Abbottabad and Tank in pursuance of the extended program 7th Population and Housing Census till April 30, 2023. Sources of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics told that the government on Tuesday announced a five-day extension in field work of the 7th Population and Housing Census till April 30 after the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) field teams observed 'negative growth' in 12 major urban areas and needed 'data verification' in 11 major cities of the country. The

areas where the census timeline has been extended include Quetta, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Karachi Central, Karachi South, Karachi West, Karachi East, Malir, Kemari, Korangi, Hyderabad and Islamabad, PBS spokesman Muhammad Sarwar Gondal said in a press statement. Similarly, he said, verification of the data collected by the PBS field team from 11 cities including Gujranwala, Sialkot, Jhelum, Gujrat, Sheikhupura, Attock, Chakwal, Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, Abbottabad and Tank was needed. The spokesman said the extension in the census timeline (from April 26 to April 30) was aimed at "complete coverage and assurance of no leftover structure/houses in the selected districts/big cities where negative growth rate or very slow growth rate

has been observed." He also asked the provincial governments of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to continue the physical verification process in 11 identified cities to ensure 'smooth coverage, sources added.

PFA takes action

On the special instructions of Director General Punjab Food Authority (PFA) Raja Jahangir Anwar and Deputy Director Mehtab Ahmed Khan, the Food Safety teams of Attock district took several actions against elements hostile to health during the Eid days to ensure the supply of quality food to the people, said PRO PFA Haris Butt while talking to APP here Wednesday. Food Safety Officer Zahoor Hussain and Chief Coordinator Attock Press Club Regd Nisar Ali Khan were also present on the occasion.

Sherry calls for vigilance as Pak braces for heavy rainfall

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman has advised the provinces on Wednesday to take necessary precautions and remain vigilant as Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has issued a weather advisory predicting heavy rainfall from April 26th to May 7th. The minister urged all the provinces to take necessary precautions to ensure public safety during the forecast period of heavy rainfall. This includes cleaning storm drains, ensuring electricity pole stability and maintaining road access in the event of local flooding, she added. She emphasized for taking extra precautions in the areas where reconstruction work is going on as a result of damages caused by the 2022 floods. The minister feared that the country may fall into a recovery trap if it did not have sufficient resources to deal with the devastation caused by the 2022 floods. "My fear is that Pakistan will be in the resilience and rebuilding trap if there are not enough resources to plough into the devastation wrought by the 2022 flooding. While there is no clarity on what level of monsoon to expect next, the rebuilding projects will certainly be impacted as well as economic recovery, if even a fraction of the devastation repeats itself," Sherry Rehman said, "The forecast predicts strong winds and hailstorms



that may cause damage to structure and crops, particularly wheat crop. Farmers must manage their activities keeping in view the weather forecast to avoid damage to crops and infrastructure. In addition, heavy rains may cause flash floods in Mansehra, Abbottabad, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir from May 1st to May 4th. Parts of Balochistan and hill torrents of D.G Khan may also experience heavy rainfall from April 28th to May 2nd. Landslides may occur in hilly areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir, Murree, and Galliat during the forecast period." The minister highlighted that across Pakistan, from Kashmir to Karachi, we must prepare to expect unstable weather patterns leading to

sporadic urban flooding "The fishing community is advised to be cautious, particularly off the coast of Ormara, Pasni and Gwadar, due to the possibility of choppy seas and extreme weather conditions. It is important for the citizens to take necessary precautions and stay informed about weather updates during this period." According to PMD, the regions that will be affected by rain, wind, and thunderstorms include Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi, Mardan, Bajaur, Kurram, Waziristan, Kohat, Islamabad, Murree, Galliat, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Gujranwala, Sialkot and Lahore from 26th April (evening/night) to 29th April. The areas that are likely to experience rain, dust, and thunderstorms with isolated heavy falls and hailstorms include Balochistan, South Punjab, and Sindh from 27th April (evening/night) to 3rd May. Furthermore, more rain, wind, and thunderstorms with isolated heavy falls and hailstorms are expected in various regions from 30th April to 5th May. These regions include Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi, Mardan, Bajaur, Kurram, Waziristan, Kohat, Karak, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Mansehra, Buner, Kohistan, Shangla, Haripur, Abbottabad, Islamabad etc. — APP

KPCTA arranges 3-day tour for orphans

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture & Tourism Authority (KPCTA) and Child Protection Department arranged a three-day tour for orphans and destitute children of 'Zamong Kor' to Galiyat and other touristic sites of Hazara region. According to an official handout issued here on Wednesday, the children

of Zamong Kor, a KP government operated shelter house for orphans and destitute children was arranged to Shimla Hill, Ilyasi Masjid, Harno Park, Siji Kot Waterfall, Nathiagali Park, Lalazar Park and other touristic spots of the Hazara region. On the occasion, the Manager Events, KPCTA, Hasena Shaukat said that like the Eidul Fitr celebrations by other people, the children residing in Zamong Kor also have the right to celebrate the religious festival in a befitting manner. Therefore, the authority arranged a special tour for these children. She said that the children were jubilant as special arrangements were made for their visit to touristic places on the occasion of the Eidul Fitr. She said that the children have fully amused during their visit to Harno Park, Nathiagali Park, Siji Kot Waterfall and other places. — APP

Supreme Court supposed to deliver justice not arranging talks, says Kundi



DNA

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday said that the Supreme Court was supposed to deliver justice and not to arrange talks. Addressing a press conference here at Circuit House, the state minister said the judiciary

was there to take decisions on the basis of justice and not on the basis of family pressure. "There was no room for recordings of private telephone calls of anyone in any independent state but unfortunately, it was being done in our country," he said and demanded that the forensic investigations should be done into the matter that who was responsible for this illegal activity. The recent two audio leaks including one of the mother-in-law of the sitting Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) and the other of the former chief justice Saqib Nisar posed many questions on the judicial system. Faisal Karim Kundi said that the negotiation and dialogue was a political process which was pursued by the political parties and even countries to resolve their differences and issues. He was of the view that Parliament was the right forum for the politicians to initiate dialogue among themselves for resolving issues. He said that the al-

lies of the coalition government had concerns regarding negotiations with PTI which were based on reality as the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) never showed a serious attitude over the national issues. He mentioned that PTI leader Asad Qaiser himself contacted representatives of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) claiming to have the mandate of his party for talks. However, the claim was rejected by the PTI chairman who nominated other party representatives for the task, he said and added that it proved the PTI like non-serious attitude once again. He also mentioned that in the past, around 85 cases related to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) came before a specific bench, out of which the decisions of 83 cases were given in favor of the PTI. He said the decisions of two remaining cases were pending including one related to the record corruption in the BRT project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which was given judicial

protection. While the other case was related to the election results of the former deputy speaker of the National Assembly, on which despite of the presence of all the evidence, the decision on the case was not given until the completion of his term of deputy speaker. Expressing grief over the loss of lives in the recent Swat incident, he said the investigations into the matter were underway and the comments over it could be made after the finalization of its inquiry report. He said the ISPR, in its last press briefing, once again clarified that it takes action on the directions of federal government. He termed "wrong policies" of the previous PTI government as the reason behind the recent wave of terrorism in the country. He alleged engaging militants in talks resulted in allowing them to resettle in different areas of the country. Those who are responsible for the wrong doings must be held accountable, he added.

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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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Emergency Ambulance.1122
& Rescue Services.4451122
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Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations
Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20

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Edhi Ambulance.....115
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PIA Cargo.....9280979
RailwayInquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092

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MH.....5611116
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RGH.....9290301-7
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Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
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Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: People are buying tickets from terminal at Faizabad to book seats in bus for travelling back to their destinations after spending Eid-ulFitr holidays with their beloved Ones, in Federal Capital. —Online

Pak appoints 11 press counsellors, 3 press attachés in various countries

Sajila Naveed to serve in Paris, Sagheer Wattoo in Brussels, Mohammad Saleh in Dubai, Nighat Aamir in Ottawa

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a recent development, Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has approved important appointments on Wednesday in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The appointments include the foreign postings of 11 press counsellors and three press attachés in various coun-

tries. According to details, Syeda Nighat Aamir has been appointed as the new Press Attache in Ottawa, Canada, while Mohsin Amanat has been assigned the same position in New York, USA. Sajila Naveed will be serving as the press attaché in Paris, while Sagheer Wattoo has been appointed to the same position in

Brussels. Other appointments include Mohammad Irfan in Jeddah, Mukarrab Mukhtar in Tokyo, Mohammad Saleh in Dubai, Farhat Jabi in Tehran, and Athar Zaib Abbasi in Singapore. Syed Khizr Ali Shah will work as press attaché in Kabul, while Zaigham Abbas has been appointed to the same position in Washington. Irfan Ashraf Qazi will be serv-

ing as the press attaché in Beijing, while Adeel Sattar has been appointed to the same position in Colombo. These appointments have been approved in order to strengthen Pakistan's diplomatic relations with other countries. The newly appointed officials are expected to perform their duties with utmost dedication and professionalism.

Parliament's authority will be protected, affirms Khawaja Asif

He emphasized that conflict always resulted in loss and the PML-N did not desire any conflict between institutions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader and Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, disclosed on Wednesday that the party was not engaged in any negotiations with the opposition at present.

Speaking to journalists at the Parliament House, Khawaja Muhammad Asif emphasized that conflict always resulted in loss and the PML-N did not desire any conflict between institutions. He refrained from predicting the outcome of such a conflict, stating that losses incurred would depend on the situation. Khawaja Asif clarified that there were no ongoing



negotiations with the opposition party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). He assured that the boundaries of the Parliament would be safeguarded, and no one would be allowed to impinge on the powers of the Parliament. The defense minister emphasised that every organization should function within its limits.

APHC vows to continue struggle

ISLAMABAD: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) on Wednesday has reaffirmed the Kashmiris' resolve to continue their political struggle till the settlement of the Kashmir dispute as per the relevant United Nations resolutions. According to Kashmir media service, the APHC leaders including Abdul Ahad Parra, Bashir Ahmed Andrabi, Khawaja Firdous, Zamrooda Habib, Yasmeen Raja, Fareeda Behanji, Muhammad Aqib, Eng Raouf, Jameel Mir, Dr Musaib, Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and Jammu and Kashmir Peoples League in their statements in Srinagar, further maintained that the freedom-loving people of Kashmir were engaged in a peaceful struggle to secure their right to self-determination in accordance with the UN resolutions

but the Indian forces' personnel had arrested thousands of Kashmiris in fake cases and lodged them in various jails of India and IIOJK. The detainees include the APHC chairman Masarrat Aalam Butt and other top leaders including Muhammad Yasin Malik, Shabbir Ahmad Shah, Aasiya Andrabi, Nayeem Ahmad Khan, Maulvi Bashir Ahmed, Bilal Siddiqi, Ameer Hamza, Mushtaq-ul-Islam, Abdul Samad Inqilabi, Dr Muhammad Shafi Shariati, Dr Hameed Fayaz, Dr Muhammad Qasim Fakhtoo and others who have been kept in various jails for years as their illegal detention is being deliberately prolonged on one pretext or the other, they added. They termed the G20 meeting, scheduled in Srinagar on 22-24 May, this year, as a decoy to play normlacy mantra by the BJP government and its puppet regime in the

UN-recognized disputed territory. They appealed to the G20 countries to flatly refuse participation in meetings and events in the internationally recognized disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir reeling under Indian military siege for the past over seven decades. They urged the G20 members to impress upon India to give the Kashmiris their inalienable right to self-determination which is the prerequisite for establishing peace, political and economic stability in the South Asian region. The APHC leaders and organizations also hailed the press statement by Director General Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Maj Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry for Pakistan's unwavering support to the Kashmir cause and their commitment to the right to self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. —APP

