



Islamabad POST

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Iranian President warns Israel against 'slightest action'

Detailed News On Page-07

Erdogan kicks off Turkish election campaign

Detailed News On Page-07



Carlos Sainz's Australian GP appeal rejected

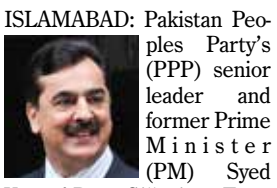
Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Gillani stresses economic stability

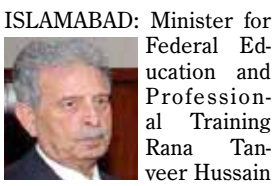
DNA



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) senior leader and former Prime Minister (PM) Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani on Tuesday expressed the hope that the political leaders in the coalition government would soon announce a strategy that would bring economic and political stability to the country. Talking to media persons here after meeting Mutthidda Qami Movement (MQM) along with Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar, Adviser to Prime Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira said, "Politicians should play their role as a bridge not as a wall." "PPP wants to make a conducive environment for dialogue among the political parties as we believe all problems being faced by the country can only be addressed through the dialogue," he added.

Minorities enjoy equal rights

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain says minorities in Pakistan enjoy equal rights guaranteed in the supreme law of the land-the Constitution. Addressing a ceremony of Pakistan Hindu Council held in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said seven minority communities including Hindus, Christian, Sikhs and others have separate curricula to pursue their religious education in an efficient manner. The Minister said minorities in Pakistan have a dual voting right one for their reserved seat candidates while other for general seat.

Sehr, Iftar Timing



Ramazan 28, 1444

Sehr: 04:03 am
Iftar: 06:46 pm
Fiqa-e-Jafria
Sehr: 03:53 am
Iftar: 06:56 pm

Inside...

Consumer-oriented digitization indispensable for power security - Page 02

The Queen's essay Competition 2023 opens - Page 03

President Alvi directs reimbursement of health insurance claim - Page 04

Biden's Northern Ireland intervention reveals a weakened West - Page 05

Bulls B win Federal Cup Basketball Tournament - Page 06

Iranian president warns of 'Haifa, Tel Aviv destruction' - Page 07

China offers to facilitate Israel-Palestinian talks - Page 08

Talks with the PTI

PDM parties fail to evolve a consensus

PPP in favour of talks, JUI, Bugti say Imran Khan is not reliable

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) parties failed to evolve a consensus whether to hold talks with the PTI or not during a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, on Tuesday. According to sources, the PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari categorically stated that PPP was a democratic party and thus believed in talks with all political players. He added, the country was passing through a difficult phase that required all political forces to join hands in order to rid the country out of crises. Bilawal further said his party was ready for talks with all parties including the PTI provided the PTI leadership shows maturity and seriousness.

Bilawal was supported by Khalid Magsi and Moshin Dawar. The JUI spearheaded by Maulana Fazal ur Rehman nevertheless seemed adamant with its stand of not undertaking any negotiations with Imran Khan. The JUI leadership was of the view that Imran Khan was not a serious person therefore there was no point in talking to him. Shazain Bugti also put his weight behind JUI and opposed any sort of negotiations with the PTI. It may be mentioned here that earlier today Bilawal Bhutto Zardari met with

Continued on Page 06

'All parties united', says Marriyum

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday said all parties to the ruling alliance were "united" and there was no truth in the false reports about its meeting which was underway. "Speculations being made in some section of the media about the meeting of ruling parties are baseless and incorrect," she said in a news statement. The minister regretted that the media started airing news regarding the meeting by attributing to leaders of allied parties even prior to the issuance of final communiqué. She said decisions were being taken with the input of all the parties which were united. "Consultation is underway and the information minister would issue a joint communiqué [of the meeting]," she added.

LHC bars Punjab Police, govt from 'harassing' Imran Khan

Khan says haven't broken a single law yet hundreds of cases registered

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday barred the Punjab police from "harassing" PTI Chairman Imran Khan, instructing them to ensure that the former premier was treated as per the law. The orders were issued by a five-member bench as it took up Imran's petition seeking to restrain authorities in Punjab from launching a police operation at his Zaman Park residence or arresting him on the basis of an "undisclosed" first information report (FIR) when the courts get closed.

The plea, filed by Barrister Salman Safdar and Advocate Azhar Siddique, was heard by Justice Ali Baqar Najafi, Justice Aalia Neelum, Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh, Justice Anwaarul Haq Pannun and Justice Muhammad Amjad Rafiq. Ahead of the proceedings, Imran arrived at the court. Videos showed the PTI chief surrounded by a number of guards who had covered his face with bulletproof shields. At the outset of the hearing, Imran's lawyer Salman Safdar told the court that cases were being lodged against his client one after the other. "80 cases have been registered against Imran Khan in

Continued on Page 06

Govt-backed PBC group suffers blow

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: In wake of complete failure of the nationwide strike, the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) faction backed by the government suffered another shocking blow, as lawyers across the country and senior members of PBC rejected their specific agenda-oriented call for a 'black day' in toto, describing their joint declaration an attack on the independence of the judiciary and the Supreme Court. In their strong reaction, senior members of PBC including Abid Zuberi, Hafeezur Rehman Chaudhary, Shafiqat Mahmood Chauhan, Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan, Shahab Sarki, Tahir Sarfaraz Abbasi, Munir Kakar on Tuesday strongly condemned the

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visits different wards of Institute of Urology and Transplantation Rawalpindi and interacted with patients under treatment. - DNA

UN says 34 million Afghans in poverty under Taliban rule

DNA

KABUL: The number of Afghans in poverty nearly doubled to 34 million as the nation was racked by the collapse of the US-backed government and the Taliban takeover, the United Nations said Tuesday. Vast foreign subsidies were halted and aid programmes dramatically cut back after the US-backed republic fell in 2021 as many countries refused to deal with the Taliban authorities in Kabul. Those NGOs still providing vital help were dealt a further blow in December last year by a Taliban government order barring Afghan women from working for them. The curb was extended this month to the UN's Afghan female employees and the organisation said it faces an "appalling choice" over whether to continue its aid schemes.

Continued on Page 06

PM lauds COAS for helping secure loans

Army chief made immense efforts in fulfilling conditions for IMF deal; Ruling coalition undecided on holding talks with PTI

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has lauded Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir's efforts for securing financial commitments from friendly countries, one of the last conditions set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to unfreeze a \$6.5 billion credit line.

The prime minister's statement came days after Finance Minister Ishaq Dar had announced that the United Arab Emirates had given an assurance to the IMF for a \$1 billion loan to Islamabad. Saudi Arabia had already made assurances for a \$2 billion loan, according to the finance ministry. Addressing a meeting of the ruling coalition parties here on Tuesday, the prime minister said the IMF agreement was in its final phase as securing loans from friendly countries to bridge the external financing gap was the one of the last conditions to receive the stalled \$6.5 billion bailout package.

Continued on Page 06

Accuses Saqib of 'promoting politics'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday stressed that the development projects, particularly those relating to health and education, must not be politicized and be implemented in the best interest of the general public. During his visit to the Rawalpindi Institute of Urology and Transplantation (RIUT), he said no one should be allowed to politicize the projects of any government. Shehbaz Sharif said it was time to get united for the proper implementation of the Constitution of the country.

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan shares plan to secure \$3bn with IMF

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The coalition government on Tuesday shared its plan with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for securing an additional \$3 billion to bridge the financing gap as it expedites efforts to convince the lender to release the next loan tranche, media reported citing sources. The IMF is seeking "necessary" financing assurances at the earliest to conclude talks with Pakistan on its stalled bailout. Fund's mission chief for Pakistan, Nathan Porter, confirmed last week. The IMF had asked Pakistan to arrange

Continued on Page 06

ECP report on Punjab, KP Polls

'Not possible to hold elections on May 14'

Top officials of intelligence agencies briefed the SC on security challenges

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), in line with the Supreme Court's order, submitted a report to a three-member bench on Tuesday, stating that it has not yet received Rs21 billion required for holding elections to the Punjab Assembly on May 14. The electoral body informed the apex court that it had not received the required funds from the ministry

after which the three-member bench directed the central bank to release funds "directly". In compliance with the order, the ECP submitted a report stating that it has not received the funds from the central bank. Separately, the central bank also submitted its report highlighting all the reasons supporting their argument that "they can allocate funds; however, did not have the authority to release funds directly". The officials from the Ministry of Finance also submitted the report to the registrar's office which included details of the developments that took place since the directives were issued. All three reports will now

Continued on Page 06

PM Shehbaz approves appointment of 20 envoys

Names of Sohail Mahmood as Ambassador to China and Hamid Asghar as Ambassador to Turkmenistan dropped

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Tuesday approved the appointment of new envoys of Pakistan to various countries. As per official sources the premier had given nod to the appointment of 19 envoys and one counsel general while objection was raised on two names. The summary was sent by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to the prime minister for approval.

Dr Faisal, who is currently serving in Berlin, has been posted as new high commissioner to Britain while Dr Bilal will be Pakistan's new permanent ambassador to the United Nations office at Geneva. Source said, Ayesha Ali appointed as new envoy to Prague, Ibrar Hussain to Kenya, Javed Imran to Tunisia, Khalid Hussain to Algeria, while

Mian Atif Sharif has been posted as ambassador to Ethiopia. Pakistan's permanent representative in Geneva, Khalid Hashmi, will be posted as ambassador to Russia. Mudassar Tipu, Zeeshan

Ahmed and Saqib Rauf will be the new ambassadors in Tehran, Iraq and Bahrain, respectively. Pakistan's high commissioner in Kenya Syeda Saqlain was posted as ambassador to Germany.

Pakistan's ambassador to Ethiopia Shuzab Abbas was posted as ambassador to Mexico. Shoaib Sarwar, Naemullah and Mudassar Chaudhry were appointed as new ambassadors to Denmark, Rwanda

and Morocco, respectively. Ahsan Raza Shah and Ahmed Maruf will be Pakistan's new ambassadors to Malaysia and Bangladesh, respectively. Pakistan's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Amir Khurram Rathore, was posted as Pakistan's new ambassador to Indonesia. Pakistan's ambassador to Denmark Ahmed Farooq was posted as Pakistan's new ambassador to Saudi Arabia. The posting of Aamer Ahmed Atozai as consul general in New York was also approved. An objection was raised to the posting of former foreign secretary Sohail Mahmood in China while posting of Hamad Asghar, Pakistan's ambassador to Morocco, to Turkmenistan was also turned down. After the objection, the two names were removed from the summary and the appointment of all the remaining envoys was approved. All the newly appointed envoys will soon assume their diplomatic responsibilities.



Sohail Mahmood



Khurram Rathore



Dr. Faisal



Aamir Atozai

Senator Talha becomes new religious affairs minister

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has appointed Senator Talha Mahmood as federal minister for religious affairs and interfaith harmony. "In terms of rule 3(4) of the Rules of Business, 1973, the Prime Minister has been pleased to assign the additional portfolio of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony to Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood, Federal Minister for State and Frontier Regions, with immediate effect," reads the notification. He has replaced the late Mufti Abdul Shakoor who lost his life in a road accident in the federal capital on April 16. Earlier, a police report, establishing causes of Mr Shakoor's death, had said that a speeding vehicle crashed into his car that resulted in his death. The vehicle that crashed into the JUI-F leader's car was going over the speed limit, the report said. A case had been lodged with the Secretariat police station on the complaint of JUI leader Haji Qudratullah.—APP

Remission in sentences for prisoners on Eid

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday approved remission in sentences for prisoners on the occasion of Eid ul Fitr. The president approved the remission of 90 days in exercise of the Article 45 of the Constitution, the President House said. The relief will be applicable to male prisoners above 65 years, who have completed their one-third sentence. The remission will also be applied to the female prisoners aged above 60 years, who have completed their one-third sentence. Likewise, the prisoners under the age of 18 years, who have completed their one-third sentence, would also be eligible for availing the relief. However, the remission will not apply to those convicted of capital punishment, espionage, rape, anti-state activities, kidnapping, and terrorism, incurring loss to national exchequer, financial crimes, and robbery.—DNA

Talha, Saudi envoy discuss Hajj arrangements

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The newly-appointed Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Senator Talha Mahmood, wasted no time in getting down to work, as he met with the Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, soon after assuming office on Tuesday. During the meeting, the two officials discussed a range of issues related to the upcoming Hajj pilgrimage, including the Road to Makkah project and other matters. Minister Mahmood praised the Saudi envoy, describing him as a valuable friend of Pakistan who had played a significant role in bringing the people of both countries closer. The two officials discussed the expansion of the Road to Makkah project to other cities in order to facilitate

the maximum Hajj pilgrims, with Ambassador Al-Malki announcing that the designated airport terminal would be handed over to Saudi officials for the project on April 25. Ambassador Al-Malki congratulated Senator Me-



hmood on his appointment and expressed his best wishes, describing him as a long-time and reliable friend of Saudi Arabia.

