



# Islamabad POST

Friday, April 15, 2023

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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**Germany urges China to help end Ukraine war**

Detailed News On Page-07

**China will not send arms for Ukraine war**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Galtier shocked by racism accusations**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Briefs

**Will never contest for PM seat**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The former prime minister and PML-N leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said that he will never contest for the Prime Minister seat, media reported on Friday. While talking to the reporter, former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said the cameras should be installed in the court so that people should know that the judges take notice of everything except the matter inside the court. PML-N leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi assured that he will never contest for the seat of Prime Minister. Now the country needs to look for prime ministers. He maintained that the parliament makes amendments to the constitution, and the court can only explain the law. Institutions need to stay in their jurisdiction, he added.

**Court grants Elahi pre-arrest bail**

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: An anti-corruption court on Friday granted pre-arrest bail to former chief minister Punjab and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) president Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi and prevented the concerned quarters from arresting him until May 17. Elahi is accused of involvement in corruption of Rs125 million. The first information report (FIR) filed in the case names Elahi, his son Moonis Elahi and his principal secretary Mohammad Khan Bhatti among others for having allegedly received kickbacks worth Rs125 million through Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) from a foreign company against a payable amount.

**Sehr, Iftar Timing**



**Ramazan 24, 1444**

Sehr: 04:09 am  
Iftar: 06:43 pm  
Fiqah-e-Jafria  
Sehr: 03:59 am  
Iftar: 06:53 pm

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Call on Russia to end war, Germany urges China - Page 07

Russia trains Belarusian pilots in nuclear weapons use - Page 08

## Punjab, KP Polls

# SC directs State Bank to release funds

A briefing was held in the chamber of CJP, with Justices Ijazul Ahsan and Munib Akhtar in attendance



COURT REPORTER / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday directed the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to release funds worth Rs21 billion for elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and send an "appropriate communication" to this effect to the finance ministry by Monday (April 17). In line with the court's directives, AGP Awan, SBP Deputy Governor Sima Kamil, finance secretaries and officials of the ECP in an in-chamber hearing today briefed the SC on the government's failure to disburse Rs21 billion in funds for elections in Punjab and KP. The briefing - which lasted for more than an hour - was held in the chamber of CJP Bandial, with Justices Ijazul Ahsan and Munib Akhtar in attendance. Hours later, the SC issued a written order that said the SBP acting governor had presented to a court a statement setting out funds and monies of the federal government which

were under the central bank's custody, control and management. The order, a copy of which is available with Dawn.com, also contained the said statement. Referring to it, the judges observed that the SBP acting governor had explained that these amounts constituted the Federal Consolidated Fund. "The amount lying in Account No.1 (Non-Food) ('Account I') constitutes by far the largest component of the Fund (being 98.77 per cent thereof as of the date for which the data was provided)," the court order read. It added that the SBP official further explained that the "amount lying in Account I is not designated for any particular or special usage whatsoever." "Furthermore, the funds therein are not static inasmuch as there are regular (it seems almost daily) inflows into, and outflows therefrom, as government receipts flow in, and monies are released to meet government expenditures." The order further quoted the SBP acting governor as saying that "other than Account I, the other 16 accounts were for special and designated purposes, carrying different amounts". Following this briefing, the order added, the top court's April 4 verdict was cited to the SBP official and he was told that an amount of Rs21bn was required for holding elections in Punjab and KP.

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## Unity among judges need of hour: Imran Says persecution of PTI leadership condemnable act

BUREAU REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said the judicial magistrate handed over Ali Amin Gandapur to Punjab Police on orders of "Namaloom" (unknowns) in sheer violation of the Islamabad High Court's (IHC) order. In a statement on Friday, PTI Chairman strongly condemned the way PTI senior leader Ali Amin Gandapur was being treated clearly on orders of the "Namaloom". Imran Khan said that despite IHC inductive order viz handing over custody, he was handed over to Punjab police by Judicial Magistrate at 11 40

PICTURE ON THE BACK PAGE

the other day in brazen violation of IHC Court order. Talking about division within judiciary, PTI Chairman said that everyone should pray for unity among the judges in the Supreme Court and warned that division at the top court would be tragic. Imran Khan stated that the division among the apex court would be a tragedy for the country.

Continued on Page 06

## Imran gets protective bail from LHC

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan on Friday attained protective bail from the Lahore High Court (LHC) in a first information report (FIR) registered against him in the Ramna Police Station. As per the FIR, the deposed prime minister is accused of "insulting the institutions, tarnishing their image, inciting people against them and abetment". The PTI chairman contended in his petition that he is "absolutely innocent and has been falsely implicated with ulterior motives and malafide intentions in this case just to tarnish his reputation, harm his growing mandate

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Henrik Persson Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan exchanging views with the Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed. The Ambassador was told about Pakistan's concern about closure of the Swedish embassy due to which especially the students were facing immense problems. - DNA

**'Institutions must stay within limits'**

Khawaja Asif says We will not allow anyone to breach the parliament's jurisdiction

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif Friday warned state institutions to stay within their constitutional limits and stressed that the government would not allow anyone to interfere with the parliament's affairs. The top minister's comments came as the federal government is in a virtual standoff with the Supreme Court over the issue of the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa general elections and a bill that seeks to curtail the chief justice's suo motu powers.

"We will not allow anyone to breach the parliament's jurisdiction," PML-N stalwart told Geo News as the country faces one of its worst economic and political turmoils. The defence minister said the government wants to strengthen the judiciary as it would help the masses in availing justice. "The background needs to be examined of the ongoing issues in the Supreme Court." Asif said parliament is the "mother of democracy", but due to the ongoing situation in the country, the legislature is less involved in policies compared to the apex court. "The institutions should respect their constitutional limits," he said, asking them not to breach their jurisdiction. The apex court while exercising 'anticipatory injunction', a day earlier stayed the operation on the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure Bill) 2023 aimed at curtailing the powers of the chief justice to take suo motu notice and constitute benches.

## In-camera NA session

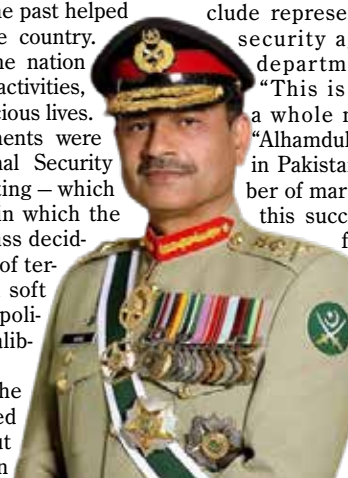
# Army Chief says negotiations helped terrorists resettle

### COAS calls for shunning debate of 'Naya' and 'Purana' Pakistan

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir said Friday that negotiations with militants in the past helped terrorists regroup in the country. His remarks come as the nation faces a rise in terrorist activities, leading to the loss of precious lives. The army chief's comments were reflective of the National Security Committee's (NSC) meeting - which took place last week - in which the top military and civil brass decided that the recent spate of terrorism was a result of a soft corner for and reckless policy with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). In the same meeting, the committee also decided to kickstart an all-out comprehensive operation

against militant outfits to root out the menace of terrorism from the country. During his briefing in an in-camera meeting of the lower house's National Security Committee, the COAS said the campaign will include representation not only from the security agencies but also from all departments of the government. "This is not a new operation but a whole national approach." "Alhamdulillah, there is no no-go area in Pakistan at this time. A large number of martyrs laid down their lives for this success. They shed their blood for the country," he said. The COAS added that terrorists have no other option but to accept the state's writ and noted that they regrouped due to the state's willingness to negotiate with them.



Continued on Page 06

## SC denies reports of scuffle between judges

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday issued a sternly worded rejection of an "utterly false news report" regarding an "alleged altercation" between the apex court's judges. The apex court notice did not mention any specific report. The notice said that an "utterly false news report regarding an alleged altercation and scuffle between judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan during their walk in the evening on April 13, 2023, in the Judges' Colony Park" was carried and highlighted through various social media platforms. Multiple social media accounts had narrated this version of events on Thursday.

"The report is hereby refuted in the strongest terms," the notice said, adding that it was "false, mischievous and malicious" and no such incident took place. "The fake reporting about the judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan is a serious violation of the law and represents an effort by disaffected elements to diminish the dignity of the court and its honourable members," the notice stated. The perception of division and bitterness among the apex court judges had become stronger amidst a spate of letters and a judicial note written by Justice Qazi Faez Isa, questioning the conduct of the Supreme Court registrar and declaring a recent order by a six-judge Supreme Court bench as unconstitutional.

# IMF Chief optimistic about Pakistan loan deal

Kristelna Georgieva said at this time they were talking about providing financial guarantees of Pakistan

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Kristalina Georgieva has expressed the hope that Pakistan will successfully complete the current loan programme and not face the same situation as Sri Lanka and Ghana, but Pakistan is at risk of bankruptcy. She says that Pakistan has not got there though and it is better not to get there. Delivering her speech at the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in Washington, the IMF chief said there is no doubt that Pakistan is facing climate challenges, but there is hope from the steps taken by the Pakistani authorities. They will successfully complete this programme. Kristalina Georgieva said at this time they were talking about providing financial guarantees of Pakistan. "To be at the forefront of change, one must think about the future sustainability of agriculture in Pakistan." Kristalina Georgieva

said that they are working hard together with the Pakistani authorities, and the country should create such a political framework that avoids economic risks. "We want Pakistan to move towards sustainable economic development. We want assurance of financial support." Asked about the risk of Pakistan failing, the IMF chief replied that Pakistan has not yet reached that point and it is better not to, to avoid the consequences of a growing global trade divide for all countries to prevent a second Cold War. "I am one of those people who know what the consequences of the Cold War were, the Cold War was a great loss of competence and partnership in the world, institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF were important in preventing the world from dividing into different blocs. It has character." The IMF managing director said that policymakers should play an important role in protecting the interests of their citizens. "If we do not show realism, people everywhere will be in a bad situation. There is a possibility



of a 7% drop, the distribution of global trade has increased due to Brexit, the US trade war, China and the Ukraine conflict." Since early February, Pakistan has been negotiating with the IMF to revive the \$7 billion bailout programme to secure \$1.1 billion tranche. Pakistan hopes that the deal will also unlock

Continued on Page 06

## UAE confirms \$1bn support: Ishaq Dar

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan's Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said on Friday that the United Arab Emirates has confirmed its commitment to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for its bilateral financial support of one billion U.S. dollars to Pakistan, bringing the country one-step closer to securing a deal with the lender. "UAE authorities have confirmed to IMF for their bilateral support of US \$1 billion to Pakistan," Dar said in a tweet today. He added that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) was now "engaged for needful documentation for taking the said deposit

from UAE authorities". Separately, Dar announced that the SBP would also receive today the third and last disbursement from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) worth \$300 million, out of its \$1.3bn loan. In a tweet, he said: "Out of Chinese bank's ICBC approved facility of \$1.3bn (which was earlier repaid by Pakistan), State Bank of Pakistan would receive back third and last disbursement today in its account amounting to \$300mn." On March 3, the ICBC had approved a rollover of a \$1.3bn loan for Pakistan and made the first payment of \$500m the same day.

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## LCCI, ACCA sign MoU to boost SMEs

ISLAMABAD: Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a shared goal of advancing financial literacy among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The MoU was signed by President LCCI, Kashif Anwar and ACCA's Head of Pakistan, Assad Hameed Khan. ACCA President, Joseph Owolabi and senior management of both the organisations were also present at the signing ceremony, said a news released issued here on Friday. The agreement sets out to raise awareness, build capacity, and enable knowledge exchange among SME professionals and entrepreneurs. Both organisations will support initiatives to enhance financial literacy and help build a robust tax culture.

At the signing ceremony, LCCI President, Kashif Anwar, said: 'I would like to congratulate not only LCCI and ACCA, but also all stakeholders, the business community, and member organisations on the signing of this agreement. It will strengthen the existing collaboration between LCCI and ACCA and support the LCCI member organisations with their capacity building needs, particularly around taxation and financial acumen.'—APP

## 186 shopkeepers arrested for profiteering

PESHAWAR: District administration Peshawar, in a crackdown against profiteering, has arrested 186 shopkeepers for profiteering, lack of official price-list, selling under-weight roti and poor cleanliness conditions. On the directives of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Shah Fahad, the officers of the district administration inspected 754 shops in various localities on Bara Road, Pishakhara Road, Charsadda Road, Dalazak Road, Warsak Road, Kohat Road, Phandu Road, Hayatabad, Gulbahar and other localities of the district, said a press release issued here on Friday. The officers of district administration arrested 186 shopkeepers and issued notices to 132 others to bring improvement in their businesses. The arrested shopkeepers include fruit & vegetable vendors, milkmen, nanbais (bakers), grocers and others and initiated legal proceedings against them.—APP

## WHO hands over equipment to DHO Kohistan

KOHISTAN: Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) Pakistan Friday handed over medical equipment, furniture and others worth 30 million rupees to the District Health Officer (DHO) Kohistan. According to the details, during the visit to Upper and Lower Kohistan, Dr Palitha Mahipala along with DHO and KP SIP officials inspected various health facilities and handed over emergency medicines, furniture, labour room equipment and others. The DHO representative also inaugurated the conference room at Tehsil Headquarters Hospital (THQ) Pattan.—APP

## “Youm-e-Tazeem-e-Harmain Al-Sharifain, Al-Aqaa” observed

The religious scholars also urged the countries part of G-20 to thwart the Indian ambitions and refuse to attend the G-20 meeting in Srinagar, Indian Occupied Kashmir

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: To express solidarity with the oppressed Palestinians, “Youm-e-Tazeem-e-Harmain Al-Sharifain, Al-Aqaa” was observed here on Friday all over the Islamic world. Palestine and Kashmir are the two burning issues of the Muslim Ummah, which are constantly bleeding since decades, said Ulema-Mashaykh and religious scholars while speaking with Friday sermons. While addressing Friday sermons all over the Islamic world, the religious scholars and Ulema-Mashaykh said that unity of Muslim Ummah is the ultimate solution to the problems of Muslims adding that the international and Islamic world should take immediate



