



Islamabad POST

Friday, April 21, 2023

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Japan will keep calling for China to act responsibly

Detailed News On Page-08

NATO Chief makes surprise visit to Kyiv

Detailed News On Page-08



Elon Musk threatens to sue Microsoft

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Anwarul Haq sworn in as AJK PM

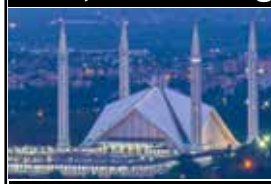
DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: Pa-

kistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) law maker Chaudhry Anwarul Haq

was sworn in as the 15th prime minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), hours after he was elected unopposed to the office by a thumping majority of the 53-seat AJK Legislative Assembly in the wee hours of Thursday. AJK President Barrister Sultan Mahmood administered the oath to the new prime minister at a ceremony in the New Prime Minister House in the state metropolis. The ceremony was largely attended by the elected representatives including the AJK Legislative Assembly members belonging to all three major parties including PTI, PML-N and PPP besides high ranking officials, councillors, social and political workers from various parts of AJK and the notables from the state capital. Haq had bagged 48 votes in the 53-member House in an election also participated by the 19-member opposition, comprising Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). A total of 48 members belonging to PTI, PPP and PML-N polled their votes electing Haq as the prime minister unopposed. The 29 out of a total of 31 PTI members of the AJK Legislative Assembly cast their votes in favour of Anwarul Haq electing him as the chief executive of the state.

EID HOLIDAYS
The Offices of Daily Islamabad Post shall remain closed from Friday, 21st April to Monday, 24th April. Subsequently, Newspaper will be published on Wednesday, the 26th of April.
— Editor

Sehr, Iftar Timing

Ramazan 05, 1444
Sehr: 04:00 am
Iftar: 06:47 pm
Fiq-e-Jafria
Sehr: 03:50 am
Iftar: 06:57 pm

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Kazakhstan put on development path under President Tokaev: Envoy
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Punjab polls delay case

AGP, PPP seek time for PTI dialogue

SC to resume hearing post-Eid following crucial meeting between govt, PTI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday adjourned the hearing of Punjab delay case till April 27 after Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Awan and PPP lawyer Farooq H Naek met Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial in his chamber. During the meeting, they sought time for holding dialogue with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to evolve consensus on simultaneous elections across the country. Subsequently, the hearing of the case was adjourned till April 27. A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar heard the case. Earlier, Chief Justice Bandial requested political leaders to hold negotiations today after the Supreme Court resumed hearing a petition seeking to hold general elections for all the national and provincial assemblies simultaneously across the country. The chief justice stated that there could be no obstinacy in negotiations and they could be successful through bilateral dialogues. He requested that leaders of all political parties sit today and negotiate, rather than after Eid. He furthered that elections could be held after Eidul Azha in July. A day earlier, the bench had issued notices to all majority political parties over a constitutional petition for holding elections of all provincial and national assemblies on the same date.

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President asks PM about legality of interim govts

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Expressing his severe concerns, President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday asked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to look into the legality of caretaker governments in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) following the expiry of their 90-day term. The president sent to the premier a letter of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry asking him to look into the issues raised by the former federal minister to uphold the Constitution and strengthen democracy in the country. In his letter to the president, Fawad raised issues with regard to the legality of the interim setups in the two provinces of the country. He had said that the interim governments in Punjab and KP had completed their stipulated period and the Constitution does not provide for the continuation or extension of the period fixed for the interim setup.

Continued on Page 06

Imran terms Nawaz ‘Captain of cowards’

Says there are also more players on a team of cowards

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan flayed on Thursday Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif, saying the latter was merely “the captain of the cowards”. Addressing the party workers during Iftar, the deposed premier said, “Nawaz Sharif is not alone. But there are also more players on a team of cowards. The capability of the Sharif family is that all of its members are cowards. Maulana Fazlur Rehman is also a part of Nawaz Sharif’s team”. Speaking about his aide Ali Amin Gandapur, Mr Khan said, “Ali Amin Gandapur is determined. Shameless are those people who indulge in activities like this. The police are just busy taking Ali Amin here and there.” Earlier on Wednesday, Mr Khan said that the entire country was in the throes of fascism.



Continued on Page 06

IHC bars govt from harassing Imran Khan

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday ordered not to harass Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan during the Eidul Fitr holidays and issued a notice to the government. Chief Justice Amir Farooq heard the request of former prime minister Imran Khan to stop authorities from arresting him during Eid holidays and to provide details of the cases registered against him. Advocate Faisal Chaudhry, who was representing PTI chief, told the court that Jamaate-Islami Amir Sirajul Haque visited Zaman Park in an attempt to defuse political tension.

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Foreign Minister Bilawal to attend SCO moot in India

Our participation in the meeting reflects Pakistan’s commitment to the SCO Charter: Spokesperson

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will lead the Pakistan delegation to the meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) being held in Goa, India on May 4-5, Foreign Office spokesperson announced on Thursday. In her weekly press briefing, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch told the media that the foreign minister was attending the SCO CFM meeting at the invitation of the current Chair of SCO CFM, Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister for External Affairs of India. “Our participation in the meeting reflects Pakistan’s commitment to the SCO Charter and processes and the importance that Pakistan accords to the region in its foreign policy priorities,” she remarked. She said that FM Bilawal had also attended the last meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in July last year in Tashkent. She said Pakistan continued to participate in SCO meetings in keeping with its long-standing commitment to the Organisation. Federal Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman represented Pakistan at the 4th SCO Meeting of Heads of

Ministries on Environmental Protection held in online format in New Delhi on April 18, 2023. On Wednesday, the spokesperson said, Director of the National Disaster Management Authority virtually attended the SCO Expert Meeting of Heads of Agencies for Prevention and Elimination of Emergency Situations while on Thursday Muhammad Idrees Mahsud, Member Disaster Risk Reduction, is virtually participating in the SCO Meeting of Heads of Agencies for Prevention and Elimination of Emergency Situations. She apprised the media of Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar’s participation in the 4th Meeting of the Neighboring Countries of Afghanistan held on April 13 in Samarkand where she highlighted the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and called for humanitarian assistance for the people of Afghanistan.

The MoS also participated in the Meeting of the Quadrilateral Group on Afghanistan which includes China, Iran, Pakistan and Russia and underlined that the untapped potential for connectivity could harness unprecedented new opportunities for the region.



Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

Eidul Fitr on Saturday

Eid in Saudi Arabia and UAE today

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Central Ruet-i-Hilal Committee on Thursday announced that Eidul Fitr would fall on Saturday (April 22) as the Shawwal moon had not been sighted. The announcement was made by Central Ruet-i-Hilal Committee Chairman Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad at a press conference in Islamabad. The announcement came after the committee met in the capital. Separate meetings of the zonal and district Ruet-i-Hilal committees were also held at their respective headquarters in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta. During the press conference, Maulana Azad said that the weather was clear in most areas but was cloudy in some areas. He further said that moon-sighting testimonies were not received from any area, therefore, Eidul Fitr would fall on Saturday.

EU supports civil society to protect human rights

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Pakistan has launched a call for proposals worth 1,700,000 EUR to enable civil society organizations (CSOs) to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in Pakistan. As human rights and democracy



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

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



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with Federal Ministers, internees, officials of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Interior Ministry, Nadra and developers of Constitution Mobile –App

Eid-ul-Fitr preparations; shopping in full swing

The markets and bazaars in the city remained abuzz with customers on Wednesday night as the buyers resorted to Eid shopping without being worried about the early closure of the shops

RAWALPINDI: With Eid ul Fitr just around the corner, shopping has gained momentum in city markets with a large number of people, particularly women and children, flocking to main city markets, bazaars and malls. A huge influx of shoppers is being witnessed in all markets and bazaars of the town. People are seen rushing to buy dresses and household items. Temporary stalls selling readymade clothes, bangles, earrings and cosmetics had also been set up throughout the city since the start of the last Ashra of Ramadan. The markets and bazaars in the city remained abuzz with customers on Wednesday night as the buyers resorted to Eid shopping without being worried about the early closure of the shops. A festive environment in shopping was no-

ted at the busy markets including Saddar, Lalkurti, Commercial Market, Moti Bazaar, Tench Bhatta, Peoples Colony, Raja Bazaar and various other markets of the town. Several local and international brands are displaying their latest Eid editions of dresses, shoes, and other essential accessories to attract buyers and gain maximum profits. The shops and bazaars were decorated with colourful lights to attract customers. The shopping frenzy is expected to reach its peak on Thursday night. Families come out for shopping soon after iftar and are seen buying shoes, cosmetics, ready-made garments, eye-catching artificial jewellery, multi-coloured bangles, and other items for Eid. Women are busy in buying clothes, footwear, cosmetics, henna, bangles and other items. Big crowds of girls were seen

on Wednesday night at bangles and henna stalls in various areas of the city. Taking advantage of the shopping rush, some shopkeepers have also started to fleece the shoppers with both hands. customer said, "I have completed shopping for my kids and I have bought clothes and matching shoes." Hawkers were also making brisk sales of clothes, footwear, cosmetics, and other goods as these products are generally purchased by low-income people ahead of Eid, said another citizen. Several Eid shoppers also complained of overpricing, especially of women's and kids' clothing. They said that only the people with deep pockets could afford to complete their shopping lists as it is difficult to buy clothes, footwear and other accessories

during these inflationary times. "The prevailing price hike is limiting me to be content with buying clothes only for my children," said Asifa, a visitor to Saddar Bazar. Mamona, a visitor to the Commercial Market, said buying bangles and henna was always one of the greatest Eid thrills. complained that the shopkeepers were exploiting the Eid shopping frenzy and overcharging the customers. A shopkeeper at Moti Bazar said a great number of shoppers were thronging markets, adding that he made a lot of sales. Rawalpindi police have increased the security of the bazaars and markets by deploying additional personnel. Meanwhile, special arrangements have also been made by the City Traffic Police to ensure traffic flow.

Two bike lifters arrested

RAWALPINDI :In an operation against criminal elements, Rawalpindi Police here on Thursday arrested two street criminals, bike lifters and recovered Rs 19,500 snatched cash, five stolen motorcycles, weapons and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, R.A.Bazar police arrested two members of Farrakh gang namely Farrakh ringleader and Saifullah, wanted in various cases. He informed that the police team constituted under the supervision of SHO R.A.Bazar Police Station on the directives of the Superintendent of Police conducted a raid and managed to net the accused. Police also recovered Rs 19,500 cash, five stolen motorcycles, weapons and other items from their possession. As per the preliminary police record, the criminals were also involved in other crimes, he said.—APP

Weekly inflation increases by 0.51 percent

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.51 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on April 19, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Thursday. The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 251.83 points as compared to 250.56 points during the past week, according to PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 47.23 percent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs17,732 witnessed a 0.25 percent increase and went up to 257.73 points from last week's 257.09 points. Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption group from Rs 17,732-22-888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 0.34 percent, 0.30 percent, 0.37 percent, and 0.63 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 29 (56.86%) items increased, 08 (15.69%) items decreased and 14 (27.45%) items remained stable. The items which recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW) included Potatoes (3.79%), Tea Lipton (3.61%), Gur (3.40%), Bread (2.48%), Chicken (2.00%), Bananas (1.68%), Rice Basmati Broken (1.54%) and Rice Irri-6/9 (1.22%), non-food items, LPG (4.75%), Petrol (3.67%) and Match Box (2.51%). The items that recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis included Tomatoes (13.11%), Onions (4.62%), Garlic (3.59%), Sugar (1.52%), Wheat Flour (0.93%), Mustard Oil (0.56%), Cigarettes (0.26%) and Pulse Gram (0.22%). On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the commodities which recorded a decrease in their average prices included Tomatoes (8.65%) and Chilies Powdered (6.48%).—DNA

