



Islamabad POST

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Gaza is on verge of catastrophic famine: EU Chief Ursula

Detailed News On Page-07

Minister calls for social media rules, reforms

Detailed News On Page-04



Never refused to play one down: Rizwan

Detailed News On Page-06



Reko Diq a game changer

PM Shehbaz lauds Saudi support for Pak development

Shehbaz Sharif was apprised that the feasibility study of the multibillion-dollar Reko Diq gold and copper mining project would be completed by the end of 2024

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), led by Mr. Sultan Bin Abdul Rehman Al Marshad, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), SFD, during its visit to Pakistan (22-24 March, 2024), called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad. The Prime Minister welcomed the delegation and appreciated the long-standing friendship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and the efforts of SFD for providing financing to Pakistan in the fields of Health, Energy, infrastructure and Education as well as the recent floods. The CEO, SFD thanked the Prime Minister and Government of Pakistan for the warm welcome and hospitality as well as the conferment of the National Civil Award, Hilal-e-Quaid-e-Azam. The Prime Minister also appreciated the signing of Financial Agreements, early today, between SFD and the Government of Pakistan worth US\$ 107 Mn for construction of Hydropower stations in AJK, which would not only provide clean energy but would also help eradicate the menace of deforestation, besides providing job opportunities to the local population. The CEO, SFD shared updates with the Prime Minister about the ongoing projects including Mohmand Multi-purpose Hydropower Project, Golan Gol Hydropower Project, Malakand Regional Development Project, and other projects funded through Saudi grants. The Prime Minister, while appreciating the support of the SFD, highlighted the need to expedite the processing of the new projects, shared with SFD, in the field of green energy and infrastructure, which once implemented, would go a long way in the economic revival of the country, besides serving the needs of the local communities. The CEO, SFD assured early processing of the

Continued on Page 06

Dar urges 'aggressive financing' for nuclear energy projects

FM has held separate meetings with the UK Minister of State for South Asia and Commonwealth and with the Minister of State for Development

DNA

BRUSSELS: Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Friday called for "aggressive financing" of nuclear energy projects, citing climate vulnerability of developing countries to be the major reason of the initiative. He made the remarks in a video message issued on the sidelines of the first Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels. He hailed the summit as a positive development for discussing alternative energy for countries vulnerable to climate change. "So the summit is going well. Different ideas have been put forth. We have also supported this," he said, adding that Pakistan already had nuclear energy capacity of more than 3,500 megawatts. He highlighted that Pakistan was also building another nuclear power plant, Chashma C-5, with the cooperation of China. "Nuclear is the safest option — it is safe and cost effective. And the world currently needs it,"

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), led by Mr. Sultan Bin Abdul Rehman Al Marshad, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), SFD called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad. — DNA

Pak condemns the terrorist attack in Kandahar

Extends sincere condolences to the bereaved families

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan strongly condemns the terrorist attack that took place in Kandahar on 21 March 2024 and resulted in the loss of valuable lives and injuries to many others. The Government and the people of Pakistan extend their sincere condolences to the bereaved families and pray for the early recovery of the injured. Pakistan reiterates its strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Terrorism is a shared concern that both countries need to address through collective efforts.

Two soldiers Embraced martyrdom in DI Khan

Security forces of Pakistan remain determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Two soldiers of Pakistan Army embraced martyrdom on Friday after a vehicle borne suicide bomber exploded himself on a security forces convoy in Dera Ismail Khan District. According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, the two brave sons of soil were identified as Naib Subedar Yasir Shaheel (Age: 38 years, resident of District Kohat) and

Continued on Page 06

Better late than never SC declares Justice Siddiqui's removal illegal

The decision was announced by a five-member bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Fazi Isa in a 23-page judgment. Apart from the CJP, the bench comprised Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Irfan Saadat Khan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday declared the removal of former Islamabad High Court (IHC) Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui illegal, directing that he may now be considered as a retired judge. The decision was announced by a five-member bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Fazi Isa in a 23-page judgment. Apart from the CJP, the bench comprised Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Irfan Saadat Khan. The verdict noted that the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC)

Continued on Page 06

KP: Opp to move court over assembly session controversy

SAFIULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Central Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday said that the opposition parties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will approach the relevant court and the Election

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Court orders to produce Imran Khan, Qureshi

Judge added that jail authorities make excuses

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court Friday approved a request seeking to produce Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and party leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi in court, directing authorities to ensure the politicians' production on April 20. The petition, requesting their production, was heard by Judicial Magistrate Mureed Abbas in relation to the Parliament attack case against Imran Khan and others, in which the former prime minister's lawyer, Naeem Panjotra, gave his arguments.

Punjab CM takes notice of torture incident

DNA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz took notice of a torture incident on a widow and her daughters at Sher Zaman Colony in the area of Civil Lines. CM directed IG Police to undertake prompt measures for the protection of the affected woman and her children along with taking a stern action against both the accused found involved in committing torture. CM ordered CCPO to submit a report after investigating the incident.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. — Editor

"Worst rigging in history"

Gandapur terms Shehbaz 'Form 47' prime minister

The incumbent government in the Centre has been formed after stealing PTI's 180 seats," CM Gandapur said while speaking to reporters

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in his latest jibe at the incumbent government on Friday said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reached parliament through 'flawed' Form 47, once again alleging that "worst rigging in history" was occurred in the recent elections. "The incumbent government in the Centre has been formed after stealing PTI's 180 seats," CM Gandapur said while speaking to reporters outside a court on Friday. He went on to say that it would be useless to talk to PM Shehbaz Sharif as the latter was himself became a lawmaker on the basis of Form 47 results, as he criticised the 2024 general elections. As ciphergate issue reemerges after United States Assistant Secretary Of State Donald Lu's testimony before a Congressional panel, the firebrand Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader

Continued on Page 06

Balochistan awaits formation of cabinet

BUREAU REPORT

QUETTA: It has been 19 days since Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti took oath of office but is yet to form a cabinet to begin running provincial affairs smoothly. In this regard, the province's chief executive announced that two more weeks are required to form the cabinet. The restive province currently remains deprived of a cabinet, as provincial lawmakers link the delay in the formation of cabinet with the Senate's April 2 elections. It should be noted that a total of 57 lawmakers in the province were administered

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan keen to enhance trade ties with UK and Germany

The British High Commissioner, H.E Ms. Jane Marriott, commended Pakistan's commitment to economic reforms and expressed the UK's continued support for Pakistan's development goals

STAFF REPORT / DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb was called on by H.E. Mr. Alfred Grannas, Ambassador of Germany on 22nd March, 2024 in Islamabad. —DNA

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan, H.E Ms. Jane Marriott, called on Minister for Finance & Revenue Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb today, to discuss matters of bilateral significance and strengthening the long-standing relations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. Minister for Finance & Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, acknowledged the enduring relations between Pakistan and the UK. The minister also apprised the High Commissioner about the conclusion of the second IMF review under the Standby Arrangement (SBA) and reiterated the Government's commitment to implement prudent fiscal policies and structural reforms in various sectors such as FBR, privatization,

Continued on Page 06

ZAMANA

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CM Maryam to introduce sustainable service models

Chief Minister agrees to cooperate with FCDO, UK in various sectors for efficient public services