ISLAMABAD: CEO Murree Brewery Isphanyar M Bhandara presenting boo titled Gems and Jewels to Acting High Commissioner of India Dr. Suresh Kumar on the occasion of Iftaar dinner hosted by the Indian High Commission, at Islamabad Serena Hotel.—DNA

# Weakening response encouraging Israeli, Indian aggression

### KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: A weakening global response due to systemic failures in global governance - under the UN's umbrella - is emboldening Israel and India to carry out aggression and human rights violations with impunity. This is clearly illustrated by the latest Israeli assaults on Palestinians in the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound which have failed to elicit any firm response beyond the routine statements of condemnation from OIC, Arab League and a few countries. These views were expressed during an international webinar titled 'Israeli Actions in the Middle East: Normalizing Aggression and Weakening Response' organized by Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). The forum was chaired by Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, Vice Chairman, IPS, while the speakers included Dr. Hatem Bazian, chair, Islamophobia Research & Documentation Pro-

ject, USA; Dr. Zeenat Adam, Deputy Executive Director, Afro-Middle East Centre, South Africa; Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, president, JUST, Malaysia; Dr. Ali Hossain Zadeh, Al-Mustafa University, Iran; Nazir Hussain, former dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, QAU; and Dr Junaid S. Ahmed, professor at College of William & Mary, USA. The speakers observed that Israel thrives on conflict and war,

which have been fundamental elements of its creation, consolidation and expansion. Israel claims to be a democratic state but harbors colonial ambitions and wants to colonize the remaining Palestinian lands. Israel has been working on Judaization of Jerusalem since 1967. The Judaization project is still underway which envisions demographic superiority to consolidate hold of the Jewish state in the occupied lands. As such the Arabs

in Israel have been relegated to the status of second-class citizens irrespective of their religion as the Christians are also facing restrictions on carrying out their religious activities. This is happening because Israel is moving away from the essence of the Oslo Accords and has no intention of giving the Palestinians their due rights. The Zionist actions of the Jewish state are being mirrored in Modi's Hindutva-fervered India

where the religion and culture of the minorities, especially Muslims, are being increasingly targeted. The speakers were of the view that the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice are unlikely to entertain cases against Israeli and Indian violation of international humanitarian law due to US pressure. The speakers maintained that though issues like Palestine and Kashmir are local or regional but require a global response. As such the international civil society needs to play a meaningful role to highlight the aggression and atrocities perpetrated by Israel and India in the occupied lands. They also censured the deafening silence of the international community, and particularly most of the Muslim countries, which give precedence to geo-economic aspects and national interests rather than taking a stand for justice and human dignity. The speakers suggested that the major Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran should raise this issue at every possible international forum.



## SAP extends its partnership with Imtiaz Supermarket

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: SAP has joined hands with the biggest retail chain, Imtiaz Supermarket for seamless operations of the latter. M/s Imtiaz is the biggest retail chain with massive sales and a huge customer base, with almost 14,000 employees, 850K+ customers across Pakistan, and 26 branches across Pakistan. While the store started off as a small corner shop, it has grown into a retail giant, earning the title of the fastest-growing retail chain in Pakistan. SAP has offered a one-stop solution to Imtiaz Supermarket, where its solutions will cover not just the basis modules like finance, costing, materials management and sales, but will also provide a specialized module for Retail Management as well as integration with the POS

and multi-channel strategy. Based on the growth strategy and expansion plans, Imtiaz has also invested with SAP in the Human Capital Management space where they are expected to cover complete HR lifecycle of Hire-to-Retire and strategic areas under SuccessFactors such as Performance & Goals, Recruitment, Compensation and employee self-services. Asher Zahid, CIO, Imtiaz Supermarket, said on the occasion, "SAP's one-stop solution has enabled us to take advantage of cost efficiencies, and standardization of service with error-free services, allowing the 26 stores to have an integrated inventory, payroll, and automatic alerts for shelving and quality checks." SAP Retail, Core and SAP CAR went Live on Dec 2021 while the SAP SuccessFactors implementation is underway. Saquib Ahmad, Managing

Director, SAP Pakistan, elaborated on this venture, "This is an important win for SAP in the retail and FMCG industry in Pakistan. To be able to bring the fastest growing superstore chain of Pakistan under our umbrella is a milestone achieved for us." SAP solutions have also provided ease in business operations, and increased transparency, with technology embedded across the board. This digital transformation has allowed SAP to provide customized solutions according to the requirements of an enormous retail giant of Pakistan. Due to its strategic technology implementation, Imtiaz Store proudly stands as the fastest-growing, largest retail chain in Pakistan. The supermarket chain also plans to expand globally, where SAP will play an integral role in its regional and global expansion.

## KP govt fulfills IMF's all conditions

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to KP CM on Revenue Pir Haroon Shah has confirmed the fulfillment of all conditions and requirements of the expected agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government.

In a statement issued from his office on Friday, the Special Assistant on Revenue Pir Haroon Shah said the economic crises had affected the entire Pakistan, especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said the provincial government was making efforts to control all unnecessary expenditures, with visible results. He stated that a condition related to General Sales Tax (GST) as per the IMF's requirement was approved by the provincial cabinet, the other day. He added it was hoped that an agreement with the IMF would be reached at the federal level soon. He further stated that the province was expected to benefit from the implementation of the relevant tax, amounting to billions of rupees.—APP

## NA Speaker, Deputy stress unity for Palestinian cause

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly (NA) Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durrani have stressed the importance of unity and solidarity among the Muslim ummah to address the challenges faced by the people of Palestine.

In a statement issued here on Friday on the Day of Al-

Quds, observed on April 14, they reiterated Pakistan's commitment to providing diplomatic and moral support to the Palestinian people. The Speaker stated, "The last Friday of Ramadan is a day of solidarity with the Palestinian people, who have long been victims of Israeli aggression and oppression." He called for the

International Community to play an active role in stopping the atrocities by Israeli troops on innocent Palestine."

The recent attacks on worshippers at Masjid Al-Aqsa were strongly condemned by the speaker. He called it a violation of human rights and an act of barbarism.—APP

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For further information please contact the following.

Maj (r) Sabih Ur Rehman  
Mobile: 0300 8553342

## Sherry among top 100 influential people

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman has been placed among the 100 most influential people of 2023 in the list of 'Time Magazine'. According to a statement issued here, "Time Magazine" released the list of the 100 most influential people of 2023. The Time Magazine named Sherry Rehman among one of the 20 most influential leaders of 2023 along with US President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister, German Chancellor Olaf Schulz, and the President of Brazil. German State Secretary Jennifer Morgan has described Sherry Rehman as a leader who gave a voice to those who lost everything in the devastating floods of 2022. In Time Magazine, German State Secretary Jennifer Morgan further wrote that the world needs more people like Sherry Rehman. Sherry Rehman was included in the list of 50 most successful women in Asia by Forbes Magazine this year and in the list of 25 most influential women of 2022 by Financial Times last year.—APP

## Mengal directs foolproof security for NZ team

ISLAMABAD: An important meeting regarding security plan and other arrangements for the upcoming tour of New Zealand Cricket Team was held under the chairmanship of Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman Capital Development Authority, IG Islamabad, DC Islamabad, PCB officials and other officers from relevant departments also participated. New Zealand Cricket Team will play 3 T20I's and 2 ODI's in Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium between 18-29 April. On this occasion, a detailed briefing was given to Chief Commissioner Islamabad by IG Islamabad Police on the special arrangements made for the upcoming tour of New Zealand Cricket Team.—APP

## 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



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PIA Cargo.....9280979  
Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489  
CAA.....9281092



### Hospitals

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



### Departments

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

### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

## Pak highly values its relations with Indonesia, says Muqam

Ambassador Adam Mulawarman Tugio acknowledged the existing scope and scale of cooperation in the field of cultural heritage between the two countries

DNA

PESHAWAR: Adviser to the Prime Minister for Political and Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture, Engr Amir Muqam on Friday said that Pakistan attached great values to its relations with Indonesia, which were governed by mutual respect and cooperation. Engr Amir Muqam expressed these views during his meeting with Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia, Adam Mulawarman Tugio that called on him at his office in Islamabad, says a press release issued here today. Adviser to Prime Minister Engr Amir Muqam conveyed that Pakistan attached great value to its relations with Indonesia which were governed by mutual respect and cooperation and expressed that Pakistan and Indonesia had maintained decades old close and cordial relations which had historical roots. He said Pakistan was looking forward to further strengthen bilateral relations with Indonesian cultural heritage vis- vis reg-



Ambassador Adam Mulawarman Tugio acknowledged the existing scope and scale of cooperation in the field of cultural heritage between the two countries and desired to undertake joint ventures in respective fields on progres-

sive basis. He invited Engr Amir Muqam to visit Indonesia, which was accepted by the adviser to the Prime Minister.

The Indonesian Ambassador also requested for providing a space at Pakistan National Library for establishing an international corner, which was approved by the Adviser to Prime Minister.

The Ambassador thanked the Adviser to the PM and also accepted the invitation to visit Swat valley.

Amir Muqam appreciated the efforts of the Indonesian Ambassador and assured that a lot is yet to be explored in culture between the two countries and we are hoping to start a cultural exchange program. They also agreed to work together to promote people-to-people contacts, enhance trade and investment and strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Senior Joint Secretary for National Heritage and Culture Muhammad Bilal and Cultural Coordinator Indonesian Embassy Miss Hira Khan was also present on the occasion.

## Mobile squad constituted for Eid

RAWALPINDI: On the instructions of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Laiqat Ali Chatha, Secretary of Regional Transport Authority Rashid Ali has constituted special mobile squads to save passengers from illegal increases in fares during the Eid days.

According to the district administration spokesman, mobile squads will be deployed in different areas and will be responsible for enforcing the fixed fare on all private vehicles in their area. Apart from this, a control room has also been set up in the office of Secretary RTA ahead of Eid. He said that the citizens could contact the control room number 051-927011 regarding any complaints of overcharging or overloading. He added that the duty roster of the control room had been issued, according to which the control room will be operational from 9:00 am to 05:00 pm from April 18 to 21.

Similarly, the newly formed squads have been assigned their respective areas where they and their staff will be on duty from 9:00 am to 08:00 pm.—APP

## Over 1,11,686 fine tickets issued

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (Traffic) has issued around 1,11,686 tickets to motorists over violation of various traffic rules under the capital's safe city e-challan system.

Islamabad capital police is utilizing all available resources and taking strict measures against the traffic rules' violators according to law. The force has issued more than 1,11,686 e-challans to motorists over various traffic violations so far.

Following directions of IGP Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, Islamabad Capital Police (Traffic Division) and Safe City Project have implemented e-challan system through a joint plan as per international standard. So far, more than 1,11,686 challan tickets have been issued for various violations including over-speeding, red signal or lane violation, zebra crossing and one-way violation. Out of the total challan tickets, 16,134 violators have paid the fine while Islamabad Capital Police has formed four teams across the city which are ensuring payment of fine amounts after delivery of challan tickets at the registered addresses. Meanwhile, Islamabad Capital Police (Traffic) wing has suspended 119 licenses - 62 of Islamabad and 57 of other districts - over deduction of ten points.—APP

## Non-Muslims enjoy better rights in Pakistan: Mahesh Kumar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) hosted an Interfaith Iftar Dinner in honor of Minister of State for National Health Services Mahesh Kumar Malani which was attended by the representatives of Hindu and Christian communities as well as the members of business community. Chaman Lal, Pritam Das, Ashok Kumar, Rajesh Kumar, Om Prakash, Jadesh Kumar, Lal

Chand, Lalat Kumar, Dilip Kumar, Raja Javaraj, Besham Kumar, Lajpat, Ramesh Kumar and others were present in dinner.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for National Health Services Mahesh Kumar Malani said that the government is aware of the difficulties being faced by the business community due to import restrictions and LC issues. He said that matters with the IMF are progressing positively and assured that soon the LCs issue of the business community would be resolved

which would help revive business activities. He said that after Eid, he would arrange a meeting of the representatives of the pharmaceutical sector with the Drug Regulatory Authority to resolve their problems. He said that compared to India, the non-Muslims are enjoying better rights in Pakistan and he is proud to be a Pakistani. He said that non-Muslims in Pakistan never felt any deprivation. He thanked ICCI for hosting the interfaith dinner and said that he will continue to play his role in promoting inter-

faith harmony to strengthen the national unity and take Pakistan on the path of sustainable development. He assured that he will cooperate with ICCI in resolving the key issues of the business community. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, speaking on the occasion, briefed the Minister of State for National Health Services Mahesh Kumar Malani about the major problems of the business community and requested his cooperation to solve them. He said

that due to non-opening of LCs, many industries are in danger of closing down and business activities are suffering. He demanded that the government should focus on resolving these issues as soon as possible. He said that the pharmaceutical sector is also facing some problems with the drug regulatory authority, so the Minister should cooperate in resolving them. He said that ICCI is the hub of activities to promote interfaith harmony as the Chamber celebrates Christmas with the Christian community every year.

## Islamabad police chalk out plans to tackle traffic

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (Traffic) has chalked out a comprehensive plan to ensure a smooth flow of traffic during the last Ashra of Ramazan when markets and shopping centres will be thronged for Eid shopping.