An event entitled 'SCO Students' held

ISLAMABAD: An event entitled "SCO Students' Talk with Taikonauts of Shenzhou-15" held here on Thursday. It was co-hosted by the Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation Commission (GNFCC) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China Manned Space Agency, All-China Youth Federation, China Soong Ching Ling Foundation and the secretariat of the SCO Youth Committee. As the branch venue, Chinese embassy in Islamabad held the "Talk with Taikonauts of Shenzhou-15" event. It was aimed at enhancing the understanding of young people in the SCO countries in the field of astronomical science and technology, promote their development and deepen practical and friendly cooperation, Ms. Pang Chunxue, Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy, Shahid Mahmood Baig, Chairman of Pakistan Science Foundation, Ms. Asif Farhat, Founder of Institute of Peace and Diplomatic studies, members from Institute of Space Technology Islamabad and many young Pakistani students from different schools in Islamabad attended the event. Aliza Jamil, student of Class 8, from Islamabad Model College for Girls, interacted with the Chinese astronaut asking about how to breath in space, the astronaut gave a very comprehensive response from space.—DNA

Huawei kicks off 2023 Global Analyst Summit

ISLAMABAD: Huawei's 20th Annual Global Analyst Summit (HAS) began on Thursday in Shenzhen, and was attended by over 1,000 industry analysts, financial analysts, key opinion leaders, and media representatives from around the world. The summit focused on discussions around the current state of the ICT industry, development strategies, roadmaps for digital transformation, and future industry trends. Sabrina Meng, Huawei's Deputy Chairwoman, Rotating Chairwoman, and CFO, opened with a keynote. "Digitalization is a blue ocean for the whole industry," she said. "Huawei will keep investing in domains like connectivity, computing, storage, and cloud." "We aim to provide our customers with a digital infrastructure that has the simplest possible architecture with the highest possible quality – that delivers the best possible experience at the lowest possible costs. Our goal is to help organizations go digital in four stages: digitizing operations, building digital platforms, enabling platform-based intelligence, and putting intelligence to use. The time is ripe to thrive together in this new and exciting digital future," she added. Meng went on to share three major takeaways from Huawei's nearly 10 years of digital transformation experience. "First, strategy is essential. At its essence, digital transformation is about strategic planning and strategic choices. Any successful digital transformation has to be driven by strategy, not technology," "Second, data is the foundation," she continued. "Data only creates value when it flows across an organization, so methodical data governance is key. Integrating data across different dimensions will create even greater value." "Third, intelligence is the destination. Data is redefining productivity. Digitizing operations and building digital platforms helps clean, visualize, and aggregate data, laying the foundation for digital transformation. Putting intelligence to use makes data on-demand, easier to understand, and actionable, taking digital transformation to the next level." Dr Zhou Hong, President of Huawei's Institute of Strategic Research, also spoke at the event. He shared Huawei's hypotheses and visions for a future intelligent world, detailing how we can transform experience into structured knowledge, and lay the foundation for intelligence. "Rethinking approaches to networks and computing is critical as we move towards an intelligent world," said Zhou. "In networking, we have what it takes to move beyond the limits of Shannon's theorems – as well as applications of his theory – to drive a 100-fold increase in network capabilities over the next decade. In computing, we will move towards new models, architectures, and components, and improve our ability to both understand and control intelligence. We will also continue to explore the use of AI for industry applications, science, and more." The two keynotes were followed by a panel discussion on the role that digital productivity plays in driving industry digitalization, the challenges industries face in their digitalization process, recommended actions, as well as expectations for industries in the process of building up their digital productivity.—DNA

President gives assent to Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill 2023

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has signed the Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill 2023, the President House said Thursday. The president gave approval of the bill in accordance with Article 75 of the Constitution.—APP

Bullion rates in Hyderabad gold market

HYDERABAD: Following were the bullion rates in the Hyderabad gold market on Thursday Gold -Tezabi- 24ct Rs.186884/10 grams Gold -Tezabi- 22ct Rs.171310/10 grams Silver -Tezabi Rs. 2272/10 grams—APP

APRIL 2023

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Briefs

Residents' committee formed to seek resolution of issues

ISLAMABAD: Residents of River Garden, a housing society on the Expressway, have formed an interim committee to represent their concerns against poor arrangements by the administration and a significant increase in bills. During a recent meeting, serious concerns were expressed regarding the society's security, sanitation, and other services. The residents have obtained an injunction from the court against the exorbitant increase in residential bills, and the administration's threat to shut off the water supply is considered contempt of court. The residents have requested negotiations from the administration to address all the issues faced by the society through mutual understanding. The newly formed interim committee, with co-conveners Aftab Ali and Athar Ali Goraya, includes Khalid Mahmood, Sheraz Rauf, Rizwan Ahmed, Abdul Majeed Ali, and Khalid Parvez Raja. The committee's objective is to negotiate with the management of the housing society to reduce lavish expenditures and halt the threat of cutting off basic facilities to the residents. At the end of the meeting, a resolution was passed demanding that the management of the housing society address the residents' concerns and improve their standard of living. The River Garden Residents' Committee aims to seek a resolution to the issues faced by society and enhance the quality of life for its residents.—APP

Pakistan earns \$1,718 million from IT services' export in 8 months

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US\$ 1,718.250 million by providing different Information Technology (IT) services to various countries during the first eight months of the current fiscal year 2022-23. This shows a growth of 1.74 percent as compared to US\$ 1,688.845 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the fiscal year 2021-22, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During July-February (2022-23), the export of computer services grew by 2.77 percent as it surged from US\$ 1,353.365 million last fiscal year to US\$ 1,390.790 million this year. Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed an increase of 2.92 percent, from US\$ 496.648 million to US\$ 511.162 million while the exports of hardware consultancy services also rose by 152.05 percent from US\$ 1.462 million to US\$ 3.685 million. The export and import of computer software-related services surged by 11.95 percent, from US\$ 355.142 million to US\$ 397.569 million whereas the exports of repair and maintenance services increased to US\$ 2.134 million from US\$ 0.776 million. In addition, the exports of other computer services witnessed a decrease of 4.63 percent going down from US\$ 499.337 million to US\$ 476.240 million.—APP

NHMP foils attempt to smuggle wheat, flour

ISLAMABAD: National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) has foiled attempts to smuggle a huge quantity of wheat and flour. Thirty-eight suspicious trucks were seized in various operations near Main Tall Plaza Islamabad, Chakri, Neela Dulha and Kallar Kahar, said a press release on Thursday. During the checking, a total of 438 tons of wheat and 40 tons of flour were found in these trucks. The flour and wheat were handed over to the concerned food authority after completing the preliminary legal proceedings.—APP

Minister assures cooperation to ICCI for new Industrial Park

Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General UBG and Faizan Shahzad also spoke at the occasion and gave useful proposals to promote industrialization in the country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Syed Murtaza Mahmud, Federal Minister for Industries and Production said that promoting industrialization is the key priority of the government to improve the economy and assured that he would fully cooperate with the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry in its endeavors for the establishment of a new industrial park in the region. He said this while talking to a delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) that called on him led by Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President. Syed Murtaza Mahmud said that after the Eid holidays, he along with Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Federal Minister for Board of Investment will hold a meeting with ICCI to take forward the matters for ICCI industrial park. He said that ICCI will be given representation in the Boards of the attached departments of his Ministry. He lauded the initiative of ICCI for organizing Pakistan-Ethiopia Business Forum and said that ICCI should send formal invitation to Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs to attend the Forum while he would cooperate in this regard. He said that the government is working on a new policy for electric vehicles. He assured that he would cooperate in resolving the key



issues of the business community. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry briefed the Federal Minister for Industries & Production about the importance of a new industrial park in the region to promote industrialization, create jobs, improve exports and

increase tax revenue. He stressed that the government should extend all possible cooperation and support to ICCI for early materialization of this important project, which is in the national interest. He said that ICCI should be given representation in the Boards of the departments working under the Ministry of Industries

so that the business community could give its input in their decision-making process for better growth of the industrial sector. He said that ICCI plans to organize a Pakistan-Ethiopia Business Forum during the upcoming visit of the Ethiopian business delegation along with the Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia and invited the Federal Minister for Industries and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs to attend the Forum. He also apprised the Minister about the key issues of the business community and sought his cooperation to redress them. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI informed the Minister about the difficulties of cooking oil manufacturers due to restrictions on LCs and said that he should play a role to address this issue. Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General UBG and Faizan Shahzad also spoke at the occasion and gave useful proposals to promote industrialization in the country.

PEMRA raids cable networks for airing illegal Indian channels

ISLAMABAD: On the directions of Chairman Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), the Authority's Regional Offices took action on the reports of violations by cable operators for airing illegal Indian channels and content against the directions of Supreme Court of Pakistan as well as those who were issued warnings by the Authority from time to time.

According to a press release issued here Thursday, the field staff of PEMRA Regional Office, Karachi conducted surprise inspections in various

localities and raided Cable operators namely M/s Delta Digital Cable Network, M/s Home Media Communications (Pvt.) Ltd., M/s Shahzaib Cable Network and M/s Sky Cable Vision. Similarly PEMRA Regional Office, Hyderabad raided 23 cable operators and seized eight networks that were airing illegal Indian channels and Indian content. Following the same pattern PEMRA Regional Office, Sukkur conducted surprise inspection in M/s Media Plus Larkana and M/s Universal CTV Network Larkana who were

also airing illegal Indian content. Moreover, PEMRA Regional Office, Multan conducted surprise inspections in various localities of Bahawalnagar City and raided Cable operators namely M/s City Digital Cable Network, State Cable Network, Naseeb and Jameel Cable Network, World Bright Cable Network, Star Information Company and Global Signals Cable Network who were airing illegal Indian channels as well as Indian content. During the mentioned raids, the PEMRA enforcement teams confiscated

illegal equipments and show cause notices have also been issued to the violators for the due course of law. PEMRA once again warns all cable TV operators of the country to immediately stop airing illegal Indian channels/content which are otherwise illegal or proscribed by the authority. No channel other than PEMRA Licensee would be allowed for distribution on cable TV networks and any operator found defying the orders henceforth would be strictly dealt in accordance with PEMRA laws.—APP

Rain causes tripping of several IESCO's feeders

ISLAMABAD: Several feeders of Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) were on Thursday tripped due to late-night rain in various areas of the company's regions. Power supply to various areas attached to Peshawar Road, Saghi Morgah, Sikho, Islamabad, Charing Crossing, Gola and Westridge feeders remained suspended due to the developing of fault, the IESCO spokesperson told in a statement issued here. The fault also occurred at PTCL, Jail Park, Dhok Noor, Shamsh Colony, Sihala, Gulistan e Johar Colony and Jhangi feeders, he added. The IESCO concerned staff actively engaged to clear the faults and address individual complaints of the customers. The IESCO chief was monitoring the power restoration operation personally. The Spokesperson also advised the public to keep a safe distance from electric wires, poles, transformers and meters during rain. In case of any emergency, the consumers could register their complaints at the concerned office number or IESCO helpline number 118.—APP

Pak may become the sixth country with 3-digit inflation

The dire economic straits have, however, cast a decidedly sombre mood across the country's vibrant markets. So far, the population has not turned to the violent street protests that brought down the government of Sri Lanka in 2022 but it is not unlikely, he warned

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Brig. (ret'd) Aslam Khan, Chairman of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Thursday said Pakistan that has nosedived into a very serious economic and political crisis can become the sixth country in the world to have triple-digit inflation in mismanagement continued and necessary steps were delayed. The inflation genie is out of the bottle, the cost of living is rising and the standard of living of tens of millions is falling at a rapid pace with no hope in sight, he said. There are no efforts on the part of the government to control inflation and provide relief to the masses as the rulers and opposition is more interested in struggling with each other, he added. Aslam Khan said that presently 73 countries struggle with double-digit inflation and it can get worst any time and they can

join the club of countries with triple-digit inflation. He said that more than about 2 percent inflation erodes buying power of the masses, damages consumer confidence, eats into business and corporate competitiveness, and harms entire economies. The reasons behind inflation are reckless borrowing, erosion of the value of the rupee, profiteering, supply chain issues, shortages, pent-up demand, and government stimulus, he informed. Large-scale and long-term economic mismanagement is also a reason behind inflation in Pakistan which has resulted in a mess that has forced millions of Pakistanis to struggle to put food on the table amid one of the country's worst economic crises. The holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, the Muslim fasting month, used to be a guaranteed earner for small shops and businesses

but now this is not the case. Many worry they will not even make enough to pay their monthly rent, with inflation hitting its highest levels in decades. There are no buyers in the market as the cash-strapped country of more than 220 million people saw year-on-year inflation hit 35.4% in March. Food prices surged more than 47% in 12 months, with transport costs rising by 55%. The economy has been wrecked by years of financial mismanagement and political instability a situation exacerbated by a global energy crisis and devastating floods that left a third of the country underwater. The dire economic straits have, however, cast a decidedly sombre mood across the country's vibrant markets. So far, the population has not turned to the violent street protests that brought down the government of Sri Lanka in 2022 but it is not unlikely, he warned.