NA Deputy Speaker inaugurates NADRA office in Bannu

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly, Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durrani, inaugurated a state-of-the-art NADRA office in a bid to facilitate the residents of Tehsil Marian in Bannu District and bring solace in the lives of the people of Bannu and adjoining areas. During his visit, Durrani reviewed various departments of the National Database and Registration Authority office and was briefed by the NADRA staff on how it functions. Deputy Speaker Durrani also pledged to make Bannu a model district and stressed that there would be no compromise on the uplift and development of Bannu, and his goal was to make it a model district. The deputy speaker recognized the important roles played by the Federal Government and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUIF) in the construction. —APP

Pakistani student shines in int'l festival

ISLAMABAD: Bagger Dawaer, a 13-year-old student in Pakistan, shines on a "Belt and Road" online art festival with his piano solo The Detective. Representing China-Pak Educational Cultural Institute, Pakistan, his performance clip was shortlisted and showcased in the "Light of Hope" unit of the first-ever "100 Sister Schools Initiative Online Art Festival" hosted by Gansu Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and Gansu Provincial Education Department, China. Born into a hybrid family with his mother a Chinese and his father a Pakistani, Bagger Dawaer has been living and studying in Islamabad. His mother told China Economic Net that while developing his interest in art, he aspires to learn STEM disciplines and aims for internationally renowned high school and university, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Wednesday. So far, the online art festival has collected nearly 300 pieces of music and dance work from over 100 schools of 21 countries and regions. In the smorgasbord of artistic works, the performers not only display the distinctive artistic forms in their respective countries, but also demonstrate their mastery of Chinese musical instruments and dances such as Clapper Talk, a general name for all the Chinese folk art forms of narrating stories in the form of storytelling and singing. Uzbek student



performing Kuaiban for the "Belt and Road" online art festival [Photo from Gansu Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries]The outstanding works are selected and promoted on the websites and WeChat accounts of the organizers. A total of five units were presented, including the New Year unit that has recorded over 100,000 views, the Spring Festival unit, Lantern Festival unit, Spring is Coming unit, and Light of Hope unit. Along with the online festival, an art exhibition opened in Gansu earlier this month. Since the implementation of the 100 Sister Schools Initiative in 2019, 50 primary and secondary schools from countries along the "Belt and Road" have established friendly relations with 19 primary. —DNA

China-made Chery accelerates green travel in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: "As Chery continues to amplify its presence in Pakistan, apart from providing new generation automotive products and technologies to Pakistani customers, Chery is also striving to play an active role in protecting the environment and building a greener Pakistan," said Song Huaifu, deputy country director of Chery Automobile in Pakistan. During Chery's 2023 Global Dealer Theme Conference, dealers around the world tested and drove core Chery models. The two plug-in hybrid products of the TIGGO family, the TIGGO 8 PRO e+ and the TIGGO 7 PRO e+, fully demonstrate Chery's leading technical strength in the field of hybrid power with their all-round performance of lower energy consumption and stronger power. According to a Gwadar Pro' report, Chery's 1.5T hybrid engine, equipped with the TIGGO 8 PRO e+, can accelerate to a top speed of 7.5 seconds per 100 km, directly eliciting screams from on-site test-drive dealers. Even though there are on-site humps, its sheer power still brings a strong sense of stability. Huaifu said that "Tiggo 4 and Tiggo 8 are our star products in Pakistan and our dealers are requesting us to introduce more products of

Tiggo family, which they are confident will be well-received across Pakistan." Over the past few years, air pollution in Pakistan has increased dramatically, making Pakistan one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change caused by air pollution. There is a need to reduce vehicle tailpipe emissions, and electric vehicles are an effective solution. However, because of the limited infrastructure (such as adequate charging facilities) needed to support a large-scale transformation of the transport sector, the transition from fuel-powered vehicles to electric vehicles can not be completed overnight. By combining the advantages of pure electric vehicles (EVs) and hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs), PHEVs can achieve pure electric, low-emission driving and increase the driving range of the vehicle through the hybrid model, making them a powerful driver of the transition from fuel vehicles to electric vehicles in Pakistan. As one of the earliest auto companies to engage in R&D of new energy technologies, Chery closely follows the trend of the times and accelerates the provision of new energy products to the global market. —DNA

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CENTRELINE

Saudi Arabia-Iran rapprochement !!

CEO Serena Hotels hosts Iftar dinner

Turkish Airlines Golf Championship

Ch Uman new office inaugurated

PHA working to combat dengue fever

RAWALPINDI: Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi is working to combat dengue fever and control the spread of the disease, said a PHA spokesperson.

She informed that Director General, PHA, Ahmed Hasan Ranjha had urged the citizens to pay special attention to cleanliness asking them to properly dispose of the stagnant water.

She said the Rawalpindi district administration was creating an awareness among people about the danger of dengue and all possible preventive measures were being taken to cope with this disease.

The spokesperson said PHA was also working in collaboration with the Rawalpindi District Administration and the District Health Department to combat dengue.

The DG had also advised the citizens to use mosquito repellent spray regularly, she added. The DG had directed the PHA officials to take all possible steps to prevent the spread of dengue in the office premises.

Walks were also being organized in different parks and roads to spread awareness, she said adding, a large number of PHA officers, employees, and citizens were attending the walks. —APP

1.6 mln citizens enjoy safe, smooth Eid holidays

ISLAMABAD: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) has said that more than 1.6 million citizens were facilitated during the three-day Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations at tourist spots here. He stated this in a press release issued on Wednesday. He said district administration, traffic police, and law enforcement agencies showed great dedication and diligence during the festivities. Despite the heavy traffic across the city, the traffic remained calm and smooth due to a well-executed strategy and traffic plan. The DC added that the security of the city was full-proof during Eid, and credited the officials of the district administration and law enforcement agencies. —APP

Briefs

**AIOU
commences
final exams
on Thursday**

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is commencing final examinations of different programs on April 27 including Associate degree in Arts (B.A), Associate degree in commerce (B.Com), Associate degree in Education, Associate degree (Human Resource Management and Islamic Banking & Marketing), B.Ed, BBA, BS (Accounting and Finance) and BS (ODL) programs which were offered in autumn 2022 semester. According to Controller Examinations, these exams were scheduled to be held on April 25 but due to Eid Holidays, the exams of April 25 and 26 have been rescheduled and will be conducted on June 20 and 21. Roll number slips are uploaded to students' CMS portal and dispatched to the students at their addresses as well.—APP

**14 outlaws held
during search
operation,
liquor, weapons
recovered**

RAWALPINDI: On the special direction of City Police Officer CPO Khalid Mahmood Hamdani, search operations were conducted in various areas of Rawal Town. During operations, Police have arrested 14 outlaws and recovered more than 02 kg drugs, 85 liters of liquor, weapons and Rs 7,500 from their possession. Rata Amral police held two liquor supplier Daulat Khan and Aleem Khan besides recovering 60 liters of liquor from their custody. Similarly, Bani police nabbed 05 outlaws Numan, Haseeb, Shehryar, Jahanzeb and Numan and recovered 02.3 kg drugs and 01 pistol 30 bore from their possession. While, Pirwadi police held Kashif, Zafar, Naveed, Umeer and Shoaib and recovered 525 grams of charas, 25 liters of liquor and Rs 7,500 were also recovered. In the search operations, 836 houses were searched, collected data of 344 tenants and a total of 1321 people were questioned. The law enforcement agencies including lady Police participated in the search operation. SSP Operations Captain (Rtd) Muhammad Amir Khan Niazi led the operation. The purpose of conducting search operations have to stop the criminal elements and activities, Rawalpindi Police is always making all out efforts to protect the life and property of citizens.—APP

**PTI must stop
for abusive
language
against
opponents**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader Uzma Bukhari on Wednesday criticized the leaders of Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) and said they must stop for using abusive language against other political parties and the leaders as well. Talking to a private news channel, she said that the parliament is the best forum to discuss public issues and all political leaders of different parties should start debates over there. She suggested that the voters had given the mandate to the government to resolve their issues through the parliamentary forum. "Imran Khan focused to come back into power by creating chaos in the country as he misguided the public through speeches in various gatherings," she said. Replying to a question, she said PTI needs to stop dictating other parties as our party knew very well as what to do when and where. Commenting on the judgment of the Supreme Court over elections, she said, we are not touching anything falling into the jurisdiction of the judiciary as political parties had demanded a full court bench to listen their views.—DNA

Dar reviews progress of CDA development projects

Among others, the meeting was attended by Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Pasha, Secretary of Finance, Chairman CDA, Member (Planning & Design) CDA, and senior officers from Finance Division and CDA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday chaired a progress-review meeting on the development projects carried out by the Capital Development Authority (CDA), especially its housing schemes for overseas Pakistanis. The meeting was apprised that CDA has initiated a number of short-term and medium-term housing projects for overseas Pakistanis, out of which the Nilore Heights-I is in the completion phase for which over 6,000 applications have been received from 81 countries against 2,000 flats, a news release said. Highlighting the importance of overseas Pakistanis in the economic and financial development of the country, Ishaq Dar directed the CDA authorities



to expedite the works on the development projects for the countrymen living abroad. He also directed the CDA authorities to hold balloting of the Nilore Heights-I project, which was exclusively developed for Overseas Pakistanis, before

May 8 instead of May 16, 2023. The meeting was briefed on the provision of commercial and residential plots for overseas Pakistanis on an open auction basis. In the next phase, it was informed that registration for plots in C-14 and C-16

sectors for overseas Pakistanis would commence for which special facilitation desks have been established in the CDA. For the auction of commercial plots, the Finance Minister directed extending incentives to those investors who pay the

amount in US dollars so that foreign exchange reserves could be further bolstered.

He asked the CDA authorities to maintain a public-friendly and transparent system for investors during the sale and purchase process by minimizing physical contact between CDA authorities and overseas investors and ensuring maximum interaction using the digital platform developed for this purpose. Ishaq Dar also directed to expedite work on Kuri and Overseas Enclave projects and "the scheme for auction of plots in C-14 and C-16 sectors should be ready by mid of May 2023 for overseas Pakistanis."

Among others, the meeting was attended by Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Pasha, Secretary of Finance, Chairman CDA, Member (Planning & Design) CDA, and senior officers from Finance Division and CDA.

Ulema urge truce in Sudan

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) on Wednesday urged all stakeholders in Sudan to resolve the issues through dialogue. The council also urged the United Nations (UN), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member countries to play an active role in ending the civil war situation in Sudan. It appreciated the timely action of the leadership and government of Saudi Arabia in the evacuation process of foreigners stranded in Sudan besides its own nationals who had safely arrived in Jeddah. It further raised its voice to resolve Kashmir issue in accordance with the UN resolution. PUC Chairman and International Tazim-e-Haramain Sharifain Council Secretary General (SG) Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Allama Abdul Haq Majahid, Maulana Muhammad Rafiq Jami, Maulana Asad Zakaria Qasmi, Maulana Noman Hashir, Maulana

Muhammad Shafi Qasmi, Maulana Asadullah Farooqi, Allama Zubair Abid, Maulana Tahir Aqeel Awan Maulana Abu Bakr Hameed Sabri, Maulana Qasim Qasimi, Maulana Obaidullah Gormani, Allama Tahir Al-Hasan, Maulana Muhammad Ashfaq Pitafi, Maulana Aslam Siddiqui, Maulana Aziz Akbar Qasmi, Maulana Saadullah Shafiq, Maulana Abdul Sattar, Qari Abdul Hakeem Athar, Mufti Umar Farooq, Maulana Zubair Khatana, Hafiz Saqib Munir, Maulana Anwar-ul-Haq Mujahid and others, in a joint statement, said, "The Muslim Ummah is like a body, if any part of the body suffers, it causes pain for the entire Ummah." The Ulema and Mashaykh said Iran-Saudi Arabia relations had been restored, the gap between the Arab-Islamic countries was being bridged, and the relations of the Arab-Islamic countries with Syria were also on the way to recovery. At this movement,

the state of civil war in Sudan was a cause of concern for the entire Muslim Ummah, they added. They said the efforts that the Saudi leadership was making under the supervision of the Saudi Crown Prince Amir Mohammed bin Salman under the patronage of the King of Saudi Arabia, Salman bin Abdulaziz, were appreciated by the entire world. They said the PUC was continuing its efforts on the issues of Ummah including Kashmir and Palestine. Pakistan's position on the Kashmir issue was clear. They said the council had appealed to the countries included in the G20 to boycott the meeting being held in Srinagar, keeping in view India's atrocities on minorities and innocent people of Indian Illegally Occupied and Kashmir (IOJK). They expressed the hope that religious leadership included in R20 would not attend any kind of meeting in the Indian IOJK.—DNA

11 criminals arrested

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police apprehended 11 outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered drugs and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directives, the Bhara Kahu police team arrested an accused namely Munir involved in possessing illegal

weapon and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. The Ramna police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Shahzad involved in possessing illegal weapon and recovered one 9mm pistol with ammunition from his possession. Similarly, the Khanna police team arrested an accused namely Waseem involved in possessing illegal weapons and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. The Koral police arrested five accused namely Asad, Bismillah Khan, Hassan Khan, Fatha Khan and Hamza Abbas involved in possessing illegal weapons and recovered five pistols with ammunition from their possession. Moreover, the

Lohi Bher police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Rizwan involved in drug peddling and recovered 524 gram hashish from his possession. During the crackdown against proclaimed offenders and court absconders, the Islamabad capital police teams arrested two 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 Naadeem Bukhari directed all senior officers 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.