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : "Socio-economic data of the entire population of Punjab will be collected through Socio Economic Registry Programme for effective planning of various Government initiatives," said Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif while presiding over a review meeting on proposed road map of Chief Minister's Initiatives with the support of Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, UK. She added, "Emphasis must be on monitoring of service delivery and good governance to ensure public welfare." Madam Chief Minister agreed on fostering cooperation with FCDO, UK in health, education, solid waste management, climate change, provision of clean drinking water, increase in revenue generation and other sectors to provide efficient services to people. Madam Chief Minister noted, "Steps are needed to increase local government revenue by 50%." Madam Maryam Nawaz Sharif highlighted, "None of the rural health centers are satisfactory. Therefore, we are bringing mobile health units and clinics on the wheels programme." Madam Maryam Nawaz Sharif said, "We are bringing effective and sustainable waste manage-

ment system for the entire province, because the province does not have a proper garbage collection system and lacks landfill sites. Villages have been neglected especially in this sector." Madam Chief Minister also emphasised on the need for working on quality of education and training of teachers. She was briefed that by 2018, electricity, clean water, washroom facilities were provided in many schools. They also assured their support in increasing the production of wheat, corn and sugarcane. The Chief Minister welcomed the delegation of Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, UK and appreciated their commitment for sustainable initiatives. She said, "It is a pleasure working with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office." Madam Chief Minister noted, "With the support of FCDO, there will be significant improvement in education and health sector." She appointed Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb her focal person for the purpose, and vowed to restructure PMU for better coordination and follow up. She highlighted, "If there is a proper monitoring system, the desired results of the projects will be achieved." The Chief Minister said, "Government is also taking steps for environmental protection, as there is a great need to

work on smog and the improvement of air quality, especially in the urban areas." She added, "Environmental protection and increase in revenue are other areas that need a lot of improvement." Madam Chief Minister said, "We are working on short term, medium term and long term development projects." She agreed to work together to increase enrollment of children in schools, improve quality of education and infrastructure. Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Former Senator Pervaiz Rashid, Provincial Minister School Education Rana Sikandar Hayat, Provincial Minister Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Khawaja Salman Rafiq, Provincial Minister Primary and Secondary Health Care Khawaja Imran Nazir, MPA Sania Ashiq, Chairman P&D, Secretaries Finance, Specialized Healthcare, Primary and Secondary Healthcare, Schools Education, Population, Forests, Energy, Environment, DG PDMA, CEO PBIT, Political Counselor from UK High Commission, Matt Clancy, Senior Governance Advisor Naveed Aziz, Senior Responsible Officer SNG Programme, Clara Strandage, British Representative in Punjab, Mujeeb Khan, Project Director SNG, Bilal Rao, Delivery Associates and other relevant officers attended the meeting.



ISLAMABAD : Federal Minister of Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal holds meeting with Chinese Ambassador, Jiang Zaidong at Planning Ministry.—DNA

IGP grants Rs22m scholarships to 48 cops

DNA

LAHORE: Inspector General Police Punjab Dr Usman Anwar has approved Rs22 million educational scholarships to 48 police officers for Masters, MPhil and other higher degrees from a well-known private university. Constables, Head Constables, Junior clerks, Sub-Inspectors, Police Technical Officers and other rank officers are among the recipients of educational scholarships, who will pursue higher studies in the best disciplines and modern subjects at the University of Management and Technology. DIG Welfare Ghazi Salah-ud-Din said that Punjab Police and University of Management Technology had signed an MoU two months ago for higher education of police employees.

Minister for strong primary Health care on district level

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Minister Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Syed Qasim Ali Shah has stated that in order to manage the burden of patients in major hospitals in Peshawar, it is essential to strengthen the Primary Health Care system on district level. Under the Primary Health Care Reform Project, during a one-day training workshop for Lady Health Workers coordinators, he expressed the need for improvement in the system to ensure basic healthcare facilities are provided to people in health centers and DHQ hospitals in the province. He emphasized that although there are challenges in the health system, working as a team would help in overcoming these challenges. Minister health further stated that

it is his responsibility to provide the best health care facilities, especially in underserved areas. He assured Lady Health Workers coordinators that all their challenges and issues would be addressed promptly, emphasizing the importance of not neglecting the health of the people. Syed Qasim Ali Shah stressed the importance of treating patients as clients rather than just medical cases to ensure better facilities in hospitals. He reiterated that all doctors are part of his team and without them, he cannot achieve anything, emphasizing the need to work as a team to serve the people. Director General Health Services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Shaikat Ali, highlighted the importance of enhancing the skills of Lady Health Workers to strengthen the Primary Health Care system and assured continuous support for providing better health facilities to the public. Dr. Ikramullah Khan, Director of the Primary Health Care Reforms Project, explained that the purpose of the workshop was to enhance the capabilities of district Lady Health Workers coordinators so they understand the project's objectives, scope, and expected outcomes. Following this workshop, better coordination between the Primary Management Unit and District Health Committee is expected, leading to timely data updates and improved reporting. Regional Director-General Hazara Division, Dr. Shah Faisal Khanzada, Director Public Health Dr. Arshad Ali, Director IMU Dr. Ijaz, and senior officers from the Health Department were also present at the occasion.

SSP hold meetings to review law, order situation

LARKANA : Newly posted Senior Superintendent (SSP) Larkana Mir Rohaheel Khan Khoso has taken over the charge of the office and had meeting with all the Police officers/officials of the District among all DSPs and SHO of district, SSP office, on Friday. The SSP issued directives to ensure peace and tranquility in Larkana and maintenance of law and order situation. He also issued directions for the elimination of crime in the District and to deal slackness in duties with stern legal action. SSP Larkana further said that it is the prime responsibility of the police to protect the lives and properties of the public. He said that all resources will be utilized to wipe out social evils and other crimes in the District be count Larkana among crime-free districts. SSP Mir Roheel Khan Khoso directed concerned Police officials to ensure cordial relations between the police and public to restore the public confidence in the police. In the meeting, the overall law and order situation in Larkana district was reviewed. In the meeting, targeted and intelligence-based operation against criminals, actions against crime professionals and other departmental matters including police efficiency were under consideration. He visited the whole city Larkana and asked the problems of the citizens. He reached the press Club Larkana and met the press. "I have been given instructions by DIG to control robbery, and murder of any citizen and I am hopeful I will do everything for the Larkana district. He said that police pickets should be increased in markets, shopping malls, financial institutions areas and highways, and they should be checked from time to time", SSP said.—APP

Govt initiates Ramadan relief for needy

QUETTA : Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) Mir Ubaidullah Gorgage on Friday said that the provincial government under the leadership of Balochistan Chief Minister was taking all possible measures to provide relief to people including needy people in the month of Ramadan. He expressed these views while distributing food items to the poor and deserving people in his constituency of BP44. Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader, Mir Ubaidullah Gorgage said that during Ramadan, we should also take care of the poor and deserving people around us. He said that in this regard, the government was making every possible effort to provide relief to the

people within its resources. The provincial government under the leadership of Chief Minister Balochistan is taking all possible measures to provide relief to the people. He said that he is fully aware of the problems of the people of his constituency and all available resources will be used to solve them. He said that ration was being distributed keeping in mind the difficulties of poor and deserving people in Ramadan saying that ration would be continued in the future. Deputy Commissioner Saad Bin Asad said that on the special instructions of the Chief Minister, Sasta markets were being organized to provide relief to the people in Ramadan while the administration was

taking action against those involved in artificial inflation and no one would be allowed to create artificial inflation during Ramadan. He said that in the blessed month of Ramadan, philanthropists should also take care of the poor and deserving people and get the pleasure of Allah Almighty. On this occasion, Member of Assembly Mir Ubaidullah Gorgage and Deputy Commissioner Quetta Saad Bin Asad distributed the ration among the poor and deserving people. On this occasion, Deputy General Secretary of PPP Mir Sanaulah Jatak, Central Leader Mir Lal Muhammad Jatak, Subidar Jatak and other leaders were also present on the occasion.—APP

Minister commends Punjab CM's climate initiatives

Azma added that CM Punjab is also seriously concerned with the issue of Dengue fever spread and taking all early preventive measures to reduce the burden

ISLAMABAD : Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari Friday lauded Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif for taking practical steps to address the challenges of climate change where Punjab government had launched an application to track an ongoing tree plantation drive in the country through geo-tagging technology. Talking to a private news channel, she said it was the first time that modern technology was being employed in Punjab to carry out the plantation drive, adding, a special feature of geo-tagging will enable the forest departments' officers to keep the plantation record. She said CM Punjab has also announced various other measures to cope with the smog challenge in Punjab where a comprehensive safe city project will be extending to all districts of Punjab for enhancement of security measures across Punjab and fostering a safer environment for all. She said government's successfully implementing of the project would pave the way for initiating the same project in other big cities of the province. "Safe City project is an important step towards making Punjab a safe, prosperous and peaceful province", she added. Replying to a question, she said that the legal action will be taken with the mutual cooperation of the environment department against all the personal-use and commercial vehicles across the city. Furthermore, various instructions have been issued by the traffic police to tackle the situation of smog for the ones travelling on the road, she added. She further warned that under the instructions of CM, Punjab government will take strict action against the heavy smoke-emitting vehicles in reducing the environmental pollution significantly, adding, all the citizens of Lahore are advised to properly maintain their vehicles and play their part in this environment-friendly move. While commenting on issue of smog, she said that next season of winter will be better than previous seasons as we will take all necessary steps for quality air and to control smog. Azma added that CM Punjab is also seriously concerned with the issue of Dengue fever spread and taking all early preventive measures to reduce the burden.—DNA