Following the directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Akbar Nasir Khan, Chief Traffic Officer Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer chaired a special meeting at traffic police headquarters to look into parking and traffic-related issues outside main markets and shopping centers during Ramzan. The meeting was also attended by SP (Traffic) Ch. Abid Hussain, all Zonal DSPs and it reviewed all traffic-related arrangements for the convenience of citizens, particularly during last Ashra of Ramazan. Traffic arrangements were finalised by Chief Traffic Officer Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer after consultation with heads of various zones and ITP's sections. It was decided to deploy additional police personnel around the main markets and shopping plazas in the federal capital to ensure.—APP



## Masses bearing inflation burden: Shazia

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Shazia Marri on Friday said that the masses are bearing the burden of inflation caused due to poor policies of the previous government during the last four years. Addressing a press conference along with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi, she said that inflation cannot be controlled in a day as it needed consistency of economic policies. Marri said that the first year of the government had been challenging which included economic, political and climate change crises. "Our government was taking several steps to improve the economic condition of the masses. Our preference is public and we are aware of their issues." She said that the legislature and government would have to sustain the supremacy of the Constitution and the sanctity of the parliament. She said the last year's flood severely affected millions of people in the country which created a huge loss of property and crops.

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif had allocated Rs 70 billion for the support of people of flood-hit areas through BISP. This aid covered around 2.8 million families. Under this initiative Rs 25000 were distributed among each affected family, she added. She further informed that the BISP had also distributed a huge number of food nutrition sachets of Rs one billion from its own budget among pregnant women and infants to meet their food deficiency in flood-hit areas. BISP was also working with the government of Sindh to award subsidies on wheat seeds. Meanwhile, financial support was given to around 186,000 small farmers in flood-affected areas, she added. She said that the BISP budget has been increased from Rs 235 billion to 400 billion with a ratio of 70 per cent increase. The number of needy families under BISP had increased to 09 million. "Similarly, BISP Nashonuma Coverage Programme was started in 15 districts in 2014 as a pilot programme. Later the initiative extended to 156 districts across the country. Today a total of 472 centres were working across the country under this initiative". The government was making all possible efforts to support the needy families of the society, she said, adding, "We have started a Dynamic Registry Survey Facility which is free of cost for each and every citizen. Through the Dynamic Registry initiative, the speedy increase in registration process was seen". Shazia also informed that transgressors were also being included in this programme because they were victims of social, and economic challenges in society. "Deserving she-males can take benefit from BISP now.—APP

## 'Smuggling of commodities issue of food ministry'

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan on Friday said smuggling of essential commodities out of the country was not only a matter of the nation's food security but also of national security.

Minister for Interior and Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif presided over the third meeting of the committee formed by the Prime Minister on the prevention of smuggling of wheat, sugar, fertilizer,

and other essential items, a news release said. Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar, Industries Minister Makhdoom Murtaza Mehmood, Special Assistant for Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha,

Interior Secretary Syed Ali Murtaza, Chairman Federal Board of Revenue Asif Ahmed and representatives of federal and provincial institutions also attended the meeting. Rana Sanaullah said all necessary steps would be taken in order to avoid the shortage of essential commodities in the country. The Defence Minister said, "This is a serious problem and the govern-

ment will have to take every possible step to counter the problem." "We have to take tough decisions to prevent this," he added. The meeting approved the establishment of joint check posts comprising police, customs, and other law enforcement agencies. Interior Secretary briefed the participants on the progress made on the decisions taken in the previous meetings.—APP

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## Briefs

## PepsiCo and Akhuwat Join Hands

DNA

PepsiCo Pakistan has launched a nationwide Ramadan initiative "Filling Hearts, Outside the Box" with the company's longstanding community outreach partner Akhuwat. Under this initiative, food ration boxes are being provided to communities in need near the company's operations across Pakistan. Akhuwat previously supported PepsiCo Pakistan with the 'Millions of Meals' program that disbursed more than 7.4+ million meals to flood-affected families in 33 districts across Pakistan. The "Filling Hearts" initiative is a heartwarming community support and uplift endeavor that is being implemented with support from the PepsiCo Foundation, the philanthropic arm of PepsiCo.

PepsiCo and Akhuwat are sharing blessings by disbursing food ration boxes in communities across Muzaffarabad, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Gujranwala, Peshawar, Okara, Depalpur, Dadu, Faisalabad, Multan, and Kasur and those residing near the company's manufacturing plants. The ration boxes contain food essentials that can provide three meals for an average family of seven persons for a month, including Ramadan-special items.

## ANF recovers over 64 kg drugs; arrests four

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in five operations managed to recover over 64 kg drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed that ANF foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Peshawar to Dera Ismail Khan and recovered 12 kg charras on Kohat Indus Highway. An accused resident of Dera Ismail Khan was sent behind the bars. In another operation, ANF and FC conducted a raid in Seri Shan Khaal area and recovered 30 kg charras and 2.4 kg opium from a nullah. The spokesman said that ANF also recovered four charras-filled capsules from the possession of a Sharjah-bound passenger, resident of Bannu, arrested at Bacha Khan International Airport. In an operation at Sialkot Airport, 8.4 kg heroin absorbed in bag of the Spain-bound passenger resident of Mandi Bahauddin was recovered while 11.7 kg Ice drug was recovered from the possession of an accused resident of Qilla Abdullah rounded up from Chaman Friendship Gate area. He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.—APP

## Islamic Calligraphy exhibition opens at PAC

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Arts Council organized an exhibition of Islamic calligraphy in connection with the Holy Month of Ramazan in collaboration with Vescopek. Naheed Manzoor and Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmed inaugurated the exhibition on Friday. The artworks of Quranic verses, Names of Allah and Names of the Prophet (PBUH), were exhibited in the expo, which will continue till April 16.

While speaking on the occasion, chief guest Naheed Manzoor said that calligraphy is an Islamic art that begins with the divine revelation of the Holy Quran. "Since Ramazan is the month of revelation of the Holy Quran, the importance of writing the Quran increases even more for Muslims." She added that artists had expressed their great love for Islam through their works of art. The Director of the Arts Council said that the calligrapher has written the Quranic verses so beautifully that the viewer wakes up in awe. "The name of writing the words in the colours of aesthetic taste and passion with a pen on the canvas is calligraphy.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Labourers polishing the marble during the maintenance work of Faisal Mosque. —APP

## NDMA warns against rains, countrywide thunderstorm

The departments were also advised to ensure round-the-clock monitoring of the situation through emergency operations centres (EOCs) with regular feedback from provincial and national emergency operations centres (PEOCs and NEOC respectively

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued a detailed guideline for federal and provincial departments to ensure effective measures to cope with any untoward situation amid weather forecasts of more rain-dust-thunderstorm in upper, western and central parts of the country. The NDMA informed that as per the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast rain-dust-thunderstorm with isolated heavy falls and hailstorms from 15-20 April was expected in the respected regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chitral, Dir, Swat, Mansehra, Buner, Kohistan, Shangla, Haripur, Abbotabad, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi, Mardan and Bajaur. In Gilgit-Baltistan, Diamir, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche and Shigar. In Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Neelum valley, Muzaffarabad, Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bhimber and Mirpur.

In Punjab, Murree, Galiyat, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal and Jhelum. In Islamabad Capital Territory, rain-dust or thunderstorm with isolated hailstorm was expected from 17-18 April in the following regions of KP namely Kurrum, Waziristan, Kohat, Karak, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan. In Balochistan, Quetta, Zhob, Barkhan, Qila Sai-

fullah, Qilla Abdullah, Chaman, Pishin, Ziarat, Sibbi, Naseerabad, Khuzdar, Kalat and Makran. Moreover, light rain-dust/thunderstorm is also expected from April 17-18 in the following regions of Punjab namely Multan, D.G. Khan, Rajanpur, Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Sialkot, Bahawalnagar, Layyah, Bhakkar, Khushab, Mianwali, Sarghoda, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Hafizabad, Mandi Bahauddin, Sialkot, Narowal, Lahore, Sahiwal, Okara, Faisalabad, Toba Tek Singh, Jhang, Kasur, Sheikhpura and Nankana Sahib. In Sindh, Sukkur, Larkana and Jacobabad. In light of the forecast shared by PMD, the following region-specific impacts were expected. Therefore, all concerned stakeholders are to remain vigilant against possible hazards. Farmers should perform their activities keeping in view the weather forecast. However, landslides or Flash Floods might occur in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Gilgit Baltistan, Kashmir, Murree and Galiyat on April 18-19.

The Authority in light of the above forecast directed all the provincial disaster management authorities (PDMAs), Gilgit Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA), State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration, National Highway Authority (NHA), National High-

ways and Motorway Police (NHMP), Frontier Works Organization (FWO), Rescue 1122, line departments, ministries and federal agencies to undertake measures as per respective mandate.

However, the following preemptive measures were to be ensured by all relevant departments in addition to measures deemed appropriate as per on ground situation: Ensure the widespread circulation of alerts and advisories, especially in local languages, to raise awareness and sensitize travellers or tourists and local communities in vulnerable areas. It also directed to engage local communities at traditionally and historically dangerous and hazard-prone sites. And also ensure adequate awareness for farmers regarding impacts on standing crops, coordinate with relevant district and municipal administrations to ensure mitigation measures for flash or urban flooding and secure or remove billboards or hoardings.

The PDMA and DDMAs were also demanded to arrange and replace necessary inventory and other essentials at strategic locations, vulnerable or choke points in coordination with NHMP, NHA, FWO, local C&W, Rescue 1122 and line departments. The provincial and federal authorities were also demanded to ensure a proactive ap-

proach by diverting traffic, providing alternate routes, and imposing move or travel restrictions.

It also demanded to ensure that tourists, visitors and travellers in at-risk or affected areas be apprised and forewarned about the weather forecast and road conditions in coordination with NHMP, law enforcement agencies (LEAs), NHA, FWO and C&W. The tourists, visitors and travellers were advised to check PMD Weather Forecast for information from control rooms, help-lines, websites and social media platforms of NHMP, NHA, FWO, DDMAs, PDMAs and C&W before undertaking the journey. It also demanded the quarters concerned to ensure the availability of emergency services personnel during the period, and ensure immediate stocking of basic commodities, especially in regions that were likely to get cut off during snowfall or landslides. Moreover, medical resources should be deployed as per the risks to meet respective regional requirements.

The departments were also advised to ensure round-the-clock monitoring of the situation through emergency operations centres (EOCs) with regular feedback from provincial and national emergency operations centres (PEOCs and NEOC respectively).DNA

## Three street criminal gangs busted; eight arrested

RAWALPINDI: In an operation against criminal elements, Rawalpindi Police have busted three gangs and arrested their eight members.

According to a police spokesman, Rattaamral police busted 'Kashi' street criminal gang and arrested its two members, Naqash alias Kashi, ringleader and Muhammad Shurjeel. Police recovered 14 mobile phones, Rs 5000 and two motorcycles from their possession.

Dhamial police managed to bust two street criminal gangs and rounded up six accused on recovery of Rs 25,000, six mobile phones and six pistols. The spokesman informed that Dawood gang was busted and its three members, Dawood, ringleader, Farhan and Kamran were sent behind the bars. In another raid, Akram street criminal gang was also busted and police netted Akram Khan, ringleader, Arshad and Sartaj.

All the arrested accused have been sent to jail for identification parade. He informed that the police teams constituted under the supervision of SHOs of Rattaamral and Dhamial police stations on the directives of the divisional SPs conducted raids and managed to bust the gangs.—APP

## Wani writes to Japanese President IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR), Altaf Hussain Wani, has brought the attention of the President of Japan, Fumio Kishida, towards the Indian government's contentious plan to hold the next G20 meeting in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Altaf Hussain Wani in a letter addressed to the President of Japan said that the controversial decision to hold the high-profile summit and/or a sideline meeting in the IOJK was based on malafide intentions aimed at deflecting world attention away from the real issue.

India's present-day government which, in brazen violation of the UNSC Resolutions, unilaterally and unlawfully abrogated the special status of Kashmir in 2019, had since peddled lies and disinformation to promote its so-called 'normalcy narrative' on Kashmir, the letter said.

It may be recalled here that the individual trips of the Members of European Parliament to Kashmir last year were presented by the Government of India as official EU delegations, it said. Similarly, a trip to the disputed territory of foreign envoys stationed in New Delhi was arranged to keep the charade of normalcy alive and convince the world that all is well in Kashmir, it added.

The letter said almost two dozen diplomats, mostly from European and African countries, were invited for a curated visit to the region to help India project its "all is well in Kashmir" narrative and to ward off the growing calls for an independent probe into human rights violations. The guided trip was a replica of the past visit wherein the delegates were taken on a brief tour of "Naya (new) Kashmir.—APP

## Gold prices increase by Rs 1100

ISLAMABAD, Apr 14 (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increase by Rs 1100 and was sold at Rs 218,600 on Friday day against its sale at Rs 217,500 the previous day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also increased by Rs 943 Rs 187,414 from Rs 186,471, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went up to Rs 171,796 from Rs 170,932.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs 20 to close at Rs 2570 and that of ten-gram silver also rose by Rs 1715 to close at Rs 2,203.36 respectively. The price of gold in the international market rose by US\$ 07 to \$2034 against its sale at \$2027, the association reported.—APP

## China, Pak work together for art preservation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China, Pakistan will be working together for Art preservation through latest technology, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Friday.

For centuries, artisans in Pakistan have been creating beautiful works of art in the form of stonework. However, with the passage of time and changing tastes, to preserve this valuable cultural heritage, Pakistan should further learn from China's successful efforts to preserve their own ancient art. Dr. Mahmood ul-Hasan, a senior official, Department of Archaeology and Museums Islamabad told CEN that by studying how China has successfully preserved their own ancient Gandhara art and applying similar methods to Pakistani stoneworks, Pakistan can ensure that these beautiful works are preserved for generations to come.

"Pakistan has a rich cultural heritage, particularly in the

form of Gandhara art. However, due to a lack of resources and infrastructure, it is difficult for Pakistani artisans to preserve this ancient art.