Pakistani, Chinese scientists work together

For over two years, he has been working with TIB, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) on anaerobic acidification of organic wastes and value-added chemicals production

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Research institutes in Pakistan and China are working together on the reuse of organic waste in Pakistan. "We aim to install the first pilot scale project on campus, utilizing the campus food waste", Dr. Farrukh Raza Amin, Assistant Professor at Department of Chemistry, COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) told China Economic Net (CEN). For over two years, he has been working with Tianjin Institute of Industrial Biotechnology (TIB), Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) on anaerobic acidification of organic wastes and value-added chemicals production. "Through the lab-scale experiment, we have developed strains that produces



chemicals including Butyric acid, acetate and propionate from food waste. These chemicals are widely used in pharmaceutical, food and paint industry", Dr. Farrukh Raza Amin said. Furthermore, scientists of the project work to establish a database on organic waste in Pakistan, which includes the characteristics of the feedstock, methane production performance and other basic data to do a systematic study. The establishment of this information database will benefit both Chinese and Pakistani

researchers to pursue research in the given field and provide an important basis to formulate relevant policies and promote the comprehensive utilization of organic waste. The project is also in line with the "energy efficiency and clean energy production practices at industrial scale" spelled out in sustainable development goals-7 (SDG-7) proposed by United Nations, which are intended to be achieved by the year 2030. Anaerobic digestion (AD) is a widely adopted technology used for producing biogas along with the digestate used as a fertilizer. However, using a wide range of organic wastes and residuals as substrate and diverse microbial community structure of the bioreactor makes AD as one of the most complicated

biochemical processes. In the process, hydrogen and volatile fatty acids (VFAs) are formed as intermediate products. As these acids are important precursors for various industries as mixed or purified chemicals such as pharmaceutical and food industry, the AD process can be bioengineered to produce VFAs alongside hydrogen and therefore biogas plants can become biorefineries for producing these value-added products. The current project aims at producing and accumulating VFAs and hydrogen, inhibit their conversion to methane and to extract them as the final products. Moreover, it also aims at the preparation of biosynthetic microbes with the desired characteristics to optimize the process performance.

Police arrest 22 anti-social elements

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi district police on the directives of Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi Capt. (r) Muhammad Amir Khan, conducted raids in different areas and netted 22 anti-social elements including drug peddlers, bootleggers and recovered over seven kg charras, one kg heroin, 68 liters liquor and five bottles of liquor.

Police spokesman told on Thursday that Waris Khan, Cantt, Naseerabad, Taxila, Saddar Wah and Dhamial police rounded up Idrees, Ijaz, Naem, Numan, Shahab ud Din, Sabir, Zakirullah, Harris and Amir Rehman and recovered over seven kg charras and one kg heroin from their possession. Bani, Race Course, Dhamial, and Kahuta police rounded up six accused, Kashif, Safer, Kabir, Zahid, Waheed, and Wajid and recovered 68 liters liquor and five bottles of liquor from their possession.

Naseerabad police in their operation managed to net a Proclaimed Offender namely Ramazan alias Jani wanted in a double murder case registered in Toba Tek Singh. The spokesman said, Gungmandi police conducted a raid and netted an accused for carrying fireworks items. He informed, Gujjar Khan police in their ongoing operations against illegal LPG and petrol agencies arrested five namely Aftab, Ashfaq, Sabir, Hanif and Nisar. He said that police also conducted raids in different areas and held 39 professional beggars. The SSP said that strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against the lawbreakers and operations against the criminals would continue.—APP

Constitution Mobile App' available on both Android

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Thursday that the newly launched application of the Constitution was available on both operating systems, Android and iOS. In a tweet, she said the 'Constitution Mobile App' can be downloaded on Android using the link <https://t.co/MXtjRYhy0>. The minister said that this mobile application can also be downloaded on iOS using the link <https://t.co/8oEEFQ52HG>. It is worth mentioning that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif launched the mobile application of the Constitution on Thursday.

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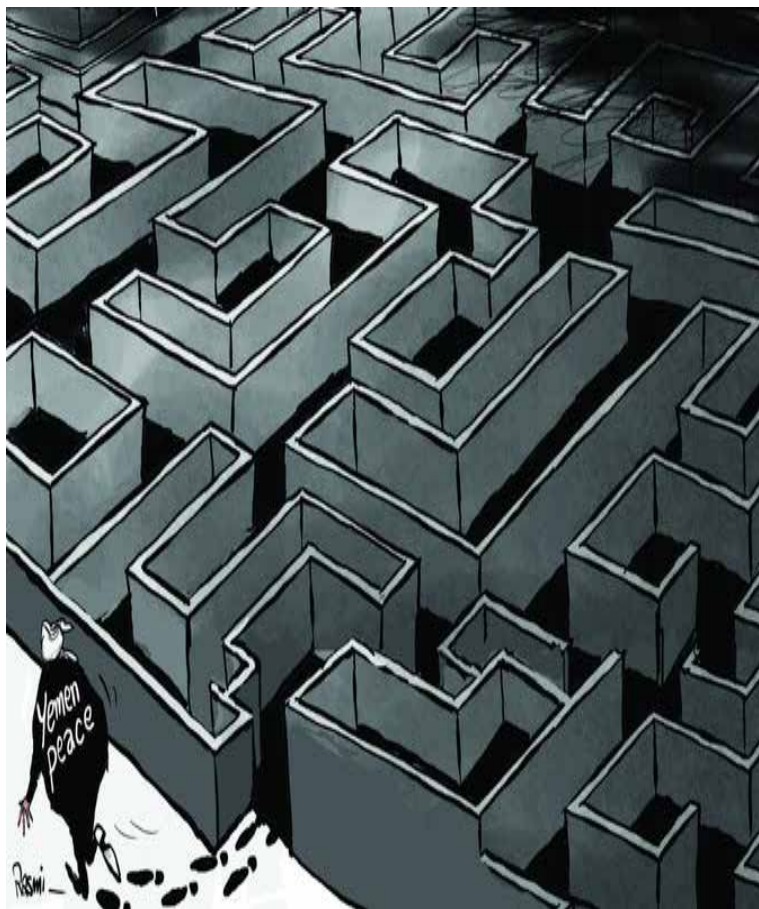
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Covid-19 aftermath

By the end of 2021, Americans were dying three years sooner, on average, than they were before Covid-19, with life expectancy falling from 79 years to 76 years, according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention's most recent statistics. Such astonishing declines have occurred planet-wide — the first global reduction in life expectancy since World War II. Total deaths jumped 13 per cent in the first two years of the pandemic. Estimates indicate that about 15 million more people died than would have been expected. Human development has been pushed into reverse. Most of these deaths have been a direct result of the coronavirus. But the pandemic also killed people by damaging health care more broadly, which will itself have enduring consequences. Years of gains and investment have been wiped away.

And we have only started to see the effects. We can reclaim our lost ground and resume the past decades of advancement in human survival and health. But that requires holding on to our sense of urgency and doing more than simply hoping things will turn around. The aftermath of pandemics requires as much focus and response as the start. And the United States' leadership is crucial. We rallied the world to invest in emergency relief. Now we must rally the world to invest in recovery. Across the globe, including here at home, the pandemic diverted resources from essential health needs of all kinds. Routine immunisation programmes, sickness care for children and adults, cancer treatment, ambulance services, surgery capacity and mental health services have all been disrupted. Covid inflicted economic harm that led governments to slash even meagre health budgets. It disrupted supply chains for basic medical supplies. And it has driven health workers, already in short supply, from the profession here and abroad.

The harm to health care has been wide, but the repair must start with the decimated and under-resourced ranks of primary health care workers — our first-line, community-based doctors, nurses and outreach workers. Attention in crisis tends to focus on hospitals and emergency responders. However, primary health workers deliver the vast majority of the services responsible for longer lives, including for stopping the next pandemic. They are the backbone of a functional and effective health system.

China and the EU

With the United States constantly pressing its European allies to jump on its bandwagon to contain China's rise and development while peddling anti-China narratives worldwide, the European Union has increasingly tended to view China through a lens provided by the US and treat it as a strategic competitor and even a rival. Such a perception is ideologically biased and detrimental to China-EU ties as it does not reflect either the width or depth of China's reciprocal cooperation with the EU. China has repeatedly said the US' decoupling approach is neither reasonable nor feasible in a globalized world, and that it hopes the EU will stop blindly following the US and adopt a more independent, objective and pragmatic approach toward its interaction with China. It is therefore good to hear more European voices calling for an independent policy toward China and speaking out against decoupling from the world's second-largest economy. On Tuesday, some members of the European Parliament called on the EU member states to develop an autonomous policy toward China independent from that of the US and seek cooperation rather than confrontation with Beijing. "After visiting China, French President Macron declared that Europe needs more strategic autonomy and should not be a vassal of the United States of America. I don't tend to agree with Emmanuel Macron, but this time I think he was right because the current European policy makes no sense and is destroying Europe," said non-attached Slovak MEP Milan Uhrík. Recent intensive high-profile visits to China by European leaders and officials may have been of benefit in that respect as they seem to have helped foster a better understanding of China. On the same day, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen talked at length about her recent trip to China in a speech. While insisting that there is a need for Europe to work on de-risking some important and sensitive parts of its relations with China, she also reiterated that "decoupling is clearly not viable, desirable or even practical for Europe". China-EU economic and trade relations are complementary and mutually beneficial. Considering the adverse impact of the conflict in Ukraine on the world economy, such an outcome is not only commendable but also conducive to the EU's economic development. Further division and disunity will only bring more troubles to an already turbulent world, and consolidating the cooperative ties between China and the EU would help foster cordial relations and act as a global stabilizer.

CPEC: A decade of progress and promise

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project is a major initiative that aims to connect Gwadar port in Pakistan's Balochistan province to China's northwestern region of Xinjiang through an extensive network of highways, railways, and pipelines. The project is not just about infrastructure development but also about establishing a robust economic relationship between the two countries. The CPEC project is an essential part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is a massive infrastructure and trade project aimed

CPEC is a testament to the enduring friendship between China and Pakistan, and it represents a shining example of regional cooperation and connectivity." - Xi Jinping, President of China

In the past ten years, the China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) has become a vital project for building infrastructure around the world. It connects China's western areas to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan, making it an important link between countries. This ambitious project started in 2013 and has been a catalyst for change in both countries. It has the potential to bring economic growth, regional connections, and better living standards to the area.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project is a major initiative that aims to connect Gwadar port in Pakistan's Balochistan province to China's northwestern region of Xinjiang through an extensive network of highways, railways, and pipelines. The project is not just about infrastructure development but also about establishing a robust economic relationship between the two countries. The CPEC project is an essential part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is a massive infrastructure and trade project aimed at boosting China's economic growth and expanding its influence in the world. The CPEC project is a vital component of the BRI, as it provides China with a shorter and more secure route to the Arabian Sea, bypassing the Malacca Strait, which is currently the busiest and most critical shipping lane in the world. The CPEC project is not only crucial for China's economic development but also for Pakistan's economic growth and regional connectivity. The project will help Pakistan to overcome its chronic energy shortages, which have been a significant impediment to its economic growth. The project includes several energy projects, including coal-fired power plants, hydroelectric power stations, and wind farms, which will add approximately 17,000 megawatts of electricity to Pakistan's national grid. Moreover, the CPEC project will create numerous job opportunities for Pakistani youth. The development of special economic zones (SEZs) along the CPEC route is expected to attract foreign investment, technology transfer, and job creation. The SEZs are designed to provide a favorable envi-

ronment for business, offering tax incentives, and streamlined regulatory procedures. The project is expected to create more than 2 million job opportunities for Pakistani youth by 2030.