He assured the minister of all possible cooperation from the Saudi government in facilitating the Hajj pil-

grimage for Pakistani pilgrims. Minister Mahmood, for his part, emphasized that under the mission of his predecessor, Mufti Abdul Shakoor, it was his first priority to provide the best facilities to Pakistanis.

Consumer-oriented digitization indispensable for power security

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Digitization is the future and it must be tailored toward addressing the lack of electricity transmission infrastructure to ensure price affordability and accessibility to consumers. Targeted investments and digital transformation must go hand-in-hand with effective resource management, thoughtful policy development, governance reforms as well as innovation in system planning, highlighted experts during a hybrid seminar on "Powering Progress: Investments and Digitization to Overcome Pakistan's Power Sector Challenges," held at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad.

The session, chaired by Ashfaq Mahmood, former federal secretary, water & power, was addressed as speakers by Khalid Rahman, chairman IPS, Mirza Hamid Hassan, chairman, IPS' steering committee for energy, water & climate change and former federal secretary, water & power, Mazhar Iqbal Ranjha, reg-



istrar, National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), Sadia Dada, CMCO, K-Electric, Salahuddin Rifai, former GM NTDC, and eminent energy experts associated with IPS including Asad Mehmood, Ahmed Ammar Yasser, and Ameena Sohail. Energy dependency is a major issue and Pakistan needs to escape the vicious cycle through out-of-the-box thinking and win-win solutions at policy and practice level, said Khalid Rahman

in his opening remarks. The power sector must be focused on overcoming the energy trilemma revolving around the availability, accessibility, and affordability of electricity, said Sadia Dada. For that, power industry must integrate new solutions and ensure targeted investments, she added. While drawing on the modelling of the power system undertaken by K-Electric (KE), she said that since privatization the company has made a targeted invest-

ment of 474 billion rupees – six times more than its profit – across its value chain that has resulted in doubling its customer base from 1.8 million to 3.4 million, increasing its energy supplies from 2,200 MW to 3,380 MW, and reducing its transmission and distribution (T&D) losses from 34.2% to 15.3% which surpasses the target set by NEPRA for the year. She further added that keeping in view the rising power demand in its serv-

ing territory, K-Electric plans to invest additional 484 billion rupees for the next seven years, which would add 2,172 MW in its generation capacity, including 1,182 MW of renewables. Through its investment plan 2030, KE aims to introduce more innovations in its distribution segment, such as Advanced Distribution Management System, mobile workforce management, Geographical Information Systems (GIS),

and Advance Analytics & Artificial Intelligence that would translate into improved customer experience through faster resolution, fewer interruptions, and enhanced capacity. Salahuddin Rifai highlighted that technology and digitization ideas have often been wrongly tackled by the power sector. Consequently, all the costs and expenses are borne by consumers, making the affordability goal futile. He stressed a consumer-oriented power sector and optimization of cost. Also, as effective use of resources and ideas requires energy experts' input, a professional board must be developed to advise the government in planning, he added. To establish greater power security in Pakistan, there is a need to systematize wholly with an improved approach, said Mazhar Ranjha. Case studies on different aspects, including tariff indexation, investments, planning, digital transformation, etc. must be done to derive workable solutions.

SC moved for disqualification of President

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A plea has been filed with the Supreme Court seeking the disqualification of President Arif Alvi. The petition, moved by citizen Chaudhry Muhammad Imtiaz, sought the disqualification of President Dr Arif Alvi under Article 41. According to the petition, President Arif Alvi is violating his oath by working on the directions of one political party. He pleaded with the court to immediately remove Alvi from the top office. Back in March this year, a similar disqualification plea was filed against Arif Alvi which was turned down by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. A two-member bench headed by Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan heard the petition filed by a citizen, Zahoor Mehmood, under Article 62 1(F) of the Constitution. The petitioner raised six objections to his candidature, and one of them was that at the time of the presidential election, he (Alvi) was an under-trial accused and was not eligible for the presidency.

FCAA welcome end of regulatory duty on imports

DNA

PESHAWAR: President Frontier Custom Agents Association (FCAA), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi has welcomed the decision taken by the government of abolishing 100 percent duty on import of used cars and some other items. In a press statement issued here on Tuesday, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi said the decision will provide a big relief to price hike stricken consumers and businessmen of the country. The federal government, Zia added, had taken a decision in November 2022 of enforcing 100 percent duty to discourage import of used cars and to benefit local manufacturers of cars, but the decision did not yield fruitful results.

Asrafi defies Hindutva leaders' statements

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The blasphemous words by Indian extremists and terrorists Hindutva leaders to attack Harmain Al-Sharifain and Baitullah are unacceptable. Every year during the month of Ramadan, Masjid-e-Al-Aqsa is being desecrated and mosques are closed in Occupied Kashmir by Indian and Israeli forces, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council, Secretary General International Tazem-e-Harmain Al-Sharifain Council. Talking to media, here on Tuesday, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Special Aide to Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Middle East said that Pakistan welcomes every effort for the cause of unity and for the stability of the

Muslim Ummah. Palestine and Kashmir are the burning issues of the Muslim Ummah, said Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi adding that China has played very imperative role in restoring relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, if China plays a role in the issue of Israel-Palestine, it should be supported and endorsed.

The solution to the issue of Palestine will only be accepted, if it had been accepted by the people of Palestine. Saudi Arabia has given very good and positive news to the Ummah in the month of Ramadan, and the visit of the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia to Syria shows positive progress towards the improvement of the situation in the region, said Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council and Secretary General of International Tazem-e-Harmain Al-Sharifain Council. Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi.

Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi stated that India is currently under the rule of an extremist and terrorist group that has destroyed the lives of minorities in India.

The extremists and terrorists Hindutva leaders of India are using blasphemous nonsense against the Muslims and about Muslim's holy places, which is unacceptable, and the Muslim Ummah is quite disturbed over blasphemous words of Hindutva leaders. Indian terrorists and extremists have threatened to attack Mecca and Baitullah, which has made the Muslim Ummah anxious, the life, honor and dignity of every Muslim is sacrificed on the honor of Harmain Al-Sharifain, viewed Tahir Ashrafi. Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that Pakistan welcomes every effort for the unity and stability of the Muslim Ummah.

AKF distributes Ramadan Food Packages

PESHAWAR: Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) with the assistance of Southern Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL) Ramadan food packages among 350 widows during a ceremony held here on Tuesday. The food packages consist of flour, ghee, pulses, rice, tea leaf and other essential food items. Addressing the ceremony, the president of AKF Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khalid Waqas Chamkani said that the foundation with the assistance of its donors arranged food packages for poor and deserving people during Ramadan to include them in the happiness of the holy month. He said that the foundation distributes Ramadan Food Package each year, for which the people of the provincial metropolis are paying tributes to it.—APP

Serious concerns among Criminology Degree Holders

DNA

HYDERABAD – In a joint statement, senior faculty member and field expert Hyder Ali Memon from department of criminology and prominent young columnist Muhammad Akhter says; recently Sindh public service commission announced positions for the post of "Inspector and sub-inspector" in the department of Anti-Corruption, Sindh. Therein, Very surprisingly instead of specifying a criminology degree as criteria of eligibility they have asked LLB as pre-requisite qualification for seems to be positions most closely related to criminology. However, Degree of criminology covers a wide range of courses includes; white collar crime, organized crime and money laundering, policing, criminal investigations, community policing, forensic criminology and various other courses. Whereas, the degree of LLB only focuses on legal aspects and its procedures rather touching the rationale and research part. At present, such violations of fundamental rights raised serious concerns among degree holders of criminology. They urged; Government should pay heed to matter by incorporating criminology as primary qualification for such advertised positions. Moreover, they appreciated NACTA authorities' initiative for incorporating criminology degree as pre-requisite qualification in recent advertisement.

Sherry urges SCO to prioritize Climate Action

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman represented Pakistan at the 4th Meeting of the Heads of the Ministers and Agencies of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states responsible for Environmental Protection organized virtually by India. During the meeting, Minister Rehman emphasized the critical role that the SCO could play at the regional level in achieving shared goals related to environmental sustainability and climate resilience. She also highlighted the value of the SCO as a forum for member states to share their perspectives on this existential crisis that is now redefining global, regional and national priorities and responses in the 21st century. Minister Rehman said, "The sustainability of life on earth and the overall socio-economic de-

velopment of current and future generations are now under threat. We all agree that constructive cooperation on bold climate and environmental issues is critical to actively move the needle and bridge the gap between the pledges and pipelines that we all make multilaterally, as well as the gap between ambitions and actions." Minister Rehman drew attention to Pakistan's unique position as one of the ten most vulnerable countries to climate change, despite contributing less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions. "We are on the front lines of climate change, braving disastrous floods, unlivable heatwaves, and fast-melting glaciers," said the Minister. She highlighted the catastrophic floods that occurred in Pakistan in 2022, which inundated one-third of the country, impacted 33 million people, and caused

over US\$30 billion in economic losses and damages. Minister Rehman also said that for Pakistan climate change has become a high priority on all ministerial agendas, and both the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan are actively working to address climate change at the national and global levels. "We have intensified our efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change and implement large-scale nature-based interventions, as well as combat pollution. Despite the fact that our policies are aligned with SCO goals as well as by commitments made in the Paris Agreement, implementation of our collective plans fall short as the climate clock is ticking faster than we imagined," the Minister said. She shared details about Pakistan's recent policies and programs, such as the National Clean Air Policy,

National Hazardous Waste Management Policy, Clean Green Pakistan, Living Indus Initiative, the creation of new national parks and expansion of protected areas, and federal-level regulations on plastics. In her address, Minister Rehman proposed several specific actions for the forum to consider, such as establishing a technical working group to exchange information and best practices on common issues, exploring opportunities for capacity building and knowledge sharing, and developing regional mechanisms for climate financing and carbon markets. She also emphasized that SCO members could consider building a united voice in advocating for reforming the international financial architecture to transform access pathways that remain blocked for climate finance delivery to developing countries.—APP



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- Islamic Studies Hadith & Hadith Science
- Islamic Studies Seerat Studies
- Islamic Studies Dars-e-Nizami
- Islamic Studies Interfaith Studies

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- Fee should be deposited in any branch of ABL, MCB, FWBL and UBL. It can also be deposited through UPaisa, Easypaisa and JazzCash. Fee can be deposited on same day after generating Challan.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

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



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: General Manager of Turkish Airlines Ali Battal hosted Iftaar dinner for friends at Islamabad Serena Hotels. He invited friends from the aviation industry.—DNA

The Queen's essay Competition 2023 opens

Pakistani youth have done extremely well in recent years with Zahra Hussain, a student of Lahore Grammar School International, coming first in the senior category in 2018 and Zainab Nawaz, a grade 8 student, achieving a Bronze Award in the junior category in 2022

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Royal Commonwealth Society has announced that the prestigious Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition is now open for entries until 30 June 2023. The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition is the world's oldest international writing competition. With thousands of young people taking part every year, it is an important way to recognise achievement, elevate youth voices and

develop key skills through creative writing. This year, The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition asks entrants to explore the power young people hold within the global community and consider how this power can be harnessed to make a meaningful impact in the world. This focus coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the Commonwealth Youth Programme, and the Commonwealth Heads of Government declaring 2023 a year dedicated to youth-led action for sustainable and in-

clusive development. Essays are submitted in two categories - a 'Senior Category' (those born between 1 July 2004 and 30 June 2009) and a 'Junior Category' (those born on or after 1 July 2009). All successful entries will receive a Certificate of Participation and a number of entrants will receive Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards for excellence in writing. The top two winners from each category will be awarded with a trip to London for a week of educational and cultural events, culminating in

a special Awards Ceremony at a royal palace. Pakistani youth have done extremely well in recent years with Zahra Hussain, a student of Lahore Grammar School International, coming first in the senior category in 2018 and Zainab Nawaz, a grade 8 student, achieving a Bronze Award in the junior category in 2022. Zoë Ware, Acting Deputy Head of Mission at the British High Commission, said the following: "The Queen's Commonwealth Essay is a fantastic opportunity for young Pakistanis to engage with the Commonwealth and sharpen their writing skills to become the future leaders of tomorrow. Sixty percent of the Commonwealth's 2.5 billion people are under the age of 30. This young demographic represents a dynamic 'youth force for change', made up of exceptional young people who are increasingly involved in advocacy, decision-making and action. I hope to see some winning essays from young Pakistanis in this year's competition."