SSP Operations holds Khuli Katchery to address public complaints

RAWALPINDI: Senior Superintendent of Police SSP Operations Muhammad Amir Khan Niazi under Punjab government's open door policy, held a 'Khuli Kutchery' here on Wednesday at Police Lines Headquarters to address the grievances of the people. According to a Police spokesman, the SSP Operations issued directives to the officers concerned to take action and submit detailed report on the complaints submitted by the citizens in 'Khuli Kutchery'. The SSP on the complaints of the citizens also sought a report from In charge Complaint Cell about ineffective action by Police Officers concerned on the applications submitted by the citizens. He said that negligence on the part of the officials concerned would not be tolerated. The SSP on the occasion said, the 'Khuli Kutcheries' were being held to provide the citizens immediate relief and addressed their complaints besides it also helped improve standards of policing. He issued orders to the officers to complete inquiries and send reports within the given time frame.—APP

Police reunites missing boy with parents

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police Ramna police station team reunited a missing boy with his parents, a Police Public Relations Officer said. According to the details, a citizen submitted an application at Ramna police station and stated that his son namely Muhammad Sayam Ibrahim had been missing and could not be traced despite hectic efforts by family members. Upon receiving the application, the Ramna police team immediately started the investigation. The police team used technical and human resources and succeeded to trace the missing boy and reunited him safely with his family.—APP

Ban on kite flying continues

ISLAMABAD: The District Administration of the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) on Wednesday warned the citizens that kite flying within the city was banned and that any violation of the ban would result in legal action being taken under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). ICT Deputy Commissioner (DC) Irfan Nawaz Memon in a media statement said that the ban was imposed on April 4 for a period of two months, in an effort to prevent kite flying accidents and protect lives and property. He also instructed Assistant commissioners (ACs) magistrates, and law enforcement agencies to ensure strict compliance with the ban while directing them to take immediate action against kite flyers and kite sellers. Memon said that kite flying had become a major public safety issue in the city, especially during the spring season. The use of sharp strings and high-flying kites caused numerous accidents in the past, resulting in fatalities and injuries, he said, adding that the ban was aimed at curbing this menace and ensuring the safety of citizens. He asked the law enforcement agencies to ensure strict compliance with the ban and take action against violators. He also urged the public to cooperate with the relevant authorities and report any violations of the ban. It is pertinent to mention here that the Office of District Magistrate ICT had prohibited the manufacturing and selling of kites, kite flying string sharp Maanjha metallic wire and nylon cord within the revenue/territorial limits of Islamabad district for a period of two months through an order on April 4. The order asked the owners/occupants of the house, shops, hospitals, buildings, etc not to allow kite flying activity on their roof-tops.—APP

Over 32,000 bikers fined for not wearing helmet

The Chief Traffic Officer said that issuing traffic violation tickets is not as a punitive measure but the purpose is to ensure a safe road environment in the Capital and secure the lives of the people

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police issued 32,696 fine tickets to motorcyclists driving bikes without helmets during the ongoing year, a police public relations officer said. He said that the Islamabad Capital Police is endeavoring to maintain an exemplary traffic system in the city and check those involved in negligence on roads. Chief Traffic Officer Islamabad said that a vigorous campaign of Islamabad capital police had been launched as per the directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, in order to create awareness among citizens about the traffic rules. He said that all the officials have been directed to ensure the implementation of traffic rules and regulation irrespective of status and rank and demonstrate patience and politeness while issuing traffic violation tickets to the road users. Islamabad capital police is utilizing all available resources to facilitate the general public adding that the parents are also requested not to allow their underage children to drive bikes or cars till age of maturity, CTO maintained. The Chief Traffic Officer said that issuing traffic violation tickets is not as a punitive measure but the purpose is to ensure a safe road environment in the Capital and secure the lives of the people.—APP

World Day for Safety on April 28

ISLAMABAD: Like other parts of the globe World Day for Safety and Health at Work will be marked on Friday (April 28) across the globe including Pakistan which will help raise awareness of workplace safety and health issues.

The organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations (UN) will actively promote the World Day for Safety and Health at Work on April 28 every year. The UN, ILO, and other organizations, communities, individuals, and government bodies with an interest in workplace health and safety unite on or around April 28 to promote an international campaign known as World Day for Safety and Health at Work. The UN posts this event in its events calendar each year.

Community leaders and organizational representatives often promote the day by speaking out on issues such as workplace health and safety standards. Various media have promoted the day through news articles and broadcast programs.

Different types of events and activities that center on workplace health and safety are held in many countries on or around April 28 each year.

The ILO is devoted to advancing opportunities for people to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. It aims to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, boost social protection, and strengthen dialogue in work-related issues.—APP

Rupee gains 7 paises against Dollar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee gained 07 paises against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Wednesday as it closed at Rs 283.39 against the previous day's closing of Rs 283.46.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 287.3 and Rs 289.7, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs1.64 to close at Rs 312.24 against the last day's closing of Rs 310.60, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen surged by 02 paises and stood at Rs 2.12; whereas an increase of 67 paises was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 352.90 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 352.23. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal went down by 02 paises and 04 paises; closing at Rs77.16 and Rs 75.54, respectively.

IRSA releases 93,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 93,700 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 107,800 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1444.64 feet and was 46.64 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 28,400 cusecs while outflow as 22,000 cusecs.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1119.20 feet, 69.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 39,700 cusecs and 32,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 26,400, 43,700, 34,900 and 6,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 24,500 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 7,100 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Export of sports goods increases 17.78% to US 306.111 mln

ISLAMABAD: The export of sports goods from the country witnessed an increase of 17.78 percent during the nine months of the current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the export of corresponding months of last year. The country exported sports goods worth US\$ 306.11 million during July-March (2022-23) as opposed to the export of US\$ 259.904 million during July-March (2021-22), showing growth of 17.78 percent, according to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Among the sports products, the exports of footballs rose by 33.67 percent, surging from US\$ 132.935 million last year to US\$ 177.694 million during the current year. The gloves exports, however, dropped by 7.53 percent by going down from US\$ 56.702 million last year to US\$ 52.432 million during the current year, the PBS data revealed. Likewise, the exports of all other sports goods rose by 8.14 percent to US\$ 70.267 million from US\$ 75.984 million last year. Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the sports goods export witnessed an increase of 14.12 percent in March 2023 as opposed to the export of the same month of last year. The sports goods exports in March 2023 were recorded at US\$ 35.953 million against exports of US\$ 31.504 million in March 2022. During the period under review, the export of footballs and all other sports products surged by 21.07 and 23.69 percent respectively.—DNA

Karandaaz Pakistan partners with foodpanda

We believe this partnership will result in digitization of payments, new accounts acquisition and also open up formal avenues for access to finance for the SME segment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Karandaaz Pakistan and foodpanda Pakistan recently signed an agreement which aimed to increase financial inclusion in the country by facilitating the onboarding of customers, who are habitual users of the Cash on Delivery (COD) option while ordering through the foodpanda app, to digital payment options like mobile wallets, RAAST ID and debit or credit cards.

The Covid-19 pandemic sped up the move towards digitalisation, and countries with better digital payment systems did better during the crisis than those that were slower to adopt digital technologies. During and post lockdown, online platforms, like foodpanda, experienced a hike in demand as they were able to provide day to day necessities to consumers and digital payments proved to be a lifeline to both them and users. Sharjeel Murtaza, Direc-

tor Digital Financial Services (DFS) Karandaaz, discussed the program saying, "Karandaaz Digital is committed to promoting financial inclusion and enhancing the adoption of digital payments in Pakistan. We believe that partnering with non-financial institutions is critical for achieving this objective. The strategic partnership with foodpanda, an established player in the food and grocery delivery space, is a very exciting

development. Our primary objective is to convert foodpanda users, who currently opt for Cash on Delivery, to digital payment methods. We also aim to leverage foodpanda's outreach for increasing demand side awareness around the advantages of being banked and adopting digital payments. We believe this partnership will result in digitization of payments, new accounts acquisition and also open up formal avenues for access to finance for the SME segment."

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Taiwan Strait not a place for warships

Whenever the word Taiwan is uttered by certain Western politicians it has become their habit to accompany it with an accusing finger pointed at Beijing. Sticking faithfully to the script written by Washington, they try to paint the picture that Beijing is using “threats, coercion, intimidation or the use of force” in a bid to change the status quo. Some have even tried to link the Taiwan question with the conflict in Ukraine. Such talk is irresponsible and has been firmly rebutted by Beijing, which has repeatedly clarified that the Taiwan question is an internal affair and therefore fundamentally different from the Ukraine issue. Which is something that even the countries hyping up the claim that the Chinese mainland is itching to use force implicitly acknowledge as they all say they adhere to the one-China policy.

The United States has made no bones about the fact that it is using the Taiwan question as part of its “Indo-Pacific” China-containment strategy, and many of its allies, such as the United Kingdom and Japan, are tagging along for the ride as they have forgotten how to stand on their own two feet. Some countries in the European Union, however, seem caught on the horns of a dilemma, as whether to go all-in with the US or not in its efforts to suppress China’s rise has become a pressing question that will determine if the bloc asserts or surrenders its strategic autonomy.

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell shed some light on the pickle the EU has got itself into in an article published in a French weekly on Sunday.

Calling for European nations to send warships to the Taiwan Strait to “signify Europe’s commitment to freedom of navigation”, he said that Taiwan “concerns us economically, commercially and technologically”. And he explained why — “because Taiwan has a strategic role in the production of the most advanced semiconductors”. That this comment came after he attended the G7 foreign ministers’ meeting in Japan is probably no coincidence. It echoes similar remarks of the top diplomat of the US in the meeting.

But putting aside the fact the semiconductor risk comes from Washington, which is trying to get an exclusive and iron grip on the production of the most advanced semiconductors, it shows that the EU hierarchy at least is still intent on toeing Washington’s line. The only reason Borrell would call for European warships to patrol the Taiwan Strait is to please Washington. Why? Because, the EU leaders, who are of a certain generation, believe the bloc has “a major security concern, Ukraine”.

But Borrell — and other Western politicians — should know that European warships sailing though the Taiwan Strait is not conducive to peace and stability. Every time they do so, it will be a provocative move to intervene in China’s internal affairs.

Any such provocation risks disaster as it is foolishly playing with fire.