The CPEC project has already started to show its impact on Pakistan's economy. The project has helped to revive Pakistan's construction industry, which had been in decline for several years. The construction of highways, railways, and pipelines has created thousands of job opportunities for local workers. The project has also increased Pakistan's foreign direct investment (FDI), which had been low compared to other developing countries.

The CPEC project has been an excellent opportunity for China to expand its trade and investment footprint in South Asia, the Middle East, and Central Asia, while providing Pakistan with much-needed foreign investment and infrastructure development. The project is a flagship initiative of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to promote economic cooperation and connectivity among countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe.

The CPEC has progressed significantly over the past decade, with a focus on infrastructure and energy projects. The project has helped Pakistan address its chronic energy shortages, with the addition of over 6,000 megawatts of electricity to the national grid, reducing power outages and boosting economic activity. The CPEC project has also helped Pakistan develop its Blue Economy through the development of Gwadar port, which will provide a strategic trade route to China and the rest of the world. CPEC has also played a crucial role in creating rural-urban synergy and regional connectivity in Pakistan. The SEZs along the CPEC route have attracted significant investment from Chinese companies, which has led to the creation of new employment opportunities and the transfer of technology and skills. The SEZs have also helped Pakistan diversify its export basket, with the export of agri-based products such as sesame seeds, seafood, and rice. China has been providing Pakistan with advanced agricultural technology, including drip irrigation systems, seed treatment, and pest control techniques. This technology transfer has helped Pakistan to improve its crop yields and reduce water wastage, resulting in increased agricultural production and revenue. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, terrorism, and political instability, the

CPEC project has continued to progress. The second phase of the project is focused on agriculture sector development, socio-economic projects, and academic partnerships to improve research and development collaborations. The CPEC project has the potential to transform Pakistan's agricultural sector, which accounts for a significant share of the country's GDP and employs more than 40% of the country's labor force. The project aims to introduce modern farming techniques, improve water management, and increase the yield of crops such as cotton, wheat, and rice. CPEC has helped Pakistan address its human development challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality. The project has created over 100,000 job opportunities for Pakistani youth and provided training and skills development to thousands of workers. The project has also helped improve Pakistan's health-care and education systems, with the establishment of hospitals, schools, and vocational training centers. It also helped Pakistan address its sustainability challenges, such as climate change, water scarcity, and environmental degradation. The project has introduced renewable energy technologies, such as wind and solar, to Pakistan's energy mix, reducing the country's reliance on fossil fuels. The project has also helped improve Pakistan's water management system, with the construction of dams, reservoirs, and irrigation networks.

bond between Pakistan and China is one that has withstood the test of time, enduring every obstacle that has come their way. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, being the star project of the Belt and Road Initiative, has brought about a plethora of advantages to both nations and the entire region. As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the CPEC, it is crucial to reflect on its triumphs and look ahead with a sense of hopefulness. Through unwavering cooperation, partnership, and mutual regard, Pakistan and China can scale greater heights of progress and affluence, not just for their citizens but for the world at large.

Hailing from the historic city of Peshawar (twinning with Urumqi), the erudite Secretary General of the Pakistan China Friendship Association has long been a proponent of the deep-rooted ties between the two nations. For those who wish to engage in further dialogue with this esteemed scholar, you may reach him at the following email address: Syeed.Gilani@Gmail.Com.

China's influence over South China Sea; counter measure taken by US and its allies

Muhammad Faisal Yousafzai



Strategically South China Sea is important for china because it can be used as a buffer zone for the southern Chinese mainland. The control of this region will enable china to create a military barrier from which she can challenge any future military threat. If South China Sea is accepted as china's sovereign territory, than china will easily demand that

In early 1930s china cartographers draw a map of Chinese borders, one of which draw U-shaped map around the entire South China Sea. In 1947 republic of china announced that the U-shape series of line map is its maritime boundaries. However, in 1949, People's Republic of china got power over china. Since then PRC is claiming her sovereign rights over the entire South China Sea region. Her claim based on historical "HAN DYNASTY" one of the old dynasty of china, who had controlled the whole region. However, there are many other claimants too, like Vietnam, Taiwan, Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia. These all sates are in competition to take control of their space in the South China Sea region, due to which these sates consistently confront china in terms of military actions like in 1974, 1988, 1995 and 1999 etc. china confronted Vietnam's forces and Philippine's forces and every time the former was the victorious. To protect their interests in the region these small claimants' states signed a mutual defense treaties with USA to balance the whole scenario. Without US assistance these all claimant sates are like mosquitos on the face of big dragon. China claim about 80 to 90% of South China Sea as its own territory, which includes all natural resources, air-space, seabed etc. strategically and economically this region is very important for China's rise. However, USA also had an interest; to protect freedom of navigation and regional security: which might lead to confront each other's depending on their actions and choices.

Economically the Chinese interest over the region is that, it will give china rights over the resource in South China Sea such as fishing, natural gas, hydrocarbons etc. and especially a sea route for Chinese trading. It's expected that over the next 2 decades, the consumption and demand of oil in Asian nations will increase dramatically about 4% annually, in which half of oil would be demanded by Beijing. Which means that the consideration of natural resources will fuel the conflict? According to US department of energy, this South China Sea region had an oil reserves of 7 billion barrels and had a production capacity of 2.5 million barrels per day. According to American scientists, this region is very important in terms of LNG transportation. According to them, the amount transported via South China Sea is three times greater than Suez Canal and fifteen times greater than Panama Canal. The

US department of energy claimed that if these estimations were correct than this region is containing more than 2,000 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves. Approximately 90% of the world trade occurs through shipping's in which 45% is passes through South China Sea, that's why it is also called "Asian Mediterranean".

Strategically South China Sea is important for china because it can be used as a buffer zone for the southern Chinese mainland. The control of this region will enable china to create a military barrier from which she can challenge any future military threat. If South China Sea is accepted as china's sovereign territory, than china will easily demand that any vessels entering or leaving South China Sea will obtain china's permission and then according to "Harvey Feldman", former US ambassador in Asia, this region will turn into "Chinese lake". Since late 2014, china has been responsible for making artificial islands in which sand dredge from ocean floors is pumped onto reefs transforming it to permanent islands. On 12 July, 2016, permanent court of arbitration, tribunal under annex VII of UNCLOS states that, china's historical rights over south china sea is illegal, and the China's artificial islands didn't satisfied the true definition of island which is permanent above water and capable of sustaining human life. "United nations convention on the laws of seas" (UNCLOS) is one of the most accepted document regarding laws on seas, which was adopted in 1982 and became operative as international law in 1994.

The main purpose of adopting this convention is to settle maritime disputes peacefully. Both china and USA are agreed that state has sovereignty over her EEZ but the major issue in UNCLOS is that in it military activities in exclusive economic zone (EEZ) are not clearly expressed due to which there is tension between china and some small ASEAN states and USA. According to china every state has sovereignty over its EEZ and no military activities are allowed without coastal state consent. However, USA believes that EEZ is international water and according to UNCLOS article 87 "the high seas are open to all states, whether coastal or landlocked". That's why there shall be freedom of navigation and over flights. China supports her arguments form UNCLOS article 301 which states that "parties shall refrain from any threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the

principles of international law", according to chines commentators, those military activities in EEZ without her consent is collecting data, and could be used to support military operation against china. However, US response is that those military activities in international waters are to protect freedom of navigation. However, in 12 July, 2016, permanent court of arbitration sates that the South China Sea is confirmed as international waters, open to US navy to carry out military activities and surveillance flights, and the tribunal also accepted the legal rights of small claimant's states like Vietnam, Philippines over the South China Sea region. That's why in 2016, the supreme court of Philippines ruled to enhance the defense agreement with US which was early signed in 1951, so that, US can stationed her troops in the country.

There is no doubt that disputes over the South China Sea will be converted into greater tension between china and USA dependent on their actions and choices. The primary aim of America in South China Sea is to guarantee regional security and freedom of navigation.

There are factors which will resolve the regional disputes like joint developments, shared infrastructures and co-ordinated investments. There is no doubt that these are not new methods but their effectiveness depends only if claimants states make concession in their existing claims and change their perspectives towards "what should be prioritized" which can only be possible if the growing nationalism is controlled and through diplomacy their trust deficits will regain. Washington must need to play a role of reliable mediator in the region and if Washington intervened in regional disputes to protect her allies like Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, than unfortunately she will her credibility not only in southeast Asia but all over the world like a domino effect. That's why it's USA best interest to restraint very party from use of force and then peacefully resolve their dispute. As "henry Kissinger" stated that "the emergence of prosperous and powerful china shouldn't be considered in itself as American strategic defeat. Perhaps, the real danger is to deal a rising china as detrimental to regional peace and this fall prey thinking will enhance the arms race in a dispute and would worsen the security dilemma". There is no doubt that china is rising, now it depends in USA whether to take is bed: as she already taken; or to take it good. Here the important point is that we still have a chance to convert current situation into opportunity and make our future peaceful, and may be this line of thinking force Chinese leaders to come out from realist school of thought and became a peaceful, powerful member of international community

Briefs

AGP, PPP seek time for PTI dialogue

FROM PAGE 01

The petition, filed by Sardar Kashif Khan who is a permanent citizen of Abbottabad, has engaged Shah Khawar as his counsel.

The counsel for the petitioner said there is a need for political dialogue for ending the impasse on the issue of holding general elections for Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) assemblies. Shortly after the hearing commenced today, the Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Awan requested a 15-minute break so that the court could bring in more seating to facilitate "political leaders".

When the hearing resumed, the petitioner's counsel stood to the rostrum and took that the leadership of many political parties was present in the court. He added that it would be appropriate for the court to hear all the leaders.

The lawyer continued that holding elections on the same date was "necessary" for the strength of democracy. Chief Justice Bandial expressed his gratitude to the political leaders for coming to the apex court.

"There is anxiety within the nation [regarding elections], and there will be peace if the political leadership solves the problem," he remarked, adding that complications would arise if the court gave orders instead. The CJP maintained that it would be "a blessing" if the political leaders resolved the issue through "understanding". He continued that the Ministry of Defense has also requested that the elections be held on the same day across the country, and the petitioner had requested that as well. The CJP said that the AGP had raised a similar point but it was lost amid politics.

PDM rejects SC-sanctioned negotiations

FROM PAGE 01

During the presser, Fazl took a headline against both the possibility of any negotiations with PTI and the Supreme Court. Accusing the apex court of being partial to the PTI chief, the PDM head said: "If the Supreme Court can show flexibility towards Imran Khan, then why can't they show flexibility towards us?"

In the hard-hitting conference, the PDM chief slammed the court of being partial in the matter. He asked: "Is this a court or a panchayat?" Maulana Fazl said: "The court wants us to agree on a date for the elections. According to the Constitution, it is mandatory to hold elections within 90 days, but if Imran Khan agrees on a date, then it is right." He added, "The court should clarify its position on the matter."

Meanwhile, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Thursday said that dialogues cannot be held with the opposition by putting a gun to their heads. Addressing a press conference, the foreign minister said that a conspiracy is being hatched to impose a "one unit policy" in the country. PPP's Farooq H Naek and PML-N's Khawaja Saad Rafique assured the three-member bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial of holding talks with the opposition party.

Imran terms Nawaz 'Captain of cowards'

FROM PAGE 01

Taking to Twitter, the deposed premier lamented, "The way we have descended into becoming a banana republic where there is no rule of law and only the law of the jungle. It is clear that this reign of terror is not controlled by PDM puppets but by another force that sees itself totally above the law. Our people are abducted, and afterwards sham FIRs are registered."