Pak house hosts National Day reception

Ambassador Muhammad Khalid Jamali noted that Pakistan and Russia enjoy warm, friendly relations built on mutual trust and cooperation

MOSCOW: Senator Vladimir Chizhov and Mr Sergey Cheremin, Minister of the Government of Moscow, Head of the Department of Foreign Economic and In-



ternational Relations of the City of Moscow were the chief guests of the event. In his address to the gathering, Ambassador Muhammad Khalid Jamali noted that Pakistan and Russia enjoy warm, friendly relations built on mutual trust & cooperation. He expressed intention to work towards increasing the cross-cultural, educational and people to people contacts to cement a strong bond of friendship between the two countries. "I am confident that the future holds even brighter prospects for our bilateral relations," the Ambassador added. The event was attended by foreign Ambassadors, diplomats, representatives of Russian ministries, scholars, journalists and friends of Pakistan. — DNA



On the happy occasion of Pakistan Day, I extend my heartiest felicitations to all citizens of Pakistan. Indeed, 23rd March is of great significance in our history, as it paved the way for an independent Pakistan. On this very day, Muslims of the subcontinent for the first time formally articulated their demand for a homeland of their own. In just over seven years from this momentous day, the dream of independence was realised under the dynamic leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and our beloved country – Pakistan – came into being. Certainly, Pakistan Day reminds us of the determination, sacrifice and epic struggle of our forefathers for independence.

My Dear Countrymen! On this historic occasion, I assure you that Pakistan Air Force is fully capable and ready to respond to future challenges befittingly. To this end, we are consistently endeavouring to augment our combat potential with added focus on Indigenization as per Quaid's vision of Self-reliance and Modernization through Smart Inductions of Cutting-Edge Niche Technologies and their Operationalization. More so, a number of strategic initiatives have recently been undertaken; notable among these include establishment of National Aerospace Science & Technology Park (NASTP), PAF Cyber Command and Aerospace Design & Innovation Center (ADIC). In addition, Jinnah Center of Character and Leadership (JCCL) has been established for Effect Based Training and better Human Resource Development. Alongside, high premium is placed on the welfare of personnel. As such, Welfare Mechanism has been revamped by institutionalizing new measures for facilitation of Shuhada families, Persons with Special Needs (PSNs), and retired as well as serving personnel. Certainly, these initiatives are paying great dividends.

Let us resolve that we will not rest on our laurels but will redouble our efforts for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan, as indeed the development of Pakistan Air Force. On this special day, we also reiterate support to Kashmiri brethren in their just struggle for self-determination. We also call upon International Community to put an end to hostilities in Palestine. May Allah Almighty grant us strength and courage to ensure invincible aerial defence of Pakistan, Aameen.

Pakistan Air Force Zindabad!
Pakistan Paidabad!

Air Chief Marshal
Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, NI (M)
Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force



PAKISTAN AIR FORCE
A SYMBOL OF PRIDE FOR THE NATION



National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

- March 01/Bosnia National Day
- March 03/Bulgaria National Day
- March 06/ Ghana Independence Day
- March 12 /Mauritius National Day
- March 17/Ireland St. Patricks Day
- March 20/Tunisia Independence Day
- March 21/Namibia National Day
- March 25/Greece National Day
- March 26/Bangladesh National Day
- March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

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



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Importance of sustainable water management stressed

The day kicked off with a symbolic ceremony at Pakistan's iconic Indus River, attended by government officials, environmentalists, and community leaders. Participants came together to honor Pakistan's rich water heritage, vowing to protect this invaluable resource for future generations

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The International Day of Water was celebrated worldwide on Friday, with Pakistan actively participating in the global observance. This year's theme, "Leveraging Water for Peace," underscored the critical role water plays in our ecosystems, economies, and lives. Despite progress, millions globally still lack access to clean drinking water and sanitation, emphasizing the urgent need for collective action, reported PTV. The day kicked off with a symbolic ceremony at Pakistan's iconic Indus River, attended by government officials, environmentalists, and community leaders. Participants came together to honor Pakistan's rich water heritage, vowing to protect this invaluable

resource for future generations. March 22nd marks International Water Day, uniting communities, organizations, and governments in advocating for water conservation and equitable access to clean water resources. This global platform raises awareness about freshwater's significance and advocates for sustainable water management. Pakistan echoed this call for action, reaffirming its commitment to addressing water challenges and promoting sustainability. Innovative technologies and practices, such as desalination plants and water-efficient agricultural techniques, are being embraced to combat water scarcity and pollution. Mohammad Nawaz, an expert in water reserve management, stressed the urgency of safeguarding water resources. He highlighted the unsustainable

use of underground water sources and the need to capture rainwater through small dams and ponds for domestic use and conservation. He emphasized the importance of monitoring and balancing water systems to address challenges posed by climate change. Nawaz emphasized the importance of constructing small dams and ponds to capture rainwater, ensuring its utilization for domestic purposes and conservation of underground water reserves which are decreasing day by day. Dr. Shakeel, a specialist in Climate Change and Water Governance, emphasized the importance of creating awareness and changing behaviors to conserve sweet water for drinking and utilize rainwater for other purposes. Despite progress, challenges persist, es-

pecially in regions facing water stress and conflict. Pollution, over-extraction, and unequal distribution exacerbate water insecurity, highlighting the need for collective action to safeguard this precious resource. On International Water Day, let us recommit ourselves to water conservation and equitable access, recognizing water as a fundamental human right. Through collaboration and solidarity, we can ensure a sustainable and water-secure future for generations to come. As Pakistan and the world celebrate International Water Day, the message is clear: collective efforts are crucial to ensure water security, promote peace, and foster sustainable development for present and future generations. Meanwhile, Renowned composer and music director Nisar Bazmi was

remembered on the occasion of his death anniversary on Friday. He was born on December 1, 1924 in Mumbai in religious family. Syed Nisar Ahmed changed his last name to Bazmi to embark on a film music career. He was hired by the All India Radio in 1939 as an artist and the first composed songs in 1944, which were broadcast on the Bombay Radio Station. His first film, "Jumna Paar", was released in 1946 and immediately established him as a first-rate composer. Bazmi composed songs for more than 40 films in India, 28 of which were released before he migrated to Pakistan in 1960s. Overall he composed music for more than 60 Pakistani films. In 1994 he was conferred the Pride of Performance award by the President of Pakistan. Nisar Bazmi died on March 22, 2007 in Karachi.

Minister to lead workshop

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives will lead a transformative workshop, bringing together the nation's top 100 Experts, Professionals, Industry Leaders and academics. This day-long event will focus on the innovative 5Es FRAMEWORK for Turning Around Pakistan through focus on Exports, E-Pakistan, Environment and Climate Change, Energy and Infrastructure, and Equity and Empowerment as pivotal drivers for Pakistan's resurgence to make it a trillion-dollar economy by 2035. This pioneering initiative underscores the importance of collaborative action and partnership between the public sector, private sector, academia and civil society of Pakistan. 5Es framework was prepared by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives during the 16-month PDM government as a result of Turn Around Pakistan Summit in which more than 1000 top Pakistani businessmen, academia and public leaders participated. The workshop is expected to be organized on 27th March, 20.

Finance minister hold talks with ADB official

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Country Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Mr. Young Ye, called on Minister for Finance & Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, at Finance Division, today to discuss ongoing collaborations and future initiatives aimed at fostering economic development in Pakistan. ADB Country Director, Mr. Young Ye, congratulated Minister for Finance and Revenue on staff level agreement with the IMF and stated that the market has positively responded to the development. During the meeting, Minister Aurangzeb expressed appreciation for the support provided by ADB over the years.