Yemen: a long road to peace

Hope has been hard to find in Yemen. After more than eight years of war, at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives, many of them civilians, the situation is desperate. More than two-thirds of the population are dependent on humanitarian aid. Yet, since the agreement of a truce between the Saudi-led military coalition and Iran-backed Houthi rebels last April, the country has seen a year of relative calm. This month, there was a huge cross-border exchange of prisoners of war. Riyadh spearheaded the coalition supporting the internationally recognised government led by Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, which had been ousted by the Houthis. It soon discovered that there would be no speedy victory, that the conflict was draining billions from its coffers and that Houthi attacks on its oil infrastructure were increasing the expense. The Houthis also had reason to talk, having suffered heavy losses and struggling with fuel shortages. The UN says that this is the best opportunity in years to end the war. It has also warned that the risk of the situation deteriorating again is very real. The reestablishment of Iran-Saudi relations is still in its early stages. If Saudi-Houthi talks make progress, Riyadh says the next step will be talks between the Houthis and the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), to which President Hadi ceded his powers. The fragmented, unwieldy body includes officials from internationally recognised bodies and the leaders of armed groups. They are united by their opposition to the Houthis and are alarmed at being cut out of current negotiations. Bringing the peace process under UN auspices would help to build confidence. But the Houthis are emboldened, and their opponents have wildly different and contradictory agendas, including seeking a separate state in the south. Even if these parties can agree a deal, those who have suffered most — civilians — will be missing from the table. They deserve representation. Responsibility for their ordeal also extends far beyond the fighters on the ground. The US and UK have sold billions of pounds worth of weaponry to Riyadh since the conflict began. All parties have been responsible for human rights abuses, attacks on civilian targets and the blocking of humanitarian aid, but there has been no hint of accountability for the lives lost. The international community should press the case for effective and impartial investigations, and a transitional justice process.

There can be no peace without talking to all those waging this war. But nor can Yemen recover if control of its future is ceded solely to those who have done so much to destroy it.

The use of explosive weapons in urban areas must stop

Nujeen Mustafa

Watching the chaotic scenes in Khartoum on TV, I am reminded of the terror I experienced being under bombardment myself during the war in Syria. Years after fleeing Aleppo, I can still hear the roar of explosions that shook the walls of my apartment and sent shockwaves through my body. As the sound of the bombing grew louder and louder, I would turn the volume on the television higher and higher.

Reliant on a wheelchair, and living on the fifth floor of a building with no lift, I knew I wouldn’t be able to escape

For almost two weeks now, vicious fighting has been going on in Sudan. Both sides of the conflict, the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, have resorted to shelling in densely populated areas, while truces that should have allowed civilians to evacuate have not held so far. Explosive weapons have hit homes, civilian buildings, such as hospitals, and vital infrastructure; fighting has killed at least 427 civilians and wounded 3,700.

Watching the chaotic scenes in Khartoum on TV, I am reminded of the terror I experienced being under bombardment myself during the war in Syria. Years after fleeing Aleppo, I can still hear the roar of explosions that shook the walls of my apartment and sent shockwaves through my body. As the sound of the bombing grew louder and louder, I would turn the volume on the television higher and higher.

Reliant on a wheelchair, and living on the fifth floor of a building with no lift, I knew I wouldn’t be able to escape the bombing and shelling that pulverised my childhood city, reducing parts of it to piles of rubble. If we are being honest, nobody thinks about people like me: people who do not have a place to hide, who have no means to protect themselves or escape a situation that endangers their lives.

Despite the devastating consequences for civilians in densely populated areas, explosive weapons remain the weapons of choice in today’s conflicts, whether in Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, or elsewhere. This is made startlingly clear in a new re-

port by the Explosive Weapons Monitor, which reveals an 83 percent surge in the number of civilians killed or injured by bombing or shelling in urban areas globally in 2022. This staggering toll was largely driven by the increased use of explosive weapons by Russian forces in Ukraine and an escalation of incidents in Ethiopia, Myanmar and Somalia.

In the first three months of 2023, there have already been at least 4,237 civilian casualties as a result of explosive weapons being used in populated areas.

Much more needs to be done to protect civilians from the horror of these weapons. Too often, towns, cities and other populated areas are at the centre of fighting with explosive weapons, such as artillery, mortars, aerial bombs and rockets, causing devastating effects.

These weapons kill, maim and terrify with a frightening ferocity. Designed for use in open battlefields, they are inaccurate and sometimes deployed recklessly, causing damage well beyond their intended target. They destroy schools, hospitals, water supplies, power lines and other vital infrastructure that people need to survive.

In a blatant disregard for civilians’ lives, some armies and combatants set up their bases near civilians or purposefully try to bomb or shell populations into submission. This persistent pattern of harm is detailed in the Explosive Weapons Monitor’s report, which also documents the use of explosive weapons in populated areas in Ukraine, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Somalia, the occupied Palestinian territories and else-

where. In 2022 alone, the number of incidents in which hospitals, ambulances and health workers were bombed or shelled globally almost quadrupled to 603, while incidents targeting schools and teachers rose to 168.

I know from my own experience the devastating effects that the use of explosive weapons in urban areas can have. The destruction of schools, hospitals, water installations and other civilian buildings makes cities completely unliveable.

We have a chance to stop the suffering of civilians now.

States must endorse the Political Declaration on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, which formally acknowledges that the use of bombs in towns and cities has unbearable consequences for civilians.

I was pleased to witness 83 countries sign this ground-breaking agreement in Dublin last year, which commits governments and militaries to adopt policies and rules of engagement that better protect civilians from the explosive weapons in populated areas. Now they must urgently act to implement this agreement, to save lives of civilians in armed conflicts around the world.

And we need more countries to step up and join the declaration. The success of campaigns to ban landmines and cluster munitions show us what is possible when the world stands shoulder-to-shoulder with people like me.

—Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Bureaucracy can change fate of Pakistan

Chaudhry Muhammad Latif



The CDA Chairman decided to establish 100 recharge wells and 20 monitoring stations to counter the reduction in ground water level and to curtail urban flooding by Nullah Leh flowing in twin cities, and causing havoc every year. Out of 100 proposed recharge wells 50 have been accomplished with conservation capacity of 10 million gallons of water

Commendable efforts for the improvement of functions and performance of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), a formidable institution of the Government, by its present chairman, Captain (Retd) Noor-Ul-Amin Mengal are underway. On the other hand similar struggle continues by the Director General Military Land and Cantonments, Major General Tariq Zameer. Both the authorities have generated an impact and a glimpse of hope of development oriented activities by important departments of the government. This is a manifestation of the fact that if bureaucracy is provided proper guidance, vision, and opportunity, the hard working and talented officers in the bureaucracy are capable enough to make tangible contribution to our dwindling economy. Of course the said organizations have ample resources to achieve their targets. The only issue in civil services is lack of due enforcement of merit system in all spheres of civil service and social structure. The advanced countries of the world accord top priority to merit system as is evident from the examples of Muhammad Sadiq Khan Lord Mayor of London. Mr. Rishi Sunak is the British Prime Minister. A lady from foreign origin is the Vice President of a Super Power of United States of America. The merit system prevails irrespective of caste, creed and colour.

The CDA Chairman decided to establish 100 recharge wells and 20 monitoring stations to counter the reduction in ground water level and to curtail urban flooding by Nullah Leh flowing in twin cities, and causing havoc every year. Out of 100 proposed recharge wells 50 have been accomplished with conservation capacity of 10 million gallons of water which at first replenished the ground water level and secondly reduced urban flooding by Nullah Leh in 2022. This is great achievement and a matter of satisfaction for the citizens of twin cities. Now the CDA Chairman has further decided to introduce rain water harvesting and

setting up a Building Housing Control Wing to regulate functions of housing projects in the capital territory, especially managing usefully the resource of rain water available in their respective domain.

The Directorate of Military Land and Cantonments has also exhibited their deep interest in building water reservoirs. A tank of water has been completed with capacity of 50,000 gallons of water as a first step in this direction. The DG has forcefully directed his subordinate establishments to undertake projects of water conservation in their catchment areas to cater for the requirement of water for vegetation and vegetables, besides, other by products, being a multiple purpose enterprise.

As such positive initiatives of these important institutions with sufficient expertise, could usher in better future. Both the departments are vested with prestige and status and are, therefore, vulnerable to transfer of the incumbents. The continuity of administrative policies fosters confidence and paves way for accomplishment of public oriented projects. CDA is often engrossed in allotment of plot issues. As in Behria Town, phase 7, Defense Villas, 150 houses, said to be owned by Employees Old Age Benefits Institution, Karachi, have been ruined due to a court stay order for the last more than seven years, worth billions of rupees, like Nasla Tower case. It is colossal national loss. These houses have become a hazard for residents of Defense Villas. It may be mentioned here that the writer made relentless efforts by his several articles on the subject published in prominent English dailies to persuade the government and its functionaries to realize the importance of rain water for our survival. The response is encouraging.

The bureaucrats with integrity, and talent are recorded in the annals of bureaucracy. In the history of Pakistan some bureaucrats rose to the climax positions of the country with a legacy of enviable reputation for their

generations. The towering bureaucrats in Pakistan and AJK can be narrated as a tribute to their meritorious services rendered to the nation. Chaudhry Muhammad Ali rose to the portfolio of Prime Minister of Pakistan. The second bureaucrat, held in high esteem is, Ghulam Ishaq Khan who became the President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. He has left an institution of International fame and an asset for KPK government, known as Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Science and Technology. Qudrat-Ullah Shahab, a chief secretary of AJK, and author of “SHAHAB NAMA” which has made him immortal. This book explains the personality of the officer. Abdul Bari chief secretary of AJK was offered historic and emotional sendoff on his transfer from AJK upto Kohala for his admirable services for the settlement of refugees. Syed Safdar Hussain Kazmi, chief secretary of AJK who was inspiration and guide for the writer in the formulation and enforcement of AJK Rules of Business 1985, and departmental rules for all the departments.

The AJK local bureaucracy also produced officers of high caliber and integrity who made commendable sacrifices and rendered valuable services for AJK. Abdul Aziz Salaria, an educationist, migrated from Jammu, retired as founder Vice Chancellor of AJK university and was also a journalist contributing articles to Daily Dawn. Another famous bureaucrat Muhammad Yousuf Awan, an engineer, retired as Additional Chief Secretary and was known for integrity and righteousness. Khalil Ahmed Qureshi initiated the process of compilation AJK state laws while he held the position of Law Secretary. He compiled the code of revenue laws and rules as senior member board of revenue. He also got prepared the calendar for AJK university while he held the post of Vice Chancellor.

—The writer is Retired Additional Chief Secretary AJK and Advocate Supreme Court AJK.

Briefs

SC to hear
Punjab
polls case ...

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any other case on Thursday. The sudden delisting of the bench resulted in the cancellation of all the cases scheduled for hearing today (Wednesday). The delisted bench was supposed to hear 12 important cases. After the delisting of bench number one, the list of cases of bench number two was also cancelled.

Taliban kill IS
'mastermind'
of Kabul...

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Taliban operation," Kirby added without giving any details of it. The pullout, ending on August 30, 2021, saw Taliban fighters sweep aside Western-trained Afghan forces in just weeks, forcing the last US troops to mount the desperate evacuation from Kabul's airport. An unprecedented military airlift operation managed to get more than 120,000 people out of the country in a matter of days. Biden has long defended his decision to leave Afghanistan, which critics have said helped cause the catastrophic collapse of Afghan forces and paved the way for the Taliban to return to power two decades after their first government was toppled. "He was killed in a Taliban operation," Kirby added without giving any details of it. The pullout, ending on August 30, 2021, saw Taliban fighters sweep aside Western-trained Afghan forces in just weeks, forcing the last US troops to mount the desperate evacuation from Kabul's airport. An unprecedented military airlift operation managed to get more than 120,000 people out of the country in a matter of days. Biden has long defended his decision to leave Afghanistan, which critics have said helped cause the catastrophic collapse of Afghan forces and paved the way for the Taliban to return to power two decades after their first government was toppled.