Russia slams S Korean suggestion to arm Kyiv

"Such steps will negatively impact bilateral relations with those states that take them and will be taken into account

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has reacted strongly to South Korea's suggestion that it may start arming Ukraine's government, slamming the idea as "an openly hostile anti-Russian move."

"Russia is conducting defensive military operations against the collective West, which has chosen the puppet regime in Kiev as an instrument of its hybrid proxy war against us. In this situation, we will consider any supplies of weapons to Ukraine, wherever they might come from, as an openly hostile anti-Russian move," Zakharova insisted on Thursday fol-

lowing earlier harsh reactions expressed by other senior Russian officials. "Such steps will negatively impact bilateral relations with those states that take them and will be taken into account when elaborating Russia's positions on issues concerning core security interests of the relevant countries," she further emphasized, noting: "As for South Korea, it might be about the approaches to the settlement of the situation on the Korean Peninsula."

Zakharova then went on to clarify that Russian forces deliver high-precision strikes solely at military targets in Ukraine, not at civil infrastructure facilities. Her remarks came a day after South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol raised the possibility

of sending military aid to the Western-backed government in Kiev in the event of what he speculated to as "a large-scale civilian attack by Russia."

"If there is a situation the international community cannot condone, such as any large-scale attack on civilians, massacre or serious violation of the laws of war, it might be difficult for us to insist only on humanitarian or financial support," Yoon inferred ahead of his upcoming visit to Washington - Seoul's key ally and sponsor. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov also reacted promptly to Yoon's highly hostile and hypothetical statement on Wednesday saying, "Unfortunately Seoul has taken a rather unfriendly stance. The start of arms supplies will indirectly mean a certain stage of

involvement in this conflict."

Yoon's remarks further drew a stern warning from Deputy Chairman of Russian National Security Council Dmitry Medvedev, who threatened that Moscow would in turn supply advanced weaponry to Seoul's arch foe North Korea if it went ahead with supplying arms to Kiev.

"I wonder what the residents of this nation would say when they see the newest example of Russian weapons in possession of their closest neighbors, our partners from the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea]?" Medvedev wrote on social media on Wednesday.

South Korea, which is a major producer of artillery ammunition, has supplied Ukraine with

non-lethal and humanitarian assistance but has so far ruled out military aid to Kiev, citing its policy against supplying weapons to war zones.

South Korean had initially ruled out the possibility of supplying Kiev with lethal weapons following the start of Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine in efforts to avoid antagonizing Moscow due to its companies operating there as well as its influence over Pyongyang.

Last week, South Korean media reported that Seoul had considered "loaning" the US nearly 500,000 rounds for 155mm artillery guns amid reports that Kiev is in desperate need of such munitions for its almost entirely Western-sponsored war against Russia.

President asks PM about legality of interim govts

FROM PAGE 01

Fawad further stated that caretaker governments were introduced as per Article 224 of the Constitution to facilitate the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in holding free, fair, just, and honest elections in accordance with the Constitution and the law.

The president also asked the premier to examine the matter to ensure the upholding of the Constitution and the strengthening of democracy in Pakistan.

FM Bilawal to attend SCO moot in India

FROM PAGE 01

In Samarkand, she also held bilateral meetings with the foreign ministers of China, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The spokesperson informed the media that Pakistan's Head of Mission in Afghanistan, Ambassador Ubaid Nizamani has returned to Kabul and resumed his responsibilities, after close consultation with the Afghan Interim Government. She said in his telephone conversation with Acting Afghan Minister for Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi on April 15, FM Bilawal also reiterated the necessity and responsibility of the Afghan Interim Government towards the safety and security of Pakistan's diplomatic missions and personnel in Afghanistan.

PM Shehbaz says judiciary cannot re-write the law

FROM PAGE 01

per a globally recognised concept, the judiciary can only interpret the law, but cannot re-write it, the premier said. The prime minister said the 1973 Constitution was the result of the hard toil of politicians from all backgrounds, who arrived at a consensus in formulation of the sacred document. He recalled that veteran politicians of their times including former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Mufi Mehmood, Khan Abdul Wali Khan, and several other political leaders who rose above their political differences to write a constitution that acted as a binding force for the federation.

IHC bars govt from harassing Imran Khan

FROM PAGE 01

But, the next morning Sindh PTI president was arrested. The chief justice remarked that the incident created a "bed taste". Advocate Faisal Chaudhry expressed the apprehension that they would launch an operation again the PTI chief during the Eid holidays. On it, the chief justice observed that he could seek details, but could not issue an order on mere assumptions. Later, Chief Justice Amir Farooq ordered not to harass Imran Khan during the Eid holidays and issued a notice to the government.

EU supports civil society to protect...

FROM PAGE 01

are essential values of the EU, promoting and protecting them remains a key priority of its external action. These values are critical for achieving sustainable development and building inclusive, open, and resilient societies. The new call for proposals focuses on strengthening the capacities of CSOs and media in exercising fundamental freedoms, protecting and supporting journalists, bloggers, and other media workers. Furthermore, the initiative will support civil society advocates to advocate for Human Rights and Democracy in the regulation and use of new technologies. Through this call for proposals, the EU aims to build the capacity of CSOs and media in Pakistan to create an environment conducive to the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

City en route to match Manchester United's treble

MANCHESTER: Manchester United remain the only English club to have won the prized treble of Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup, but Manchester City are closing in on the same feat. City stormed into the Champions League semi-finals for the third consecutive season on Wednesday, completing a 4-1 aggregate triumph over Bayern Munich. Mighty Real Madrid, who eliminated Pep Guardiola's men in the last four last season, await in the semi-finals.

If City can slay the defending champions, they would be huge favourites to finally end their quest to conquer Europe, with AC Milan or Inter Milan waiting in the final in Istanbul on June 10. Domestically, City are already the dominant force as they go in search of a fifth Premier League title in six seasons. Long-time pacesetters Arsenal hold a four-point lead at the top of the table but are showing signs of nerves after costly draws against Liverpool and West Ham. City have a game in hand and home advantage next week when the Gunners visit the Etihad for a potential title decider. Before then, Guardiola's men make the trip to Wembley on Saturday for what should be a routine passage to the FA Cup final. Sheffield United are on the brink of securing a return to the Premier League next season, but it would be a huge surprise if the Championship side end City's 15-game unbeaten run, which stretches back to February. Despite the arrival of Erling Haaland, who scored the 48th goal of his debut season in a 1-1 draw in Munich on Wednesday, there were plenty of doubts about City just a few months ago. Guardiola uncharacteristically took aim at what he saw as his side's lack of hunger after a 4-2 win over Tottenham in January. Less than a month later, Spurs beat them - City's most recent defeat - with Kevin De Bruyne, Ilkay Gundogan and Ruben Dias among those left on the bench. All three have since been restored to Guardiola's most trusted starting line-up and City have achieved defensive solidity without blunting the effectiveness of Haaland. "We're very confident, in a very good moment, the best moment of the season for the team," said midfielder Bernardo Silva. "We struggled until February because we couldn't get in that usual run of the past years of winning 10, 15, 20 games in a row. Now the team is very consistent the way we are playing, we feel we have a chance in every competition and we are going for them." The odds on City matching Alex Ferguson's greatest achievement of his 26 years in charge of United have been slashed, with the club now the bookmakers' favourites for all three competitions they are in the hunt for. But Guardiola has warned in recent weeks of the tightrope City must walk in chasing down Arsenal at the top of the Premier League, with one slip potentially proving fatal. "We know how tough it is to get to this part of the season where if you drop your performance for one part of the game, you are out of one competition," said Silva. "Next game is Sheffield, then it's Arsenal so it's going to be tough, but it's going to be fun. - Agencies



Sabalenka beats Krejckikova for third time in 2023

WEB DESK

BEIJING: "Up to now, our stable annual supply of fine varieties has exceeded 4,000 tons in Pakistan, accounting for more than 40 percent of local hybrid rice seed market," Chu Linfeng, Deputy General Manager of the Anhui Winall Hi-Tech Seed Co., Ltd., told China Economic Net in an interview, with pride.

The annual early-maturing rice planting season is just a month away in the South Asian country. Lately, the latest batch of 200 tons of hybrid rice seeds was on its way to Pakistan. Since entering the Pakistani hybrid rice seed market in 2007, the company in Anhui Province has always put high-yielding, high-temperature-resistant and stress-resistant hybrid rice varieties as the top priority for promotion, Chu told the reporter.

"Besides high temperatures, drought, salinity, pests and diseases, none of these obstacles can prevent hybrid rice from thriving here. In general, we always arrange the shipment of seeds in advance. From November last year to April this year, our seeds have been dispatched in time as planned." In order to adapt to the local climate as well as keep the yield stable, China and Pakistan practitioners

have carried out in-depth cooperation, so as to overcome breeding challenge. "Rainfall in Pakistan is concentrated in July-September, and the country has a very large area receives an annual rainfall of less than 150 mm. Thus, the local demands for high temperature and drought tolerance of rice varieties are urgent. As the impact of global climate change becomes increasingly severe, pests and diseases caused by unstable climate also pose great challenges to agriculture. We have carried out long-term testing and screening of improved varieties, and provided supporting technology training for partners, causing satisfactory results," Chu added.

Abdul Rasheed, the Chief Research and Development Officer in Guard Agriculture Research and Services, indicated that rice generally matures between 30 to 40 degree Celsius, but with the hybrid technology it could even bear 40 to 50 degree Celsius. It consumes less water that reduces the overall cost making it cost effective as well.

Moreover, it matures in 95 to 100 days while the ordinary rice takes around 120 days and due to shorter maturity period hybrid rice crop "consumes less irrigation as compared to traditional rice varieties," Rasheed added.

City's Bruyne stretches lead over Lionel Messi

LONDON: Star midfielder Kevin De Bruyne has assisted 23 goals in all competitions this season, which is his most in a single campaign for Manchester City.

De Bruyne has five more than any player for clubs in Europe's big-five leagues in 2022-23 with PSG star Lionel Messi in second place with 18.

It must be noted that City became only the third English team to qualify for the UEFA Champions League semi-finals in three consecutive seasons after their win over Bayern Munich over two legs in the quarter-finals.

The other two English teams in the list are Chelsea and Manchester United, who both achieved the feat between 2006-07 to 2008-09.

City will face Real Madrid in the Champions League semi-finals for the second straight season after Erling Haaland scored in a 1-1 draw which secured a 4-1 aggregate last-eight win over Bayern Munich on Wednesday. The Norwegian missed a first-half penalty but muscled his way upfield midway through the second half, lashing past Bayern goalkeeper Yann Sommer for his 48th goal in 41 appearances this season.

Bayern scored a late penalty through Joshua Kimmich but were again haunted by their inability to make possession and chances count.

City will face a rematch with manager Pep Guardiola's old foe Real Madrid, who scored two late goals to spectacularly turn the tie their way on the way to eventually winning the title last season. "The semi-final again... the experience that we have in the competition, the players feel it a lot, they want to do really well," Guardiola told BT Sport.

Bayern sacked previous coach Julian Nagelsmann in favour of Thomas Tuchel earlier this month despite a perfect record in the Champions League this season but have since been eliminated from Europe and the German Cup. "If we can't take positives from this match, we would have a problem," Tuchel, whose side are only two points clear of Borussia Dortmund in the Bundesliga title race, told DAZN. "At the moment, City are in the best shape, with the best players in the best league in the world."

Guardiola, so often criticised in the Champions League for tinkering with his side, named the same XI that won the first leg 3-0 in Manchester. Tuchel made two changes, opting for the creativity of City loanee Joao Cancelo at full-back and bringing back Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting, the only recognised striker in the squad. - DNA

Djokovic tested but prevails in opener

SPORTS DESK

BANJA LUKA: Novak Djokovic battled back from a set down to beat French teenager Luca Van Assche 6-7 (4/7), 6-3, 6-2 in his opening match in Banja Luka on Wednesday. The world number one squandered three set points in the opener before Van Assche took the tie-break, but Djokovic broke twice in the second set to force a deciding set. He dropped serve right away to start the third set but then broke Van Assche twice in a row, with Djokovic grasping control to eventually put away his 18-year-old opponent.