He particularly highlighted ADB's assistance through Policy Based Lending (PBL) to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and floods. Furthermore, the status of ongoing policy-based programs, including the Public Private Partnership (PPP) Program and the Climate and Disaster Resilience Enhancement Program (CDREP) were also discussed. Acknowledging ADB's pivotal role in promoting climate-conscious programs across Asia and the Pacific, the Minister emphasized the alignment of ADB's climate operations with Pakistan's own climate goals and commitments. The Minister outlined Government's priority areas for achieving macro-economic stability and sustainability, including measures to enhance revenue, SOEs reforms, privatization, and public-private partnerships. Concluding the meeting, both parties reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the partnership between Pakistan and ADB, with a shared goal of promoting sustainable economic growth.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates Mr. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Alzaabi called on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at Parliament House.—DNA

Pakistan earns \$555m by exporting transport services

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$555.927 million by providing different transport services in various countries during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. This shows an increase of 1.46 percent as compared to \$547.939 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the fiscal year (2022-23), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) report-

ed. During the months under review, the exports of sea transport services witnessed an increase of 10.40 percent, going up from \$159.840 million last year to \$176.460 million during the months under review. Among the sea transport services, the exports of freight services dipped by 51.89 percent from \$83.920 million last year to \$40.370 million whereas the exports of other sea transport services however increased by 79.25 percent from \$75.920 million to \$136.090 million current year, the PBS data revealed. The exports of air transport

witnessed a nominal decline of 3.53 percent going down from \$376.089 million last year to \$362.807 million during July-January 2023-24. Among the air transport services, the exports of passenger services decreased by 5.36 percent, from \$251.000 million to \$237.550 million, whereas the exports of freight services surged by 4.85 percent, from \$17.130 million to \$17.960 million, in addition, the export of other air transport services witnessed nominal decline of 0.61 percent from \$107.959 million to \$107.297 million. Meanwhile, the exports of road transport

services during the months under review witnessed a growth of 67.56 percent going up from \$7.830 million to \$13.120 million during this year, it added. Among the road transport services, the exports of freight services witnessed a decrease of 17.74 percent from \$2.650 million to \$2.180 million, while the export of other road services increased by 111.20 percent from \$5.180 million to \$10.940 million. The export of postal and courier services dipped by 15.31 percent, from \$4.180 million to \$3.540 million, the data revealed.

Govt's committed to strengthen Radio Pakistan

KARACHI: Federal Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Shahera Shahid on Friday, underscored the crucial role played by the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (Radio Pakistan), emphasizing its extensive reach across the nation with news delivery in multiple languages. During her visit to the PBC office, she addressed various issues including Radio Pakistan's financial matters such as liabilities, salaries, and pensions, which are currently being discussed at higher levels for prompt resolution. Furthermore, she mentioned the government's deliberation on enhancing financial self-sustainability for institutions with high expenses. The burden of power utility bills on Radio Pakistan is also being addressed through collaboration with the Power Division. Notably, efforts have been made to ensure timely pension payments, which were previously delayed, benefiting pensioners. Secretary Shahera Shahid underscored the government's efforts to uplift Radio Pakistan and its workforce, including the adoption of government scales. Improvements in transmitters are underway to guarantee seamless transmission, alongside the establishment of a centralized broadcast setup in Rawat, Islamabad. Moreover, organizational measures are being implemented to provide medical facilities for employees, while Radio Pakistan's properties are being leveraged for organizational enhancement and employee welfare. Shahera Shahid, on the occasion also undertook a visit to the Associated Press of Pakistan Corporation (APPC) Karachi Bureau. She meticulously inspected various sections of the bureau office, gaining a comprehensive understanding of its operations. Earlier, upon her arrival at the PBC building, she received a warm welcome from the Station Director of Radio Pakistan and other senior officers from APP and the Audit Bureau of Circulation.—APP

Grand Mufti of Bosnia meets Minister Salik

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The esteemed Grand Mufti of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr. Husein of Kavazovic, called on the Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource De-

velopment, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, at the Ministry. Accompanying the Grand Mufti were the Bosnian Ambassador to Pakistan and the Honorary Consul General of Bosnia Mr Asad Saleem in Pakistan. The delegation was warmly received by Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis

and Human Resource Development. Federal Secretary Dr Arshad and other senior officers from the Ministry were also present in the meeting. During the meeting, Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain extended a warm welcome to the Grand Mufti, express-

ing heartfelt congratulations on his forthcoming receipt of the Sitare e Quaid e Azam Award on March 23rd, conferred by the President of Pakistan. Minister Hussain underscored the Ministry's substantial potential for public service delivery and articulated his commitment to enhancing the performance of its seven attached departments.

These departments play a pivotal role in facilitating the welfare of workers within Pakistan and abroad.

MARCH 2024

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Briefs

Water Day highlights awareness on scarcity

ISLAMABAD: World Water Day was observed on Friday, with the aim of highlighting the importance of water worldwide and raising general awareness about its increasing scarcity and pollution. The theme of World Water Day 2024 was 'Water for Peace'. World Water Day was celebrated for the first time on March 22 in 1993 after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development confirmed it.—APP

Weekly inflation decline by 1.13 pc

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 1.13 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on March 21, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 323.50 points as compared to 327.21 points during the past week. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 29.06 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16=100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, decreased by 1.83 per cent and went down to 314.20 points from last week's 320.06 points. The SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517, Rs. 29,518-44,175 and above Rs. 44,175, decreased by 1.64 per cent, 1.34 per cent, 1.25 and 0.91 per cent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 09 (17.65%) items increased, 17 (33.33%) items decreased and 25 (49.02%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included Tomatoes (36.73%), Onions (19.58%), Potatoes (4.02%), Garlic (2.87%), Pulse Mash (1.25%), Wheat Flour (1.02%), Sugar (0.95%), Pulse Masoor (0.86%) and Diesel (0.60%).—DNA

NHMP launches extensive awareness drive

ISLAMABAD: The National Highway and Motorway Police (NHMP) has kicked off a comprehensive awareness campaign across various motorways and highways nationwide, aiming to reduce traffic accidents and enhance road safety. An NHMP public relations officer on Friday said while talking to APP that the initiative was spurred by directives from the Inspector General of NHMP, Salman Chohdary in order to ensure road safety and minimize traffic mishaps. The NHMP's campaign will focus on educating travelers about the dangers of lane jumping, the risks associated with using mobile phones while driving.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan and his wife posing for a picture with the recipients of gifts from Azerbaijan embassy on the occasion of holy month of Razadan.—DNA

PRGMEA wants TEXPO 2024 in Lahore to make it successful

We trust that TDAP will give due consideration to our request and take necessary actions to accommodate the rotation of TEXPO to the Punjab provincial capital," he concluded

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PRGMEA) has raised the voice against the violation of procedure by TDAP to conduct TEXPO 2024, as the Authority has shifted this year's event to Karachi. As per schedule this year's event was to be held in Lahore because previous TEXPO 2023 was held in Karachi. The PRGMEA Chairman (NZ) Ahmad Hanif has asked the authority to bring this mega event to the Punjab provincial capital, which is the major garment industrial hub, as the previous TEXPO exhibition of 2023 held in Karachi had witnessed a successful

participation from Punjab, facilitating our esteemed members in engaging with potential buyers and showcasing their products to a global audience. In a letter, written simultaneously to TDAP Chief Executive Zubair Motiwala and Commerce Secretary Capt (r) Khurram Agha, PRGMEA North Zone chairman Ahmad Hanif requested the government to organize this year's TEXPO 2024 in Lahore because of its significance to attract the international buyers. The regional chairman also appreciated the role of TDAP in boosting industrial activities in the region and hoped that the Authority would be in touch to increase cooperation in this regard. He said that PRGMEA north zone attaches great importance to its partnership with the TDAP as one of the largest

government entity to collaborate and support the garment exporters in the country. Ahmad Hanif observed that TEXPO Pakistan served as a significant platform for the value-added textile sector, attracting a large number of genuine and major buyers and delegations from key markets such as the USA, Europe, and China. "We believe that participating in TEXPO 2024 presents a valuable opportunity for our members to connect with the world buyers through both B2B and B2C interactions. However, considering the importance of regional inclusivity and fair representation, we kindly request TDAP to consider organizing the 5th TEXPO 2024 in Lahore as per the rotation schedule. He maintained that Lahore, being a major textile hub, offers an ideal

setting for hosting such a prestigious event. Moreover, holding TEXPO in this city of textile hub will ensure broader participation from both the manufacturers as well as the exporters across the country, promoting inclusivity and equitable opportunities for all stakeholders. "We believe that organizing TEXPO 2024 in Lahore will not only benefit the textile industry but also contribute to the overall economic growth and development of the region. We trust that TDAP will give due consideration to our request and take necessary actions to accommodate the rotation of TEXPO to the Punjab provincial capital," he concluded. He hoped for a favourable response and the continued success of TEXPO Pakistan in future.