Two TTP
terrorists...

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police station and under investigation at SIU. This year, the accused killed Qayyum Goshtwaley along with their other accomplices in Banaras for non-payment of extortion. The case of incident was registered at Pirabad police station. In 2022, the accused killed Saeed Ahmed, a citizen of Afghan origin, in Gulshan-e-Maymar area on the suspicion of spying TTP for a foreign agency.—APP

Petro calls on
his cabinet to
resign

BOGOTÁ: Colombian President Gustavo Petro has called for the resignation of his entire cabinet as the government struggles to get legislation approved by Congress, three ministers informed on Wednesday. Petro, the country's first leftist president, has so far not made his request public, but in a Twitter post on Tuesday he spoke of a "rethinking of the government." The cabinet shakeup marks the most serious crisis within Petro's government in his tenure as president. After nearly nine months in power, Petro has been unable to usher in the profound reforms in labor laws, healthcare, pensions and the judiciary that he promised during his campaign. On Tuesday, the Liberal and Conservative parties, and the Social Party of National Unity (de la U) distanced themselves from the government, objecting to elements of his far-reaching reform plans. Petro, for his part, called for an "emergency government... given that Congress was incapable of approving simple very peaceful articles" on equitable redistribution of land. He said those not capable of working day and night "have no place in our government." —APP

CDA decides to build Sports
Enclave in Shah Allah Ditta

Chairman Capital Development Authority Captain Noor Ul Amin Mengal further said that the ancient route of Alexander the Great connecting Shah Allah Ditta to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be restored and rehabilitated within the ICT limits

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority Captain Noor Ul Amin Mengal on Wednesday visited Shah Allah Ditta, Margalla Avenue, Sector C-13, C-14, C-15 and C-16. Member Estate, Member Environment, Member Engineering, Member Planning and other senior officers of the authority accompanied the Chairman during his visit. On this occasion, Chairman Capital Development Authority Captain Noor Ul Amin Mengal issued instructions to construct Sports Enclave in Shah Allah Ditta. He further said that sports enclave will serve as multipurpose sports center where facilities including volleyball, rock climbing, zip line, cricket etc will be provided. It is pertinent to mention here that this stadium will

be constructed over 300 kanal CDA's own land. CDA has designated said land for promoting environmental and healthy activities. Chairman CDA Captain Noor Ul Amin Mengal has issued instructions to prepare PC-I at earliest and submit it for approval. Chairman Capital Development Authority Captain Noor Ul Amin Mengal further said that the ancient route of Alexander the Great connecting Shah Allah Ditta to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be restored and rehabilitated within the ICT limits. Moreover, Chairman Capital Development Authority Captain Noor Alamin Mengal also issued instructions to revive and rehabilitate Trail 8 from the Buddha Caves to the Buddha Stupa. Chairman Capital Development Authority Captain Noor Ul Amin Mengal also visited Margalla Avenue, Sector C-13, C-14, C-15 and C-16



and inspected the progress made in the development works.

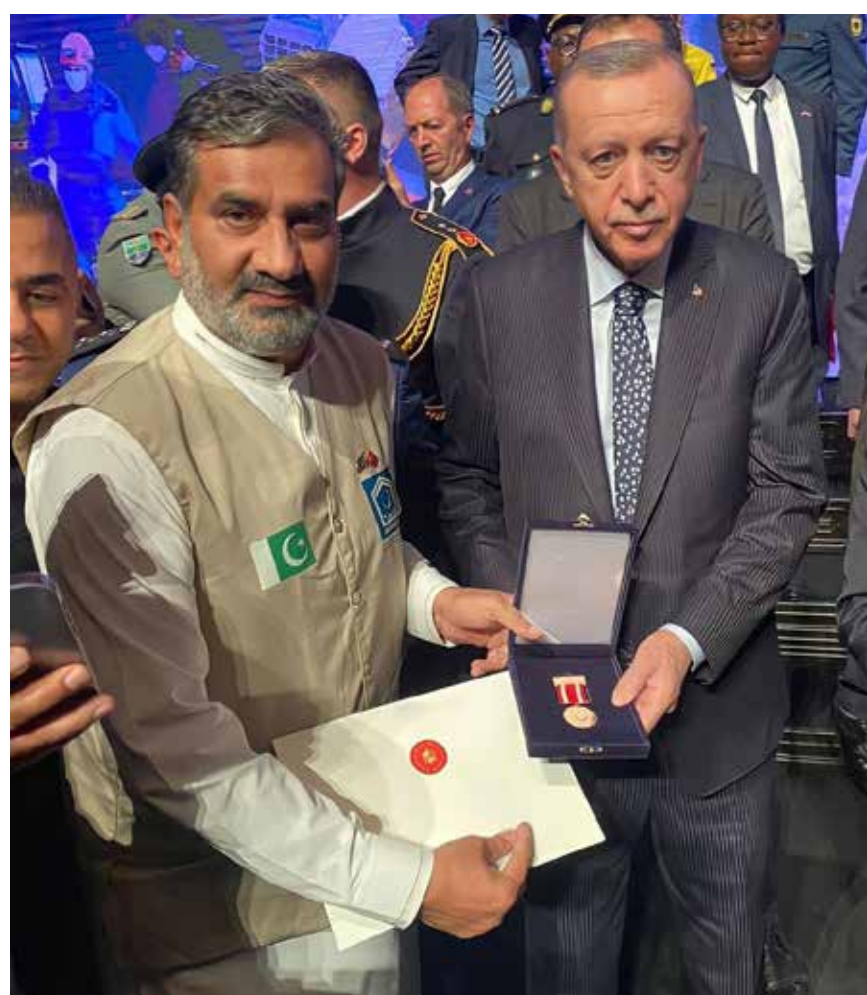
Chairman Capital Development Authority Captain Noor ul Amin Mengal reprimanded the officers for not completing the construction of 50 feet road at the junction of Margalla Avenue and

completed earliest. He further directed that the fencing work along Margalla Avenue, especially near Sector D-12 should be completed as soon as possible. Chairman CDA further said that the quality of curb stones should be improved and those curb stones whose quality is not good be replaced immediately. Chairman CDA along with the concerned officers also inspected the Shah Allah Ditta underpass and service road along Margalla Avenue. Chairman CDA expressed his dissatisfaction for slow pace of work. Chairman CDA further said that the project director have to improve his performance otherwise action will be taken on the basis of inefficiency. Chairman Capital Development Authority issued instructions that the asphalt and drainage work of the underpass should be completed immediately. He further directed that slip road connecting

Margalla Avenue and Sector D-12 be dualized as single road may lead to accidents. He further said that traffic safety should be taken into account while planning the road to avert road accidents. The Chairman Capital Development Authority further directed the Member Estate to immediately demolish the newly constructed built up properties in Sector C-13 and other sectors. He directed Member Estate to personally monitor the operation. He further said that occupation of government land will not be tolerated in any case. He also directed DG Enforcement to ensure that no new constructions are made in Sector C-13, C-14 C-15 and C-16. Chairman CDA was also briefed about the ongoing development works in C-15 and sector C-14. Chairman CDA directed the Member Engineering to speed up the development works in the sectors.

Rizwan closes in on
India dynamo for top
batter ranking

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan opener Mohammad Rizwan has been rewarded for his excellent finish in the recently completed T20I series against New Zealand by making ground on India star Suryakumar Yadav at the top of the MRF Tyres ICC Men's T20I Batting Rankings. Rizwan compiled an unbeaten 98 during the fifth and final match of the T20I series against the Black Caps and the right-hander ended the series as Pakistan's leading run-scorer with a total of 162 runs. That helped Rizwan close the gap on Suryakumar to less than 100 rating points, with the dynamic India star still leading the way with 906 rating points while the Pakistan veteran rises from 798 to 811 points and maintains a second place on the rankings. Pakistan skipper Babar Azam holds onto third place on the latest T20I rankings for batters, although the right-hander dropped 13 rating points to 756 points after he managed just 19 runs in the final match of the series. Middle-order batters Mark Chapman of New Zealand and Iftikhar Ahmed of Pakistan are the big movers as they have attained career-best positions at the end of their five-match series that ended 2-2 with the last two matches played in Rawalpindi over the past week. Chapman, who smashed unbeaten knocks of 71 off 42 deliveries and 104 off 57 in those two matches to finish with a series-topping aggregate of 290 runs, has rocketed 48 places to 35th in the rankings. Chapman's previous best ranking was 54th attained in February 2018. Iftikhar, who scored 36 in the final match, has proceeded six places to the joint-38th position. He is the third-highest-ranked Pakistan batter after Rizwan and Babar, who are ranked second and third in the list led by India's Suryakumar Yadav. Iftikhar's previous best was 43rd position in November last year. Others to move up the T20I rankings after the series are New Zealand players Chad Bowes (up 82 places to 118th in the batting rankings) and Ish Sodhi (up two places to 14th in the bowling rankings) while Pakistan all-rounder Imad Wasim has moved up all three lists. Imad is up 15 places to 127th among batters after scoring 31 in the final match, while his hauls of three for 19 and two 21 have lifted him 120 places to 93rd in the bowling rankings. He is also up 44 places to 24th among all-rounders. In the weekly ODI rankings update, which considers performances in the Oman-Nepal match of the ACC Men's Premier Cup in Kiripiti, Nepal leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane has moved up one slot to 22nd position among bowlers after finishing with three for 45 while Kushal Malla's 108 off 64 balls has lifted him 35 places to 110th position.—Agencies



ANKARA: President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan awarded the the State Medal of Supreme Sacrifice to Al-Khidmat Foundation in a ceremony held at Bestepe Nation's Convention and Culture Center. The medal was received by Ikrum-ul-Haq Subhani, President Al-Khidmat Foundation Central Punjab, who led the Al-Khidmat Foundation Pakistan's relief team during the Turkey/Syria earthquake two months ago.—DNA

PSB welcomes
sports enthusiasts

ISLAMABAD: The South Asian Games is a quadrennial multi-sport event held among the athletes from South Asia. South Asia Olympic Council (SAOC), the governing body of these games allocated 14th Edition of South Asian Games which will be held in 2024. Repair/Renovation/Up gradation work of sports facilities of Sports Complex Islamabad and Coaching Centres is underway to make them of international standards so that the Games could be held in a befitting manner. Due to repair/renovation/up gradation work, some facilities were temporarily closed for the safety of athletes and members. However, most of the facilities like Lawn Tennis Courts, Fitness Gym, Athletics Track & Football fields, Liaquat Gymnasium, Sportsperson Hostels are opened for members and national training camps of various sports disciplines are in progress since long. Besides, a number of sports events have been organized by public & private sector educational & other organizations at sports complex Islamabad during the last 1 year. Rodham Hall and Hamidi Hall will also be inaugurated in 2nd week of May 2023 whereas, Swimming Pool will be opened in 1st week of July 2023. The management of Pakistan Sports Board is making its efforts best to get readily available the sports facilities after improvement for the athletes and general public as soon as possible.—DNA