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ISLAMABAD: Chairman NDMA Lt. Gen. Inam Haider Malik presenting a souvenir to Senator Mushahid Hussai.—DNA

Rupee gains 80 paisas against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan rupee gained 80 paisas against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Tuesday and closed at Rs 283.90 against the previous day's closing of Rs 284.70. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 287 and Rs 289.5, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 1.94 to close at Rs 311.15 against the last day's closing of Rs 313.09, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen declined by 01 paisas and stood at Rs 2.11; whereas a drop of Rs 1.23 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs352.49 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs353.72. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal dipped by 21 paisas each to close at Rs 77.31 and Rs 75.69, respectively.—APP

Ambassador invites Chinese enterprises to visit Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Ambassador to China Moinal Haque has invited Chinese enterprises and companies to visit Pakistan and participate in the 4th International Textile Exhibition (TEXPO) 2023 to be held in Karachi next month. "I would like



to take this opportunity to invite the Chinese enterprises and companies to come and join us in TEXPO," Ambassador said in a statement according to Gwadar Pro. Ambassador Haque said that his team at the Pakistan Embassy in Beijing and Pakistan's Consulates in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu and Hong Kong would facilitate the participation and visit of Chinese enterprises and companies. Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) is organizing TEXPO 2023 from May 26 to 28 this year at Karachi Expo Center. Giving details of the upcoming three-day event, he said that it is Pakistan's largest textile and leather exhibition providing a platform for local and international companies dealing in raw materials and finished products with globally competitive prices and premium quality. "The theme of this year's TEXPO is leading the way to sustainability and this theme is a tribute to the efforts of the local and global textile industry that continues to strive towards ensuring compliance with local and international environmental laws ensuring consumer protection and eco-friendly practices." Ambassador Haque maintained that TEXPO offers three days of exhibitions, business-to-business opportunities, fashion shows, design studios, product displays, press and media events, industry visits and business opportunities seminars.—DNA

APRIL 2023

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Digital platforms replaces culture of Eid cards

ISLAMABAD: The culture of writing letters and sending Eid cards is fast diminishing in the present society where people especially youngsters were seen prefer to wish their near ones through electronic greetings and downloading Eid greeting apps ahead of the upcoming festival of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The nature of Eid greetings has drastically changed now as most citizens had turned to digital platforms to wish Eid greetings instead of sharing Eid cards, said a report aired by a Private news channel.

No doubt the days are gone when people used to send Eid cards to family and friends on a large scale, said an old age citizen, adding, at present people have switched over to the internet, mobile phones and social networks to express their feelings.

The particular trend has dwindled over the years, said a female teacher, adding, the practice of sending Eid cards was once routine for most families to spend time appropriately selecting, purchasing, writing and posting Eid greeting cards to friends and families but now, it has become a rarity.

Talking about the declining trend of the cards, a social media user said our lifestyle has changed now. "We are more mindful of our money now. It's more convenient to download e-cards from the internet, which are free and one card can be sent to many friends with a single click."—DNA

Uzbekistan shows interest to invest in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, Aybek Arif Usmanov has expressed keen interest to enhance bilateral relations in trade, industry, and e-commerce and emphasized the need to take appropriate steps to expand trade volume up to \$1 billion between both countries.

He expressed these views in a meeting with Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar here on Tuesday. He said bilateral trade relations had shown a positive trend, and trade data for the fiscal year 2021-22 reflected a growth of \$91 million, whereas Pakistan's exports to Uzbekistan had doubled from \$36.56 million in July-March 2021-22 to \$73.12 million during July-March 2022-23. He said that bilateral trade volume could increase to \$5 billion annually by removing unwanted barriers. He also acknowledged the minister's political reconciliation efforts to bring all parties on the negotiation table. The two sides also agreed for working jointly to identify opportunities for cooperation in trade, investment, and other sectors. During the meeting, the commerce minister acknowledged the enormous potential for trade between the two countries.—DNA

Briefs

NEPRA
notifies
reduction in
power tariff

ISLAMABAD: National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Tuesday notified a 0.0006 paisa per unit reduction in power tariff for WAPDA power distribution companies under the monthly fuel adjustment mechanism (FCA) for February.

The Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA-G) on behalf of XW-DISCO has requested 85 paisa increase in the tariff for the said period, said a notification. The Authority had conducted a public hearing into the matter on March 30 with Chairman NEPRA in the Chair. Earlier, the FCA for January was charged as 48 paisa. The FCA for February would be charged 48 paisa less as compared to January. The FCA would be applicable to the billing month of April, the notification said. It would also be applicable to all consumers except lifeline, agri, domestic consumers using up to 300 units, electric vehicle charging stations, and K-Electric. —APP

Overseas
ministry to
establish
protectorate
offices

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Syed Agha Rafiqullah on Tuesday informed the National Assembly that a summary has been moved to establish protectorate of emigrant offices in all the major cities. Responding to a calling attention notice regarding non-availability of protectorate of emigrant offices in Sukkur, Bannu, Abbottabad and Gilgit-Baltistan, he said, "Keeping in view the importance, the Ministry has moved a summary to establish offices in all the major cities and minister himself would introduce it to the federal cabinet for the approval soon."

He informed the members that former Prime Minister Imran Khan has shifted Abbottabad protectorate of the emigrant office to Sawat on the request of the then communication minister.

He said that the minister of Overseas Pakistan had carried out visits to various countries to explore more job opportunities for Pakistanis. "Agreements with various countries are in the pipeline and these would be finalized soon" he added. He said that talks with Malta, Korea and Japan are also underway to accommodate more Pakistanis in these countries.

He said that all the information regarding availability of job opportunities abroad is for the information of the public. Responding to another question, he claimed that during the previous regime Imran Khan's front man committed corruption in the overseas ministry. The Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf referred the matter to the concern committee for detailed discussion. —APP

Salary,
pension to PR
employees
already paid

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Railways Kiran Imran Dar on Tuesday informed the National Assembly that all pending salaries and pensions to employees of Railways had been paid. Responding to a notice regarding the delay in payment of pensionary benefits and salary to the employees of the railways, she said, "All the employees of Railways had received their salary pension today as per the direction of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to pay salary before the Eid."

She further informed the house that the dues of retired employees till 2022 had also been cleared. Dar said that a sum of Rs. 3 billion has been spent to rehabilitate Railways track damaged in the 2022 flood. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf inaugurating the exhibition of rate manuscripts of the holy Quran in connection with the golden jubilee celebrations of the Constitution of Pakistan. — DNA

Alvi directs reimbursement
of health insurance claim

The President in his decision stated that the onus to prove the pre-existing ailment rested upon the petitioner company and the repudiation of the insurance claim required unimpeachable evidence

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has upheld the decision of the Federal Insurance Ombudsman (FIO) directing an insurance company to reimburse the full health insurance amount of 57,172 Australian Dollars (AUD) to a citizen, who had been denied the insured amount on flimsy grounds, within 30 days.

The complainant (Fahad Mahmood) had obtained a Worldwide Travel Insurance Policy from a company (United Insurance Company of Pakistan Ltd) for his father to travel to Australia with a sum assured of USD 50,000 for Medical Expenses and Hospitalization Abroad.

During his stay in Australia, his father was admitted to hospitals twice and was treated for a few days. He filed the health insurance claim but the company only honoured the claim for his father's first admission to the hospital in Australia. The second admission claim was denied on the ground that his father was admitted the second time due to pre-existing ailments (chronic kidney disease, chronic heart failure, diabetes, benign prostate hypertrophy and hypertension) which he did not disclose at the time of obtaining the policy from the company. Feeling aggrieved, the complainant approached the FIO for relief, which passed the order in his favour. Subsequently, the company filed a representation with the President against FIO's order, which was rejected.

The President in his decision stated that the onus to prove the pre-existing ailment rested upon the petitioner company and the repudiation of the insurance claim required unimpeachable evidence regarding the existence of the alleged pre-existing ailment and its knowledge by the policyholder. "No clinical investigation or diagnostic assessment has been produced by the petitioner company to prove the factum of pre-existing ailment", he added. The President further held that FIO had rightly observed that "the business of insurance obliges the company to ensure the protection of the

interests of insurance policyholders. Due diligence is required to be carried out by the respondent company before the issuance of policy as it relates to the policy applicants' health, belongings and life. Without going through due process, the issuance of policy creates such situations. After getting his policy issued, a policyholder considers himself covered against various eventualities. A policyholder travelling abroad can come across health issues in a foreign land requiring urgent medical cover, which is exactly the purpose of the travel insurance policy".

The President said that the company was a well-established organization and it had

all means at its disposal to ascertain pre-existing ailments before issuing the policy. He observed that the company had accepted the first admission claim without any objection but it took the plea of a pre-existing ailment while repudiating the second admission claim unjustifiably without producing cogent material to corroborate its stance. He further observed that the repudiation of the second admission claim on flimsy ground, while honouring the first admission claim, constituted maladministration on the part of the company, which was unjust, unreasonable and based on irrelevant grounds.

The President, therefore, upheld FIO's order and rejected the company's representation.

IMF continues to ignore
many distressed countries

No country can develop until it implements such reforms and policies in such a manner that it no longer need loans from the IMF and other international institutions, he observed.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Saifuddin Sheikh, Executive Director of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Tuesday said the IMF is sitting on more than 1000 billion dollars but it is constantly ignoring many poor countries that are stuck in difficulties. The policies of the lender are affecting its influence and reputation, and many countries are not listening to it, he said.

Saifuddin Sheikh said that despite massive capital, the international organisation is ignoring many countries that are asking for one to three billion dollars, which is reducing confidence in this institution. The IMF continues to alter its conditions for loans for political gains; therefore, it would be better to call it the Western Monetary Fund instead of the International Monetary Fund because it has focused on the develop-

ment of western countries. The business leader said that many countries are frustrated with the IMF and are now looking to China for loans.

Currently, 65 countries have to return 15 percent of their external debt to China. And in the case of Pakistan, about 30 percent of its external debt is taken from China, which is increasing. He said that the IMF never presses poor countries to raise taxes on the privileged class; it always targets the common man.

The IMF has been subject to a range of criticisms, generally focused on the conditions of its loans; it has also been criticised for its lack of accountability and willingness to lend to countries that are known for corruption of rulers and wastage of funds.

The IMF always stresses reducing government borrowing, increasing taxes and interest rates, and lowering spending. It also calls

for allowing failing firms to go bankrupt. Its structural adjustment, privatisation, and deregulation have seldom worked as expected. He recalled that during the Asian crisis of 1997, many countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand were required by the IMF to pursue tight monetary and fiscal policies to reduce their budget deficits and strengthen exchange rates. However, these policies caused a serious recession with very high levels of unemployment in these countries, which was a failure of the lender.

He noted that it is very difficult for a country to develop under the IMF's umbrella, which is why the number of countries that take help from it is reducing. No country can develop until it implements such reforms and policies in such a manner that it no longer need loans from the IMF and other international institutions, he observed.

IRSA
releases
110,500
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 110,500 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 102,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1434.37 feet and was 36.37 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 32,200 cusecs while the outflow as 35,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1106.30 feet, 56.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 32,600 cusecs and 38,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Tansa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 39,600, 31,900, 25,500 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 21,700 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 7,900 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala. —APP

ANF seizes over
6765 kg drugs worth
US\$ 355.112 mn

ISLAMABAD, Apr 18 (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) seized 6765.499 kg drugs, worth US\$ 355.112 million and arrested 29 persons including one woman and impounded 15 vehicles while conducting 36 counter narcotics operations throughout the country.

According to spokesperson of the ANF, the seized drugs comprised 3724.670 Kg Opium, 75.743 Kg Heroin, 1080.209 Kg Hashish, 88.355 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice), 16.700 Kg Amphetamine, 1720 Kg Ketamine, 58 Kg Volume Tabs (170000 x Tablets) and 1.822 Kg Diazepam Tabs (10040 x Tablets) and 120 x Liters Liquid Amphetamine. ANF Balochistan recovered 4742.88 Kg Drugs in 7 operations while arrested 6 persons involved in drugs smuggling and impounded 4 vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 3716.670 Kg Opium, 64 Kg Heroin, 878.510 Kg Hashish, 67 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice), 16.700 Kg Amphetamine, and 120 x Liters Liquid Amphetamine. ANF Punjab recovered 1757.045 Kg Drugs in 8 operations while arrested 9 persons including 1 x woman involved in drugs smuggling and impounded 6 vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 3.600 Kg Opium, 0.975 Kg Heroin, 23.160 Kg Hashish, 1.210 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice) and 1720 Kg Ketamine. ANF Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recovered 149.245 Kg Drugs in 9 operations while arrested 4 persons involved in drugs smuggling and impounded a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 2.400 Kg Opium, 0.581Kg Heroin, 128.764 Kg Hashish and 17.500 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice). ANF Sindh recovered 62.525 Kg Drugs in 4 operations while arrested 3 persons involved in drugs smuggling and impounded 3 vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 1.550 Kg Heroin, 2.975 Kg Hashish and 58 Kg Volume Tabs (170000 x Tablets). ANF North recovered 53.804 Kg drugs in 8 operations, arrested 7 persons in drugs smuggling and impounded a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 2 Kg Opium, 0.537 Kg Heroin, 46.800 Kg Hashish, 2.645 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice) and 1.822 Kg Diazepam Tabs (10040 x Tablets). —APP

Wheat output
increases 1.6%

ISLAMABAD: Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) was apprised that owing to the incentives introduced by the incumbent government to mitigate the adverse impact of catastrophic floods and torrential rains during the last moon soon season and to revive the local agriculture sector, the output of Rabi crops witnessed significant growth. The FCA which met with Secretary Ministry of National Food Security and Research Zafar Hassan was told that wheat output during the Rabi season 2022-23 increased by 1.6 per cent as compared to the production of last year and total output was estimated at 26.81 million tons.