In order to better preserve this precious cultural asset, Pakistan should look to China for guidance and inspiration" he said. He stated that Chinese culture has a long history of preserving traditional arts and crafts through the use of modern technology and techniques. By learning from China's example, Pakistani artisans can ensure that their country's unique cultural heritage is preserved for future generations. "During my visit to China, I was really amazed to see the technologies and latest methods that China is using to preserve their art and culture which is outstanding. We visited many historical places like the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Summer Place and different Museums here", he told CEN. It is worth mentioning that China-Pakistan Gandhara Art Exhibition was inaugurated

last month in Beijing and the exhibition at the Palace Museum showcases 173 finest examples of Gandhara art, including sculptures of Buddha, bodhisattvas, deities, objects of daily use, and jewelry items, selected from seven museums in Pakistan. "Pakistan takes great pride in its rich cultural heritage, and the exhibition of Gandhara art at the Palace Museum is a testament to this fact. It is also an opportunity for the Chinese people to appreciate the artistic and cultural traditions of Pakistan and this exhibition is a testament to the deep and abiding friendship between our two countries. The relationship between Pakistan and China is one that has stood the test of time", he added. He further said that a large number of Buddhist sculptures with Gandhara influence and Kharoshthi inscriptions recovered from the Buddhist sites of the ancient Silk Routes are now kept in the National Museum of China, similarly Chinese inscriptions.

## 10 drug peddlers netted with over 8.7 kg charras

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers on Friday arrested 10 accused, besides recovering over 8.7 kg charras from their possession.

A police spokesperson said that Gungmandi police held Muhammad Ali for having 1,400 grams of charras while Pirwadhai police rounded up an accused named Waqar ur Haq for possessing 515 grams of charras. Whereas, Bani police in an operation recovered 1,100 grams of charras and Westridge police seized 1,060 grams of charras, besides netting Yasir, a drug peddler. Similarly, Naseerabad, R.A.Bazar, Taxila, Rawat and Chontra police held Sohail, Mubashir, Rafique, Aslam, Toqeer, and Irfan for having a total of 4,670 grams of charras.

Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway.

## NUTECH signs MOU with TANG



ISLAMABAD: The National University of Technology (NUTECH) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the TANG Chinese Education and Technology Ltd of China. The signing ceremony was held at NUTECH on April 2023. Additional Secretary, Ministry of Science & Technology, Mr. Usman Akhtar Bajwa graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Executive President & Director TANG Pakistan Mr. Max Ma, Rector NUTECH Lt Gen Moazzam Ejaz (R), along with staff, faculty and students attended the ceremony. A 3-year Dual Diploma Program in the field of Software Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) is planned, where students will study for the first two years in NUTECH, followed by last year in China aimed at providing quality technical manpower to local economic zones industrial SEZs and hence, play its role in the socio-economic development of the country.—DNA

## Indian Sikh yatris start rituals at Gurdwara Punja Sahib

ISLAMABAD: Visiting Sikh yatris from India on Friday started their rituals at Gurdwara Punja Sahib, Hassanabad for Khalsa Janam Din (the righteous Sikh brotherhood) and Vasakhi Mela celebrations. According to an official source, the pilgrims were brought to Hassanabad under tight security.

The Gurudwara Sahib had been beautifully decorated with electric lamps, the source said, adding other arrangements had also been ensured for the pilgrims. A team under the supervision of Deputy Secretary of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) Imran Gondal was working round the clock for the best hospitality of the pilgrims, he informed. The leader of the group, Sardar Arvinder Singh Khalsa, party leader from Parbandhak Committee at Shiromani Gurudwara, told the media, "Our religious places in Pakistan have been renovated and restored to their original condition while proper security arrangements have been made." He also expressed gratitude to the government and Evacuee Trust Property Board Chairman Dr Amir Ahmad on behalf of all the visiting yatris. The main ceremony of Vasakhi Mela will be held on Saturday wherein pilgrims from the country will also participate. After the main ceremonies, the pilgrims will reach Janumasthan Nankana Sahib on April 15.—APP

## Khunjerab Pass reopening brings great prosperity

BEIJING: Khunjerab Pass reopening will bring great prosperity, said Ajmal Khan, Vice President Gilgit-Baltistan Chamber Of Commerce, in an interview with China Economic Net (CEN). "Khunjerab Pass is a great blessing for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan because this is where trade takes place. There is no industry here. People here are either employed or their employment depends on trade across the border," said Ajmal Khan.

The Khunjerab Pass, the only official crossing between China and Pakistan, resumed two way passenger traffic on April 3. Connecting Gilgit-Baltistan with China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, it was shuttered in 2020 to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. Before COVID-19, exports were mainly pine nuts. Pine nuts from Diamer in GB, Bannu in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa used to pass through Khunjerab Pass. When pine nuts

were being exported, about Rs 4-5 billion can be earned, said Imran Ali, President of Gilgit-Baltistan Chamber Of Commerce. "Currently, the highest demand in China is for cherry from Gilgit-Baltistan. Cherry of Gilgit-Baltistan is considered to be the best quality cherry in the world," said Imran Ali. "The cherry of Gilgit-Baltistan ranks 7th in the world. It is flavorful, delicious and of good quality. When it is exported, we

will get yuan or dollars from there," said Ajmal Khan. Apart from this, walnuts are exported from Gilgit-Baltistan, and also seasonal fruits that come from Punjab like mangoes. Earlier rice has been exported as well, Ajmal Khan added. However, Khunjerab Pass lacks facilities for some exports. Due to hot water treatment and certification, Pakistan faces a lot of export difficulties despite demand for dry fruits and fresh fruits from China, Imran Ali pointed out. Pakistan has two projects running close to Khunjerab Pass. One project is Diamer-Bhasha Dam, which requires heavy machinery. For CPEC mega projects, machinery is brought by sea which takes two and a half months. However, it takes them 10-15 days only to get their equipment to the project site through Khunjerab Pass, said Imran Ali.—DNA

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## US arms manufacturers have eye on clock

Rupert Hammond-Chambers, president of the so-called US Taiwan Business Council, told Japan's Nikkei newspaper on Wednesday that a group of 25 US defense contractors plans to send delegates to the island in early May to explore opportunities for the joint production of drones and ammunition.

The trip is meant "to promote defense industry cooperation with Taiwan", the newspaper quoted Hammond-Chambers as saying.

This is not the first time the head of the de facto lobbying group for arms sales to the Chinese island has acted as a thief throwing a stone into a courtyard before deciding whether to climb over the wall or not. He had already scouted the surroundings of the courtyard in October last year. Taking advantage of Washington's growing concern then that the fast consumption of ammunition in the Ukraine conflict was quickly depleting US stocks, he revealed to the same Japanese newspaper that Washington is considering a plan to jointly produce weapons with Taiwan. Although what technologies would be included in the program, which entails the approval of the State Department and the Pentagon, had not yet been decided, it would likely focus on providing Taiwan with more munitions and long-established missile technology, with Hammond-Chambers saying that "It's a piece of the puzzle, not a game changer".

Asked about the proposal, a US State Department spokesperson said at the time that all options were being looked at to "ensure the rapid transfer of defensive capabilities to Taiwan".

Nikkei reported that Washington is open to the idea of coproduction arrangement, because US contractors are struggling to fill the backlog of orders. The big arms orders that Washington thrusts on Taipei — the US is the sole arms seller to the island — dwarfs the capacity of the world's most efficient and largest weapons assembly lines in the US, resulting in a late delivery that stretches years, even decades, ahead. But even the island's secessionist-minded administration is well aware that giving a green light to producing US weapons on the island means instant self-destruction. Washington too knows that the proposal would change the game beyond its control.

Yet Hammond-Chambers' latest show clearly demonstrates that the US military-industrial complex is becoming increasingly ruthless in trying to skin a flea for its hide as it wants to seize every minute of the window before Taiwan's reunification with the motherland to maximize the surplus value they can extort from the island.



## Macron's call for strategic autonomy

On his way back from a three-day visit to China with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, in a Sunday interview with Politico and Les Echos, French President Emmanuel Macron again underlined the importance of European "strategic autonomy", arguing the EU should reduce its dependency on the United States and avoid getting dragged into a confrontation between China and the US over the Taiwan question. "The great risk" Europe faces, according to the French leader, is it "gets caught up in crises that are not ours". His remarks have caused quite a stir. But just as President Macron has clarified, those words were consistent with both his own vision of Europe's future and the policies of his country. And, may we add here, those of the European Union.

Proponents endorse the French leader's vision of Europe establishing itself as an independent "third superpower"; critics blame him for undermining the transatlantic alliance, subscribing to the China-Russia proposal of a "multipolar world", with some even likening his approach to the notorious "peace in our time" appeasement policy of then United Kingdom prime minister Neville Chamberlain in 1938.

The strong backlash to his words has prompted the French leader to reaffirm during his state visit to the Netherlands that his government remains dedicated to preserving the status quo over Taiwan and a peaceful resolution of the matter, and that being a US ally doesn't mean being its thrall. "Being an ally does not mean being a vassal... doesn't mean that we don't have the right to think for ourselves," he told a news conference with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

This is why Rutte agreed with his French guest that Europe "must be a player and not a playing field". This is also why European Council President Charles Michel said European leaders are increasingly sympathetic to Macron's push for "strategic autonomy".

Despite the "nuances and sensitivities" regarding relations with the US, Michel said, "Some European leaders wouldn't say things the same way that Emmanuel Macron did ... I think quite a few really think like Emmanuel Macron." Following up on his "plan for Europe" put forward in 2017, President Macron began his visit to the Netherlands on Tuesday with a keynote speech on "European sovereignty" in which he said the continent should choose its own partners and shape its own destiny rather than being a mere witness to the dramatic evolution of the world. The leaked documents showing the extent to which the US is orchestrating the conflict in Ukraine have made it clear that the ideologues in Washington will unhesitatingly lay the world to ruin with their eschatological conviction in the US' manifest destiny if they are enabled. Macron is right to call for prudence rather than unthinkingly following their lead.

## Time to revive the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002

Nadim Shehadi

The first hint of the plan was revealed to Thomas Friedman of The New York Times in a meeting with then-Crown Prince (later King) Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. Friedman told the story in a column on Feb. 17, 2002. He had suggested in an earlier article that there should be a clear Arab initiative for peace with Israel and he spoke about this with Crown Prince Abdullah, who replied that it was exactly what he had in mind and he was going to announce it in a speech ahead of the Arab League Summit in Beirut the following month. The international and regional conditions were even more explosive then than they are today. The dust had barely settled since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on New York by Al-Qaeda. One month later, the US invaded Afghanistan, and there was already talk of an American invasion of Iraq, which everyone in the region

Two realities have been highlighted by the recent flare-up in Gaza and South Lebanon. One is the presence of a vigorous and consistent resistance movement, which is linked to Iran and able to trigger war at will, and the other is the total absence of any peace plan for the Palestinian-Israeli issue or any Arab-led alternative. When the region is on edge, about to blow up, it is wise to calm things down. We have seen this with the recent Saudi Arabia-Iran agreement, with hopes that this will bring stability and help to resolve other conflicts. The eruption in Gaza and Lebanon reminds us that the absence of justice for the Palestinians makes us all vulnerable. It is time to revive the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 to fill that gap. There is a pattern emerging. First, TikTok clips go viral, showing images of Israeli brutality against Palestinian civilians praying in Al-Aqsa Mosque or celebrating in Jerusalem during the holy month of Ramadan. Hamas then seizes the opportunity to attack and assert its position as the sole protector of the holy site and defender of the cause. The Palestinian Authority is thus embarrassed and made to look both weak and like a collaborator. Finally, the media of the so-called axis of resistance goes wild, not only against Israel but also against the Arab states that are pursuing peace and normalization. This also happened in May 2021. Then, the clips were of a Palestinian woman pleading with an Israeli settler who had just taken over her home in Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem and of Israeli police beating up Palestinians during Ramadan celebrations and storming the Al-Aqsa Mosque during prayers. We also saw images of Israeli radicals making hateful statements. The flare-up inevitably followed, with Hamas sending rockets into Israel in retaliation, provoking a predictable reaction and more atrocities.

This time round, Hezbollah has joined in. No one believes that it had no part in the firing of rockets from southern Lebanon into northern Israel. Both Hamas and Hezbollah were

the winners — they asserted their resistance credentials and demonstrated once again that their agenda of violence and armed struggle is the only one that works. The Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, also known as the Abdullah Plan, is the only viable alternative.

The first hint of the plan was revealed to Thomas Friedman of The New York Times in a meeting with then-Crown Prince (later King) Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. Friedman told the story in a column on Feb. 17, 2002. He had suggested in an earlier article that there should be a clear Arab initiative for peace with Israel and he spoke about this with Crown Prince Abdullah, who replied that it was exactly what he had in mind and he was going to announce it in a speech ahead of the Arab League Summit in Beirut the following month. The international and regional conditions were even more explosive then than they are today. The dust had barely settled since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on New York by Al-Qaeda. One month later, the US invaded Afghanistan, and there was already talk of an American invasion of Iraq, which everyone in the region predicted would create far more problems than it would solve. The Palestinian Second Intifada was still ongoing and there was a right-wing government in Israel headed by Ariel Sharon. Tensions were high. It looked like the whole region was on the verge of blowing up in a major confrontation with the West. It was in these circumstances that the Arab Peace Initiative was proposed. The carefully worded plan built on the previous Arab League declaration of 1996 that a just and comprehensive peace remained a strategic option. It put forward three conditions to Israel, asking it to reconsider its policies and accept the idea of a just peace, while offering normalization with the Arab world in return for declaring the conflict over. The first condition was that Israel withdraw from the Occupied Territories to the June 4, 1967,

lines, including the Syrian Golan Heights and remaining territories in South Lebanon. The latter was in reference to the Shebaa Farms. Second was the achievement of a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem, to be agreed in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194. This was a watered-down wording from a version asserting the right of return of refugees, leaving it to be agreed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Third was accepting the establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian territories occupied since June 4, 1967, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The wording here was also moderated by accepting sharing Jerusalem as the capital of both states. However, the Arab Peace Initiative went nowhere, as it was overshadowed by the fact that, one day before its declaration, a Hamas suicide bombing in a hotel in Netanya killed 30 Israelis and injured 140 during a Passover Seder feast. This was the deadliest attack of the Second Intifada and became known as the Passover massacre. It was followed two days later by the start of Israel's Operation Defensive Shield, which lasted more than a month and during which Yasser Arafat was besieged in the Mukata'a. It was the biggest military operation by Israel since 1967 and the Arab Peace Initiative was forgotten with it.