Man City aim to derail
Arsenal's title challenge

MANCHESTER: Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola admitted the tension of the Premier League title race is getting to him as his side close in on Arsenal ahead of Wednesday's top-of-the-table clash. The Gunners hold a five-point lead over the defending champions, but momentum is on City's side as they have two games in hand and have seen Arsenal draw their last three matches. Guardiola is going for his fifth Premier League title in seven seasons in England, but believes nerves are a good sign that he still has the hunger for more success. "It

is a good sign, being a little bit nervous," said the Catalan coach at his pre-match press conference. "Being nervous is part of our lives, being anxious is part of our lives, being scared is part of our lives. We don't have to be perfect. "When we educate our kids, they (think they) have to be perfect for Instagram and TikToks, and this kind of thing, they have to be a genius." But I would say the uncertainty, things that happen before a game, happen. When I feel that feeling I know it's normal. The problem would be if I didn't have

that feeling." The bookmakers now make City favourites to not only defend their title, but go on to match Manchester United's feat in 1998/99 as the only English side to win the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup in the same season. However, Guardiola warned he expects a reaction from Arsenal after seeing their lead chipped away in recent weeks by draws with Liverpool, West Ham and bottom-of-the-table Southampton. "Always I had the feeling that it would be so difficult to play them at this stage but, after three games dropping

points, it will be much, much more difficult now," added Guardiola. "I would have preferred it if they had come here with better results than the three last results when they didn't win a game." Both sides will be missing key defenders as City are without Nathan Ake, while William Saliba's continued absence poses a headache for Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta. Without the Frenchman, Arsenal have conceded seven goals in their last three games and must find a way of keeping City's 48-goal marksman Erling Haaland quiet.—Agencies

Castellanos hits four against Real Madrid

NEW DESK

BARCELONA: Girona striker Taty Castellanos hit an incredible four goals as his side thrashed champions Real Madrid 4-2 in La Liga on Tuesday, helping leaders Barcelona edge closer to the trophy. Carlo Ancelotti's Madrid are 11 points behind Barcelona having played one extra match, with this defeat virtually killing any hope they had remaining of defending the title. Fourth-place Real Sociedad earned a hard-fought 0-0 draw at Real Betis to frustrate the Andalusians, fifth, ensuring a six-point gap remains between them. Girona's Castellanos was left in tears after missing a big chance against Barcelona earlier in April in a goalless draw, but made amends in spectacular fashion at Montilivi against Madrid. The Argentine striker, on loan at Girona from New York City FC — owned by the City group — exposed gaps in Madrid's defence ahead of their Champions League semi-final tie against Manchester City in May. Castellanos shut down his social media accounts after his bad night in front of goal at Camp Nou, but thanked those close to him for their support. "It was



a dream night, we had a great game against one of the best teams in the world, it was a dream night," Castellanos said. "I never imagined this, (I'm) enjoying it with our fans, with the people who have sent me support — my family, people in Argentina, they are always supporting me and that's fundamental." In April 2022 Castellanos hit four goals for New York City against Real Salt Lake and repeated the trick a little over a year later. "Obviously they are different days, it was a dream to

score against Madrid and to score four — you can't even imagine it," he added. "I'm very happy for everything, for the fans, for the lads." Castellanos now has 11 goals in La Liga this season in 29 appearances. Ancelotti had said his team needed to stay in a positive winning dynamic in the league to stay at the top of their game in Europe, but badly took their eye off the ball in Girona. "A tough night, yes, when you lose a game like that it's a tough night," said the Italian. "On a defensive level it was a bad game,

and that was the key to the match... the individual level was lower than normal too. "Everybody's was, not just some people. The level was very low, because the defensive aspect, which was very good in recent games, today, we have forgotten." Ancelotti was hampered by striker Karim Benzema taking a knock in the win over Celta Vigo at the weekend, while goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois did not travel because of a stomach problem among other absences. Former Madrid defender Miguel Gutierrez set up the opening goal with a cross for Castellanos, which he headed home from six yards out after 12 minutes. Castellanos doubled Girona's lead after 24 minutes when he got in behind Eder Militao and blasted through Andriy Lunin's legs. Vinicius Junior pulled one back for Real Madrid with a header from Marco Asensio's fine inswinging cross, giving them hope of a second half comeback. However Castellanos netted his third just 36 seconds after the interval after a fine run and cross from Yan Couto. The striker pounced again after 62 minutes, again capitalising on a Militao mistake to net his and Girona's fourth. Lucas Vazquez pulled another back for Madrid late on after more good work by Vinicius.

PDM, allies
united

FROM PAGE 01

majority decision of the four judges. "But the SC is still trying to take things forward with the same three-member bench," PM Shehbaz said. "And this is why we have gathered here today — to reiterate our decision." He said the top court's decisions were dealt with by parliament previously as well, adding that the same should be done now too. "This is our moral and political responsibility to respect the decisions previously taken by Parliament," the PM stated, adding that it was important to highlight these matters. "The decision [regarding talks] has to be taken by parliament, not you or me," he pointed out. Referring to the SC's direction to the government and opposition regarding talks, he said that the apex court's "job is not arbitration, but their job is to give orders as per the Constitution and law". "Hence, decisions regarding whether elections should be held and if they should be held on one day ... regarding this there is complete unity in the allied parties ... on Aug 13, the assembly will complete its term and polls will be held on a date following the completion of 90 days."

PM Shehbaz contended that it was important to tell the public that the PTI, instead of helping the government solve the current challenges, had exploited the situation. He mentioned PTI Chairman Imran Khan's claims of foreign conspiracy and termed his party's efforts to "derail the International Monetary Fund programme" as impediments to the smooth running of the country.

Speaker to
write letter...

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hasn't happened yet. In a meeting of the ruling allies earlier today, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that a parliamentary committee would discuss the terms of talks between the ruling alliance and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) regarding holding elections across the country on the same day. But the lawmakers of the ruling alliance, in their fiery speeches today, rejected to hold talks with the opposition under duress and expressed confidence in the leadership of PM Shehbaz. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, in his address to the lower house, said despite court orders, Punjab local body elections did not take place and even after the passage of 90 days, the date for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa polls was not decided yet. He termed as "shocking" the Supreme Court's latest verdict, in which it directed the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to issue funds for polls in Punjab and KP and later take approval from parliament. "The parliament is being insulted because of a few people's stubbornness. If the judiciary has any misunderstanding regarding the Constitution, the PPP and the parliamentary committee are present to help it understand." He questioned how the SC could order that the parliament be ignored. "Despite judges' thoughts", we respect them," he stressed. He added, however, that the top court did not have the authority to amend the Constitution.

PTI says govt
not sincere...

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wanted to hold polls nor dialogue with the opposition to find out solution to get the country out of the imbroglio. Qureshi reiterated: "PTI will continue to follow constitution and Supreme Court's (SC) judgement regarding holding of the elections now. He said that the imported government neither wanted to hold polls in 14 May nor on 8 October, as there was no consensus within the widely fractured PDM. Qureshi stated that the government even in any mood to hold talks with the PTI, as they were hell-bent on violating the constitution. He went on to say that Ayaz Sadiq and Saad Rafique were nominated by the government itself to hold talks with the PTI but now they were saying that it was not the team tasked to hold talks, adding that they wanted to use the parliament as a bulwark and shield.

Briefs

Powerful Iranian cleric killed in attack

TEHRAN: A powerful Iranian cleric, a member of the Assembly of Experts that selects the country's supreme leader, has been killed in an armed attack, officials said Wednesday.

"Ayatollah Abbas Ali Soleimani was killed this morning in an armed attack... the assailant was also arrested and is now being investigated," IRNA news agency reported, citing the political and security official for the northern Mazandaran province where the attack happened. The attack took place in a bank in the city of Babolsar, the official said.

"The motive of the assailant is not yet clear and will be announced after it is clarified," the official added.

The governor of Mazandaran province Mahmoud Hosseini-pour said the attacker was a local security personnel of the bank. "So far, our information and documents indicate that this was not a security or terrorist act," Hosseini-pour told state television. Soleimani, 75, was previously the representative of the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.—Agencies

S. Korea's retail sales up 6.4 pct in March

SEOUL: South Korea's retail sales rose in single digits last month due to solid demand for clothing and sports items in spring-time, government data showed Wednesday. Revenue among major online and offline retailers gained 6.4 percent in March from a year earlier, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy. Sales by offline retailers increased 6.6 percent last month as the lifting of measures against the COVID-19 pandemic fueled outdoor activities in springtime. Offline demand for clothing and sports items grew in double figures, but the sales of home appliances and household items reduced in single digits last month. Sales among department stores and convenience stores advanced 9.5 percent and 9.7 percent each, while revenue of discount outlets added 1.2 percent on demand for clothing and sports items. Revenue among online retailers expanded 6.1 percent in March from a year earlier on the back of robust demand for clothing and cosmetic products.—DNA

Türkiye presses for anti-terror push

MOSCOW: Türkiye is only in Syria to fight terrorists and wants to create a safe environment for the Syrian people, National Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said on Wednesday.

"As we have always maintained, we respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity," Akar said after talks in Moscow with his Russian counterpart Sergey Shoigu, Iran's Mohammad Reza Gharaii Ashtiani, and Syria's Ali Mahmoud Abbas. The meeting was also attended by the intelligence chiefs of all four countries. "The only reason we are in Syria is to fight terrorists, particularly the PKK/YPG/PYD and Daesh/ISIS. We will continue our efforts to neutralize all terrorists, which is important not just for us, but also for the territorial integrity of Syria," Akar told reporters at the Vnukovo International Airport. Another of Ankara's aims is to prevent a new wave of refugees from Syria, he added. "With our efforts, we are providing as positive and stable an environment in Syria as possible. By improving conditions there, we will ensure that the Syrian brothers and sisters we are hosting in our country can return to their homeland voluntarily in a safe and respectful manner," he said. Türkiye will never take a step that puts Syrians in danger, he emphasized. "Everyone should be aware of this and act accordingly. We have had a very clear and consistent policy on this since the very beginning," said Akar.—Agencies

Sergey Lavrov warns of EU militarisation, similar to NATO

NATO states Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania do not have their own fighter jets, so the military alliance has been securing their airspace in Northeastern Europe since 2004 with the assistance of air forces from other NATO members

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said the European Union "is becoming militarised at a record rate" and there was now little difference between the EU and NATO. Lavrov told a news conference on Tuesday at the United Nations in New York that a recently signed declaration essentially states that the NATO military alliance of 31 members will ensure the security of the 27-member EU bloc. He appeared to be referring to an EU-NATO declaration in January on their "strategic partnership" which called Russia's invasion of Ukraine "the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security

in decades", but the declaration does not state that NATO will ensure the security of the EU.

"NATO and the European Union (EU) cooperate on issues of common interest and are working side by side in crisis management, capability development and political consultations, as well as providing support to their common partners in the east and south," NATO states on its website. Lavrov was asked whether the war in Ukraine was a miscalculation on Russia's part, as since Moscow's invasion Finland had joined NATO, with Sweden expected to join next, and Ukraine also lobbying for membership. "NATO never had any intention of stopping," he replied, referring



to what Moscow views as the Western military alliance's expansion towards its borders. Lavrov also referenced actions in recent years that saw Sweden and Finland "increasingly taking part in NATO military exercises and other actions that were meant to syn-

chronise the military programmes of NATO members and neutral states". Russian President Vladimir Putin has long complained about NATO's expansion and even used that as a justification for invading Ukraine. Visiting Kyiv last week,

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said Ukraine's "rightful place" was in the military alliance and pledged more support for the country in its fight against Russia. Lavrov said Russia was promised on several occasions that NATO would not expand, but he added "those were lies". "Unbiased assessments that our political scientists as well as those abroad made is that NATO sought to break Russia apart," he said.

"But in the end, it only made it stronger, brought it closer together. So, let's not make any hasty conclusions now as to what this will all end in," he added. Russia's defence ministry said on Wednesday that two of its Tu-160 strategic missile carrier bombers had

completed a planned, more than 14-hour flight over the neutral waters of the Barents and Norwegian Seas, while the German Air Force said NATO planes had intercepted three Russian reconnaissance aircraft in international airspace over the Baltic Sea.

The two Russian Su-27 fighter planes and an Ilyushin IL-20 aircraft were flying without transmitting transponder signals, the German Air Force said. NATO states Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania do not have their own fighter jets, so the military alliance has been securing their airspace in Northeastern Europe since 2004 with the assistance of air forces from other NATO members.