"It wasn't easy. This probably will rank as the slowest court and slowest conditions I've ever played in. I didn't expect this to be so slow," said Djokovic.

"I couldn't put any ball past him. He was on every single ball for a set and a half until I started to get some rhythm going and some tempo." He added: "I'm happy with the way I finished the match. Of course I can always play better but a win is a win."

Djokovic praised his opponent as a "very promising player". "He (Van Assche) has a bright future ahead of him, especially on



this surface, he is very fast and agile", the 35-year-old said.

"It's normal to expect that new, young players will emerge, generational change is a normal thing in every sport, but I didn't want to lose to an 18-year-old. It was definitely an additional motivation for me."

Former French Open junior champion Van Assche, the youngest player in the world's top 100 at number 87, had served Djokovic ample warning of his potential by beating Stan Wawrinka in round one. Djokovic said Monday his elbow was not in "ideal condition" following a third-round exit last week

at the Monte Carlo Masters, during which he was broken eight times by Lorenzo Musetti. After Wednesday's match, Djokovic said his elbow was "fine... holding up well". "These conditions are not ideal for joints and my elbow... but I am glad that I managed to endure. I am healthy and eager for new victories." Van Assche earned the first break of the match for a 5-4 lead but failed to serve out for the set. He then saved three set points at 5-6 before eventually taking a surprise lead.

For the second set Djokovic disposed of the black compression sleeve on his right arm he also wore in Monaco, sweeping through without offering Van Assche a single break opportunity.

Despite falling behind to begin the third set, Djokovic recovered swiftly and sealed victory after two hours and 38 minutes. During Wednesday's press conference, Djokovic also mentioned, jokingly, a possible future career as a coach. Asked whom he would like to coach, Djokovic replied, smiling: "(Nick) Kyrgios", with whom he once had an icy relationship. "If I could coach Kyrgios, he would probably win five Grand Slams. But it would cost him a lot of money, too much money."

Briefs

14 bids to smuggle 10,180 bags foiled

RAWALPINDI :The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police have foiled 14 bids to smuggle 10,180 flour, fine flour bags and 92 tonnes wheat and flour, said a district administration spokesman here on Thursday. He informed the authorities of the food department along with Rawalpindi district police conducted raids in different areas and rounded up 14 drivers namely Abid, Asad, Umar, Sajjad, Wajid, Usman, Sarfraz, Muhammad Khan, Hanif, Israr, Rizwan, Mujahid, Saeed and Ziarat on recovery of 10,180 bags and 92 tonnes wheat and flour. He informed that the accused was trying to smuggle wheat flour bags out of Rawalpindi division. The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) and City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were strictly monitoring all the exit points of the district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids, he added.

CTP issue traffic plan for Chand Raat, Eid ul Fitr

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi here on Wednesday issued traffic plan for Chand Raat and Eid-ul-Fitr. According to a CTP spokesman, the CTP had finalized a special traffic plan for Chand Raat and Eid ul Fitr, under which additional personnel would be deployed at important markets, shopping malls, public places and mosques to control the heavy traffic. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Tamoor Khan said under the plan, traffic wardens had been assigned duties to maintain traffic flow particularly on Chand Raat. CTP on the directives of the CTO would take strict action against the violators and the motorists had been urged to cooperate with traffic police, he said. City Traffic Officer, Tamoor Khan advised the citizens to follow the traffic rules and not indulge in over-speeding. Traffic wardens were also instructed to deal with the motorists politely, he added. Tamoor Khan said that 1100 traffic police personnel including DSPs, inspectors, traffic wardens and traffic assistants would perform their duties. 35 special pickets had been set up at various places in Rawalpindi city to check one wheeling and car skating on Chand Raat and Eid holidays. Seven special squads had also been formed which would take action in accordance with the law against the traffic rules violators, he informed.

WASA to ensure uninterrupted water supply

RAWALPINDI: Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi on the directives of Managing Director (MD) Muhammad Tanvir has devised a special plan to ensure uninterrupted water supply to the citizens during Eid ul Fitr holidays. According to a WASA spokesman, the Eid holidays of operational staff related to water and sewerage sections had been cancelled. A meeting chaired by MD WASA Muhammad Tanvir had reviewed the arrangements finalized for Eid ul Fitr holidays, he added. The meeting was attended among others by Deputy Managing Director Muhammad Salim Ashraf, Deputy Managing Director Admin and Finance Amir Ashfaq Qureshi. Muhammad Tanvir directed the authorities to utilize all available resources to ensure an uninterrupted water supply to the citizens during Eid ul Fitr holidays. He said that tube well operators, valve men, sewer staff and other teams would remain on duty during the holidays.—DNA

UN chief to convene ‘closed-door’ meeting on Afghanistan

“The purpose of this kind of small group meeting is for us to reinvigorate the international engagement around the common objectives for a durable way forward on the situation in Afghanistan,” he added

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will convene envoys on Afghanistan from various countries next month to try to find a unified approach to dealing with the Taliban authorities, the United Nations has announced. But his spokesperson Stephane Dujarric parried reporters' questions on whether or not Taliban leadership would be represented at the talks, saying, “At this point, the meeting will bring together the UN and relevant regional organizations,” he added. “There will indeed be a meeting in Doha on May 1st and 2nd, which the Secretary-General will host, with special envoys on Afghanistan from various countries,” Dujarric, the spokesperson said earlier at the regular noon briefing at UN Headquarters in New York. “The purpose of this kind of small group meeting is for us to reinvigorate the international engage-

ment around the common objectives for a durable way forward on the situation in Afghanistan,” he added. The announcement about the meeting comes at a time when the Taliban have started enforcing a ban on Afghan women working for the United Nations in Afghanistan. The secretary-general “continues to believe that it’s an urgent priority to advance an approach based on pragmatism and principles, combined with strategic patience, and to identify parameters for creative, flexible, principled and constructive engagement.” Meanwhile, the United Nations mission in Afghanistan has launched a review of its operations following a ban on Afghan women working for the world body. The word about the meeting in Qatar’s capital followed remarks Monday by UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, who addressed the

prospect of the envoys gathering to discuss the “baby steps” that could put the Taliban back on the pathway to recognition by the international community, albeit with conditions attached. “There are some who believe this can never happen. There are others that say, well, it has to happen,” Mohammed said in a speech at Princeton University. “The Taliban clearly want recognition... and that’s the leverage we have.” But Dujarric, the spokesman, on Wednesday stressed that Mohammed “was not in any way implying that anyone else but member states have the authority for recognition” of Afghanistan’s government. Last December, the UN General Assembly approved a decision by its credentialing committee to postpone any approval of Kabul’s request to accredit a new ambassador representing them at the United Nations following the Taliban’s return to power

in August 2021. He said at Princeton the UN deputy secretary-general - who is deeply involved in the issue - spoke merely about “reaffirming the need for the international community to have a coordinated approach regarding Afghanistan.” “This includes finding common ground on the longer-term vision for the country, and sending a unified message to the de facto authorities on the imperative to ensure women have their rightful place in the Afghan society,” he added. On April 4, the Taliban banned Afghan women from working for UN offices countrywide, sparking opprobrium from the West and a United Nations review of the world body’s Afghanistan operations. On Tuesday, former US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad said in a tweet that the UN chief will be hosting a meeting in Doha of special envoys for Afghanistan from around the world on May 1. Khalilzad said he recommends four

measures for the event: Full implementation of the Doha Agreement should be embraced as the common goal; a roadmap for implementation, considering the current conditions in Afghanistan, is needed; to develop the road map, the Secretary-General and the Envoys should have a session with the Taliban during their deliberations; and as a follow-up to the meeting, the Secretary-General should appoint a personal envoy to work with Afghans and the relevant international in developing and implementing the roadmap. This comes as the head of the UN Development Programme said as quoted by the Associated Press on Tuesday that the United Nations is ready to take the “heart-breaking” decision to pull out of Afghanistan in May if it can’t persuade the Taliban to let local women work for the organization. But on Tuesday, the UN spokesperson said that the UN had no plans to pullout, saying, “We’re staying in Afghanistan.”—Agencies

Pak-China hybrid rice collaboration to safeguard food security

DNA
BEIJING: “Up to now, our stable annual supply of fine varieties has exceeded 4,000 tons in Pakistan, accounting for more than 40 percent of local hybrid rice seed market,” Chu Linfeng, Deputy General Manager of the Anhui Winall Hi-Tech Seed Co., Ltd., told China Economic Net in an interview, with pride. The annual early-maturing rice planting season is just a month away in the South Asian country. Lately, the latest batch of 200 tons of hybrid rice seeds was on its way to Pakistan. Since entering the Pakistani hybrid rice seed market in 2007, the company in Anhui Province has always put high-yielding, high-temperature-resistant and stress-resistant hybrid rice varieties as the top priority for promotion, Chu told the reporter. “Besides high temperatures, drought, salinity, pests and diseases, none of these obstacles can prevent hybrid rice from thriving here. In general, we always arrange the shipment of seeds in advance. From November last year to April this year, our seeds have

been dispatched in time as planned.” In order to adapt to the local climate as well as keep the yield stable, China and Pakistan practitioners have carried out in-depth cooperation, so as to overcome breeding challenge. “Rainfall in Pakistan is concentrated in July-September, and the country has a very large area receives an annual rainfall of less than 150 mm. Thus, the local demands for high temperature and drought tolerance of rice varieties are urgent. As the impact of global climate change becomes increasingly severe, pests and diseases caused by unstable climate also pose great challenges to agriculture. We have carried out long-term testing and screening of improved varieties, and provided supporting technology training for partners, causing satisfactory results,” Chu added. Abdul Rasheed, the Chief Research and Development Officer in Guard Agriculture Research and Services, indicated that rice generally matures between 30 to 40 degree Celsius, but with the hybrid technology it could

even bear 40 to 50 degree Celsius. It consumes less water that reduces the overall cost making it cost effective as well. Moreover, it matures in 95 to 100 days while the ordinary rice takes around 120 days and due to shorter maturity period hybrid rice crop “consumes less irrigation as compared to traditional rice varieties,” Rash-eed added. It is learned that the main cultivation area of Winall hybrid rice is located in Sindh province, as well as a small amount in Punjab province. What is nice is the yield per mu is generally 650 to 800 kg (9750 to 12000 kg per hectare). “In 2021, we exported more than 4,500 tons of hybrid rice seeds to Pakistan, and the highest-yielding variety increase the yield by about 30 percent compared with local varieties,” emphasized Jiang Sanqiao, Vice GM of Winall Group. Teaching one to fish is better than giving him fish. Since 2019, Winall and Huazhong Agricultural University of China have jointly established the International Cooperation Class, training agricultural talents

in Pakistan and other countries for three consecutive years, and expanding the blueprint for agricultural cooperation under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. “In addition, through the collection, identification and application of overseas germplasm resources, we are committed to developing more high-yielding varieties, which means that there is great potential for agricultural cooperation along the BRI.” Hybrid rice, which has helped Pakistan improve food security, get rid of poverty and even earn foreign exchange, won wide acclaim. According to the Pakistan’s Ministry of Commerce, rice is the largest agro export commodity in the export basket of the country with a total export of over USD 2 bln annually. “Next, we will carry out more in-depth agricultural cooperation in all aspects. Last August, Anhui Province and Pakistan have jointly established the Agricultural International Cooperation Alliance to promote agricultural enterprises in various fields in Anhui Province to conduct business in Pakistan,” noted Chu.