Twenty years later, a revival of the Arab Peace Initiative could be a game-changer in terms of relations with the US and Europe, who would be involved in its implementation. This would also be a test for the Iranian-Saudi agreement. After nearly 40 years of continuous conflict, there is a need to change course; the people of the region deserve stability and better prospects for the future.

*Courtesy: Arab News*

## Palestine, The First issue of the Muslim World

Mehran Movahed Far



The Islamic Republic of Iran, in line with efforts to resolve the Palestinian crisis, has put forth a democratic and just plan of "holding a referendum in Palestine." This plan is a suitable alternative to the previous failed plans. Practicing the right to determine one's fate is the basis of this plan.

The Question of Palestine has been remained as the most complicated international challenge and issue for over seven decades. In addition to Palestinians' deprivation from their most inalienable and imprescriptible rights, Israeli unlawful, inhumane and expansionist policies and measures have led to deterioration of the living conditions of the Palestinian people on a daily basis. Being in contravention of the principles and purposes of the UN Charter and International law specifically International human rights as well as International humanitarian law, those malign policies and measures have been intensified due to the unreceptive positions of the international community and its failure in taking serious measures to resolve the issue of Palestine. The Zionist regime everyday engages in "grave, continuous, and systematic human rights violations," including children's rights. Normalizing ties with this infanticidal regime not only doesn't lead to peace in Palestine but encourages it to continue oppression & occupation. Quds is the land of Palestinians and the Muslims' first Qibla. No one can buy or occupy it. Struggling to achieve and realize their fundamental rights, particularly the right to self-determination and self-defense against occupation and unlawful expropriation of their territory, the Palestinian have resisted and made praiseworthy and valuable efforts

in different aspects. Nevertheless, the problem has remained unsolved since no comprehensive and practical plan or initiative corresponding with historical facts of Palestine has ever been proposed.

The issue of Palestine is no longer just the problem of the Palestinians, but it is the first issue of the Muslim world and International Quds Day has become a significant symbol of global resistance movement against occupation, terrorism, apartheid, injustice and systematic violations of the Palestinian nation's natural and basic rights. The terrorist nature of the apartheid regime of Israel is evident in the daily massacre of civilians, Arab elites, and Iranian scientists. The International Quds Day is the manifestation of the unity of Islamic Umma and the symbol of perseverance against a law-breaking and occupying regime, that is the only possessor of nuclear weapons in West Asia. Respecting "the Palestinian cause and fighting an apartheid regime's violence" is the criterion to measure "the importance of justice" for the world. The Islamic Republic of Iran proudly supports Palestinians. The Quds Day is the symbol of the continuity of a nation's efforts to retake its homeland. The Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes addressing the issue of Palestine, as the foremost and principal issue of the Muslim world, and considers attempts by global Zionism to drive the issue into oblivion to be

doomed to failure.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, in line with efforts to resolve the Palestinian crisis, has put forth a democratic and just plan of "holding a referendum in Palestine." This plan is a suitable alternative to the previous failed plans. Practicing the right to determine one's fate is the basis of this plan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the sole possible solution is to hold a nationwide referendum with participation of all original Palestinian people, including Muslims, Christians and Jews. Four phases of the Plan:

The presented Plan entails four main phases: 1. Enforcing the Palestinian refugees' right to return to their historical and original homeland

2. Holding a general referendum among the original inhabitants of the Palestinian territory including members of all religions who used to live in Palestine before the issuance of Balfour Declaration, to exercise their self-determination right and enable them to determine the political system of their choice.

3. Establishing the political system agreed upon by the majority of the people of Palestine 4. Deciding on the state of the non-original residents of Palestine by the political system elected by the majority

*—The writer is Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Lahore*

## Briefs

## SC directs State Bank to release funds

FRONT PAGE 01

"It was queried as to whether this sum could be made available from the funds aforementioned of the federal government lying with and under the custody, control and management of the State Bank, with particular reference to Account I." In response, the acting governor confirmed that this would be done if the court so directed and ordered, the SC order said.

It added that the SBP "further confirmed that the necessary transaction for the transfer of funds to the commission (ECP), so that Rs21bn become immediately available and utilisable for the latter, could be done within the shortest possible time, and at the latest by the close of business on Monday i.e. April 17, 2023". Moreover, Finance Ministry Special Secretary Awais Manzoor Sumra, with the AGP's assistance, also gave a presentation to the court. This presentation, in broad terms, was given with regard to the "financial position of the Government of Pakistan, with particular reference also to the present and/or pending international obligations to the IMF (International Monetary Fund)", the order said.

The judges observed in the order that keeping in view the figures presented to the court, "of which even the smallest ran to several hundreds of billions of rupees, it became clear that the disbursement of Rs21bn for fulfilling the constitutional mandate of holding the general elections would, at most, amount to a minuscule increase in the obligations of the federal government. "Indeed, viewed from certain financial perspectives and contexts, which were stated by the team from finance, the amount would be so insignificant as to not even amount to a rounding off error." The order further stated that the team from the Finance Division informed the court that the government regularly went into bond markets to borrow and raise funds "which in the aggregate in any given financial year ran into trillions of rupees". The order said it was stated that in this regard, "treasury bills were issued by the SBP on behalf of the federal government on a regular and ongoing basis and that, even in this perspective, taking the amount now under consideration into account would not have any meaningful impact or effect".

## Army Chief says negotiations helped...

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"Security forces are ready for permanent peace in the country. In this regard, intelligence-based operations are conducted on a daily basis," the army chief added. "We should leave the discussion of new and old Pakistan and talk about our Pakistan from now on. Pakistan has no shortage of resources and manpower," the army chief said. "Elected representatives of the people should decide the nation's destination. Pakistan Army will fully support Pakistan in its journey of development and success," he said. Members of the National Assembly welcomed the ideas of the army chief by banging the desk and clapping, according to media. Apart from the army chief, according to sources, senior members of the military also gave a detailed overview of the current situation to the members.

## Imran gets protective...

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among masses and victimize him politically". "Being head of the largest political party and aggrieved from such malpractice, the petitioner craves for the kind indulgence of this court for the grant of protective bail," added the petition. The deposed premier further implored in his petition that a series of "false criminal cases have been registered against him, senior leadership of the PTI and active participants since past few months".

## Millions rally across world

## Int'l Quds Day marked amid continued Israeli aggression

Ten routes were designated for rallies throughout the Iranian capital, where people from all walks of life headed to iconic Enqelab (revolution) Square

DNA

TEHRAN: Millions of people have attended Quds Day rallies across Iran and other Muslim countries to show their solidarity with the oppressed Palestinian people and condemn Israeli atrocities. The rallies in Iran, organized by the Islamic Propagation Coordination Council (IPCC), started at 10 a.m. local time (0630 GMT) in Tehran and other cities across the country on Friday. The demonstrators sought to communicate to the world the deplorable situation of the Palestinians and condemn Israeli atrocities which have intensified this year, especially since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan.

Ten routes were designated for the rallies throughout the Iranian capital, where people from all walks of life headed to the iconic Enqelab (revolution) Square. Every year on the last Friday of Ramadan, worldwide rallies are held to support the Palestinian people's resistance against Israel and the struggle to liberate their territories which have been occupied since 1967. The annual event is seen as an opportunity for freedom-seeking people across



the world, regardless of faith, to voice their support for the Palestinian cause and vent their anger at Israel. The International Quds Day is among the legacies of the late founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Imam Khomeini, who is revered as a spiritual leader by Muslims across the world. Back in 1979, shortly after leading an Islamic Revolution which toppled the US-backed Shah of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini named the last Friday of the fasting month of Ramadan the Quds Day. In their final communiqué in Tehran, the demonstrators described unity and solidarity within the Muslim world as the key to triumph over global arrogant powers and their conspiracies. The Axis of Resistance, it said, has confounded Zionists and driven the corrupt and far-right

administration of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to despair. "The child-killing regime is experiencing gradual deterioration, political instability as well as severe bipolarity," it said. "The unfolding developments across the Israeli-occupied territories and the reverse migration of Israeli settlers clearly show that the fake Zionist regime has reached an irreversible point of

decline and is moving closer to collapse." The protesters also underscored the need to reinforce support for the anti-Israel resistance front, saying it is the only viable solution to resolve the Palestinian issue as the first and foremost issue of the Muslim world. The statement went on to emphasize the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their lands from which they were expelled in 1948, and the rights of the Palestinians to hold a comprehensive and free referendum and determine their future political fate. The demonstrators also condemned Israeli raids on the al-Aqsa Mosque compound and assaults on Palestinian worshippers, terming them as part of Tel Aviv's attempts to escape from the political and economic turmoil it is currently experiencing.

The statement touched on a new Intifada (uprising) in the making in the occupied West Bank, saying Israel is alarmed by the unity of Palestinian groups and the mass mobilization of young Palestinians to join resistance groups. The participants also hailed retaliatory missile strikes by Palestinian resistance fighters, warning Israeli officials against committing any new blunder against the al-Aqsa Mosque.

## Sundowns rescue point after blunder

JOHANNESBURG: A blunder from otherwise outstanding Golden Arrows goalkeeper Sifiso Mlungwana gifted champions Mamelodi Sundowns a 1-1 draw on Wednesday in the South African Premiership. Arrows were clinging to a one-goal lead in Durban when Mlungwana allowed a Siphon Mbule header after a corner to slip from his grasp into the net in 73 minutes. Earlier, Mlungwana made several superb saves as unpredictable mid-table outfit Arrows produced their best performance of the season. It was the first Premiership goal of the league campaign for Mbule, who came off the bench in the second half to extend the unbeaten league run of Sundowns to 20 matches. The home side had taken a 23rd-minute through Ryan Moon, who reacted quickest to a low cross and hammered the ball past goalkeeper Ronwen Williams. Since winning a sixth straight Premiership title on April 1, Sundowns have suffered a mini slump, drawing with Cape Town City, Swallows and Arrows, and scoring only one goal. But they are 19 points ahead of second-placed Orlando Pirates with four fixtures left and set to better the record margin of 16 points for a title-winning side, which they created last year. The Pretoria outfit are chasing a treble as they have reached the quarterfinals of the South African FA Cup and the CAF Champions League. "We were off the pace and feeling sorry for ourselves in the opening half," said Rhlulani Mokwena, the 36-year-old coach of Sundowns who never played top-level football. "Our schedule involves matches every few days, but that is the price of being successful and we must accept that. "There was a dramatic improvement after some tough half-time talking. We showed bravery and I was very proud of the boys." Elsewhere, CAF Confederation Cup quarterfinalists Marumo Gallants climbed out of the relegation zone by coming from behind to beat fellow strugglers Chippa United 3-1 in Polokwane. - DNA

## Yemen prisoner swap starts as talks set for 2nd round

SANAA: Hundreds of captives from Yemen's brutal civil war were set to be reunited with friends and family as a major prisoner swap started on Friday, hours after truce talks broke up with an agreement to meet again. As hopes rise of an end to Yemen's devastating eight-year war, which pits Iran-backed rebels against a Saudi-led coalition, the first planeload of 35 prisoners flew from the rebel-held capital Sanaa to government-controlled Aden, the International Committee of the Red Cross said. Another 125 prisoners took off in the opposite direction, the ICRC said. Two more flights are scheduled for the first day of the exchange, involving 322 captives. Nearly 900 will be released during the three-day operation. Large crowds gathered at both airports. In Sanaa, Mohammed Al-Qubati said: "I have been waiting for this day for five years. I'm

waiting for my father and my cousin." And in Aden, there were celebrations when Yemen's former defence minister Mahmud al-Subaihi, and the brother of the ex-president, Major General Nasser Mansur Hadi, emerged from the first plane as it landed. The exchange and the truce negotiations in Sanaa come a month after Gulf heavyweights Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed to re-establish diplomatic ties, triggering a wave of rapprochement across the troubled region. A Saudi delegation led by ambassador Mohammed al-Jaber left Sanaa late on Thursday without a finalised truce but with plans for another round of talks, according to Huthi and Yemeni government sources. "There is an initial agreement on a truce that should be announced later on, if finalised," a Huthi official said on condition of anonymity, in information that

was confirmed by a government source. "There is an agreement to hold another round of talks to further discuss points of difference." The Huthis' chief negotiator, Mohammed Abdulalam, called the talks "serious and positive" and said he was "hoping to complete the discussion of outstanding issues at a later time". The rebels seized control of Sanaa in 2014, forcing the internationally recognised government to flee and triggering the Saudi-led military intervention the following March. Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed by direct and indirect causes in a war that has triggered one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, according to the United Nations. However, a six-month, UN-brokered truce that officially lapsed in October is still largely holding as diplomatic efforts increase for a renewed ceasefire. Hans Grundberg, the UN special envoy for Yemen, hailed the prisoner release ahead of next week's Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr. "Today, hundreds of Yemeni families get to celebrate Eid with their loved ones because the parties negotiated and reached an agreement," he said in a statement. "I hope this spirit is reflected in ongoing efforts to advance a comprehensive political solution. Thousands more families are still waiting to be reunited with their loved ones." During the exchange, the Huthis will release 181 prisoners, including Saudis and Sudanese, in return for 706 held by government forces. "It's a much awaited moment of relief for hundreds of families, many of whom were left wondering for years if they will ever see their loved ones again," Yemeni conflict analyst Hisham al-Omeisy told AFP. - APP