The high-power committee which, is mandated to oversee strategic measures for ensuring food security in the country was apprised that wheat crop was sown over 9.0 million hectares to fulfil the local staple food requirements as well as for keeping the strategic reserves. While, the committee observed that the potato production during the season grew by 1.9% as compared to the output of last year, whereas the total production was recorded at 7.9 million tons. During the season the potatoes were cultivated on over 0.3 million hectares. The tomato production for 2022-23 is estimated at 563.6 thousand tons from an area of 45.7 thousand hectares, there is an increase in production of 1.2% over the last year. —APP

RCCL inks contract with ANTH

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCL) and Dr. Akbar Niazi Teaching Hospital (ANTH) signed an agreement/contract to provide discounts to its members on various services. President Saqib Rafiq on behalf of RCCL and Col (r) Dr. Ghulam Mujtaba Abbasi on behalf of ANTH signed and exchanged the agreement documents. Under the agreement, RCCL members will get a discount rate facility on various Hospital Services at ANTH including executive clinic consultation, diagnostic services and Hospital Services (Procedures and IPD).

Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh and Secretary General Irfan Manan Khan, among others, were also present on the occasion.

President
Alvi condoles
with families
of martyred
troops

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday expressed condolence with the families of the Pakistan Army personnel who were martyred in South Waziristan on April 15.

The president had a telephonic conversation with brothers of Lance Naek Shoab Ali and Sepoy Rafi Ullah, and paid tributes to the martyrs for their sacrifices and services to the country. He said the whole nation saluted the services of the martyrs. The president also saluted the martyrs for their duty and bravery. He also thanked the families of the martyrs on behalf of the whole nation. President Alvi offered sympathies with the families of the martyrs and prayed to Allah Almighty for courage to bear this irreparable loss. He also prayed for elevation of ranks of the martyrs in paradise. — DNA

Rehmani
condemns
killing of
lawmaker

ISLAMABAD, Apr 18 (APP): Jammu and Kashmir People's Freedom League Chairman Muhammad Farooq Rehmani has condemned the live TV murder of four-time lawmaker Atiq Ahmad and his brother Ashraf Ahmad in Uttar Pradesh, India, where police failed to protect them amidst reports of anti-Muslim violence.

The attacker allegedly shouted anti-Muslim slogans while the brothers were handcuffed and the police failed to protect them during a medical check-up in broad daylight. Rehmani expressed deep concern over the increasing incidents of anti-Muslim violence in India and warned of a humanitarian crisis if the world fails to act. He urged immediate intervention to stop the slaughter of Indian Muslims.

He stated that Indian Muslims were being slaughtered like animals in their own homeland by the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) gangs without any intervention from the international community. Rehmani added that the only fault of Indian Muslims was their belief in Islam, and "this was being used to justify their persecution".

Moreover, he highlighted that while in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK), Kashmiris were being targeted for demanding the right of self-determination, the demographic changes were being made to alter the Muslim majority character of the state. Rehmani warned that such atrocities could lead to a severe humanitarian crisis and urged the world community to take immediate action to stop the ongoing violence against Indian Muslims.

Commenting on the 2019 Pulwama attack, he stated that the revelations made by Satya Pal Malik, former governor of IOJK, had vindicated Pakistan's stance and confirmed that the attack was a part of the terrorism bogey used to enact fake encounters against the youth of Kashmir. Rehmani accused India of violating promises made with the people of Jammu and Kashmir and international humanitarian law, as well as failing to protect the rights of Indian Muslims according to the Nehru-Liaquat Pact. —APP

Three bids to
smuggle 2275
flour bags
foiled

RAWALPINDI: The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police here on Tuesday foiled three bids to smuggle 2275 flour and 60 fine flour (maida) bags. According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Potohar Division police conducted raids in different areas and rounded up three namely Noor ul Amin, Ghulam Naveed and Aminullah. He informed that the accused were 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 Rawalpindi district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids, he added. —APP

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G7 joint communique

With the majority of it dedicated to coordinating their actions to help the United States safeguard its hegemony, the joint communique issued on Tuesday upon the conclusion of the three-day G7 foreign ministers' meeting in Karuizawa, Japan, points to the fact that the club of the richest economies is allowing itself to be "Natolized" by Washington as a geopolitical tool of the US.

Despite the great lengths they have gone to hide the sword sheathed in a scabbard decorated with partner-competitor-rival motifs, that China was listed as one of the 11 "pressing global challenges", along with the Ukraine crisis and nuclear issues of Iran and the Korean Peninsula, clearly demonstrates the US-led club's true intent.

That many China-related issues are included in the joint statement – including the Taiwan question, the maritime disputes in South China Sea, alleged "human rights issues" in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, cyberspace governance and trade frictions – only serves to give the impression that the document was drafted by Washington and Tokyo together before it was toned down by the rest.

While claiming it is their "intention to promote human security and continue building a global community that leaves no one behind", what the document reinforces is that it is the actions of the US and its allies that are the true challenges to peace and stability.

At the same time, the US is leaving no stone unturned to obstruct China's negotiations with regional countries over the maritime disputes in the South China Sea, which, to Washington's embarrassment, have made remarkable progress, among which is the agreement that no external forces should be allowed to interfere in the disputing parties' efforts to settle regional affairs.

If there is truly no change in their basic positions on the Taiwan question, including their upholding of the one-China principle, they would not have aired their support for the Chinese island to participate in some world bodies, which has been vetoed year after year by the international community. They know that the renewed support will embolden the diehard secessionists on the island to stick to their cause, as elbowing the island into the door of some international organizations as a parallel with sovereign states is something they have sought to do for years. All this being said, and given the growing aggressiveness of the increasingly "Natolized" G7, it begs the question, which countries are the ones not acting in accordance with their obligations under international laws.



Blaming China not enough

If there is a problem in the United States, you can bet your bottom dollar that rather than getting to grips with it, the default action will be to blame China. It doesn't matter what stripe the administration is. Such is the case with the deadly synthetic opioid, fentanyl, that kills tens of thousands of Americans each year.

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 107,735 Americans died from a drug overdose between August 2021 and August 2022, two-thirds of them due to an overdose of a synthetic opioid, mainly fentanyl. Yet despite it claiming to favor cooperation with China to crack down on narcotics and the fact that China takes a very tough line against illicit drugs, the US pointed a finger at China being the source of the problem, indicting and sanctioning Chinese individuals and entities on April 14 for their claimed "involvement" in fentanyl precursor chemicals. China has done all that can be done to curb the illicit trade in fentanyl. It officially added fentanyl to the Supplementary List of Controlled Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances with Non-medical Use in May 2019, a key move in preventing the illicit manufacturing, trafficking and abuse of the substance. That the US' move is a political one rather than a practical one is evidenced by the fact that the US is blaming China for exporting "fentanyl precursors", which are in fact only ordinary chemicals sold through normal trade.

As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a regular news briefing, "instead of reducing domestic drug demand, strengthening prescription drug control, and enhancing education, the US tries to confuse the public, mislead the public, and shift responsibility for its own ineffective governance". Contrary to its claims, "China, in the spirit of humanitarianism, has been trying to help the US as best it can".

Indeed, according to the US Customs and Border Protection, the United States has seized no fentanyl-related substances from China since their scheduling. The latest accusations by the US have shifted to link China with Mexico, claiming that China is shipping precursor chemicals to the country, where drug cartels produce the lethal drug and smuggle it overland into the US. Yet China has not received any report or data from Mexico on the use of Chinese precursor chemicals for drug production there, nor has the US provided any evidence about the flow of Chinese chemicals into Mexico for fentanyl production. May 9 marks the second National Fentanyl Awareness Day in the US. If US politicians mean to save US lives, it is time for them to do something that really helps tackle the problem rather than just making China the scapegoat.

Biden's Northern Ireland intervention reveals a weakened West

Christopher Phillips

Former President Barack Obama's unwillingness to enforce his chemical weapons red line in Syria in 2013 damaged perceptions of American power, while the election of Donald Trump in 2016, and the divisive nature of US politics that followed also damaged American credibility. The constant news bulletins reporting on mass shootings and angry pro- and anti-Trump rallies continue to hit US soft power. The world has moved on since Clinton's charismatic visits to Northern Ireland, and the West is now weaker. Biden is not responsible for this, as many of the developments were before his time and/or beyond his control, but it is the reality he faces nonetheless

US President Joe Biden's visit to Belfast last week inevitably drew comparisons with key interventions made by fellow Democratic President Bill Clinton in the Northern Ireland Peace Process more than two decades ago.

Clinton's three visits – in 1995, 1998 and 2000 – were widely viewed as being instrumental first in nudging unionists and republicans toward a deal, and then in keeping the 1998 Good Friday Agreement alive during the turbulent months and years after it was signed.

Observers in Belfast, Dublin and London, as well as interested parties further afield, hope that Biden's visit will have a similarly galvanizing effect on politics in the province which, once again, appear to be deadlocked. Biden, of course, lacks the pull of Clinton. As one Irish civilian who witnessed both presidents' visits told The Guardian: "Clinton was charismatic, like a film star. Biden is ... older."

Thankfully, Northern Ireland is in a very different place now compared with when Clinton first visited. The peace agreement has held for 25 years despite numerous challenges along the way. It is perfectly possible that Biden's intervention will do the trick – aided by the \$6 billion of investment in the province he has promised reluctant unionists if they return to the power-sharing agreement. Even so, it is hard not to reflect that, in addition to lacking the charisma of Clinton, Biden also does not bring the same power projection enjoyed by his presidential counterpart in the 1990s. This is not a question of personality, per se, but rather of the different global reality in which Biden operates. While Clinton could charm the people of Northern Ireland toward a settlement as head of unquestionably the most powerful state on earth, and leader of a victorious West, Biden instead leads a divided US and a weakened West. Clinton's intervention was part of a wider global American agenda in the 1990s and 2000s. Successive presidents pursued a liberal global hegemony that frequently promoted its two values of neo-liberal capitalism and democracy. Unchallenged by any serious rivals before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, this "unipolar" moment allowed Clinton to intervene in Bosnia, Sierra Leone and the Israel-Palestine peace process, though he would later be criticized for not acting to prevent the genocide in Rwanda. Tony Blair, the former British prime minister and one of the original architects of the Good Friday Agreement, proved to be a partner in US activism after his election to the British premiership in 1997. While Clinton and Blair would later be criticized, rightly, for some aspects of their liberal interventionism, their actions reflected a period of unparalleled Western confidence, belief, and power. Fast forward to 2023, and Biden is not operating from the same commanding position. The US remains the most powerful state in the world but it is far from unchallenged. China is close to matching it economically, if not militarily, while Russia is more combative than it was in the 1990s. Moscow's invasion of Ukraine has shown the limits of Western power in today's multipolar world. Only Western states have joined Washington's sanctions on Russia, while almost all states in Asia, South America, Africa and the Middle East have declined to do so. While Clinton came to Northern Ireland keen to heal Britain and Ireland's long-running problem and to boost the Western coalition as it pursued a US-led "New World Order," Biden's challenge is simply keeping the fragile Western coalition together. Indeed, Biden would be justified in feeling frustrated that he needs to intervene at all. The Northern Irish stalemate that threatens peace in the province has come about because of Brexit, a damaging goal for the Western coalition in which two of Washington's allies, Britain and the EU, have turned on one another in mutual recrimination. At a time when Biden would rather these key Western partners were uniting to face down

shared Russian and Chinese threats, years of wrangling and recriminations over Brexit have only made the Western alliance more fractious. Britain's new Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has adopted a more conciliatory approach than his more anti-EU predecessors, but Biden will be well aware that Sunak himself was a leading Brexiteer and signed off on the confrontation with Brussels when he was chancellor. Biden has welcomed Sunak as a security partner in the new anti-China AUKUS alliance between the US, the UK and Australia, but this is no Blair-Clinton or Blair-Bush partnership. Brexit has made Britain less powerful and less relevant to the US and, as a result, has weakened the Western coalition. Of course, Brexit was not the only act of Western self-sabotage that has weakened the global position of the US and its allies. Bush and Blair's invasion of Iraq was arguably the beginning of the decline, followed by the financial crash of 2008 and Western governments' reactions to it. Former President Barack Obama's unwillingness to enforce his chemical weapons red line in Syria in 2013 damaged perceptions of American power, while the election of Donald Trump in 2016, and the divisive nature of US politics that followed also damaged American credibility. The constant news bulletins reporting on mass shootings and angry pro- and anti-Trump rallies continue to hit US soft power. The world has moved on since Clinton's charismatic visits to Northern Ireland, and the West is now weaker. Biden is not responsible for this, as many of the developments were before his time and/or beyond his control, but it is the reality he faces nonetheless. As US president he might still be able to persuade recalcitrant unionists but circumstances mean he is not promoting the positive vision of the future that Clinton did. Biden's goal is merely to hold the fragile Western order together, not sell it to the world as Clinton did.