Elon Musk threatens to sue Microsoft

NEW YORK: Elon Musk has suggested that he intends to sue Microsoft over “illegally using” Twitter’s data. The software giant recently announced plans to remove Twitter from its corporate advertising program. In an update to its multi-platform social network engagement page, Microsoft announced that as of April 25, its Smart Campaigns advertising platform will no longer support Twitter and that advertising clients won’t be able to access their Twitter accounts through Microsoft’s social management tool. Meanwhile, other social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn will continue to be available, the company added. Musk replied to the news in a short tweet on Wednesday by stating: “They [Microsoft] trained illegally using Twitter data. Lawsuit time.” The billionaire was apparently referring to Microsoft’s use of the Twitter API (application programming interface) to train AI programs, presumably including the Microsoft-controlled OpenAI ChatGPT. Microsoft has also reportedly refused to pay for the Twitter API, which as of February comes with a monthly access fee, with the basic plan costing \$100 per month while enterprise subscriptions come in tiers. According to a report by the magazine Wired last month, Twitter wants to charge large companies from \$42,000 to as much as \$210,000 per month for access to the API. According to Twitter, its API provides “broad access to public Twitter data that users have chosen to share with the world” as well as non-public information, such as direct messages, that people have authorized developers to have access to. One user replied to Musk’s statement by suggesting that limiting the use of Twitter’s API could potentially curtail traffic to the social media website from the outside. The billionaire responded by saying he was “open to ideas” but stressed that “ripping off the Twitter database, monetizing it (removing ads) and then selling our data to others isn’t a winning solution.” Musk acquired Twitter for \$44 billion last year and has since brought a range of changes to the company.—DNA

Masarrat Aalam Butt extends Eid greetings

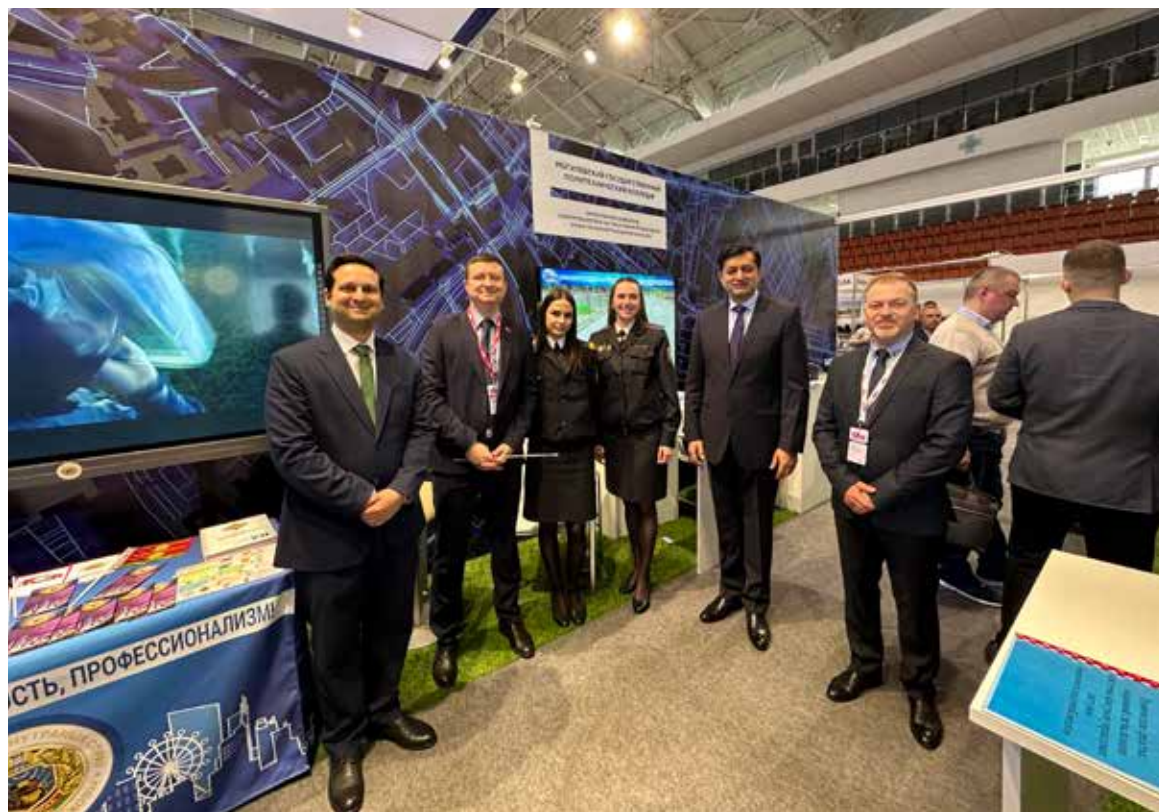
ISLAMABAD: Incarcerated Chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Masarrat Aalam Butt, has extended Eid greetings to the Muslim Ummah and the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, in particular. According to Kashmir Media Service on Thursday, the APHC Chairman, in a message in connection to Eid-ul-Fitr from New Delhi’s infamous Tihar Jail, said Eid was the day of expressing gratitude to Almighty Allah and seeking His blessings. He appealed to the people of the occupied territory to celebrate Eid with simplicity and share its joys with the families of martyred and illegally detained Kashmiris. “We have to be extremely kind to the families who had suffered at the hands of Indian troops during the ongoing freedom struggle of Kashmir,” he added. Masarrat said although Eid was a day of happiness and blessings, the Kashmiris had so far missed the real spirit of this day because of the atrocities and the cruel behavior of the Indian occupational troops against the common people who have been suffering immensely since last over seven decades. He said, “It is very unfortunate that we are carrying and receiving the coffins of our youngsters. Our dignity and honour are at stake and the situation in Kashmir has only multiplied our sorrows and it is quite heart-wrenching to see the increasing number of widows and orphans,” he added.—APP

Saad for timely, synchronized elections across country

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique on Thursday emphasized timely and synchronized elections across the country to maintain national unity, as per civil society organizations and the Election Commission of Pakistan. In a media talk outside the Supreme Court, the minister noted that any deviation from holding elections simultaneously in all four federating units and the federal capital could have severe implications and complicated issues. He added that the government had submitted its point of views on the application given by a citizen requesting simultaneous provincial and federal elections. Expressing his reservations on the previous court decisions, Saad stated that consultation among allied parties in the government was underway to resolve the issue. The minister voiced his apprehensions regarding previous court rulings, stating that a decision had not yet been reached on whether to pursue legal recourse or explore alternative avenues to address the matter.—APP

Pak presents its climate investment portfolio seeking funds

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan launched its first-ever Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Investor Map 2023, which identifies concrete, investable solutions to the country’s pressing needs, at a special session of the United Nations SDG Investment Fair 2023, held in New York on Wednesday. It also unveiled a diversified portfolio of climate-resilient investments worth \$2.84 billion in projects that include adapting to climate change, low-cost housing construction and Microfinance, the financial services provided to low-income individuals excluded from traditional banking. Launching the SDG Investor Map, Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, said: “This Map highlights bankable investment opportunities for Pakistan, which can lead to a reduced trade deficit, transitions to alternate energy, a robust infrastructure, and enhanced food security in the country.” In his keynote address to the session via video-link from Islamabad, Tariq Bajwa, Special Assistant to Pakistan’s Prime Minister on Finance, said, “As Pakistan recovers from the devastating impact of the 2022 floods.—APP



MINSK: Pakistan ambassador to Belarus, Sajjad Haider visits 29th International Tibo fair, a major trade event for IT and telecommunications. The fair saw more than 260 participants from Belarus and beyond. During the visit he also met with Belarusian Minister of Telecom & IT Konstantin Shulgan to discuss the importance of the IT sector. — DNA

Guantanamo prison remains open despite growing pressure

LONDON: The Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba has become an embodiment of cruel detention practices that have caused the US to be accused of torture. The US military detention facility, opened by then-President George W. Bush to hold terrorism suspects captured abroad after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, is still operating as a remnant of the so-called war on terror. Earlier this year, around 160 international rights groups sent a letter to President Joe Biden urging him to shut down the prison. Oxfam America and the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) said the facility, also known as “Gitmo,” fuels “bigotry, stereotyping and stigma” and that by promoting social divisions, it risks enabling “additional rights violations.” The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a non-profit organization dedicated to defending the civil liberties of all Americans, has urged Biden to

close the facility down, describing it as a “global symbol of injustice, abuse and disregard for the rule of law.” “Well, I’d be very surprised if Guantanamo is closed anytime soon because there’s just not the political appetite I think in America to do that,” Clive Stafford Smith, a prominent US human rights lawyer who represented 87 Guantanamo prisoners and won 85 cases, told Anadolu. At one point, there were nearly 800 prisoners at the facility with 749 eventually freed, said Stafford Smith. They were all Muslim men who had been kept there for years without being charged, he added. Mansoor Adayfi, who was sold to the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) by local warlords in Afghanistan in 2001, spent his 18th Ramadan “naked, blindfolded and chained all day in a cold, dark cell under the ground.” In his latest testimony, he said the American agents would play loud music constantly and would only stop when “they would take me

out for an interrogation. I didn’t – and couldn’t – know when Ramadan started, as I had no way to estimate the time of day.” While he was chained up, the US soldiers every few days would forcibly feed him and push water through his mouth. “I lost so much weight that I passed out and I was given intravenous transfusions every few days,” he said. Several months later, he was transferred to Guantanamo Bay prison, where he said he repeatedly experienced torture, humiliation, and abuse. He was kept there locked up for 14 years without charge. Stafford Smith pointed out that Guantanamo Bay prison is an “enduring stain” on the reputation of the United States. “When we as a country go around the world and say that we are proponents of human rights, the rule of law and liberties, the idea that we set up a prison, which is a vacuum of human rights and has no legal rights at all, is just hypocrisy of

the first order,” he said. “I never thought back in the 1990s that I as an American lawyer would be talking about torture methods that my government was using on a systematic basis and admitting to them publicly,” said Stafford Smith. On just one of his clients who got out recently, he identified 62 different methods of torture which the US government refers to as “enhanced interrogation techniques,” an expression borrowed “from Nazis.” Over the last 20 years, Stafford Smith represented more than 10% of all the Guantanamo prisoners on a charitable basis. For him, this has been a great privilege, “because frankly, my job as an American lawyer is to try to make up for some of the dreadful things we’ve done.” While representing the prisoners, he has come to realize how “incredibly stupid the whole concept of Guantanamo was, and how bad our intelligence was.” According to Stafford Smith, more than half of the people at Guantanamo ended up there because the

American government paid bounties of between \$5,000 and \$20 million for information leading to the detention of individuals. One of his clients, Mohammed El-Gharani, was sold for a bounty to the US and was unjustly imprisoned for seven years in Guantanamo at just 14 years old. El-Gharani’s life was turned upside down when he moved to Pakistan from Saudi Arabia to study computing and English. One day, upon leaving Friday prayers at a mosque in Karachi, he was unjustly and mistakenly arrested. He was taken to Guantanamo, where among all other prisoners he faced repeated torture, constant acts of racism and xenophobia. Instead of standing up for human rights, the rule of law and decency, the US is torturing people by locking them up without trial and by assassinating them with drones, said Stafford Smith. “We can’t go around the world just killing people and abducting them,” he said.— agencies

Briefs

'Japan will keep calling for China to act responsibly'

TOKYO: Japan will keep calling for China to act responsibly on the world stage, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said on Thursday, a sign of Tokyo's deepening concern about stability in the Taiwan Strait following Beijing's recent military drills. The comments from Kishida, after China conducted drills in the waters off Taiwan earlier this month, highlight Tokyo's growing alarm about the possibility of an attack on nearby Taiwan. Japan would "continue to call on China to take the responsibility it should be taking as a major country on the world stage," Kishida said during a roundtable interview with members of the foreign media. "Peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait is not just important for Japan, but the international community and the world more broadly as well," he said. "We have been consistent with our position on Taiwan, that any issues should be resolved peacefully through dialogue. In any case... we will comply with our constitution, international laws, and our domestic laws including the relevant defence laws." Foreign ministers from the Group of Seven (G7) nations met in Japan this week and urged Beijing to "abstain from threats, coercion and intimidation and the use of force". — Agencies

LHC slaps Rs100,000 fine on Bushra Bibi's lawyer

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) dismissed a petition filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi on Thursday that sought to "halt expected police action" at their Zaman Park residence during the Eid ul Fitr holidays. The court also imposed a fine of Rs100,000 on Bushra's lawyer Azhar Siddique. Punjab police had raided Khan's Lahore residence last month after the former premier left for the Islamabad Judicial Complex for a hearing and arrested several party workers. During the hearing of a separate case at the LHC earlier this week, Khan informed the court of his fears that another "operation" would be launched during the Eid ul Fitr holidays. Subsequently, the court directed police to not "harass" Khan. Bushra's petition, which was heard, nominated the Ministry of Interior, inspector general Punjab police and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) as respondents. It stated that "reports" had been received that an operation would be conducted at Zaman Park during the Eid holidays.