Govt: working on two security projects in Gwadar

The project involves laying down optical fiber cables with connectivity extending up to 190 kilometers and installing multipurpose cameras at 411 locations

DNA



ISLAMABAD Following the recent terror attack in Gwadar city, the government of Pakistan is ramping up efforts on two major security projects in Gwadar as part of its counterterrorism strategy. These initiatives aim to enhance security infrastructure and reduce the future risk of terror attacks in the port city. The two major security projects are the "Perimetric Security System Project" and the Gwadar Safe City Project, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. The Perimetric Security System Project is designed to provide comprehensive security coverage for the Gwadar Port Authority

Complex, offices linked to GPA, and buildings belonging to the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA). An official from GPA informed Gwadar Pro that the project is a built-in multipurpose system capable of detecting threats, conducting surveillance, and analyzing attack patterns. It is being installed with the goal of ensuring a safe and secure environment at the key offices of GPA and GDA. As part of this project, approximately 675 CCTV cameras will be installed to bolster security measures. The China Communications Construction Company, in collaboration with a local firm, has teamed up with GPA and the Ministry of Maritime Affairs (MMA) in this endeavor. Concurrently, the government of Balochistan has accelerated the Gwadar Safe City Project (Phase I) by establishing the Project Management Unit (PMU) and submitting technical and financial feasibility reports, in line with the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan 2025. With an estimated cost of Rs 3,325.6 million, the Gwadar Safe City Project is being executed by the Ministry of Homes and Tribal Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Technology, under the Government of Balochistan. The project involves laying down optical fiber cables with connectivity extending up to 190 kilometers and installing multipurpose cameras at 411 locations.

Edible oil imports

ISLAMABAD: The imports of edible oil including soyabean and palm into the country during the first 08 months of the current financial year decreased by 48.10 percent and 32.47 percent respectively as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-February, 2023-24 palm oil imports into the country went down from \$2.681 billion to \$1.810 billion as over 1.959 million metric tons of palm oil were imported as compared to the imports of 1.115 million metric tons of the same period last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Meanwhile, about 97,455 metric tons of soyabean oil valued at \$105.664 million were imported as compared to the imports of 140,120 metric tons costing \$203.578 million, showing negative growth of 48.10 percent, it added. However, on the month on month basis, the imports of soyabean oil increased by 35.34 percent, and palm oil 5,505 metric tons of above-mentioned commodity valued at \$5.674 million were imported as compared to the imports of 3,250 metric tons costing \$4.192 million of the same month of last year. In February 2024 over 224,074 metric tons of palm oil valued at \$199.078 million were also imported as against the imports of 223,296 metric tons valuing \$234.568 million in the same period of last year. It is worth mentioning here that the food group exports from the country during the first 08 months of the current financial year grew by 54.05 percent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year.—DNA

Minister calls for social media rules, reforms

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar Friday urged the government to take all stakeholders on board before implementing the social media laws and bringing reforms to curb its alleged misuse. Talking to a private news channel, he said that freedom of expression was good, but false allegations against state and its institutions were wrong which needs to be fixed, adding that public should not misuse the social media platforms and avoid using abusive language, defamation and other forms of hate speech online. Minister further said that such actions were violating public morals and can cause damage to an individual's reputation, honor, and social standing in the society. He urged the public to use social media platforms responsibly, and avoid making offensive comments. Replying to a question, minister of Law said that the protection of state interests should be the first and foremost priority for all, adding, but no one would be allowed to criticize and violate the constitution and the law as well. "Political stability and social harmony were essential elements for ensuring progress and prosperity in the country," he added.—APP

Seminar on role of Urdu language

ISLAMABAD: The National Language Promotion Department (NLPD) on Friday organized a seminar titled "The role of Urdu Language in Pakistan Movement" in connection with Pakistan National Day celebrations to be held on March 23. The seminar was chaired by Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, while Prof. Dr. Riaz Ahmed, former Director National Institute of Historical Cultural Research, Quaid e Azam University, Islamabad was the keynote speaker on the occasion. The speakers at seminar highlighted the importance and role of Urdu Language and said that it won't be unjustified to say that Urdu language and two nation theory were inevitably indispensable for each other. With reference to that, prior to the establishment of Pakistan, the Muslims of subcontinent participated with great vigor with a conviction for Urdu language as their national language despite having other and thus made it possible to accomplish the achievement of Pakistan, they added.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Former MP Asiya Nasir presenting a bouquet to Govt spokesman MNA Isphanyar Bhandhara, in his office.—DNA

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Escalation of resistance

THE current state of affairs inside the besieged Gaza Strip are unsustainable and a stain on humanity's collective historical record. This being said, the only ways out of this current predicament will come in the form of a large regional war or a ceasefire. In order for a ceasefire to come about, however, there must be a major series of events that work to bring about a sustainable cessation of hostilities. Unfortunately, we have reached a stage in the war between Gaza and the US-Israeli alliance where the invaders have clearly adopted a stance that will see them at war until total annihilation of the people of Gaza, unless there is a major shift. What the Palestinian resistance has managed to pull off against the Israeli military, during the initial offensive on October 7 and now the ground war inside Gaza, has inflicted such an embarrassment on the US-Israeli war machine that they are incapable of reconciling with. As the leader of Lebanese Hezbollah, Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, has long said, "Israel" is a spider's web. Despite this clearly being the case, the Zionist Entity and its US allies are unwilling to accept their defeat and seek now to continue a genocidal campaign against the people from which the resistance comes, the people of Gaza. Israeli bloodlust, combined with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's fear of his political undoing in a post-war setting and the US-Israeli refusal to allow the complete collapse of their superior image in West Asia, are all the driving factors of this war's continuation. The military industrial complex and Western superiority are both on the line, for which Washington is clearly willing to see ethnic cleansing and genocide against the people of Gaza, in order to come off with a win. With the Zionist regime, at the command of the US, failing to achieve any tangible results during their war on the besieged Palestinian territory they continue to attack, their only other means of securing any semblance of victory is believed to be in the form of a ceasefire victory. They hope to achieve this through putting such immense pressure on the civilian population of Gaza, that the resistance gives up its key ceasefire demands and releases the Israeli prisoners of war with little to show for it. However, the Palestinian resistance remains steadfast and refuses to bow to the dictates of the US and Israeli regimes.

Another possibility is that the Zionist Entity will launch its threatened assault on Rafah, which will likely result in an unprecedented humanitarian crisis and the mass slaughter of civilians. Depending upon the blows that the Israeli military receives at the hands of the resistance and the level of the human catastrophe, this could also cause a shift in American strategic thinking. It is very likely that the US fears what could occur as a result of such a poorly planned and reckless assault on Rafah, that being the kind of ground incursion which we have seen throughout the Gaza Strip. The Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan is clearly a time of heightened fears for the US Biden administration, as there are greater chances of unexpected actions being taken against the occupation. Specifically, when it comes to attacks on worshippers inside and surrounding al-Aqsa Mosque, this causes a special kind of rage, leading to frequent clashes throughout the occupied territories. For the coalition that Israeli PM, Benjamin Netanyahu, commands, the fate of the current government could be in the hands of extremists like Itamar Ben-Gvir, should they be willing to break the government over their desire to launch incursions and attacks on al-Aqsa.