UK minister defends controversial migration bill

The bill has been met with criticism from human rights organizations and refugee advocates, who argue that it violates international law and the UK's obligations under the Refugee Convention

LONDON: The British immigration minister on Tuesday defended the government's controversial Illegal Migration Bill, saying it is "the single most significant piece of immigration legislation of modern times." Pointing out the dramatic increase in small boat crossings, Robert Jenrick said that there has been more than a 400% increase in these small boat arrivals in the last two years. "Every crossing is a potential tragedy," he noted at an event organized by the Policy Exchange think tank. Saying that illegal migration will be one of the defining characteristics of the 21st century, Jenrick stressed that how to stop it and how to maintain sovereign borders will also be one of the "defining policy questions



of our time." "The basic fact is undeniable that the number of people who are willing and able to reach the UK today is astronomical and vastly outnumbers what we are capable of or willing to take as a country," he stated. Citing the UNHCR's numbers, the minister said that there are now more than 100 million people displaced globally. "And these numbers are rising fast." "The current numbers of

people arriving here illegally surpass any reasonable numbers that the state could be expected to provide for, or integrate successfully into our national community," he added.

Conservatives should not "shy away from their belief" that the nation has a right to preserve itself, said Jenrick, adding: "Excessive uncontrolled migration threatens to cannibalize the compassion that marks out the British people." He said the bill enables the detention of illegal arrivals without bail or judicial review. He said that with this bill, those that make illegal journeys "must know that it will be a futile endeavor." "That's why the UK government has brought forward the Illegal Migration Bill, which I would argue is the single most significant

piece of immigration legislation of modern times," added the minister.

The bill has been met with criticism from human rights organizations and refugee advocates, who argue that it violates international law and the UK's obligations under the Refugee Convention. It also triggered mass protests across the UK, with concerned citizens and NGOs accusing the government of scapegoating migrants.

Lastly, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), an executive non-departmental public body in the UK, on Monday reiterated its opposition to the Illegal Migration Bill. More than 44,000 migrants arrived in the UK crossing the English Channel last year.—Agencies

WHO identifies India-made contaminated cough syrup

GENEVA: The World Health Organization (WHO) issued an alert Tuesday regarding contaminated cough syrup made by an Indian company which it identified in the Marshall Islands and Micronesia. Samples of the syrup were analyzed by the Therapeutic Goods Administration of Australia and the analysis found that the product contained "unacceptable" amounts of diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol as contaminants, the WHO said in a statement. Diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol are toxic to humans when consumed and can prove fatal. "The substandard product referenced in this Alert is unsafe, and its use, especially in children, may result in serious injury or death," the statement said. It added that toxic effects can include abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, the inability to pass urine, headache, an altered mental state and acute kidney injury which may lead to death. According to the WHO, the cough syrup was manufactured by India's QP Pharmachem Ltd., which is based in Punjab, and marketed by Trillium Pharma, which is based in Haryana. Neither QP Pharmachem nor Trillium have supplied the WHO with guarantees about the safety and quality of these products, the organization stressed. The WHO has advised those who have the affected product not to use it and people who have suffered an adverse reaction or unexpected side effect after using it to seek immediate medical advice from a healthcare professional. It also called for "increased surveillance and diligence within the supply chains of countries and regions likely to be affected by these products" and advised to immediately notify the WHO if these substandard products are discovered. The statement did not mention whether anyone in the Marshall Islands or Micronesia had fallen sick due to the use of the contaminated cough syrup.—DNA

Role in slave trade Portugal should take responsibility

OVIEDO: Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa said on Tuesday that his country should do more than just apologize for its role in the transatlantic slave trade. "Apologizing is sometimes the easiest thing to do: you apologize, turn your back, and the job's done," he said in parliament on the anniversary of the 1974 Carnation Revolution, which overthrew the country's dictatorship. He added that Portugal should "assume responsibility" for its past in order to build a better future. His remarks followed Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's address to parliament, which was met with jeers and interruptions by the far-right Chega party. = Brazil, a former Portuguese colony, was built on the labor of African and indigenous slaves. Of the 12 million enslaved Africans brought to the New World, approximately 5.5 million were forcibly taken to Brazil, according to Princeton University's Brazil Lab. However, Portugal's history of slavery is not typically discussed by its politicians. In 2017, Rebelo de Sousa became the first Portuguese leader to visit Senegal, once at the center of Portugal's slave trade. During his visit, he sparked outrage in the academic community by claiming that Portugal abolished slavery in 1761 because "Portugal recognized human dignity." Following his visit, professors signed a letter denouncing his words as "an idealized" version of what actually occurred, arguing that it was a false narrative intended to make the Portuguese more comfortable with their past. While Portugal often claims to be one of the first countries to abolish slavery, the abolition only applied to the homeland, and the slave trade was instead redirected to Brazil. Brazil was the last nation in the Western Hemisphere to abolish slavery, which was not officially ended until 1888.—Agencies



MINSK: Pakistan ambassador to Belarus, Sajjad Haider visits the renowned National Film Studio, Belarusfilm, and met with the Director General Vladimir Karachevsky. Talks included Pakistan's participation in the International film festival "Listapad" and a possible showcase of Pakistani movies to celebrate the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations with Belarus. — DNA

Türkiye elections Identity, foreign policy and terrorism in focus

WEB DESK

ANKARA: Politicians will discuss virtually everything until the May 14 elections in Türkiye. Anything from mega projects and the economy to (Kurdish and Alevi) identity issues, counterterrorism measures and imperialism are currently on the table. That is because voters attach great importance to who will be in charge for the next five years. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan harvests the fruits of his "politics of works" and pledges to oversee a "new era of progress" at campaign events. Presenting a holistic approach to foreign policy, national security and defense, he promises to keep building "the axis of Türkiye." No wonder the international media identified the upcoming contest as the most crucial election of 2023. Governments worldwide know that whether Erdoğan gets reelected will have

serious impacts on global and regional politics.

The National Alliance's presidential candidate and the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, also makes campaign pledges and develops a new approach to identity-related issues. As mentioned in my previous column, he subscribes to seemingly-positive identity politics and polarization. However, identity issues will inevitably arise as the republic enters its second century. Let there be no doubt that discrimination will lead to defeat, and inclusiveness shall pay dividends. That is precisely why all candidates and political parties accuse their respective opponents of discrimination. It is also necessary to identify the links between the debate over foreign powers, nationalism and identity, and certain serious risks that the country faces today. Among other things, the opposition's presidential candidate

pledged to release from prison all individuals dismissed from public service by decree – a source of grave concern. Moreover, as PKK and the Gülenist Terror Group (FETÖ) terrorists endorse Erdoğan's opponent, the Nation Alliance's deafening silence disgruntles many. Instead of pledging to combat the PKK and FETÖ, the opposition attempts to steer the conversation by stating, "We are sick of people saying that anyone that doesn't vote for (the government) is a terrorist." In truth, the opposition bloc's decision to join forces with the Green Left Party (YSP), not the electorate's preferences, remains under discussion. It is what Sır Sak, a heavyweight in the pro-PKK Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), demanded of Kılıçdaroğlu in which voters take an interest: What have they discussed behind closed doors and what were the terms of their agreement? Those questions directly relate to the future

that possibly awaits Türkiye. That is why the electorate demands answers. Likewise, another vital question is whether another reconciliation process may be possible under the current circumstances. If the United States continues to support the PKK's Syrian branch, the YPG, in northern Syria, whose interests would that policy serve? It would be pointless to give the terrorists an inch of political or ideological ground, at home or abroad, as the Turkish intelligence overwhelms the PKK by successfully targeting its middle and senior management. PKK and FETÖ members do not attempt to hide the fact that their situation would improve if Kılıçdaroğlu were to win the presidential election. Accordingly, the voters have a democratic right to demand an explanation from the opposition's presidential candidate – who cannot ignore that demand by rejecting discrimination. Is anyone to believe that

the PKK's so-called commanders are unaware that their frequent public statements would fuel concerns over Kılıçdaroğlu's potential victory? Yet, that does not matter to the terrorists because terrorist organizations only care about gaining political and ideological ground. They only think of the spotlight as valuable.

At the same time, they attempt to create a rhetorical framework that will enable them to strengthen Kılıçdaroğlu if he were to win the presidential race, as well as inspire hope among their sympathizers. Terrorist organizations will become more ambitious and voters will grow more concerned unless and until Kılıçdaroğlu publicly pledges to continue the fight against terrorist groups with the same level of determination as the current government. Otherwise, he will face mounting criticism that he could not speak up against terrorists for the sake of "a handful of votes."

Jacinda taking on new role at Harvard

HOUSTON: Harvard University announced Tuesday that former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern will join its staff for one semester as she takes on two fellowships at the school in Cambridge, Massachusetts after exiting her country's parliament.

"Jacinda Ardern showed the world strong and empathetic political leadership," said Harvard Kennedy School Dean Douglas Elmendorf. "She earned respect far beyond the shores of her country, and she will bring important insights for our students and will generate vital conversations about the public policy choices facing leaders at all levels." Ardern has been recognized for her response to the deadly mass shooting of 51 people by a white supremacist at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2019 and has worked vigilantly to tackle violent extremism online.

"I am incredibly humbled to be joining Harvard University as a fellow—not only will it give me the opportunity to share my experience with others, it will give me a chance to learn," Ardern said in a statement. "As leaders, there's often very little time for reflection, but reflection is critical if we are to properly support the next generation of leaders." Ardern will be joining Harvard Kennedy School as its 2023 Angelopoulos Global Public Leaders Fellow and as a Hauser Leader at the school's Center for Public Leadership.—APP

Washington bans assault weapons

WASHINGTON: Governor Jay Inslee signed a bill into law Tuesday that prohibits the sale, manufacture and import of assault weapons in Washington, making it the 10th US state to implement such a ban.

In a tweet, Inslee said Washington does not and will not accept gun violence as normal. "Banning the sale of assault weapons, our bill to enact training requirements and a wait period, and the bill to improve accountability of manufacturers and retailers will save lives," he wrote. On April 19, the state House of Representatives approved the sales ban on assault weapons with a vote of 56-42. Gun manufacturers will be permitted to sell their existing inventory that was in stock before Jan. 1, 2023 under the amendment, according to reports. The White House said the action will make the state "safer" and "more secure." "President (Joe) Biden commends the leadership of Washington Governor Jay Inslee and legislative leaders as well as advocate survivors and elected officials who fought for years to make today a reality," spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said at a press conference.—DNA

Romania grants contract to buy Turkish drones

BUDAPEST: Romania's Ministry of National Defense has granted a contract worth \$321 million to Turkish drone magnate Baykar, to purchase Bayraktar TB2 unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs), according to the recently published official document.

The official contract award notice was published on the Tenders Electronic Daily website, an online version of the Supplement to the Official Journal of the European Union. Haluk Bayraktar, general manager at Baykar, also confirmed the contract, saying that Romania, "which has long-standing friendship and strong ties based on mutual trust," has joined the list of countries that have taken the high-tech Bayraktar TB2 UCAV into its inventory. He said with this latest purchase, the number of countries signing export contracts for Bayraktar TB2s have reached 28. "As Baykar, we are proud of exporting to 2 EU member countries and 3 NATO member countries together with Romania," Bayraktar's tweet read. In August last year, local media reported the Romanian ministry's aim of procuring three drone packages at around \$300 million, after it gained popularity.—APP

Briefs

PTI replaces
several
candidates
for PA
elections

DBA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has replaced several candidates for the upcoming Punjab assembly elections and issued party tickets for pending constituencies, as announced in a review committee meeting presided over by party leader Imran Khan on Wednesday. The meeting considered complaints and reservations regarding party tickets and released a list of replaced candidates as well as candidates from pending constituencies. Tariq Murtaza, Colonel Amjad Sabir, Arif Abbasi, and Sohail Gujjar have been selected to contest the elections for PTI from their respective constituencies of PP 7, PP 10, PP 11, and PP 73. Similarly, PTI has issued party tickets to Nazir Subi from PP 79, Afzal Mahais from PP 50, Ali Wakeel Khan from PP 57, Rana Nazir from PP 61, Muhammad Ali from PP 62, Abuzar Chadhar from PP 137, and Fiaz Bhatti from PP 162. Mehar Saleem from PP 176, Barrister Shahid Masood from PP 177, Shaheer Dawood from PP 101, Nadeem Aftab Sandhu from PP 108, Chand Bibi from PP 189, and Salman Safdar from PP 194 have also received party tickets. Furthermore, Shakeel Niazi from PP 197, Muhammad Damra from PP 198, Major (R) Sarwar from PP 201, Zahid Iqbal from PP 234, Ahmed Yar from PP 251, Asghar Joeya from PP 253, Raja Salim from PP 257, Ghulam Mohammad Solangi from PP 266, and Ehsanul Haque Nolathia from PP 269 have received party tickets from PTI. In addition, PTI has selected Nadia Khar from PP 271, Jan Yunis from PP 272, Imran from PP 273, and Moazzam Jatoti from PP 276 as its candidates.