## Galtier shocked' by racism accusations

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain coach Christophe Galtier said on Friday he was "deeply shocked" by accusations that he made racist remarks about players when he was coaching Ligue 1 club Nice last season. "I am deeply shocked by the remarks attributed to me and which have been relayed by some in an irresponsible way, which hurt me deeply," Galtier said at a press conference. The 56-year-old has denied making racist and Islamophobic remarks following allegations which surfaced in an email apparently sent by the former Nice sporting director Julien Fournier and which have been reported by various French media. The message, which AFP has not been able to verify, was reportedly sent by Fournier to Dave Brailsford, the former

head of British Cycling and now Director of Sport at chemicals giant Ineos, the owners of Nice. "I was brought up on a state housing estate and in a multicultural environment with shared values and respect for other people, whatever their origins, colour or religion," Galtier added. "I cannot accept having my name tarnished in this way. I have therefore decided to take legal action against anyone who tries to damage my reputation." Galtier was speaking shortly after the public prosecutor in the southern French city of Nice announced that a preliminary investigation had been opened into possible "racial or religious discrimination". Nice prosecutor Xavier Bonhomme told AFP that police searches were

being carried out at the club's offices. Galtier has received threats since the reports surfaced and has been placed under protection by PSG. "The club supports Christophe Galtier in the face of the many and unacceptable threats he has received, and now hopes that this matter will be dealt with by the courts," the Qatar-owned club said in a statement to reporters on Friday. Galtier, who won the Ligue 1 title with Lille in 2021, spent a year at Nice before moving to Paris at the end of last season. PSG's leading supporters' group, Collectif Ultras Paris, has said it would "not be acceptable" for him to remain in charge if the allegations were proven to be true. Galtier had already been under increasing pressure due to PSG's faltering form since they were knocked out of the Champions League in the last 16 by Bayern Munich last month. They are currently six points clear at the top of Ligue 1 and host second-placed Lens on Saturday. - DNA

## Rafael Nadal out of Barcelona

MONTE CARLO: Rafael Nadal's preparation for a tilt at a record-extending 15th French Open title suffered a further blow when he announced Friday his withdrawal from the ATP Barcelona tournament. The 36-year-old Spaniard said he had still not recovered full fitness from the hip flexor injury he sustained in the Australian Open in January and which saw him miss this week's Monte Carlo Open. "I am still not ready and so I continue my preparation process for the return to competition," he tweeted. The Barcelona tournament starts on Saturday and the French Open on May 28. Nadal said it hurt him to miss Barcelona. "Barcelona is a special tournament for me because it is my club by adoption and because playing at home is always a unique feeling," he said. The 22-time Grand Slam singles champion - he shares the record with Novak Djokovic - had originally thought he would be out for up to two months. He pulled out of hard-court tournaments at Indian Wells and Miami, with his sights set on a return at the start of the clay court season. His fitness problems have become an increasing issue since he won his 14th French Open crown last year. - Agencies

## Novak Djokovic upset by Musetti in Monte Carlo

MONTE CARLO: Novak Djokovic was knocked out in the last 16 of the Monte Carlo Masters by Lorenzo Musetti in three sets on Thursday after the world number one struggled badly on serve. Djokovic, a two-time winner in the Principality in 2013 and 2015, was broken eight times before going down 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 to the 21st-ranked Musetti on a wet and chilly day on the Cote d'Azur. "The feeling is terrible after playing like this, honestly. But congrats to him. He stayed tough in important moments, and that's it," said Djokovic. The Serb led by a set and a break against Musetti, but the Italian youngster fought back in a scrappy second set and then prevailed in the decider after rain interrupted the match for an hour. Musetti advances to a quarter-final meeting with compatriot Jannik Sinner, who saved a match point before beating Poland's Hubert Hurkacz 3-6, 7-6 (8/6), 6-1. Djokovic, the big favourite in the absence of Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz, surged 5-2 ahead in the opening set. He dropped serve as he tried to close it out before breaking Musetti for a third time. The top seed again looked in control at 4-2 in the second but was broken easily in a game that started with Djokovic justifiably unhappy over a line call that went against him. Musetti won the next three games, successfully serving

for the second set at the second attempt after blowing his chance while leading 5-4. A rain shower early in the deciding set forced play to be suspended, with Musetti landing the decisive break to go 5-3 up and eventually sealing victory on his fourth match point. "I am struggling not to cry because it is a dream for me," said Musetti, who led Djokovic by two sets at Roland Garros in 2021 before having to retire.

"Beating Novak is something remarkable for me." Djokovic, holder of a record 38 Masters titles, has not gone beyond the last eight in Monte Carlo since 2015. "I don't think it's catastrophic, but my feeling is bad right now because I lost the match. That's all," said Djokovic. "It's not a great day for me, so I'm not really in the mood to speak." French Open finalist Casper Ruud also bowed out after suffering

a 6-1, 7-6 (8/6) defeat to German Jan-Lennard Struff, who has beaten the Norwegian on all three occasions they have met.

The 100th-ranked Struff - who came through the qualifiers - will play Andrey Rublev in the quarter-finals after the Russian beat his compatriot Karen Khachanov 7-6 (7/4), 6-2. Ruud was on a run of nine successive victories on clay - having won in Gstaad last July and then Estoril on Sunday - but he looked out of sorts in Monaco. The world number four, who also reached the US Open final last year, saved two match points and fought back from 5-2 down to lead 6-5 in the second set only for Struff to level. The German then took a hard-fought tie-break when Ruud sent a return out. The in-form Daniil Medvedev saved two match points in a final-set tie-break to oust Alexander Zverev 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (9/7) under the lights. Zverev served for the match in the second set and again in the third before Medvedev once more wriggled out of trouble in the tie-break to record his 26th win in 27 matches. "If he'd been right mentally he could have finished the match twice," said Medvedev. His next opponent is Denmark's ninth-ranked Holger Rune, who moved into last eight after Matteo Berrettini withdrew due to a muscular problem Italian suffered during his previous match. - Agencies



## IMF Chief optimistic...

FROM PAGE 01

funds from other donors waiting for IMF's endorsement. Later at a news briefing in Washington, Kristalina Georgieva said "My hope is that with the goodwill of everyone, with the implementation of what has been already agreed by the Pakistani authorities, we can complete our current programme successfully." She pointed out that the Fund's projected global 2.8 percent in 2023 was "the weakest medium-term forecast in decades". The growth will remain weak, at around 3pc, over the next five years, she added.

"Underlying inflation remains stubbornly high, geo-economic fragmentation affects trade and capital flows, and downsides risks have increased," she warned. "Fighting inflation and safeguarding financial stability have become more complex with the recent banking sector pressures." Responding to a question about the impact of climate change on Pakistan's economy, Ms Georgieva said in 2011 she had the opportunity to see what climate change meant for the people of Pakistan. "And I know that (last summer's) flood is much more dramatic than the one I witnessed," she added. "No question Pakistan will continue to be on the front-line of the climate crisis. And that means that communities also think about the future of agriculture in a more climate sustainable manner," she said.

Responding to a question about IMF-Pakistan talks for the revival of the 2109 loan package, Ms Georgieva said: "We have been working very hard with the authorities in Pakistan within the context of our current programme to make sure that Pakistan has the policy framework that makes it possible to avoid what you are talking about." The reporter who asked the question had hinted at the possibility of Pakistan's burgeoning debt becoming unsustainable. But Ms Georgieva said the purpose of the IMF-Pakistan talks was to avoid getting to a point where the country's debt may become unsustainable. "We are not there yet and it's better not to get there," she said.

## UAE confirms...

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The second one also worth \$500m was made on March 17. Today's development is expected to lead to the much-delayed staff-level agreement (SLA) with the Fund and unlock multilateral disbursements. Since early February, Pakistan has been negotiating with the IMF to revive the \$7bn bailout programme to secure a \$1.1bn tranche. With central bank reserves falling to critical levels, hovering around \$4bn and barely able to cover a month of imports, the IMF tranche is critical for the country as it will also unlock other external financing avenues, helping Pakistan avert a default on its obligations. Last month, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had said that the lender wanted external financing commitments fulfilled from friendly countries before it released bailout funds. Several friendly countries such as Saudi Arabia, China and the United Arab Emirates, had made commitments to help Pakistan fund its balance of payments. Subsequently, the state minister of finance had said that the Fund had received a commitment from Saudi Arabia regarding funding for Pakistan.

## Unity among...

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"Unless we do not save the Constitution, you cannot save the country either," he added. Lashing out the imported government for running away from elections, PTI Chairman reiterated that these cabal of crooks did not care about the Constitution and the law, as they just wanted to secure another NRO to save their own skins. Imran Khan went on to say that constructive criticism of institutions was a hallmark of democracy, ad society ruined without criticizing and highlighting the wrongdoings of the institutions. PTI Chairman said that the democracy flourished across the world because of freedom of expression and dictatorship fast faded away since there was no place for constructive criticism.

## Briefs

Mediations  
underway  
in Sudan

KHARTOUM: Different Sudanese political parties and former rebels have been working to contain the ongoing military tension between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the strong paramilitary of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Forces for Freedom and Change on Thursday called on the two sides to slow down, urging them to stop the escalation. The former rebels headed by the three sovereign council members Malik Agar, Jibril Ibrahim, and Mini Arko Minawi also said they engaged in talks with the leadership of the two sides to stop the escalation. "We were in intensive contacts with the leadership of the two sides and we got a positive response from them regarding the containment of the situation and refrain from escalation and the talks are still ongoing," the three leaders said in a joint statement without further details. However, eyewitnesses in Khartoum told Anadolu that the redeployment of the forces in Khartoum is ongoing, adding that the streets are empty as the people are worried that wide battles may take place. —APP

Ghana  
approves  
Oxford malaria  
vaccine

ACCRA: Ghana has become the first country in the world to receive regulatory approval to market the malaria vaccine developed by the University of Oxford. The announcement was made by the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) in Ghana on Thursday. The vaccine was manufactured by the Serum Institute of India Pvt. Ltd and submitted through the local agent DEK Pharmaceutical Ghana. The approval was granted following an extensive series of reviews and thorough peer-reviews of the non-clinical and clinical quality parts of the vaccine product development dossier. The vaccine has been approved for use for the immunization of children aged 5 months to 36 months against malaria caused by Plasmodium falciparum. Experts say the vaccine will help fight malaria which infects millions of people every year and kills hundreds of thousands, especially children, in Africa. FDA Chief Executive Mimi Delese Darko in a press briefing explained that the evaluation and approval process considered the safety, immunogenicity, and efficacy data generated from five main clinical trials conducted in the UK, Kenya, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Tanzania. —Agencies

JUICE  
mission  
launches  
on second  
attempt

KOUROU: The European Space Agency's JUICE space probe blasted off Friday on a mission to discover whether Jupiter's icy moons are capable of hosting extra-terrestrial life in their vast, hidden oceans. The launch of an Ariane 5 rocket from Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana came after a previous attempt on Thursday was called off due to the risk of lightning.

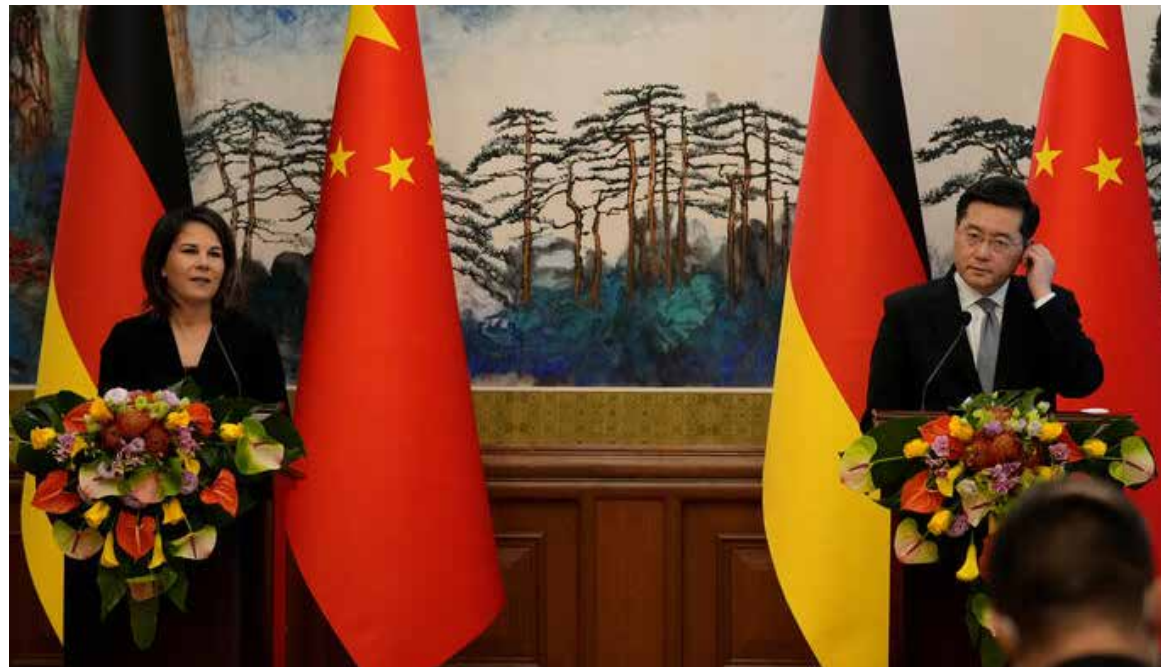
Despite cloudy skies, the rocket took off as planned at 09:14 am local time (12:14 GMT), with teams on site saying it was on the correct trajectory. A little under half an hour after lift-off, the uncrewed six-tonne spacecraft is scheduled to separate from the rocket at an altitude of 1,500 kilometres (930 miles). Only then can the launch be declared successful. The Jupiter Icy Moons Explorer (JUICE) plans to take a long and winding path to the gas giant, which is 628 million kilometres (390 million miles) from Earth. It will use several gravitational boosts along the way, first by doing a fly-by of Earth and the Moon, then by slingshotting around Venus in 2025 before swinging past Earth again in 2029. —Agencies

Call on Russia to end war,  
Germany urges China

Beijing insists that Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy, is part of its territory, even though Taiwan has had an independent government since 1949

DNA

BEIJING: The German foreign minister has urged China to pressure Moscow to end the war in Ukraine, saying no other country had "more influence on Russia". Speaking on Friday after a meeting with her Chinese counterpart Qin Gang in Beijing, Annalena Baerbock said she also expressed concerns about human rights issues and escalating tensions with Taiwan. Her visit comes a week after that of French President Emmanuel Macron and the head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, who also pushed China to play a greater role in resolving the Ukraine crisis. "It is good that China has signalled its commitment to a solution but I have to say frankly that I wonder why the Chinese position so far does not include a call on the aggressor Russia to stop the war," Baerbock said. After the meeting, China announced that Defence Minister Li Shangfu would visit Russia on Sun-



day for a four-day visit, at the invitation of his counterpart Sergei Shoigu. China has positioned itself as a neutral mediator throughout the conflict, but its refusal to condemn the invasion and a recent trip to Moscow by President Xi Jinping have led Western powers to accuse it of favouring

its traditional ally. Qin said on Friday that China believed "the only way to resolve the Ukraine crisis is to promote peace and talks". "The Ukrainian crisis has developed up to this day, and the lessons are profound, worthy of deep reflection by all parties. Territory is indivisible,

and security is also indivisible," he said. "Without recognition of the security interests of a particular party, crises and conflicts are inevitable," he added. Meanwhile, Baerbock said she told her counterpart of Germany's concerns that human rights were being "curtailed" in China with

the "scope for civil society engagement" also shrinking. On Monday, China sentenced two prominent human rights lawyers to more than a decade in jail. Xu Zhiyong and fellow campaigner Ding Jiaxi were convicted of "subversion of state power" following closed-door trials.