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EU foreign policy challenges

AS the clock ticks toward June's big European Parliament elections across the EU's 27 member states, politics in Brussels is becoming increasingly domestic-focused. However, there has rarely been a time in recent years when so many red lights are flashing outside of the bloc, in what has been called an "arc of instability." That term was first used in the 1990s, especially by Australians, to describe a chain of politically unstable nation states in the Asia-Pacific region. However, more recently, it has been utilized by some US policymakers to highlight instability in a different, broader geography. That is a spectrum of states from sub-Saharan Africa through North Africa, into the Middle East, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, plus South and Central Asia and possibly parts of Southeast Asia too. Some of this vast geography will be among the key topics of discussion at the ongoing summit of the EU's 27 presidents and prime ministers. One example is the growing tensions in the Middle East, with the EU's chief diplomat Josep Borrell this week condemning Israel for creating what he said was a "manmade" famine in Gaza. Borrell added: "Before the war, Gaza was the greatest open-air prison. Today, it is the greatest open-air graveyard." Moreover, he said European leaders have told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu they cannot stand by and watch Palestinians starve to death. In North Africa, meanwhile, Sudan could face a catastrophic famine within weeks, aid workers have warned, amid security restrictions and armed violence as the war between the Sudanese Armed Forces and its former security partners the Rapid Support Forces continues. The UN's World Food Programme says this threatens to trigger "the world's largest hunger crisis," with more than 25 million people scattered across Sudan, South Sudan and Chad "trapped in a spiral" of food insecurity. The conflict has also uprooted more than 8 million people. With 2 million forced from their homes before the fighting broke out, Sudan already hosts the world's largest displacement crisis. Beyond these hugely important security and defense questions, it is also clear that the bloc will need a clearer, wider grand strategy in the years ahead. In many plausible scenarios, it is highly likely that Europe will be facing a more challenging geopolitical context. Several states in particular will be crucial to shaping how this plays out in a fast-changing multipolar world. With respect to the US, a long-standing ally of Europe, greater stability has been infused into the bilateral relationship following Joe Biden's arrival in the White House. However, Donald Trump, who has called for the EU's further dismemberment, could well win again in November. However, no matter which of Trump or Biden wins, the overall geopolitical context for Europe may worsen significantly in the next half-decade. This is not just because of Russia, but also wider problems, including instability in key countries in neighboring regions. The bloc therefore faces huge international challenges that may only grow. While it is on a trajectory to become a stronger, more progressive force in world affairs, it still has a long way to travel in this direction to fulfill its ambitions.

Revitalising the spirit of Pakistan Day: A call for unity and progress

Mustafa Bilal

The story of Pakistan, its struggle and its achievement, is the very story of great human ideals, struggling to survive in the face of great odds and difficulties. (Quaid-e-Azam's Address at Chittagong on 23 March 1948). Today, national resolve seems to be waning especially among the younger generation, who often view Pakistan Day as just another public holiday and are in despair because of the prevailing socio-economic circumstances. Yet, the spirit of 23rd March reminds us that we are masters of our destiny. This indomitable spirit pushed our forefathers to preserve despite the seemingly insurmountable odds

AS dawn breaks on the 23rd of March, Pakistan will once again resonate with the echoes of 1940 which marked the conception of a country built on the ideals of freedom, justice, and unity. The journey from the Lahore Resolution to the present day has been one of triumphs and tribulations. People across the nation pause to commemorate Pakistan Day and its legacy with military parades and televised ceremonies, which are a spectacle of patriotism, especially the aerial acrobatics performed by the Sherdils of PAF. Yet, as we revel in the grandeur of parades and the echoes of patriotic songs, a lingering question haunts our collective conscience: Have we, the heirs of the Lahore Resolution, strayed too far from the vision that once united us under the banner of Pakistan? For if we navigate through the annals of our history, we will confront a series of paradoxes that have undermined our historical narratives. The dream of a unified nation, as envisaged in 1940, has been marred by internal strife and political upheaval. Similarly, the essence of the Lahore Resolution, a fervent commitment to the principles of democracy, social justice, and communal harmony has been diluted in the quagmire of partisan politics, sectarian divisions, and economic disparities. Moreover, the lack of social cohesion and political polarisation has eroded the once fervent determination to collectively confront our national challenges. Despite this, Pakistan Day has always been morally uplifting and a reminder to take ownership of our country. It is the need of the hour to instil faith and hope for a

better future for Pakistan given that the day that once reawakened national resolve now serves as a stark reminder of how far we have drifted from what was envisioned in 1940.

Today, national resolve seems to be waning especially among the younger generation, who often view Pakistan Day as just another public holiday and are in despair because of the prevailing socio-economic circumstances. Yet, the spirit of 23rd March reminds us that we are masters of our destiny. This indomitable spirit pushed our forefathers to preserve despite the seemingly insurmountable odds. It now urges us to reclaim the gloomy narrative of our nation from the clutches of despair as our challenges today pale in comparison to the ones overcome during the movement for Pakistan's independence. Therefore, a pressing national imperative exists to revitalise the spirit of unity and determination. In doing so, we must also realise that we owe the liberties we have been enjoying for the past 75 years to the struggles of an entire generation. The Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore stands as a testament to their unshakable resolve. While it is an iconic monument, millions of underprivileged children might never know what the Minar symbolises or about our historical struggles for independence. It is for these children, and future generations, for whom we should make Pakistan the country that previous generations envisioned it to be. The sacrifices they endured to turn the idea of Pakistan into reality are a debt we must now repay through our collective altruism. Therefore, we must altruistically work for a cause that is bigger than all of us.

Indeed, being citizens of Pakistan, each of us has a role to play in fulfilling the dreams of our forefathers of creating a prosperous country. These dreams can only be realised if we look beyond short-sighted and self-centred interests. In this regard, our political leaders need to reconcile their differences and draw inspiration from their predecessors who set aside individual interests and joined hands to lead our struggle for Independence. Thus, Instead of harbouring anger towards those with opposing political views, we should remember that our democracy was established on the principle of collaboration among individuals with different interests and perspectives. The true commemoration of Pakistan Day hence lies in a collective resolve to address the issues that have hindered our progress as a nation and our national development as a country. It is high time to bridge the chasm between the Pakistan envisioned in 1940 and the Pakistan of today by embodying the ideals that were the bedrock of our inception. On this Pakistan Day, let us not just bask in the nostalgia of our historical triumphs. It is a day to recognise that the creation of Pakistan was not the culmination of our struggle but the beginning of a new chapter in our history, a chapter that we are still writing. For in the heart of every Pakistani, the dream of a better and more united nation still flickers, waiting to be rekindled.

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Unpacking Iran's role in the yemeni conflict

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The recent airstrikes led by the United States in Yemen against Houthi elements were seen as necessary to protect international shipping in the Red Sea. This waterway is crucial for global economic stability. The United States felt compelled to respond forcefully to attacks by Iranian allies on American military elements in Iraq and Syria