Courtesy: Arab News

A small dip in Islamophobia in the US gives us hope

Corey Saylor

BDS, modelled after the successful global South African antiapartheid movement, is a key test for the freedom of speech in the US today. This encroachment on the freedom of speech must be challenged and we at CAIR can help people who are affected by such legislation. Call us. The positive signs we saw in 2022 do not mean we should let our guard down. Hate is still ubiquitous around us. We see anti-Semitic and anti-Asian hate rising.

After 27 years climbing a mountain of Islamophobic bias, America appears to have taken a step back. The intake staff of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization, received 5,156 total complaints in 2022. This represents a 23 percent decrease since the previous year. It is the first recorded decline since we started tracking such data in 1995. Perhaps, we have summited the mountaintop of bias directed at American Muslims, and while we are still way up where the eagles fly, we are, nevertheless, entitled to some hope. Complaints about law enforcement and government overreach dropped by 38 percent. Given that we reported a 32 percent total complaint increase in the first year of the Trump presidency, the change of administration in Washington may have played a role. The fallout of the January 6 insurrection in 2022, during which the seat of the US Congress was ransacked, may have contributed as well. For years, white supremacists and antigovernment groups enjoyed political cover. Republican-driven political correctness ensured that staff at the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security knew that focusing on groups unrelated to the Muslim community could have negative implications for their careers.

After January 6, it is possible that overbroad law enforcement surveillance and informants deployed against law-abiding Muslims may have decreased, as such law enforcement agencies directed their focus toward actual threats. In educational settings the picture remains troubling. School incidents of Islamophobia rose by 63 percent in 2022. Among them was the case of a Florida teacher interrupting praying Muslim students and accusing them of doing "magic". She told them she was "interrupting the floor" and almost stepped on a child, as she walked over the group's prayer mats while the children were still

engaging in prayer. There was also the case of an employee at a Maryland school who allegedly locked an Afghan Muslim ninth grader in a bathroom where the child was beaten by other students. A week later the student still had a severe concussion. But there have been also positive developments in the education and sport sectors. Public officials in Ohio and Maryland enacted laws designed to protect athletes who observe their religious beliefs while competing. This came after student athletes Noor Abukaram and Je'Nan Hayes were disqualified from high school sports competitions in the two states for wearing headscarves. In 2021, Illinois became the first state to protect religious athletes in this manner. We encourage legislators in other states to follow suit. In other spheres, challenges remain. Banking while Muslim continues to be a struggle for many, as financial institutions continue closing or not opening bank accounts for people based on their choice of religion. Why? Because existing legislation, such as the Patriot Act, allows such discrimination to take place. Last year, 22 US lawmakers concurred in an open letter, noting, "Countless US individuals, businesses, and charities have been victims of discriminatory policies and practices that appear to limit their access to financial services because of their religion or national origin." In March, the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) reported that 27 percent of the Muslims they surveyed reported facing challenges from financial institutions. It is all legal so no lawsuit can clear up this inclination to discriminatory practice. That is why, the US government must take action; it is time for the Biden administration and banking regulators to update account monitoring practices put in place over the last 20 years to ensure that financial institutions no

longer see it as beneficial to discriminate against certain types of customers – mainly Muslim, Iranian and Arab Americans.

Another area that needs urgent attention is freedom of speech. Many American Muslims participate in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement to help pressure Israel to treat Palestinians with dignity and in accordance with its obligations under international law. So far 35 states have passed anti-BDS legislation and many others are considering such bills. Last year, there was a positive development in Texas, which has had an anti-BDS law in place since 2017 requiring local government contractors to sign a certification that they do not support the boycott of Israel. In January 2022, a judge ruled in favour of Rasmey Hassouna, the owner of an engineering company, who had sued the city of Houston for trying to impose an anti-BDS clause in his contract with the city administration. After the ruling, Hassouna was able to sign the contract without the clause.

BDS, modelled after the successful global South African antiapartheid movement, is a key test for the freedom of speech in the US today. This encroachment on the freedom of speech must be challenged and we at CAIR can help people who are affected by such legislation. Call us.

The positive signs we saw in 2022 do not mean we should let our guard down. Hate is still ubiquitous around us. We see anti-Semitic and anti-Asian hate rising. We see violence against brown and Black people persisting. We see public officials turning Americans against each other for a percentage at the polls. Yet this glimmer of hope our data offers feeds the optimism that drives us to keep standing up against hate, linking arms with our friends, and not waiting to be engulfed.

Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

PM lauds
COAS for
helping...

FROM PAGE 01
"The army chief made immense efforts in this regard which are indescribable," media quoted the premier as saying during the huddle. The prime minister also appreciated efforts by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for the success of the process. On Saturday, the IMF said that it was still waiting for the "necessary financing assurances" for the successful conclusion of the review talks. IMF Mission Chief to Pakistan Nathan Porter said the Fund "looks forward to obtaining the necessary financing assurances as soon as possible to pave the way for the successful completion of the 9th EFF (Extended Fund Facility) review". But on Monday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told the lower house of the parliament that Riyadh has provided another \$2 billion, while UAE has also committed to give \$1b to Pakistan. The premier said the country has met all IMF conditions following the \$3b commitments from Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

UN says
34 million
Afghans...

FROM PAGE 01
The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released on Tuesday a stark new assessment of 2022 data estimating 34 million Afghans were living below the poverty line. The figure is a staggering increase of 15 million on 2020, the last full year of rule by the Western-backed government that crumbled in a matter of weeks the following summer. There is no contemporary census data for Afghanistan but the UN uses a population estimate of 40 million, meaning 85 percent of the nation is projected to be in poverty. "Some have been compelled to sell their homes, land, or assets that generate income," the UNDP report said. The UN airlifts vast sums of US dollars into Afghanistan to pay staff and operating costs - cash injections that have also been vital in shoring up the nation's faltering economy.

Pakistan
shares plan
to secure...

FROM PAGE 01
\$6 billion in external financing - a sum that the struggling \$350 billion economy needs from now till June to avoid default. It should be noted that the \$6 billion financing gap had been worked out on the assumption that the current account deficit would remain around \$7 billion in the current fiscal year. The IMF welcomed "the recent announcement of important financial support to Pakistan from key bilateral partners", indirectly confirming the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia's commitments. But these commitments are short of Pakistan's requirements.

PDM parties
fail to evolve
a consensus

FROM PAGE 01
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in his office. Source privy to the meeting said that both leaders also discussed Punjab elections case being heard by the apex court. They also discussed the possibility of talks with the PTI and taking part in the All Parties Conference being convened by the Jamaat-e-Islami after Eid. The PDM however has not decided yet to take part in the APC or otherwise. A day earlier, PPP delegation comprising former PM Yusuf Raza Gillani, Naveed Qamar, and Qamar Zaman Kaira called on PML-N delegation comprising Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, and Railways and Aviation Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique. Mr Gillani had also met with BAP leader Khalid Magsoo before the meeting. Talking to the media after meeting, Mr Gillani said that people were reeling through depression adding that there should not have been dividing lines between the parliament and the judiciary.

Bulls B win Federal Cup
Basketball Tournament

In the decisive final Bulls B dominated throughout the match and never allowed their opponent to fight back for the tournament trophy. Zargham Khan scored 5 points and Irfan Hamid 3 points for winning, while Shumail Shukri scored 3 points for tem generals

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Bulls B clinches the Federal Cup 3x3 Basketball Tournament title by defeating strong General team with 11-05 points here at F-6 Multipurpose court, Islamabad organised by Federal Basketball Association.

President Federal basketball Association (FBBA) Ijaz Butt was the chief guest of the closing ceremony while General Secretary FBBA Ouj E Zahoor, Former Basketball Coach Malik Riaz, Shahryar Khan and other dignitaries were also attending the closing ceremony.

In the decisive final Bulls B dominated throughout the match and never allowed their opponent to fight back for the tournament trophy. Zargham Khan scored 5 points and Irfan Hamid 3 points for winning, while Shumail Shukri scored 3 points for tem generals.

Earlier in the semi-final round, Generals defeated Timber wolf (TW) B by 13-8 points and



Bulls B defeated Raptors Reds 37 teams participated in the event which continued for four days which was organized by the Federal Basketball Association under the umbrella of Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF).

 Hamas delegation in historic
visit to Saudi Arabia

DNA

RIYADH: A delegation of high-ranking officials from the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement has traveled to Saudi Arabia as the two sides seek to revive relations. Palestinian media reported that the delegation, including Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh, head of the group abroad, Khaled Mashal, and officials Mousa Abu Marzook and Khalil al-Hayya, arrived in the Saudi city of Jeddah late on Monday.

Citing sources, the reports said the delegation will perform the Umrah

pilgrimage in the final days of the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. Ties between Riyadh and Hamas deteriorated in 2007, following the resistance group's victory in the Palestinian legislative elections and clashes with the Fatah political party in the Gaza Strip. Mashal was the last high-ranking Hamas official to visit Saudi Arabia in 2015. In 2019, Saudi Arabia arrested dozens of Hamas members, claiming that they were threatening kingdom's rule. Hamas leaders have in recent months sent messages regarding improvement of relations with Saudi Arabia.

In turn, the kingdom has released many of Hamas detainees, including senior member Mohammad Al-Khudari. Following the release of two Palestinians linked to Hamas based in February, the Gaza-based group expressed hope that the development would be "a prelude to opening a new page with the brothers in Saudi Arabia." "We affirm our keenness on positive relations with our brothers in Saudi Arabia and all brotherly countries in the service of the Palestinian cause and our Arab and Islamic nation," it said in a statement. The Hamas delegation's

trip to Saudi Arabia came more than a month after Tehran and Riyadh agreed to a China-brokered reconciliation deal to resume their diplomatic ties. Coinciding with Hamas officials' Saudi trip, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is visiting the kingdom upon an official invitation by Riyadh. He is expected to meet Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Tuesday to discuss the latest developments regarding the Palestinian cause and the situation in the region, as well as the strengthening of Palestinian-Saudi relations, Wafa news agency reported.

 Sri Lanka thrash
Ireland to win
first Test

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka claimed a commanding victory on day three of their first Test against Ireland by an innings and 280 runs in Galle. Ten wickets from Prabath Jayasuriya helped Sri Lanka claim their biggest ever win, and condemn Ireland to their heaviest Test defeat. Captain Dimuth Karunaratne produced another excellent performance and was the top scorer with 179. Ireland are now winless in their five Test series since 2018. "It's another test match under the belt for a lot of our cricketers," Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie said of their experience. "A lot of us want to play Test cricket but we got a real taste of that over the last three days. Sri Lanka at home are a daunting prospect for any team, never mind a team that hasn't played a lot of Test cricket. Certainly there are learnings but we've got to find a way to compete better." Electing to bat, Sri Lanka seized early control and amassed 591-6 before declaring their first innings at the Galle International Stadium. Karunaratne was one of four players to claim unbeaten hundreds alongside Kusal Mendis (140), Dinesh Chandimal (102) and Sadeera Samarawickrama (104). Ireland were out for 143 in their first innings after Lorcan Tucker's dismissal, with the 26-year-old ending on 45. - DNA

 Accuses
Saqib of
'promoting
politics'

FROM PAGE 01

He expressed satisfaction with the successful completion of the first phase of the hospital where patients were being provided best medical treatment in areas of dialysis, kidney ailments, and surgeries. He lauded the Punjab administration of health for effectively carrying out the operationalization of the hospital and appreciated doctors and nurses for their dedication. He mentioned that Rs 5 billion were spent on RIUT so far and recalled that he laid the foundation stone of the hospital in 2012. He regretted that the previous government delayed the project, which otherwise could have been made operational much earlier.

PM Sharif said earlier, an allegation put against him by a former chief justice of the Supreme Court halted the work on a kidney and liver transplant hospital in Lahore. He said such discouragement of development and social work badly impacted the provision of civic facilities for the general public. He said serving the masses was a noble cause that needed a synchronized effort by all stakeholders.

 'Not
possible
to hold...