Baerbock directly referred to Xinjiang, referencing a United Nations report that detailed a string of rights violations against Uighurs and other Muslim minorities in the province, including "credible" allegations of widespread torture. However, China's foreign minister dismissed human rights concerns, saying any friction was centred on a fight against separatism.

On Taiwan, Baerbock said military escalation would be a "horror scenario" for the entire world. She reiterated Germany's One China policy, according to which Beijing is recognised as the only legitimate government of China and that Berlin does not maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Baerbock stressed, however, that a change of the status quo by force would not be acceptable. Earlier this week, China concluded three days of live-fire drills near the self-governed island in response to Taiwan President Tsai Ingwen's recent trip to the United States. Beijing insists that Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy, is part of its territory, even though Taiwan has had an independent government since 1949.

Russia spy links  
UK Minister alerted over  
short-selling Viceroy Research

## MONITORING REPORT

LONDON: Leader of the House of Commons Penny Mordaunt MP has assured that she will raise the issue of short-seller Viceroy Research and its head Fraser John Perring as a matter of urgency. Penny Mordaunt MP, who has previously served as Minister of State for the Armed Forces, thanked the Labour MP for raising questions on Viceroy Research's "very important matter". The Leader of the House of Commons Penny Mordaunt MP made this assurance after high-profile Labour parliamentarian Liam Byrne told the British Parliament the head of short-selling Viceroy Research and its leader Fraser John Perring has links with the Russian state. Labour MP Liam Byrne raised the alarm during a debate in the House of Commons and

asked the British government to look into the activities of Viceroy Research and its leader Fraser John Perring as a matter of urgency. Penny Mordaunt MP, who has previously served as Minister of State for the Armed Forces, thanked the Labour MP for raising questions on Viceroy Research's "very important matter". The Leader of the House of Commons said: "I will ensure that the Security Minister (Tom Tugendhat MBE) has heard his concerns. He is overseeing the strengthening of the architecture in government to identify what is going on behind particular deals." She said the gov't has in recent years "strengthened capacity in government to spot what is going on and to ensure



that everyone is wide-eyed about it. I will raise this case with the Security Minister". Sources have said that the ruling Conservative party's MP and leader of the House of Commons has already raised the issue with the Minister of Security who is looking into the serious concern. The Minister, said the source, has expressed alarm at the revelations in the House of Commons. Labour MP Liam Byrne

US, South Korea  
hold air drills after  
North's missile test

SEOUL: The US and South Korea held joint air exercises on Friday, a day after North Korea launched a new solid-fueled Hwasong-18 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). The joint exercises involve B-52H bomber, South Korea's Defense Ministry said in a statement. Seoul used its F-35A radar-evading fighters and F-15K jets while Washington deployed F-16 fighters in addition to the bomber, the ministry said. However, it did not reveal the location of the joint air exercises held on the Korean Peninsula. The Hwasong-18 will defend North Korea, "suppress invasions, and protect the safety of the nation," according to North Korea state media KCNA. Seoul said: "The drills reaffirmed the capability to rapidly deploy US strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula as well as the allies' enhanced combined operational capabilities and interoperability." On Thursday, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un guided the latest missile launch. Seoul's and Washington's joint drills also came a day after the US and Japan conducted a joint air exercise over the Sea of Japan, known as East Sea by Seoul, on Thursday. According to Japan's military, four US F-16 and four Japanese F-2 fighter jets took part in the drills "amid an increasingly severe security environment surrounding Japan, including North Korea's suspected high angle ICBM-class Ballistic Missile launch." "This bilateral exercise reaffirms the strong intention between Japan and the United States to respond to any situation, the readiness of JSDF and US Armed Forces, and further strengthens the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-US Alliance," the Japanese Joint Staff said.

Graft-accused  
MEP Eva Kaili  
released from jail

BRUSSELS: Greek MEP Eva Kaili, who has been charged with corruption as part of the so-called Qatargate inquiry, was released from prison and placed under house arrest on Friday. Kaili left Brussels' Haren prison in her lawyer's car and was driven straight to her apartment near the European Parliament. She has been ordered to remain at home pending trial, while wearing an electronic tracker. "My daughter is waiting for me, so I'm very happy that I will be with her in a bit," a beaming Kaili told journalists as she arrived, referring to her two-year-old child. Speaking Greek and then in English, she added: "The fight continues, with determination, from my lawyers. We will talk soon." Kaili, a 44-year-old ex-newsreader and former vice president of the parliament, has become the public face of a corruption scandal that has rocked EU politics. Prior to her release she had spent four months in custody and was the last of the main suspects to remain in prison while the Belgian probe continues. Her partner, parliamentary aide Francesco Giorgi, has also been charged and released. Two others, Belgian MEP Marc Tarabella and Italian former EU lawmaker Pier Antonio Panzeri, were released to their residences in Belgium on Thursday, also wearing electronic tracking bracelets. —APP



HASSANABADA: A Police personal holding gun stand guard to maintain security during 'Besakhi Mela' at Gurdwara Panja Shaib in City. —Online

## Türkiye worried about biased EU observers

The parliamentary speaker also expressed Türkiye's concerns about the inclusion of Andrej Hunko and Sibel Arslan in the delegation

ANKARA: Ahead of a critical election that will determine the next president of Türkiye and lawmakers of Parliament, Türkiye is being closely watched by the international community. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) will deploy staff to observe the election. Yet, Ankara is unsure about their neutrality. As a PACE delegation visited Parliament Speaker Mustafa Şentop, Türkiye's worries became more explicit about the backgrounds of observers, including those joining events of a party associated with a terrorist group. Şentop was blunt as he addressed Frank Schwabe, head of the PACE delegation. "I think it is unfortunate that you made statements about your concerns that Turkish elections would be

democratic, fair and held in a free environment," Şentop said at the meeting at Parliament. "Such prejudiced statements are typical of an understanding of Türkiye based on double standards," he added. The delegation, in the meantime, issued a message on Friday, after meeting with Şentop and other officials, claiming that the electoral environment "remains challenging and difficult for opposition forces," without elaborating. The 42-member delegation will monitor the elections, which will pit incumbent President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan against three other candidates, while the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) will strive to keep its majority in Parliament in simultaneous legislative elections. "The delegation calls on the Turkish authorities to make use of all means to alleviate the effects of

polarization, ensure that these elections are free, fair, transparent and in line with international standards, strengthen trust in the electoral system throughout the country and ensure that the will of the Turkish people will be duly reflected in the ballot box and afterward," a statement by PACE said. Şentop assured them that all preparations were in place for a peaceful, democratic and free election in compliance with international standards, noting Türkiye's experience in democratic elections and openness to the international observation of its elections. He told Schwabe that a pre-election report their delegation prepared would be taken into consideration by Türkiye, which attaches importance to constructive criticism and advice. "But this report can have an impact only if it reflects an unbiased and constructive un-

derstanding," Şentop added. He urged Schwabe to avoid similar pre-election statements as Türkiye expected this delegation to "apply rules of observation meticulously and in a neutral manner." The parliamentary speaker also expressed Türkiye's concerns about the inclusion of Andrej Hunko and Sibel Arslan in the delegation. Hunko of Germany and Arslan of Switzerland were documented attending rallies of supporters of the PKK terrorist group. Hunko was denied access to Türkiye as an observer before the 2018 elections for this reason. The terrorist group finds widespread support in Europe, which Ankara accuses of turning a blind eye. Türkiye has been at odds with a number of countries allowing rallies by PKK supporters. Şentop also lamented the fact that PACE did not take the necessary steps on the issue, although the

Turkish delegation to PACE openly expressed their disapproval of the inclusion of any parliamentarian supporting terrorist groups in the delegation of observers. "PACE is free to determine the composition of the delegation but we cannot allow people hostile to Türkiye (to observe the elections)," he said. The PKK is recognized as a terrorist group by the United States and European Union and is known for its ties to the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Türkiye. HDP nominated its lawmakers under the name of a new party for upcoming elections as it faced closure due to a lawsuit for its terrorism connection. Şentop added that Türkiye's relations with the Council of Europe and PACE have been strained, pointing out "reports and statements about our country that go beyond criticism." — Agencies

Morocco  
receives 2.9  
mln tourists  
in Q1

RABAT: Tourist arrivals in Morocco reached 2.9 million in the first quarter of 2023, a 17-percent increase from the same period of 2019, a reference pre-pandemic year, the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism said on Thursday.

"Tourism in Morocco continues its ascent to unprecedented levels, as evidenced by the exceptional figures recorded at the end of March 2023," the ministry said. Tourists from Spain, the United Kingdom, Italy and North America recorded a growth of 45 percent, 28 percent, 9 percent and 5 percent, respectively, it added.

Nearly 13 million tourists visited Morocco in 2019, the year before the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, with its total tourism revenues amounting to 9.6 billion U.S dollars. The North African country adopted on March 17 a 580-million-dollar plan to develop its tourism sector to attract 17.5 million tourists by 2026. —APP

Magnitude  
7.0  
earthquake  
hits Indonesia

JAKARTA: A 7.0-magnitude earthquake was recorded in the sea north of the main Indonesian island of Java, the US Geological Survey (USGS) said on Friday, with no immediate reports of damage or casualties.

The strong quake struck at 4:55 pm local time (09:55 GMT), the USGS said, with Indonesia's geological agency ruling out a tsunami after the epicentre was detected to be at a depth of 594 kilometres (370 miles).

Indonesia experiences frequent quakes due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity that stretches from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin. Friday's quake struck roughly 160 kilometres northwest of the city of Surabaya, the country's second-most populous city that is home to more than two million.

The tremor was felt over a large part of the island of Java, and as far away as the island of Bali. In Surabaya, it was barely felt, but some lamps were swaying," said an AFP reporter on the scene, adding that he felt the tremor "for a while". In November, a 5.6-magnitude quake hit West Java province, on the same island, killing 602 people.

Most of the victims of that earthquake were killed when buildings collapsed or in landslides triggered by the tremor. A 6.1-magnitude earthquake struck off Sumatra island in Indonesia on April 3, shaking homes of panicked residents but causing no casualties or damage. —Agencies

Finland joins  
1st NATO  
exercise as  
member

DNA

HELSINKI: Finland completed its first NATO exercise as an alliance member, the Finnish Navy announced.

"Two frigates deployed with Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1) visit Helsinki from 13th to 16th April 2023. Before arrival they participated in an exercise organized by the Coastal Fleet," read a statement by the Finnish Navy.

On their way to Helsinki, German frigate FGS Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Portuguese frigate NRP Bartolomeu Dias exercised together with the Finnish Coastal Fleet's vessels in the Gulf of Finland on Wednesday, it further said. "This was the first time for Finland and for Coastal Fleet to conduct an exercise and a visit as Finland being an Ally of NATO," the statement noted.

"The PASSEX (Passing exercise) developed interoperability between the participating vessels in producing situation picture and in navigation," it added. As part of NATO's open-door policy and enlargement, Finland became the 31st member of the alliance on April 4.

## Briefs

### China will not sell arms to any party in Ukraine war

BEIJING: China won't sell weapons to either side in the war in Ukraine, the country's foreign minister said Friday, responding to Western concerns that Beijing could provide military assistance to Russia.

China has maintained that it is neutral in the conflict, while backing Russia politically, rhetorically and economically at a time when Western nations have imposed punishing sanctions and sought to isolate Moscow for its invasion of its neighbor.

Qin Gang is the highest-level Chinese official to make such an explicit statement about arms sales to Russia. He added that China would also regulate the export of items with dual civilian and military use.

"Regarding the export of military items, China adopts a prudent and responsible attitude," Qin said at a news conference alongside visiting German counterpart Annalena Baerbock. "China will not provide weapons to relevant parties of the conflict, and manage and control the exports of dual-use items in accordance with laws and regulations." - Agencies

### Iranians mark Jerusalem Day to support Palestinians

DNA

TEHRAN: Tens of Thousands of Iranians, some chanting "death to America" and "death to Israel," marched in the capital of Tehran on Friday to mark Jerusalem Day, an annual show of support for the Palestinians. Senior Iranian officials attended the rally, including President Ebrahim Raisi.

Since Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979, the rallies marking what is also known as Al-Quds Day have typically been held typically held on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan. Israel captured east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war and annexed it to its capital. The Palestinians seek the eastern part of Jerusalem as a future capital. Jerusalem is the home of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest shrine in Islam. The compound, revered by Jews as the Temple Mount, is also the most sacred site in Judaism.