THE Houthi movement and its relationship with Iran play a significant role in the complex geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. The Houthi movement also known as Ansar Allah is a Shiite rebel group based in Yemen. The group originated in the 1990s led by the Houthi family, and has been involved in a series of conflicts with the Yemeni government. The Houthi movement is primarily composed of Zaidi Shia Muslims, a minority sect in Yemen. The group has historical grievances related to political and economic marginalization, as well as religious differences. Over the years, the Houthi rebels have clashed with the Yemeni government and their grievances have evolved into a broader struggle for power, autonomy, and influence in Yemen. Iran's involvement in the Houthi insurgency is a contentious and debated issue. While Iran has provided political and ideological support to the Houthi movement, the extent of its military assistance is a subject of contention. Iran and the Houthis share a common Shiite identity and Tehran has used the Houthi rebellion as a means to exert influence in the Arabian Peninsula and counter Saudi Arabia's influence in

the region. Iran has been accused by regional actors, including Saudi Arabia and the United States, of providing financial aid, weapons and training to the Houthi rebels. The transfer of ballistic missiles and other military support has been a particular point of concern for those critical of Iran's role in the conflict. However, Iran has denied direct military involvement, emphasizing its political and humanitarian support for the Houthi cause. The Houthi insurgency escalated in 2014 when the group took control of the Yemeni capital, Sanaa and subsequently expanded its territorial control. This led to a military intervention by a coalition of Arab states led by Saudi Arabia in support of the Yemeni government. The conflict has resulted in a devastating humanitarian crisis, with widespread displacement, famine and a collapse of basic services. The Yemeni conflict and Iran's alleged involvement with the Houthi rebels have contributed to heightened tensions in the broader Middle East. The situation has exacerbated regional rivalries, particularly the longstanding Saudi-Iranian rivalry and has drawn in other actors, including the United States which

supports the Saudi-led coalition. The recent airstrikes led by the United States in Yemen against Houthi elements were seen as necessary to protect international shipping in the Red Sea. This waterway is crucial for global economic stability. The United States felt compelled to respond forcefully to attacks by Iranian allies on American military elements in Iraq and Syria. Failing to do so might have undermined the credibility of U.S. warnings about the consequences of such activities. However, while these strikes were deemed necessary, they are not considered a complete solution. The Houthis, originally a Yemeni tribal group, are now part of Iran's broader network of allies, including Hezbollah, Hamas and Iranian militias in Iraq. Despite the impact of the U.S. strikes on the Houthis, the larger Iranian network remains largely intact. The challenge for the U.S. extends beyond addressing maritime attacks; it involves countering Iran's ability to wield influence through its regional allies and proxies. As long as Iran can sustain and enhance this network, strategically important regions like the Red Sea will remain vulnerable and the U.S. cannot defend everything.

Briefs

PM Shehbaz lauds Saudi support...

FROM PAGE 01 shared projects and also reiterated that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of the Royal Family, would extend all possible assistance and continued support to Pakistan. The Prime Minister thanked the CEO and members of the delegation and conveyed his best wishes to all the members of the Royal Family, especially the Khadija-e-Harain Sharifain. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was apprised that the feasibility study of the multi-billion-dollar Reko Diq gold and copper mining project would be completed by the end of 2024.

Dar urges 'aggressive financing'...

FROM PAGE 01 the foreign minister said. He noted that multilateral international institutions were reluctant to finance such projects. "However, a global opinion is emerging [...] I strongly urged multilateral lenders to consider aggressive financing so that developing countries can also make use of nuclear energy," he said. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar has held separate meetings with the UK Minister of State for South Asia and Commonwealth, Lord Tariq Ahmad, and with the Minister of State for Development, Andrew Mitchell at the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office in London today.

Pakistan keen to enhance...

FROM PAGE 01 and private sector facilitation. The British High Commissioner, H.E. Ms. Jane Marriott, commended Pakistan's commitment to economic reforms and expressed the UK's continued support for Pakistan's development goals. She emphasized the importance of further enhancing bilateral cooperation, particularly in areas of mutual interest, and reiterated the UK's commitment to strengthen the partnership between the two nations. Concluding the meeting, the two sides expressed their mutual commitment to further strengthening bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation between Pakistan and the United Kingdom for the benefit of both nations.

Gandapur terms Shehbaz...

FROM PAGE 01 insisted that the party's stance remained unchanged regarding the diplomatic cable as it was a "conspiracy", and foreign "intervention" in Pakistan's internal affairs. "Cipher was a conspiracy [...] our stance is still the same." Pointing towards former Pakistani envoy to the US, Gandapur added that Asad Majeed had confirmed the veracity of Lu's statement regarding the cipher, and the former should be questioned about the exact source of cipher if no meeting was held.

Balochistan awaits...

FROM PAGE 01 oath by Zamrak Khan Achakzai, who was appointed the presiding officer for the maiden session of the provincial legislature on February 28. Members who took oath included the elected lawmakers from Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) and others. Bugti, who was elected for the coveted CM post unopposed, took oath of office on March 2, facing hydro-headed challenges as the province remains badly impacted by terrorism. Meanwhile, Senate elections will take place next month with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) set to issue the revised list of the candidates on 26th of this month.

Gary Kirsten, Justin Langer on PCB's radar for coaching role

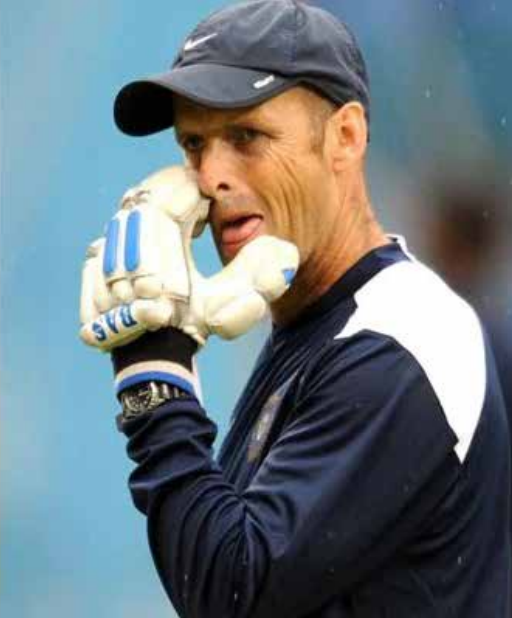
Kirsten coached the Indian team while Langer has served as Australia's coach in the past

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is interested in hiring South Africa's Gary Kirsten or Australia's Justin Langer for the role of head coach. Kirsten coached the Indian team while Langer has served as Australia's coach in the past. The board is keen on securing a long-term contract for the new coach. The PCB continues its quest to fill the vacant position of Pakistan's head coach. Since the dismissal of Grant Bradburn in the aftermath of a disappointing ODI World Cup campaign last year, the men in green have been without a designated head coach. Former all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez temporarily filled the void, serving as both team director and head coach during Pakistan's tours of Australia and New Zealand. However, Hafeez stepped down from the post last month,



leaving the PCB scrambling to find a suitable replacement. Initially, the PCB engaged in



talks with former Australian all-rounder Shane Watson for the head coach's role. However, negotiations broke down, with PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi citing leaks to the media as a contributing

factor to Watson's decision not to accept the offer. "We were also in talks with Shane Watson, and one reason for him not accepting the offer was because so many things leaked out in the media, most of which were not correct," revealed Naqvi. In addition to Kirsten and Langer, the PCB is reportedly exploring options with Mike Hesson, Matthew Hayden, Eoin Morgan, and Phil Simmons. While former PCB chief Zaka Ashraf advocated for local coaches, Naqvi has expressed a preference for a foreign coach. However, the PCB faces challenges in convincing overseas candidates due to concerns stemming from the treatment of past coaches, both foreign and local. "It is because of the PCB's poor track record in appointing and sacking coaches - foreign and local - in the past that others are now very reluctant to accept any offer from the PCB," a board official acknowledged.

"I never refused to play one down," says Rizwan

The opening pair of Babar Azam and Rizwan was split in T20I series against New Zealand

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan has opened up on his batting position in T20 cricket and said that he never refused to bat down the order. The opening pair of Babar Azam and Rizwan was split in the T20I series against New Zealand with Saim Ayub partnering up with the wicketkeeper-batter. While talking to a local sports channel, Rizwan shed light on recent discussions surrounding his batting order and how he is ready to do anything for Pakistan. "I never refused to play one down. When I was

asked, I said I am absolutely available," Rizwan stated. "I even said that if I am needed for bowling, I am ready for that too, I can even leave my wicket-keeping. "If you look at my career so far, in 26 matches, I have gone to bat at numbers 7, 8, and 9. No batsman has gone in at number 9, I have. I cannot say that I will not do this. I was ready before, and I am still ready now," he added. Meanwhile, he also talked about his statement where he had said that splitting the pair of him and Babar has provided a dent to Pakistan. "I was asked that if splitting my opening pair with Babar hurt Pakistan. Maybe I didn't understand the question at that time,

but I said it hurt Pakistan in the context that Pakistan had lost four matches. I did not say that it hurt Pakistan because we were split as an opening pair," Rizwan stated. "We understand what is best for Pakistan and who determines the best? The coach can see, the captain can see. If we talk about the New Zealand tour, even then Shaheen adopted a rotation policy, so that the best can be extracted from each player. We don't say that we made a mistake by going back and forth, but we can say that you should look at things logically, do things logically that are best for Pakistan," he concluded. Meanwhile, former Pakistan captain Babar Azam

and wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Rizwan failed to attract any team during The Hundred draft for the 2024 season on Wednesday. Azam and Rizwan were among the late additions to The Hundred draft along with Pakistan's T20I captain Shaheen Afridi, however, only Afridi managed to secure a deal during the event. Eight teams competing completed their squads for the upcoming fourth edition of The Hundred - England's first-of-its-sort league - after a breathless day of drafting. Earlier this month, more than 65 Pakistan players registered themselves for The Hundred 2024 Draft, however, only three players were picked.