FROM PAGE 01

be sent to the three-member bench in their chambers. Earlier, top officials of the intelligence agencies briefed the Supreme Court on the current security challenges being faced by the country regarding elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, media reported citing sources. Justice Ahsan and Justice Akhtar were briefed by the security officials, said the sources. They added that the meeting went on for more than two hours at the CJ's chamber. The apex court, in its April 4 order, had directed the government to submit a report regarding the provision of security personnel for polls in the two provinces by April 17.

 LHC bars
Punjab
Police...

FROM PAGE 01

Punjab only," he said. "Courts can look into the ill-use of authority by police and we want the bench to do the same in this matter too." At that, Justice Najafi said that he had expressed displeasure over the situation outside Zaman Park earlier as well. The judge was referring to the three-day-long police action outside Imran's residence last month. The operation had resulted in violent clashes between officials and PTI supporters, leaving dozens injured. During the hearing today, the PTI chief's lawyer said that his client had received credible information regarding another operation outside Zaman Park during the Eid holidays. "Give us relief for five days," he requested, saying that "for five days the doors of the court will be closed". "The doors of justice are never closed," Justice Najafi replied.

 Govt-backed
PBC group
suffers blow

FROM PAGE 01

joint declaration by some members of Provincial Bar Councils and the SC against the Lawyers' Conference in Lahore. They termed the joint declaration malicious aimed at undermining the independence of the Judiciary. The statement stated that the PBC stood by the judiciary and always would strive to protect the independence of the judiciary and ensure rule of law. The jurists stated that the said declaration was apparently issued under the auspices of a few individuals of a particular group with the aim of fulfilling the agenda of a political party. They said that the said declaration was silent about the constitutional time frame for holding elections and the tenure of the interim setup. The legal minds termed the declaration an attack on the independence of the judiciary and the SC, besides it was insulting and defiant from the Constitution.

 Calling Chelsea
broken 'a bit much'
- Lampard

LONDON: Saying that Chelsea are currently "broken" is "a bit much," says their interim manager Frank Lampard. The Blues sacked manager Graham Potter earlier this month with the team 11th in the Premier League, despite spending more than £550m on players this season. The Champions League is the last competition they can win this season but they trail Real Madrid 2-0 before Tuesday's quarter-final second leg. "We are not where we want to be. That's clear," said Lampard. "But I think the word broken is a bit much. The league position is a reality, and we are 2-0 down in this game. We have to work against that." Real have won the Champions League a record 14 times, beating Liverpool in last season's final, and are second in Spain's La Liga. Lampard was asked if overturning Real's advantage from the first leg and reaching the semi-finals would rival 2012 when, as a player, he helped Chelsea win the Champions League for the first time. "I don't think anything that happens tomorrow will be better than winning the Champions League," said the 44-year-old, who is Chelsea's record goalscorer. "We had many difficult moments on that run - against Barcelona and Napoli. It was a huge run where there were a lot of big achievements.

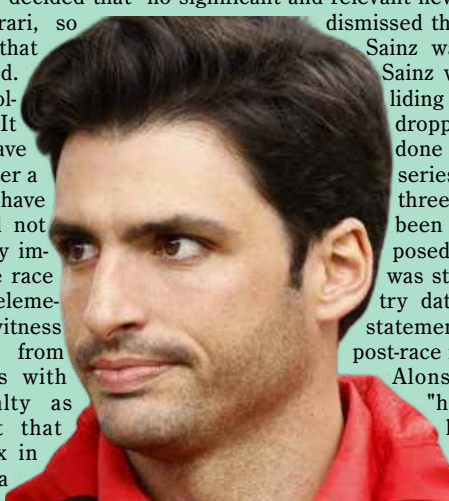
"But considering the score now, the team we are up against and the moment we are in, we have to fight really hard to make it happen so, of course, it would be special." Real coach Carlo Ancelotti recalled how his side were 3-1 up against Chelsea after the first leg of last season's quarter-finals, only to need a late goal in the second leg to take the tie into extra time before winning 5-4 on aggregate. "What happened, happened. We want to struggle less tomorrow," said the Italian, who won a league and FA Cup Double as Chelsea manager in 2010. "Chelsea has a difficult moment. I'm thinking the game tomorrow can be a great opportunity for them to move from this situation. We're aware of this. Ninety minutes remain and in this type of competition anything can happen. We'll be ready to play at our best." - Agencies

 Djokovic
has elbow
concerns

BANJA LUKA: Novak Djokovic said Monday he has not fully recovered from an elbow issue which hindered him in his Monte Carlo Masters last-16 exit last week. The world number one struggled with his serve before falling to Italian Lorenzo Musetti in Monaco. "The elbow is not in ideal condition, but let's say it's good enough. Hopefully it will be fully ready for the first match," said Djokovic, who had elbow surgery in 2018, ahead of this week's event in Banja Luka. The Serb won the Australian Open earlier this year to draw level with Rafael Nadal's men's record tally of 22 Grand Slam titles. He will be among the favorites for next month's French Open. The 35-year-old will face 87th-ranked French teenager Luca Van Assche, who ousted Swiss veteran Stan Wawrinka 1-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 on Monday, in the Banja Luka second round. "I've never met this boy before, I don't know much about him. I know he's young, he's just joined the top 100," said Djokovic before the tournament which has been relocated from his hometown of Belgrade because of work on the venue. - APP

 Sainz's Australian
GP appeal rejected

MELBOURNE: Ferrari's attempt to overturn Carlos Sainz's penalty at the Australian Grand Prix has been rejected. The race stewards reconvened on Tuesday to hear Ferrari's petition for a right of review of the penalty, which dropped Sainz from fourth place to 12th. They decided that "no significant and relevant new element" had been presented by Ferrari, so dismissed the petition. Stewards said their view that Sainz was wholly to blame had not changed. Sainz was given a five-second penalty for colliding with Fernando Alonso's Aston Martin. It would normally have been compressed after a Ferrari claimed to have formation that had not stewards when they imposed while the race. These were the telemeter driver's own witness statements, taken from One of these was with viewed the penalty as cited an incident that nadian Grand Prix in the Force India review because Ferrari's Felipe Massa was to blame and the drivers involved had been taken to hospital. Perez was given a five-place grid penalty for the following race, which was upheld after Force India's request for a review. On Ferrari's other arguments, they said they had already viewed the extensive telemetry to which the FIA had access before making their decision and that they did not feel the need to speak to Sainz to decide he was wholly to blame for the incident. "Had we thought that this required a statement from Sainz for us to analyse the event, we would have summoned him after the race," the verdict said. "We did not consider it necessary then to hear from him to decide that fact." - DNA



Napoli, Milan chase Champions League glory

Osimhen's devastating efficiency in front of goal was sorely missed in last week's single-goal defeat which gave Milan a slender advantage to take into Tuesday's showdown at the Stadio Maradona

MILAN: Victor Osimhen and Mike Maignan will face off for a place in the Champions League semi-finals on Tuesday when AC Milan travel south to Naples for the decisive second leg of the all-Italian quarterfinal. Nigerian striking sensation Osimhen and France's new first-choice goalkeeper Maignan arrived at two of Italy's most storied clubs via Ligue 1 outfit Lille, where they played together for a season before both eventually made their way south of the Alps. Osimhen hadn't played for Napoli since the last international break before making a substitute's appearance in Saturday's goalless draw with Verona which cut his side's imposing Serie A lead to 14 points.

The 24-year-old only played the final 17 minutes of that frustrating stalemate, but the match came alive once he was on the pitch. He caused havoc in the Verona defence and came close to snatching the points when he smashed a first-time rocket off the underside of the bar with eight minutes remaining. Osimhen's devastating efficiency in front of goal was sorely missed in last week's single-goal defeat which gave Milan a slender advantage to take into Tuesday's showdown at the Stadio Maradona. "Osimhen has such a physical presence and speed you can chuck the ball at him, and he'll hold onto it, use his head or unleash a change of pace. He has so many different options when he has the ball," Napoli coach Luciano Spalletti said on Saturday.



Napoli missed a host of chances to get something from the game at a packed and soaking wet San Siro in which Maignan produced the sort of display which has made him a natural successor to Hugo Lloris as Les Bleus' goalkeeper. The 27-year-old's return between the sticks in late February following five months out injured has given Milan more security at the back, with five clean sheets in their last nine matches in all competitions. And knowing he is ready to pull off at times astonishing saves when gaps appear at the back has allowed Milan to slowly return to the more swashbuckling

style with which they won their first Serie A title last season. His superb stop in the dying seconds on Wednesday denied Giovanni Di Lorenzo from giving Napoli, at that point down to 10 men following the harsh sending off Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa, what would have been a deserved draw. Former Milan manager Fabio Capello said Maignan was Milan's best player in the first leg and the seven-time European champions will need him in similar form on Tuesday if they are to have a chance of winning number eight. Maignan and Osimhen only played together for one season at Lille - the 2019-20 campaign - but it was enough to leave an impression on Serie A's top scorer.

Asked while still at Lille whether it was easy to score penalties against Maignan, Osimhen said: "No! Nearly everyone misses against him. He's too good!" Luckily for Napoli, it is Osimhen's partner in goalscoring crime Khvicha Kvaratskhelia who takes spot-kicks. While 25-goal Osimhen will be back in Naples, Spalletti will have to do without Anguissa and South Korean defensive revelation Kim Min-jae, who is suspended. What Napoli lose on the pitch they will gain off it however, as hardcore supporters agreed a truce in their feud with owner Aurelio De Laurentis which had made the atmosphere at Napoli's recent home matches toxic. Supporters made a colossal racket on Saturday and will no doubt make the Stadio Maradona a seething cauldron for possibly the biggest match in Napoli's history.

Briefs

Islamabad Police issue list of E-Challan defaulters

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Police has issued a list of 100 defaulters of Safe City E-Challan, who have been found the most frequent violators of traffic rules. "These individuals have been issued e-challan tickets for their violations but have failed to submit the required fines," said the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Police on Tuesday. He said that the vehicles of the violators would be locked in police stations until the fines are paid, adding that the Safe City cameras are diligently monitoring vehicles violating the traffic rules. The spokesman urged all citizens to comply with the city's traffic rules. The owners of these vehicles have been asked to submit the fines as soon as possible. The Islamabad Capital Police is making efforts for making an integrated traffic system to ensure safer roads for all citizens, he added.—APP

PAC summons Supreme Court registrar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the National Assembly has summoned the Supreme Registrar for skipping the audit of the apex court for the last 10 years. The meeting of the PAC was held in Islamabad here on Tuesday with Noor Alam Khan in the chair. The PAC chief took notice of not conducting an audit of the Supreme Court during last 10 years. No audit of the Supreme Court has been carried out in the last 10 years, Noor Alam Khan was quoted as saying in the meeting. The PAC chief summoned the Supreme Court registrar after Eid-ul-Fitr holidays into the matter and said he is not afraid of anybody. Khan also scolded the CDA chairman over the failure to present details of the plots given to the judges, parliament members and cabinet members. Last month, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) sought a record of the Supreme Court judges' salary, perks and privileges within a month. The meeting of the PAC was held with its chairman Noor Alam Khan in the chair in Islamabad. Noor Alam Khan asked why the Auditor General of Pakistan failed in presenting a report related to SC judges' salary, perks, and privileges. The report was to be submitted in today's meeting, Alam maintained.

NEOC to be served as central digital hub

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik on Tuesday briefed the Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Defence Senator Mushahid Hussain that the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) would serve as a central digital hub and revamped National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) as think tank which would enhance resilience to disasters. Senator Mushahid Hussain met the NDMA chairman here in his office, the NDMA wrote on its official Twitter handle. He briefed the Senator on National Disaster Preparedness and Response Regime in light of lessons learnt from Floods 2022. Mushahid Hussain endorsed the concept of Remodelled National Preparedness & Response Regime and lauded NDMA's efforts to enhance capacity for better disaster management.



ISLAMABAD: President Rawalpindi Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries Riffat Shaheen posing a group photo along with others after "Iftar Dinner" in the honor of Diplomats and Foreign Missions in Pakistan, at Islamabad Club on the eve of 26th Ramazan, —Online

In case of slightest Israeli action

Iranian president warns of 'Haifa, Tel Aviv destruction'

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi strongly warns the apartheid Israeli regime against taking even the slightest action against the Islamic Republic, saying Iran will react to such a move with "destruction of Haifa and Tel Aviv." Raeisi made the remarks while addressing a parade to mark National Army Day in Tehran on Tuesday, when he said the Iranian Army's capabilities are based on domestic know-how. "The enemies, especially the Zionist regime (Israel), have received this message that the slightest move against the country will evoke a severe response from the armed forces and will be accompanied by the destruction of Haifa and Tel Aviv," he added. He also said the message of Iran's Army and Armed Forces to the US troops is



that they must leave the region as soon as possible. "The extra-regional and American forces should leave the region as soon as possible because it is in their own interest and in the interest of the region," the Iranian president said. "The presence of foreign forces threatens regional security but our armed forces provide security wherever they are present in the

region," he added. He noted that the Iranian Armed Forces have resisted terrorists and improved security in the region, while foreign forces only pose a threat to the regional states. The Iranian Armed Forces' power is beneficial to the security of the region and "it is no secret to anyone that our armed forces have protected the territorial integrity and security

of the countries in the region," he said. He reiterated that the presence of foreign troops, Americans in particular, would never protect the integrity of the Persian Gulf region. He said the brave and heroic Iranian army has taken the lead from the armies of the regional countries in various fields of science and technology and everyone acknowledges this fact.