Powerful
Iranian cleric
killed in
attack in
a bank

TEHRAN: A powerful Iranian cleric — a member of the Assembly of Experts that selects the country's supreme leader — has been killed in an armed attack, officials said on Wednesday. "Ayatollah Abbas Ali Soleimani was killed this morning in an armed attack... the assailant was also arrested and is now being investigated," IRNA news agency reported, citing the political and security official for the northern Mazandaran province where the attack happened. The attack took place in a bank in the city of Babolsar, the official said. "The motive of the assailant is not yet clear and will be announced after it is clarified," the official added. The governor of Mazandaran province Mahmoud Hosseini said the attacker was a local security personnel of the bank. —Agencies

Met Office
forecasts rains,
thunderstorms

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has predicted rains and thunderstorms across Pakistan from today (Wednesday) under the influence of a westerly weather system which is likely to spread to the central and southern parts of the country. In a statement, the department warned that the westerly wave would persist till the first week of May. Under the new system, thunderstorms are expected in Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi, Mardan, Bajaur, Kurrum, Waziristan, Kohat, Islamabad, Murree, Galiyat, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Gujranwala, Sialkot and Lahore from April 26 to April 29. The advisory said rain-dusts with isolated heavy falls. —DNA

Zelensky holds first war
phone call with China's Xi

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky says he has had a "long and meaningful" phone call with China's Xi Jinping, their first contact since Russia's war began. He said on Twitter he believed the call, along with the appointment of an ambassador to Beijing, would "give a powerful impetus to the development of our bilateral relations". In the phone call, Xi and Zelensky exchanged views on the Ukraine crisis, with Xi reaffirming China's support for peace talks, according to the Chinese government. Xi said China will send a special envoy to Ukraine and other countries to help conduct "in-depth communication" with all parties for a political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis, the government said,



adding that Xi also said China is willing to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. China "will neither watch the fire from the other side, nor add fuel to the fire, let alone take advantage of the

opportunity to profit," Xi said, acknowledging that the crisis has had a "major impact" internationally and that the "only feasible way out" is "dialogue and negotiation." The call was "an important dia-

logue," the head of the Ukrainian Presidential Office Andriy Yermak said in a Telegram post. China confirmed the call, adding that it "always stood on the side of peace". Until now, Beijing has sought to show a neutral stance on the Russian invasion. But it has never condemned the invasion and last month President Xi paid a two-day state visit to Russia. He referred to President Vladimir Putin as his "dear friend", proposed a vague 12-point peace plan and insisted that China stood on the right side of history. However, he made no commitment to providing Russia with weapons. Within days of the visit, President Zelensky invited the Chinese leader to visit Kyiv for talks, noting that they had contact before the full-scale war but nothing since it began

in February 2022. In a readout of Wednesday's phone call, China's CCTV quoted President Xi as saying that China would "neither watch the fire from the other side, nor add fuel to the fire, let alone take advantage of the crisis to profit". Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said on Wednesday that Moscow has taken notice of China's willingness to facilitate negotiations with Ukraine following the phone conversation between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. "We note the readiness of the Chinese side to make efforts to establish the negotiation process," Zakharova said during a news conference on Wednesday. However, she also noted that under current conditions negotiations are unlikely and blamed Kyiv for rejecting Moscow's initiatives.

'No evidence'
of local
transmission
of mpox

ISLAMABAD: A day after Pakistan reported its first case of mpox, a viral zoonotic disease, the Ministry of National Health Services (NHS) said on Wednesday that there was "no evidence" of localised transmission. On Tuesday, a patient from Saudi Arabia tested positive for the virus, prompting authorities to beef up measures at airports and set up isolation wards in hospitals. The patient, reported from Saudi Arabia, arrived in the country on April 17 with symptoms of the disease. According to sources in the ministry, the patient is a resident of Mandi Bahauddin and was working as a driver in Jeddah. Patients infected with the disease commonly show symptoms such as a rash, fever, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, back pain, low energy and swollen lymph nodes. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), symptoms usually begin within a week but can start 1-21 days after exposure. In a press release, NHS spokesperson Sajid Shah said that the disease had been declared a public health emergency in July 22 last year by the WHO. —Agencies

Kenya cult
toll climbs
to 95

MALINDI: The number of victims linked to a suspected starvation cult in Kenya climbed to 95 on Wednesday, a government official said, with weeping relatives anxiously awaiting news of loved ones after investigators unearthed mass graves last week. The discovery of dozens of bodies buried in Shakahola forest near the coastal town of Malindi shocked Kenyans, with cult leader Paul Mackenzie Nthenge accused of driving his followers to death by preaching that starvation was the only path to God. The gruesome saga, which has been dubbed the "Shakahola Forest Massacre", has prompted calls for a crackdown on fringe religious outfits in the largely Christian country. "We had five exhumations which brings the total number of those who lost their lives to 95," Rhoda Onyancha, Coast Regional Commissioner, told reporters. At the state-run Malindi Sub-County Hospital, whose morgue is already stretched well beyond capacity with dozens of bodies, families were desperate to know if their loved ones had been found. —Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of leaders from coalition parties. —DNA

Rescue ship from
Sudan reaches Jeddah

ISLAMABAD: A ship carrying 37 Pakistani nationals from Sudan — where fighting between the army and paramilitaries has killed and wounded hundreds — arrived in Saudi Arabia's Jeddah on Wednesday, the Foreign Office (FO) said. "Evacuation plan for Pakistani nationals in Sudan continues. The ship carrying 37 Pakistani nationals from Port Sudan arrives in Jeddah," it said in a tweet. "They were received by CG in Jeddah, Khalid Majid on arrival at Jeddah Port. We are grateful to the Government of KSA for its support & hospitality," the FO added. According

to the Saudi Arabia Foreign Ministry, the boat with 1,687 civilians from more than 50 countries arrived in the kingdom today, which is the largest rescue effort by the Gulf state to date. The group was "transported by one of the Kingdom's ships, and the Kingdom was keen to provide all the basic needs of foreign nationals in preparation for their departure," it said in a statement. In another statement, the FO said that "another convoy of 200 Pakistanis has arrived safely in Port Sudan". It added that the "Embassy of Pakistan in Sudan will continue to facilitate their stay in Port Sudan and

arrange their eventual repatriation". Fighting broke out in Sudan on April 15 between forces loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy-turned-rival Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Meanwhile, A former Sudanese politician wanted for alleged crimes against humanity has said that he and other former officials are no longer in jail — following reports of a breakout. Ahmed Haroun was among those being held in Kober prison in the capital Khartoum who are facing charges by the International Criminal Court (ICC). A ceasefire between fighting military factions largely appears to be holding. But there are doubts about both sides' commitment to a lasting peace. The conflict — which began on 15 April — arose from a bitter power struggle between the leaders of Sudan's regular army. —Agencies

Sudan: War
crimes
suspect free
amid chaos

KHARTOUM: A former Sudanese politician wanted for alleged crimes against humanity has said that he and other former officials are no longer in jail — following reports of a breakout. Ahmed Haroun was among those being held in Kober prison in the capital Khartoum who are facing charges by the International Criminal Court (ICC). A ceasefire between fighting military factions largely appears to be holding. But there are doubts about both sides' commitment to a lasting peace. The conflict — which began on 15 April — arose from a bitter power struggle between the leaders of Sudan's regular army. —Agencies

Six Balochistan cops
martyred in Jacobabad

JACOBABAD: Six policemen were martyred on Wednesday while two were injured in an attack by dacoits near the area of Jageer in Sindh's Jacobabad district while on their way to rescue a hostage, police officials said. Jacobabad Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Dr Sumair Noor Channa confirmed the development, adding that the slain police officials were from the Usta Muhammad police station located in Balochistan's Jaffarabad. SSP Channa said that the martyred officials included Usta Muhammad station's sub-inspector Tayyab Umrani and constables Nisar Ahmed and Abdul Wahab. Naseerabad division Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Munir Ahmed Sheikh said that the joint operation will continue till the hostage, Furqan Soomro, has been recovered. The DIG added that Soomro — the son of Aslam Soomro, a rice mill owner in Usta Muhammad town — had been kidnapped at gunpoint a day ago from Jaffarabad. DIG Sheikh said that the operation had been expanded with the cooperation of Sindh police and more personnel were on standby if needed. Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo expressed his grief, saying that the "police inspector and three constables embraced martyrdom while performing their duties". He commended the martyred for "facing the enemy with bravery", and prayed for their families to have patience. Bizenjo further said he hoped that the Sindh government would soon bring to justice those responsible for the incident. Earlier this month, a station house officer was martyred while five others, including a deputy superintendent of police, were injured after dacoits attacked a large police contingent in Sindh's Kandhkot district to free hostages. The Sindh and Punjab police have launched a grand joint operation against gangs of dacoits entrenched in the riverine areas of upper Sindh and southern Punjab. The Pakistan Army, Rangers and other security personnel are also aiding the police forces. —DNA

South Korea, US set for new
collaboration to deter North

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden and South Korean leader Yoon Suk Yeol are expected to agree on Wednesday to deepen collaboration meant to deter nuclear escalation by North Korea amid heightened anxiety about its growing arsenal of missiles and bombs, U.S. officials said. Besides the pomp and pageantry the White House has scheduled, the two allies are using the first formal state visit by a South Korean leader in more than a decade to send a warning to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. The two are expected to agree on a new "Washington Declaration" that U.S. officials say will give South Korea detailed insights into, and a voice in, U.S. contingency planning to deter and respond to any nuclear incident in the region through a U.S.-ROK Nuclear Consultative Group. The Republic of Korea is South Korea's official name. While the allies

will affirm that diplomacy with North Korea is the best solution, Washington will announce that it will deploy imposing military technology, including a ballistic-missile submarine to South Korea in a show of force, senior U.S. administration officials told reporters in a briefing call. It will be the first such submarine visit since the 1980s, they said. The officials stressed that no U.S. nuclear weapons would be returned to the peninsula, and South Korea would continue not to have control over the U.S. nuclear arsenal. South Korea will also reaffirm its commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and its non-nuclear status, they said. "This is modeled after what we did with European allies during the height of the Cold War in similar periods of potential external threat," said one senior Biden administration official. The United States

is briefing China in advance on the steps, the officials said, a measure nodding to desires to ease the tense relationship in the region. Yoon's six-day trip comes as Washington and Seoul mark a 70-year alliance. On Tuesday, Yoon and his wife Kim Keon Hee joined Vice President Kamala Harris for a tour of the NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, outside of Washington, to discuss cooperation on space issues. Later, he visited the Korean War Memorial with Biden, marking the deadly 1950-53 conflict that echoes into the present day. On Wednesday, Yoon will be feted with an elaborate ceremony and East Room dinner catered by a U.S. chef whose mother emigrated from Korea. It is only the second state visit Biden has hosted since he took office two years ago — the first such guest was France's president. —Agencies

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