Ali Zaidi granted bail in fraud case

DNA

KARACHI: A judicial magistrate in Karachi's Malir District on Thursday granted bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh President Ali Zaidi in a fraud case after he reached an "out-of-court settlement" with the complainant. Zaidi's bail was approved after he was presented in court after the end of his three-day physical remand. At the outset of the hearing, the magistrate asked the authorities what interrogation they carried out during the three days Zaidi was in their custody. The investigation officer informed the court that he tried tracing the culprits allegedly involved with Zaidi in the fraud case. The court then asked the cop where the progress report was. To which, the police officer responded that he "forgot to attach" the report. "Did the police torture you?" the court asked Zaidi.

Shares outcome of the parliamentary polls

Kazakhstan put on development path under President Tokaev: Envoy

Ambassador of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Kistafin briefs media about the outcome of recently-held parliamentary elections



Ambassador of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Kistafin briefing the media about outcome of parliamentary elections

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Kistafin has declared the recently held parliamentary elections as a hallmark of futuristic vision and wisdom of President Kassym Jomart Tokaev. He added as a result of the elections the nation shall be taken to a better future. The ambassador expressed these views while briefing the media people about the outcome of the parliamentary elections that took place in March this year. Ambassador Kistafin further said the idea of the press briefing was to raise awareness about the political transformation that is happening in Kazakhstan. He said the main idea is to liberalize the

Kazakh society with a view to implementing democratic reforms, which ostensibly is a very important milestone in the history of Kazakhstan. The ambassador further said bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Pakistan are excellent. He particularly mentioned launching direct flights between the two countries. He said a direct flight from Karachi to Almaty shall start within a couple of months while flights from other Pakistan cities to various Kazakh cities shall start in the due course of time. He said both sides were hectically engaged in negotiations in order to make this project a complete success. He said last year both countries celebrated the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Various high level visits between the two countries have already taken place, which clearly shows how deep-rooted relations between the two brotherly countries are. He also talked about a single country exhibition organized by businessmen from Pakistan in the business hub of Kazakhstan, Almaty. The exhibition went very well and a number of applications were received from Kazakh businessmen seeking various avenues in Pakistan. The Pakistani businessmen too expressed keen interest in exploring the Kazakh business potential and facilities offered to foreign investors and businessmen. Ambassador Kistafin also shared with the media persons some salient features of the President Kassym Jomart Tokayev's address at the opening of the first session of the Parliament of the VIII convocation, in which the President had said that for the first time a party which had long been in opposition was represented in Parliament. This was made possible thanks to large scale political reforms and liberalization of legislation governing party registration. Henceforth the parties will be at the forefront of the political processes that will determine the future of the country. The President in his address further said that to ac-



President of Kazakhstan Kassym Jomart Tokaev

tively involve the younger generation in the affairs of the state was one of the most important tasks. Young people must bring new values to society. Many young candidates united during the election campaign and created their own bloc. Young people should assess this as a unique opportunity to work for the benefit of the country. Along with this conditions were created for women and persons with special needs to enter the Mazhilis, he added. 'Next five years will be decisive for our country. We will have to create a quality legal framework to ensure the country's dynamic progress. This will require changing the rules and principles of how our economy functions. The first steps in this direction have already been taken - work on demonopoli-

zation and the return of illegally withdrawn capital from the country is under way'. The ambassador said that the Kazakh President rightly pointed out in his address that Kazakhstan's economy was still dependent on the extraction of minerals. In other words, its structure remains raw materials, while the country's progressive development requires economic diversification. Of course we also have our competitive advantages in the world market, which must be effectively used to solve current and strategic tasks. Ambassador Kistafin hoped that under the dynamic and visionary leadership of President Kassym Jomart Tokaev Kazakhstan shall continue to make strides towards development and prosperity with the ultimate aim of empowering the people of Kazakhstan.

NATO chief makes surprise visit to Kyiv

KYIV: NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg made a surprise visit to Kyiv on Thursday. In his first visit to Ukraine since Russia launched its full-scale invasion last year, Stoltenberg paid his respects to soldiers who had died fighting Russian forces and inspected Russian military equipment that is on display in a central square in Kyiv. "Now, when the majority of people in NATO countries and the majority of Ukrainians support the entry of our country into the alliance, it is time to take the appropriate decision," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said later during a joint press conference with Stoltenberg. The NATO chief responded by saying that discussing Ukraine's accession to the alliance would be high on the agenda at the next NATO summit. "Ukraine's future is in the Euro-Atlantic family, Ukraine's future is in NATO, all allies agree on that," he said. Stoltenberg has invited Zelenskyy to take part in a NATO summit in July. Kyiv launched a bid to join the alliance — a prospect that was seen as being one of the main reasons for Russia's invasion — after Moscow claimed it had annexed four regions of Ukraine under partial Russian occupation. Zelenskyy also called on Stoltenberg to help drum up support for more advanced weapons deliveries to Ukraine. "I addressed the Secretary-General with a request to help us overcome the reluctance of our partners regarding the delivery of certain weapons, namely long-range, modern aviation, artillery, armored vehicles," the Ukrainian president said. Stoltenberg's visit comes as Ukrainian forces are preparing for their spring counteroffensive after Russia's attempt to make gains during winter, especially around the town of Bakhmut, proved largely unsuccessful. NATO has pledged to support Ukraine in its defense against Russian aggression. Earlier this month, Finland joined the alliance, setting aside decades of neutrality in a historic realignment of Europe's post-Cold War security landscape. While NATO says it poses no threat to Russia, the Nordic country's accession dealt a major political blow to Putin. Finland's membership doubles Russia's border with the world's biggest security alliance. Neighboring Sweden is expected to join in coming months as well, possibly by the time President Biden and his NATO counterparts meet in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, in July. — Agencies

ECP extends deadline for symbol allotment

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has granted a deadline extension until 12:00 a.m. on April 20, 2023, for the submission of party tickets and the allotment of symbols to candidates who will be contesting in the General Elections for the Provincial Assembly of Punjab. This move is intended to facilitate the smooth conduct of the upcoming elections and provide candidates with additional time to fulfill the required formalities. The Election Commission has informed the Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) and all Returning Officers (ROs) that the deadline extension until 12:00 a.m. on April 20, 2023, for the submission of party tickets and allotment of symbols to contesting candidates for the General Elections to the Provincial Assembly of Punjab. It is imperative that political parties ensure the timely delivery of party tickets to their candidates, and that candidates obtain their allotted symbols from the ROs by the end of the day as per the revised schedule. This measure will enable the smooth and efficient conduct of upcoming elections. — APP

Dozens killed in crush at Ramadan charity event

WEB DESK

SANAA: At least 80 people have been killed in a crush at a school in Yemen's capital Sanaa just days before the Eid al-Fitr festival, according to Houthi officials and media. The crush happened late on Wednesday as hundreds of people crowded into a school in the Bab al-Yemen district of Sanaa in the hope of getting a charitable donation of about \$10 that was being handed out by merchants to mark the final days of Ramadan. A video posted by Houthi television on the Telegram messaging app showed a crowd of people jammed together, some screaming and shouting and reaching out to be pulled to safety. Security staff fought to push people back and control the crowd. Separate footage released by the Houthis, who control the capital, showed bloodstains, shoes and victims' clothing scattered on the ground while investigators examined the area.

First order placed for discounted Russian oil

ISLAMABAD: After months-long discussions, Pakistan has placed its first order for discounted Russian crude oil under a new deal struck between Islamabad and Moscow. State Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik confirmed the development, sharing that one cargo will dock at Karachi port in May. "The deal will see Pakistan buy crude oil only, not refined oil, and imports are expected to reach 100,000 barrels per day if the first transaction goes through smoothly," Malik told media on Wednesday night. "Our orders are in, we have placed that already," he said. He said Pakistan's Refinery Limited (PRL) will initially refine the Russian crude, with other refineries to be included later after a trial run. Earlier this month, a delegation from Russia arrived in Pakistan to hold talks regarding the payment mode. "Russians during the talks have raised the issue over the reporting of the talks in the media particularly about the discount in crude oil price and mode of payment stressing the Pakistani counterparts to ensure keeping the deal with Moscow secret as they do not want the disclosure to other Russian crude buyer countries," sources privy to the matter told media. Therefore, Pakistan's top functionaries also decided not to disclose the mode of payment and the exact discount. Russian Energy Minister Nikolay Shulginov led a delegation to Islamabad in January to hold talks on the deal, after which he said oil exports to Pakistan could begin after March. However, things got delayed as the two sides struggled to reach a consensus on the payment mode along with other aspects of the deal. — DNA

Sudan: New fighting rattles Khartoum

The embassy once again advised all Pakistanis to stay at home and avoid unnecessary outings due to the deteriorating security situation

DNA

KHARTOUM: Residents of Sudan's capital reported renewed heavy gunfire on Thursday over central Khartoum and some other areas as many tried to flee the city on the eve of the Eid holiday marking the end of the holy

month of Ramadan. Khartoum and its sister cities Omdurman and Bahri have been rocked by fierce battles this week between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that have shut the city down, stranding many and causing food supplies to run short. Early on Thursday, smoke and fires that had risen from the city in previous days had abated, live TV feeds over Khartoum showed, before the fighting erupted once again. Gunfire was heard in Bahri and residents reported violent clashes west of Omdurman where they said the army had moved to block the arrival of RSF reinforcements. Both sides said earlier they would respect a 24-hour cease-fire that was due to come into effect at 6 p.m. local time (1600 GMT) on

Wednesday, but was quickly broken by renewed fighting. The RSF issued a statement about the breakdown in the truce, saying it came under attack in Omdurman and inflicted losses on the army in response, including shooting down two helicopters. Some of the most intense fighting has been focused around the compound housing the army HQ and the residence of Sudan's military ruler, General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan. The army controls access to Khartoum and appeared to be trying to cut off supply routes to RSF fighters, residents and witnesses said. International powers, struggling to evacuate citizens after the airport and several districts housing embassies were caught up in the violence, have been pushing repeat-

edly for truces, to little effect. More people have been leaving the capital with most able to pass but some stopped at checkpoints, according to residents and social media posts. "There's no food, supermarkets are empty, the situation isn't safe, honestly, so people are leaving," said Khartoum resident who gave only his first name, Abdelmalek. Meanwhile, the Embassy of Pakistan in Sudan's capital Khartoum came under attack Wednesday as the fighting between the army and paramilitaries continues with no signs of ending after five days. In a statement, the embassy said: "Today, the Embassy of Pakistan was hit by three bullets amid the clashes between Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces, which cause[d] loss to the Chancery building." The statement

mentioned that the incident was a blatant violation of the Vienna Convention as the host government is responsible for providing security to diplomatic missions. "We urge the two parties to exercise constraint and request the government of Sudan to immediately deploy security personnel for the protection and security of Embassy of Pakistan," the statement said. The embassy once again advised all Pakistanis to stay at home and avoid unnecessary outings due to the deteriorating security situation. There are around a thousand Pakistanis in Khartoum. Thousands of residents fled Sudan's capital where witnesses reported bodies in the street from fighting between the army and paramilitaries that embassies said killed more than 270 civilians.

Protesters storm Paris Euronext building

AGENCIES

PARIS: A group of protesters briefly invaded offices of stockmarket operator Euronext in Paris' La Defense business district on Thursday, saying big companies must pay up to finance pensions, as part of wider protests against a rise in the retirement age. "We are told that there is no money to finance pensions," said Sud-Rail unionist Fabien Villedieu. But there is "no need to get the money from the pockets of workers, there is some in the pockets of billionaires."