The Iranian chief executive said the country's army has turned into a strong fortress against anti-revolutionary elements, Takfiri groups, and thugs, adding that it is in charge of safeguarding Iran's borders and protecting national interests and security in the oceans. Raeisi, who also serves as head of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), em-

phasized that the National Army Day conveys the message of peace and friendship to regional countries. He noted that Iran's sky is among the most secure in the region, adding, "The Islamic Republic of Iran's Army creates opportunities for the country from all threats and shortcomings." The Iranian chief executive also vowed to equip the Army with state-of-the-art technologies. The National Army Day, which is celebrated annually on April 18, was established by the founder and first Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, in 1979. Two months after the fall of the deposed Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Ayatollah Khomeini met with the soldiers of the Armed Forces who had made an invaluable contribution to the victory of the Revolution. A few days later, Ayatollah Khomeini named April 18 "the Army Day," calling for military parades to exhibit the nation's military preparedness.

Erdogan kicks off Turkish election campaign in symbolic city

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday launched his campaign for Turkey's critical May elections with a massive rally in Afyonkarahisar, a western province where the foundations of his ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) were first laid in 2001. "In the 100th anniversary of our republic, we are starting the road to the 'Century of Turkey' from Afyonkarahisar," Erdogan told the crowds. Speaking on the successes of his party on one hand, Erdogan criticized his main opposition on the other, saying that "the six-party bloc cannot rule Turkey." "How can a man who fails to unite even his own allies around the same table stand up for Turkey?" he said, referring to his main challenger Kemal

Kılıçdaroglu and his six-party bloc Nation Alliance. He slammed the opposition for relying on "imperialists" and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). "We do not grovel before the imperialists or their vigilantes, we only bow before Allah,

but only for him," Erdogan added. Acknowledging his administration's past collaboration with the IMF, Erdogan said, "The opposition told us we had to borrow from the IMF but we refused and cut all ties with IMF by 2013 when we

paid off all our debt." "To top it off, we have boosted our central bank reserves from \$27.5 billion at the time to three digits," Erdogan said. "This is the AK Party." Recalling his catchy slogan of "The istis.—Agencies



Zong 4G's initiative to promote Women Empowerment

ISLAMABAD: Zong 4G, one of the leading telecom operators in Pakistan, has joined hands with Pakistan Bait ul Maal (PBM) to create an opportunity that is truly empowering and inspiring for women in remote areas of Pakistan. Together, Zong 4G and PBM launched an initiative to promote women's empowerment and create employment opportunities for women who often have limited access to economic opportunities. As part of this initiative, more than 130 talented women from 14PBM Women Empowerment Centers (WECs) spread across some of the remotest areas of Pakistan hand-stitched and embroidered cloth sleeves for Zong 4G's 2023 Sustainability Reports. This initiative is not only showcasing women's artistic talent but also promoting Pakistan's rich cultural heritage. These women, enrolled in the Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal's women empowerment center, were given a chance to earn money and support their families while exhibiting their skills. Zong's initiative not only promotes the work of these women, but also serves as a symbol of their commitment to making a positive impact in the community. The embroidered sleeves created by these talented women showcase their skills and creativity and carry a special sentimental value. Zong 4G used these cloth sleeves for their Annual Sustainability Reports and it not only highlights the importance of empowering women in their community but also provides a platform for their work to be appreciated and recognized.—DNA

Brazil pushes to end Russia-Ukraine war

BUENOS AIRES: Brazil's foreign minister reiterated his country's call for an immediate cease-fire in Ukraine as he met Monday with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov. During their meeting, Mauro Vieira also called for "respect for humanitarian law and a negotiated solution with a view to a lasting peace that addresses the concerns of both sides." He also said that Brazil can help set up a group of "neutral nations" to mediate in negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, according to Brazilian state news agency Agencia Brasil. Lavrov thanked Brazil for its efforts to negotiate an end to the war and said the Russian government is interested in resolving the conflict as quickly as possible. He made the comments while meeting with Vieira at Itamaraty Palace in the capital Brasilia.—APP

Tunisia arrests Ennahdha's Ghannouchi's arrest

TUNIS: Tunisian authorities shuttered the headquarters of the opposition Ennahdha party on Tuesday, a day after arresting its leader Rached Ghannouchi, a senior party official said. "A police unit showed up at the party's main headquarters (in Tunis) and ordered everyone there to leave before closing it," Riadh Chaibi said. "The police also closed the other offices of the party elsewhere in the country and prohibited any meeting in these premises," he told AFP. The move came after Ennahdha's veteran leader Ghannouchi was arrested at his home in the capital Tunis, the latest in a string of opposition figures held. Ennahdha was the largest party in Tunisia's parliament before President Kais Saied dissolved the chamber in July 2021. The party's vice-president, Mondher Louissii, told a news conference late Monday that Ghannouchi had been taken to a police barracks for questioning and that his lawyers had not been allowed to attend. His arrest came after media reports in which he allegedly said Tunisia would be threatened with "civil war" if political Islam, from which his party originated, were eradicated there. A source at the Interior Ministry quoted by Tunisian media confirmed that Ghannouchi's arrest was linked to these statements. Since early February, authorities in the North African country have arrested more than 20 political opponents and personalities. They have included politicians, former ministers, businessmen, trade unionists and the owner of Tunisia's most popular radio station, Mosaïque FM. Saied, 65, claims those detained were "terrorists" involved in a "conspiracy against state security."—APP

China's economy grows 4.5%

Beijing: China's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 4.5% from a year ago in the first quarter of 2023, much above market forecasts of 4%, according to flash data released on Tuesday. This was the strongest growth since the first quarter of last year, largely due to China's reopening and lifting of strict COVID-19 curbs that were in place for nearly three years. The figure accelerated from 2.9% in the fourth quarter of last year, according to China's National Bureau of Statistics. On a quarterly basis, the world's second-largest economy grew 2.2% in the January-March period, picking up from an upwardly revised 0.6% in October-December. In 2022, China's GDP increased by 3.3%, less than the government's target of 5.5%. Retail sales, a key driver of China's growth, jumped 10.6% in March, marking the strongest rebound since June 2021 and exceeding expectations due to an uptick in consumer confidence. Industrial output increased 3.9% in March, slightly lower than market forecasts of 4%.—DNA

What is happening in Sudan? A simple guide

Fighting has erupted in Khartoum and other cities in Sudan as powerful rival military factions battle for control, increasing the risk of a nationwide civil war. Here's a simple guide to the conflict: Power struggle at the heart of the violence Fighting broke out on Saturday after weeks of tension between the army and the powerful paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Both groups were allies. Together, they seized power in a 2021 coup. But tensions increased over the proposed integration of the RSF into the military. The key question is who is in control and who would be the military's commander-in-chief during an integration period. According to analysts, this is a power struggle for the control of the country. Most of the fighting is occurring in the capital, Khartoum, but clashes are reported across the country. At least 185 people have been killed

and thousands injured in the first three days, who became rivals? The protagonists in the outbreak of violence are army General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy and the RSF leader, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, commonly known as Hemedti. In October 2021, al-Burhan and Dagalo orchestrated a coup, upending a fragile transition to civilian rule that had been started after the 2019 removal of longtime ruler Omar al-Bashir. Al-Burhan, a career soldier from northern Sudan who rose through the ranks under the nearly 30-year rule of al-Bashir, took the top job as the de facto ruler of Sudan after the coup. Dagalo, from Darfur's camel-herding Arab Rizeigat people, assumed responsibility as his number two. As the army and civilian leaders came together to try to hammer out a deal to end the political crisis the coup brought on, integrating the RSF into the regular army became a

key sticking point. According to analyst Kholood Khair, a December framework agreement for the deal "ratcheted up tensions between al-Burhan and Hemedti" when it "elevated Hemedti's position into Burhan's equal, rather than his deputy." Khair, the founder of the Khartoum-based Confluence Advisory think tank, said: "That shift in power is why conversations about security sector reform and integration of the RSF have ended up in armed conflict rather than heated debate around the table." is the RSF? The RSF was created in 2013 and evolved from the so-called Janjaweed militias, which are accused of war crimes in the Darfur region. During the Darfur conflict in the 2000s, the government used the group to help the army put down a rebellion. In 2017, a law legitimising the RSF as an independent security force was passed. "As he rose to prominence, [Daga-

lo's] business interests grew with help from al-Bashir, and his family expanded holdings in gold mining, livestock and infrastructure," Adel Abdel Ghafar, director of the Foreign Policy and Security Program at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs, told Al Jazeera. Despite being a longtime al-Bashir ally, Dagalo took part in overthrowing the president when the 2019 uprising broke out. complicated regional picture Sudan borders the Red Sea, the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa. Its strategic location and agricultural wealth have attracted regional power plays, complicating the chances of a successful transition. Several of Sudan's neighbours, including Ethiopia, Chad and South Sudan, have been affected by political upheavals and conflict. Sudan's relationship with Ethiopia has been strained over disputed farmland along their border; the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region, which drove tens of thousands of

refugees into Sudan; and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Regional heavyweights Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which forged close ties to the RSF when it sent thousands of fighters to support the war in Yemen, have called for both sides to stand down. They, the United States and the United Kingdom form the "Quad", which has sponsored mediation in Sudan along with the United Nations and African Union. Western powers fear Russia could establish a military base on the Red Sea, which Sudanese leaders have expressed openness to since the al-Bashir era. Egypt, which backs Sudan's military, has pursued an alternative track with groups that supported the 2021 coup. hat comes next? 'A very zero-sum game' "This is an existential power struggle on both sides," according to Alan Boswell, Horn of Africa director at the International Crisis Group, who added that both sides see the conflict as a "very zero-sum" game.—Agencies

Briefs

Russian court rejects appeal of detained US journalist

WEB DESK

MOSCOW: A Russian court has rejected the appeal of US journalist Evan Gershkovich against his pre-trial detention. He appeared in court in Moscow on Tuesday - the first time he had been seen in public for weeks. He was arrested in the city of Yekaterinburg while working for the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) newspaper and charged with spying. MrGershkovich stood with folded arms in a bullet-proof glass enclosure, wearing jeans and a blue checked shirt. He gave a quick smile while standing calmly, but did not say anything to the reporters present. The court rejected his legal team's offer to free him on bail of 50 million roubles (\$614,000) or put him under house arrest. MrGershkovich will stay at a former KGB prison until 29 May at least. Along with his lawyer, US ambassador to Moscow Lynne Tracy was also present in the courtroom. This is the same court where Kremlin critic Vladimir Kara-Murza was just convicted of treason and sentenced to prison on Monday. Media were allowed in the courtroom at the start of the hearing before being ushered out and will be permitted to return at the end of the hearing.

Chinese tech giant denies Pentagon spy claim

MONITORING DESK

BEIJING: Chinese surveillance technology giant Hikvision has denied it is illegally disguising its products sold to the US government to enable Chinese espionage. It was responding to media queries about allegations revealed in a recently leaked Pentagon document. But Hikvision did not answer questions on whether it partners with Chinese intelligence agencies. The company is the world's largest surveillance camera maker and has close links to the Chinese state. It supplies its products to resellers who in turn supply governments and companies, often with the resellers' branding, in a process known as "white labelling". Though this is a common business model, Hikvision has come under intense scrutiny for its ties to the Chinese state and the use of its products in monitoring Uyghurs. The US had previously banned Hikvision products from its government supply chains, but in November regulators took this a step further and put in place a nationwide ban, citing concerns over national security.

Islamabad court grants post-arrest bail to Gandapur

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad district and sessions court on Tuesday granted post-arrest bail to PTI leader Ali Amin Gandapur who was arrested earlier this month in a case pertaining to threatening national institutions. The verdict, which was reserved on Monday, was pronounced by Additional District and Sessions Judge Sikandar Khan. The judge also directed the PTI leader to furnish two surety bonds amounting to Rs0.3 million each. Gandapur, a former federal minister, was arrested last week from outside the building of the Peshawar High Court's Dera Ismail Khan Bench. He was handed over to Islamabad's Golra police but his custody was later given to Bhakkar police. The first information report (FIR) registered against the PTI leader with Golra police mentioned an audio in which he could purportedly be heard using derogatory language against federal coalition, hurling threats on government officials and inciting public against government.