### Government announces Eid holidays from April 21-25

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has announced a five-day holiday for the occasion of EidulFitr, which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

As per the official notification released by the Cabinet Division, the holidays have been scheduled from Friday, April 21, to Tuesday, April 25, providing a five-day long break for citizens to celebrate the holy festival. "It is for general information that the Prime Minister is pleased to declare 21st to 25th April 2023 (Friday to Tuesday) as public holidays on the occasion of EidulFitr," the notification dated April 13 said. Eidul Fitr is a significant festival in the Islamic calendar, celebrated at the end of the Holy month of Ramadan. Muslims all over the world observe a month of fasting, and Eid celebrations mark the end of this period of self-restraint. This year, Eidul Fitr is expected to fall on April 21 or April 22, depending on the sighting of the moon.

# Russia trains Belarusian pilots in nuclear weapons use

Russia has a union agreement with Belarus that envisions close political, economic and military ties. Russian troops used Belarusian territory to roll into Ukraine from the north in February 2022 and have maintained a presence in Belarus

DNA

MOSCOW: Belarusian air force crews have completed their training for using tactical nuclear weapons as part of Russia's plan to deploy the weapons to its ally Belarus amid the fighting in neighboring Ukraine, the Russian Defense Ministry said Friday. The ministry released a video in which a Belarusian pilot said that the training course in Russia had given the crews of the Belarusian air force's Su-25 ground attack jets the necessary skills for using the weapons. Russian President Vladimir Putin declared last month that Moscow planned to put some of its tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus. It

was another attempt by the Kremlin leader to dangle the nuclear threat to discourage the West from supporting Ukraine.

Russia has a union agreement with Belarus that envisions close political, economic and military ties. Russian troops used Belarusian territory to roll into Ukraine from the north in February 2022 and have maintained a presence in Belarus. The deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus would put them closer to potential targets in Ukraine and NATO members in Eastern and Central Europe. Belarus shares a 1,250-kilometer (778-mile) border with NATO members Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Such weapons are intended to destroy enemy troops on the battlefield. They have a

relatively short range and much less power compared with nuclear warheads fitted to long-range strategic missiles, which are capable of obliterating whole cities.

Putin said that construction of storage facilities for tactical nuclear weapons would be completed in Belarus by July 1. Russia also has helped modernize Belarusian warplanes to adapt them to carrying nuclear weapons and provided the country with Iskander short-range missiles that could be fitted with a nuclear warhead. Putin has emphasized that Russia would retain control over any nuclear weapons deployed to Belarus, just as the US controls its tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of its NATO allies. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine had Sovi-

et nuclear weapons stationed in their territory, but handed them over to Russia after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the German foreign minister has urged China to pressure Moscow to end the war in Ukraine, saying no other country had "more influence on Russia". Speaking on Friday after a meeting with her Chinese counterpart Qin Gang in Beijing, Annalena Baerbock said she also expressed concerns about human rights issues and escalating tensions with Taiwan. Her visit comes a week after that of French President Emmanuel Macron and the head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, who also pushed China to play a greater role in resolving the Ukraine crisis.

## Inflation ebbs despite surge in prices

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inflation fell, albeit slightly, despite increase in the prices of 26 essential commodities during the week ending on Thursday, according to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on Friday. The PBS weekly report said that inflation decreased by 0.6% on a weekly basis; however, it stood at 44.61% on an annual basis. It added that in the week, 26 essential commodities became expensive, nine became cheaper, while the prices of 16 remained stable. The 26 essential items which saw increase in prices include potatoes, sugar, eggs, red lentils, salt, beef, mutton, jaggery, chicken, washing soap, lentil [black grams], rice, match boxes, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), fresh milk and yoghurt. Read more: Inflation to begin decelerating over next few months: SBP The 9 items, which saw decline in prices include onion, tomato, dal, chickpea, rice, yellow lentils, flour, mustard oil and firewood. The prices of the remaining 16 commodities in the essential items basket remained stable. On the weekly basis, the price of potato increased by 8.59%, eggs by 2.65%, LPG by 4.47%, chicken by 2.19%, washing soap by 1.83%, bananas by 1.64%, lentils by 1.45% and jaggery by 1.25%. The price of tomato went down by 22.43%, onion by 15.85%, yellow lentil 0.35%, dried brown chickpeas by 0.82%, flour by 2.75%, mustard oil by 0.09%, and garlic by 1.29%, according to PBS data.



LAHORE: Chairman PTI Imran Khan sits at Lahore High Court during his appearance. - DNA

# Pentagon leak suspect Jack Teixeira charged

BOSTON: Jack Teixeira, the Massachusetts Air National Guard member suspected of leaking a trove of classified military intelligence, was charged by the federal government Friday with retention and transmission of national defense information and willful retention of classified documents. Teixeira, 21, appeared shortly after 10 a.m. Eastern before Magistrate Judge David Hennessy of the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts in Boston. The two criminal charges carry a maximum of 15 years in prison. Teixeira did not enter a plea and is detained pending a hearing on Wednesday. The gov-

ernment is seeking continued detention. Teixeira was wearing a beige prison-issued outfit and was handcuffed. He sat next to his lawyer, looked around the room, and nodded at his family in the first row. Hennessy asked Teixeira if he understood that he has the right to be silent. Teixeira answered yes. The judge reminded him, "Your words can be used against you." At the end of the proceedings, Teixeira's father shouted, "Love you, Jack!" - to which the suspect responded, "Love you, too, Dad." Teixeira was arrested Thursday afternoon at a family residence in Dighton, Mass., following a

fast-moving investigation related to leaks of military intelligence that started with a small online group and eventually led to hundreds of government secrets spilling out to the wider world. Skip to end of carousel Dozens of highly classified documents have been leaked online, revealing sensitive information intended for senior military and intelligence leaders. In an exclusive investigation, The Post also reviewed scores of additional secret documents, most of which have not been made public. Who leaked the documents? Jack Teixeira, a young member of the Massachusetts Air National Guard,

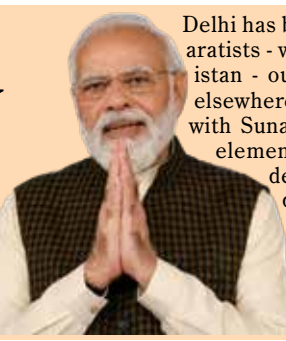
was arrested Thursday in the investigation into leaks of hundreds of pages of classified military intelligence. The Washington Post reported that the individual who leaked the information shared documents with a small circle of online friends on the Discord chat platform. What do the leaked documents reveal about Ukraine? The documents reveal profound concerns about the war's trajectory and Kyiv's capacity to wage a successful offensive against Russian forces. According to a Defense Intelligence Agency assessment among the leaked documents, "Negotiations to end the conflict are unlikely during 2023." - Agencies

## Arab nations discuss Syria return to Arab League

RIYADH: Delegates from nine Arab nations are meeting in Saudi Arabia to discuss the possibility of normalising relations with Syria and its return to the Arab League. Ministers and top officials from the six GCC countries - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - along with those of Egypt, Iraq and Jordan were to meet on Friday at Saudi Arabia's request. Syria's suspension from the Arab League was imposed after President Bashar al-Assad's government launched a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests in 2011. Al-Assad has been shunned by many Middle Eastern countries and is a Western pariah over the 12-year war, which has killed more than half a million people and forced about half of Syria's pre-war population from their homes. Saudi Arabia, which has long resisted normalisation with al-Assad, said after a rapprochement with Iran, Syria's key regional ally, a new approach was needed with Damascus. Riyadh invited Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad for talks on Wednesday in a landmark visit and both countries agreed to reopen embassies soon. Damascus and Riyadh are moving towards resuming flights and consular services for the first time since the war began. Any recommendation to reinstate Syria in the 22-member Arab League, whose next meeting is due to be held in Saudi Arabia in May, is likely to draw protests from Western capitals. - DNA

## PM Modi raises embassy security with UK's Sunak

NEW DELHI: Britain should take action after a violent incident during protests outside India's embassy in London last month, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi told British counterpart Rishi Sunak on Thursday. New



Delhi has been upset about protests and vandalism by Sikh separatists - who seek an independent Sikh homeland called Khalistan - outside the Indian High Commission in London and elsewhere in the US and Canada. In a telephone conversation with Sunak, Modi called for "strong action against anti-India elements" by the British government following the incident, Modi's office said in a statement. Sunak condemned the incident as "unacceptable violence", his Downing Street office said in a readout of the call. "He stressed that extremism had no place in the UK and updated on the steps being taken to ensure the security of Indian High Commission staff," Sunak's office added. - DNA

# Five million more risk poverty post-floods

Int'l Rescue Committee agrees to work with Sindh govt in post-flood relief activities

DNA

KARACHI: The International Rescue Committee (IRC) on Friday agreed to work with the Sindh government in post-flood relief activities, climate change-related plans, and to help in the health sector, particularly against malnutrition. This emerged in a meeting between the Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and IRC CEO David Miliband (through video link). During the meeting, the CM told the IRC chief that as per the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment report, Sindh has been at the receiving end of about 61 percent of the total damages and 75 percent of the total losses due to the

floods, adding that the adverse impact of climate change has disrupted every conceivable facet of life in the province. Shah furthered that the devastating impact of floods has "undone" a significant chunk of public sector investments in the province as it permeated across all sectors. He added that 24 out of the 30 districts have been declared "calamity-hit" where the floods have affected more than 12.4 million people, with more than 1,000 lives lost as well as over 2 million housing units impacted, and over 450,000 livestock perished. The chief minister also said that about 20,000 schools and more than 1,000 health facilities have been damaged. He

added that about 8,500 km of the road network and 7,300 km of irrigation network has also been damaged and the estimates suggested the provincial poverty rate may increase, pushing an additional 5 million people below the poverty line with over 4.3 million additional people facing the threat of food insecurity. The IRC CEO added that his organisation was working in eight districts of the province, Dadu, Jamshoro, Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, Tharparkar, and Umerkot to address malnutrition issues among pregnant mothers and mother-child healthcare. Shah and Miliband also discussed the strategic plan developed by

the provincial government. **Strategic Action Plan:** Shah said that the strategic action plan developed by his government aimed to guide Sindh's flood response and priorities from a short, medium and long-term perspective. "The core focus of the action plan is to serve as a guide for strategic prioritization for planning, programming, and implementation for Sindh in the post-flood context," he said and added the strategic action plan prioritised critical intervention areas to address systemic issues. The strategic action plan focuses on irrigation and water resource infrastructure (including drainage systems), housing and community facilities, livelihood, communica-

tions (roads infrastructure), education, health, and human impact (poverty, social protection, food security, psycho-social impact). Shah also told IRC that the growers have been given cash to purchase wheat seed at a rate of Rs5,000 per acre, as a result, Sindh has grown a bumper wheat crop during the ongoing Rabi season. He also added that the flood-affected people were being given cash to reconstruct or repair their damaged houses. The IRC CEO told the chief minister that he would discuss the issues faced by the provincial government with his team and then visit Karachi to meet in person to finalize the relief activities program.

## Oil steady after IEA says supply cut could hurt

JEDDAH: Oil prices edged lower on Friday after the West's energy watchdog warned that output cuts announced by OPEC+ producers could exacerbate an oil supply deficit and hurt consumers. Brent crude futures were down 10 cents, or 0.12 per cent, to \$85.99 per barrel at 0900 GMT. West Texas Intermediate crude futures (WTI) slipped 9 cents, or 0.11pc, to \$82.07 a barrel. Both contracts were set to post a fourth consecutive week of gains amid easing concerns over a banking crisis last month and the surprise decision last week by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers led by Russia, a group known as OPEC+, to further cut output.

Brent is set to post a 1pc weekly gain, while WTI was up 1.7pc. OPEC on Thursday flagged downside risks to summer oil demand as part of the backdrop for the 1.16 million barrels per day (bpd) cut. In its benchmark monthly report on Friday, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said the OPEC+ decision could hurt consumers and global economic recovery. - Agencies

## IED blast kills three children in Chaman

DNA

QUETTA: At least three children lost their lives in Balochistan's Chaman district on Friday when an improvised explosive device (IED) exploded in the RehmanKahol area near the Afghan border. According to Levies sources, the blast took place in an abandoned house where children were playing. While two of the children were killed instantly, the third child passed away while being taken to the hospital. The heirs of the deceased were transporting the injured child to Quetta for medical treatment when he succumbed to his injuries.

Following the incident, senior administration officials and Levies personnel arrived at the site to launch an investigation. The incident comes only two days after a pen bomb seriously injured a madrassah student in the Saranan tehsil of Balochistan's Pishin district.

## N Korea says it tested "most powerful" missile to date

PYONGYANG: North Korea says it tested a new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile - its "most powerful" missile to date. State media hailed launch, which led to a brief evacuation order in Japan, a "miraculous success". Solid-fuel missiles can be fired more quickly than liquid-fuel ones, making them harder to intercept. But analysts say they are not without downsides. South Korea maintains that the North will need more time to develop a fully operational solid-fuel ICBM. This is the first time the North has test-fired a solid-fuel ICBM after years of testing solid-fuel short-range missiles. It has tested various ICBMs, but these were powered by liquid propellants, which must be fuelled directly ahead of launch - a process that can take hours. Experts describe this is a breakthrough in Pyongyang's weapons programme, as solid-fuel ICBMs come ready-fuelled, and would therefore enable North Korea to strike the US with far less warning. South Korea's Defence Ministry on Friday said the technology is not new, and described North Korea's test on Thursday as a "middle step" in developing a full-fledged solid-fuel ICBM system. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who supervised the test with his daughter, wife, and sister, reportedly said the test would make rivals "suffer from extreme fear and anxiety". He also said the test-fired weapon, known as the Hwasong-18, supports the North's aggressive military strategy. - Agencies