China offers to facilitate Israel-Palestinian talks

Israel and the Palestinians have not held substantive peace talks on ending the century-long conflict in over a decade. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's govt is committed to expanding settlements in occupied West Bank

DNA

BEIJING: China's foreign minister told his Israeli and Palestinian counterparts that his country is ready to help facilitate peace talks between the two sides, in its latest effort at mediation in the region. In separate phone calls to the two officials on Monday, Qin Gang expressed China's concern over intensifying tensions between Israel and Palestinians and its support for a resumption of peace talks, the Foreign Ministry said in statements issued late Monday. Last month, Saudi Arabia and Iran reached a deal in China to restore diplomatic ties that were cut off in 2016. It was a dramatic moment of diplomacy for China that Beijing touted as evidence of its ability to be a dip-

lomatic player in the Middle East. Qin stressed in his talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen that Saudi Arabia and Iran have set a good example of overcoming differences through dialogue, a statement about that phone call said. He told Cohen that Beijing encourages Israel and the Palestinians to show political courage and take steps to resume peace talks. "China is willing to provide convenience for this," he was quoted as saying. Israel and the Palestinians have not held substantive peace talks on ending the century-long conflict in over a decade. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government is committed to expanding settlements in the occupied West Bank - which most of the international community considers illegal and an obstacle to peace

- and several of his key allies are staunchly opposed to the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Cohen expressed his country's commitment to reducing tensions, but said the problem appeared to be difficult to resolve in the short term, the Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said. Israel's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Qin and Cohen discussed "the importance of maintaining quiet at the Temple Mount, particularly in the final days of Ramadan," the Muslim holy month, but made no mention of peace talks with the Palestinians. It said that Cohen conveyed "the threat that we see in Iran's nuclear program" and called on China to help prevent Tehran from obtaining nuclear weapons. Qin also told Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister Ri-

yad Al-Maliki that China is willing to play an active role in the resumption of talks, a second statement said. On Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin confirmed Qin's outreach to the two officials. "It is never too late to do the right thing," he said. This month, violence in Israel and the West Bank has increased, touched off by an Israeli police raid on Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site, the compound home to the Al-Aqsa mosque. The Israeli military struck sites linked to the Palestinian group Hamas in southern Lebanon and the Gaza Strip after militants in the two territories fired rocket salvos at Israel. The mosque sits on a contested hilltop revered as the third-holiest site in Islam and the holiest site in Judaism.

Saudi FM arrives in Syria's Damascus

DAMASCUS: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan arrived Tuesday in Syria's Damascus on an official visit, Saudi state TV al-Ekhabariya reported. Prince Faisal was received by the Minister of Presidential Affairs of Syria, Mansour Fadlallah Azzam, at Damascus International Airport. Prince Faisal bin Farhan's visit to Damascus confirms the Kingdom's keenness on a political solution, the Saudi Foreign Ministry said, adding that Saudi Arabia was keen on the unity, security, stability and Arab identity of Syria. Last week, the Saudi prince held talks with his Syrian counterpart, Faisal Al-Miqdad, in Jeddah. A joint statement was issued confirming that the talks discussed achieving a settlement in Syria due to its return to its Arab surroundings, as well as ways to find a political solution that preserves the unity of Syria. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of Religious Affairs Senator Talha Mehmood in a meeting with Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf Bin Saeed Al Maliky. - DNA

Sudan's warring sides agree for a 24-hour ceasefire
More than 180 people killed in Sudan fighting, UN envoy says

NEWS DESK

KHARTOUM: Sudan's rival commanders agreed a 24-hour ceasefire from Tuesday evening, the army said, following calls to each side from US Secretary of State Antony Blinken over fierce fighting in Khartoum that saw shots fired at a US diplomatic convoy. The ceasefire will start at 6.00 p.m. (1600 GMT) and will not extend beyond the agreed 24 hours, Army General Shams el-Din Kabbashi, a member of Sudan's ruling military council, said. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held separate calls with the army chief and head of the paramilitary Rapid Response Forces (RSF), whose power struggle has killed at least 185 people and derailed an internationally-backed deal for a shift to civilian government after decades of autocracy and military rule. Gunfire echoed across Sudan's capital for a fourth day on Tuesday, accompanied by the sound of warplanes and explosions, a Reuters reporter said. Residents in Khartoum's twin city of Omdurman, on the other side of the Nile, also reported air strikes that shook buildings and anti-aircraft fire.

Blinken said a US diplomatic convoy came under fire on Monday in an apparent attack by fighters associated with the RSF, adding that all those in the convoy were safe. He called the incident "reckless" and said any attacks or threats to US diplomats were unacceptable. Blinken, speaking in Japan, said he had telephoned both RSF leader General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, and Sudan's army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, appealing for a 24-hour ceasefire "to allow the Sudanese to be safely reunited with families" and to provide them with relief. Fighting between Sudan's army and the RSF that erupted on Saturday has killed at least 185 people and injured more than 1,800, UN envoy Volker Perthes said on Monday. The RSF's Hemedti, whose whereabouts have not been disclosed since fighting began, said he had "discussed pressing issues" with Blinken during their call and more talks were planned. In posts on Twitter he said the RSF approved a 24-hour armistice. The RSF also issued a statement saying it was waging a continuing battle to restore "the rights of our people."

UN warns against Curbs on women's rights

UNITED NATIONS: The "draconian" restrictions on women's ability to study and work have contributed to the calamitous socio-economic situation in Afghanistan, with devastating consequences for the population, according to a UN report released on Tuesday. The Afghanistan Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, released by the UNDP, provides an overview of the fallout resulting from the takeover of Afghanistan by its present-day de facto rulers, the Taliban, in August 2021. Immediately after the Taliban assumed power, the Afghan economy collapsed, accelerating Afghanistan's decade-long slide into poverty; with a population estimated by the UN at about 40 million and GDP of \$14.3 billion in 2021, Afghanistan is among the countries with the lowest per capita income in the world, with around 85 per cent of the population estimated to be living below the poverty line.

Whilst the report points to some encouraging signs (a rise in exports, an expected eight percent increase in domestic fiscal revenue, stabilization of the exchange rate, and a reduction in inflation), it explains that this is largely down to the large-scale international aid funding (\$3.7 billion in 2022, \$3.2 billion of which was provided by the UN) sent to Afghanistan in 2022. This does not point to a lasting recovery: income per person is expected to decline this year and in 2024: UNDP modeling suggests that, if aid drops by 30 per cent, inflation could reach 10 percent in 2024, and average incomes could fall by 40 per cent. Any reduction in international aid will worsen the economic prospects of Afghanistan, and extreme poverty will perpetuate for decades: the UN aid appeal of \$4.6 billion for international assistance in 2023 is therefore the minimum required to help Afghans in need. - APP

Chinese worker sent on 14-day judicial remand

MANSEHRA: A Chinese national working at the Dasu hydropower project was taken into police custody on Monday following unrest, after labourers at the dam site accused him of making blasphemous remarks during a heated argument. The man was booked on blasphemy charges in Upper Kohistan district and sent to prison on a 14-day judicial remand by an Abbottabad anti-terrorism court on Monday. "We have arrested the foreigner suspect under blasphemy and terrorism charges and airlifted him from here to present him before the anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Abbottabad," Mohammad Khalid, the district police officer (DPO) in Upper Kohistan, told reporters. The suspect was later produced before the ATC amid strict security measures. Security personnel remained tightlipped about his place of detention, but the DPO said he was moved to Islamabad onboard a helicopter on Monday evening. According to locals, the man had complained to workers at the dam that "precious time" was being lost due to prayer breaks. This enraged some of the workers and they fanned out to nearby villages, whipping up emotions. - Agencies

Putin makes rare visit to Ukraine frontline regions

Russian leader wished the troops a happy Easter, which Orthodox Christians marked last Sunday, and gifted them copies of old icons, the Kremlin said

WEB DESK

MOSCOW: The Kremlin said on Tuesday that President Vladimir Putin had visited two frontline regions in Ukraine, prompting a strong rebuke from Kyiv which said he was viewing "the crimes of his minions." The Kremlin did not say when Putin visited the southern region of Kherson and the eastern region of Lugansk, which Putin claimed to have annexed last September without fully controlling them. The Kremlin chief sent troops to Ukraine in February, 2022, triggering the largest conflict in Europe since World War II. Ukrainian forces have said they are preparing for a spring counter-offensive. MykhailoPodolyak, an adviser to

President Volodymyr Zelensky, dismissed Putin's trip as "a 'special tour' of the mass murders author... to enjoy the crimes of his minions for the last time." After Putin's visit was made public on Tuesday, Ukrainian officials said Russian forces had shelled the central market area of Kherson, injuring six people. Last year, Russia was beaten back in northern and southern regions and Moscow's forces have made only incremental gains in eastern Ukraine. Much of the fighting is now concentrated around the eastern town of Bakhmut which has become the longest and bloodiest battle of the conflict. During his trip to Ukraine, Putin met Russian military commanders and discussed the situation on several fronts of the pro-Western

country, the Kremlin said. Video footage released by the Kremlin showed Putin disembarking from a helicopter as he visited the headquarters of the Dnieper army group in the Kherson region. He also visited national guard headquarters in Lugansk in eastern Ukraine. "It's important for me to hear your opinion on the situation, to listen to you and to exchange information," Putin said in the video, surrounded by senior military commanders. The Russian leader wished the troops a happy Easter, which Orthodox Christians marked last Sunday, and gifted them copies of old icons, the Kremlin said. His trips to Kherson and Lugansk came after the Kremlin said in March that the Russian leader

had made a surprise trip to the port city of Mariupol that Moscow captured after a long siege last spring. British military intelligence said on Tuesday that "heavy fighting" continued along the Donbas front line. "However, there is a realistic possibility that Russia has reduced troop numbers and is decreasing offensive action around Donetsk city, most likely to divert resources toward the Bakhmut sector," it said in a statement on Twitter. The statement said that in Bakhmut, Russia's regular troops and forces from the Wagner mercenary outfit continued to make "creeping advances." "The front line in the town center largely follows the main railway line," the statement said. Ukraine, the statement said, wants "to free-

Gold continues upward trajectory

DNA

KARACHI: Rupee closes at Rs283.09 against US dollar in interbank market. Gold rates in Pakistan continued to climb on Tuesday as the rupee failed to appreciate significantly. According to data provided by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association (APS-GJA), the price of gold (24 carats) increased by Rs300 per tola and Rs257 per 10 grams to reach Rs217,400 and Rs186,385, respectively. The yellow metal had reached a record high of Rs218,600 per tola last week. It then dropped to Rs216,000 per tola on April 15 as its rate declined in the international market. It has continued to rise again since then. The increase in the precious metal's value in the domestic market has been in line with developments in the international market as well as the prevailing economic crisis and rupee depreciation. The rupee had fallen to an all-time low of Rs288.43 against the US dollar in the interbank market on April 11. While it has recovered since then, the US dollar continues to trade above Rs280. On Tuesday, the rupee closed at Rs283.9 per dollar after appreciating by Re0.81 or 0.29%.

Apple opens first store in Mumbai

DNA

MUMBAI: Apple inaugurated its first retail store in India on Tuesday showing its increased focus on the market in the country as people queued outside the store to be among the first to enter. The store located in Reliance-owned Jio World Drive mall in Mumbai, people were seen taking selfies with Apple CEO Tim Cook who inaugurated the store and opened the gates himself. Taking to Twitter, Cook said: "The energy, creativity, and passion in Mumbai is incredible! We are so excited to open ... our first store in India." The event featured Indian music and folk dancers that followed. Some of the customers waited outside the store overnight despite the products' availability online. The store was opened for tech analysts and bloggers on Monday where several Indian media celebrities met with Tim Cook. In a statement on Monday, the tech behemoth regarded the stores as a "major expansion" of its presence in India.

Massive landslide buries trucks, kills at least 2 people

DNA

TORKHAM: A landslide during a thunder and lightning storm on the main road through Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Khyber Pass buried more than 20 trucks on Tuesday, killing at least two people, with dozens more feared trapped, officials said. Abdul Nasir Khan, the deputy commissioner of the Khyber district, told media that two Afghan citizens had been killed in the landslide and authorities were trying to recover the bodies. Separately, Rescue 1122 spokesperson Bilal Faizi said eight injured persons had been provided first aid care, while four had been moved to the hospital. The official said a fire had broken out immediately after the landslide as drivers were cooking meals for their sheri on gas stoves. "The blaze is now under control," he told media. Faizi said heavy machinery including 12 ambulances, four fire vehicles, three recovery vehicles and three heavy excavators had been deployed at the site as the wreckage was extensive. Photos shared by officials showed truck containers mostly buried in huge piles of rocks. According to a statement issued by the KP Disaster Management Authority, the landslide took place on the main route connecting the Pakistan-Afghanistan Torkham border at 2:30am.