Malaysia rejects offer to host 2026 Commonwealth Games

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia government announced on Friday that is not interested in hosting the 2026 Commonwealth Games due to uncertainty over costs and funding. The development is a major setback for the quadrennial multi-sport event. Malaysia was asked to step in after the Australian state of Victoria withdrew as host, citing ballooning costs, with the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) offering 100 million pounds (\$126 million) in supporting funds. Malaysia ruling itself out raises the possibility that the Games may not take place for the first time since being cancelled due to the Second World War. The funding offered was not enough, officials said, and Malaysia could not commit to hosting the event at such short notice and with little time to assess the potential economic impact. "If we had a longer time, we would definitely do it, but because there's such a short time, we definitely can't do it," government spokesperson and Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil told a regular briefing. "When we assessed the viability of hosting the Games, the length of time needed and the cost was seen to be particularly prohibitive." The London-based CGF did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment on Malaysia declining its offer. The youth and sports ministry said the 100 million pounds funding it had offered would not be enough to cover the costs of hosting a large-scale sports event. "Additionally, the economic impact could not be identified in this short timeframe," it said in a statement. - Agencies

Rape convict Robinho arrested in Brazil

SANTOS: Former Manchester City and Real Madrid footballer Robinho was arrested Thursday in Brazil, after losing a last-minute court bid to delay serving his nine-year sentence for raping a woman a decade ago. Supreme Court Judge Luiz Fux rejected Robinho's request for a stay and ruled "the detention order is maintained... so that he can begin serving his sentence." Federal Police in the southeastern city of Santos said in a statement to AFP on Thursday night that their forces "carried out an arrest warrant... against Robson de Souza." "The prisoner will undergo an examination at the (Medical Legal Institute), a custody hearing and will be sent to the penitentiary system." Popularly known as "Robinho," the footballer was found guilty by an Italian court in 2017 of taking part in the gang rape of an Albanian woman celebrating her 23rd birthday at a Milan nightclub four years earlier. The former Brazil international, now 40, lost an appeal in 2020 and had his sentence upheld by Italy's highest court in 2022, after which Italian prosecutors issued an international arrest warrant for him. Brazil does not extradite its nationals, however, and Italy asked that Robinho be made to serve his sentence in his home country instead. A court in Brasilia agreed Wednesday, by nine votes to two, and on Thursday court president Maria Thereza de Assis Moura signed a document paving the way for a warrant to be issued for Robinho's incarceration. Journalists flocked to his luxury condominium in Guarujá, near Santos, but his arrest wasn't caught on camera. The Globo network later aired a short video showing him inside a police precinct. Robinho will be taken to a prison in Tremembe, about 150 kilometers (95 miles) southeast of Sao Paulo, the nation's most populous city, a Federal Police officer told journalists. His lawyers had filed a request to the Supreme Court to allow him to remain free while challenging the latest court decision. - Agencies

ICC Women's T20 fixtures announced

ISLAMABAD: The fixtures for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup Qualifier 2024 will be held in Abu Dhabi, UAE from April 25 to May 7. A total of 10 teams would be battling for two Women's T20 World Cup spots to be held in Bangladesh later this year, said a press release. Ten teams, divided into two groups of five each, would compete in the Qualifier in two Abu Dhabi venues from April 25. The two table-toppers from the two groups would feature in the semi-finals on May 5 with the winners booking their tickets to Bangladesh and joining the hosts, Australia, England, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa and West Indies in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024 in September and October. Scotland, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uganda and the United States of America (USA) feature in Group A, while Ireland, Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Vanuatu and Zimbabwe make up Group B. - Agencies

CM approves sports advisory council, Punjab board

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz has decided to constitute a Sports Advisory Council in which foreigner players and students would be its members. CM has also decided to reconstitute Punjab Sports Board and directed to avail the services of national and international coaches for the promotion of sports and training. CM presided over a meeting at Sports Department in which it was agreed to make multi-purpose sports grounds in 91 constituencies. A Special Planning Unit will be constituted in the Sports department to undertake planning and other development affairs. It was decided during the meeting that biometric attendance condition will be ensured in the Sports department so as to identify the ghost employees. CM lauded strives of Minister for Sports and Sports Department. Maryam Nawaz stated "She greatly likes sports and was the Captain of Baseball team during her period of studies. I want restoration of sports and there is a dire need to undertake measures at a mega scale. The youths face dearth of opportunities and are driven towards addiction. The sports infrastructure should be restored immediately for the youth and hockey competitions should be organized as it is our national sport." The proposal to constitute the Institute of Sports Sciences Punjab was reviewed during the meeting. CM directed to include basketball sport in the talent hunt programme. Approval for granting additional Rs. 2 billion for the Sports Endowment Fund being established at the cost of Rs. 2 billion. CM directed to constitute a Maintenance Department for the protection of sports facilities adding that whatever amount is required for the promotion of sports will be granted. Former Senator Pervaiz Rasheed stated that the private schools had less space and due to non-availability of grounds, sports activities have ended in the schools. Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb stated that the children should be provided sports facilities at the UC level. Secretary Sports gave a briefing about the working of the department and apprised that revamping of the National Hockey Stadium has been completed and would be inaugurated soon. Sports camps would be established for the children in the summer vacations. Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Former Senator Pervaiz Rasheed, Provincial Minister for Information Azma Bokhari, Provincial Minister for Sports Faisal Ayub Khokhar, MPA Sania Ashiq, Secretary Sports and relevant officials attended the meeting. - DNA

Sakkari advances, Wozniacki falls in Miami Tennis

Sakkari was back to winning ways just days after losing the Indian Wells final as she demolished China's Yuan Yue 6-2 6-2

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

MIAMI: Maria Sakkari was back to winning ways just days after losing the Indian Wells final as she demolished China's Yuan Yue 6-2 6-2 to ease into the third round of the Miami Open. While it was smooth passage for Sakkari it was rough going for Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina, the fourth seed having to dig deep to see off determined Danish qualifier Clara Tauson 3-6 7-5 6-4 in a near empty Hard Rock stadium. After splitting the opening two sets in a ragged back-and-forth contest, 2022 Wimbledon champion Rybakina finally seized control with a break to nose in front 3-2 in the third and would never let go of the lead. Sakkari, putting the 6-4 6-0 California drubbing at the hands of world number one Iga Swiatek in Sunday's final in the rearview mirror, was all business after having failed at the first hurdle in her last two visits to Miami. Having collected her first WTA Tour title in Austin last month and following that up with a quarter-final run at Indian Wells, Yuan represented a potentially tricky first test for eighth seeded Greek. But the 28-year-old passed with flying colours, breaking her Chinese opponent five times in the 79-minute masterclass.



In other second round action, Ukraine's Anhelina Kalinina saved match point and came back from a set down to topple former-world number one Caroline Wozniacki 5-7 7-5 6-4. Trailing 2-5 in the second set, Kalinina appeared to be heading for the exit but with nothing to lose, she came out swinging her racket to break the Dane as she served for the match. The danger was far from over for the Ukrainian who faced match point on her own serve but stayed

alive with a fearless forehand winner to cut the deficit to 5-4. Tennis rallies around Sabalenka at Miami Open after boyfriend's death Kalinina ended up winning five games in a row to bag the second set. With the momentum now in Kalinina's corner, the 27-year-old poured on the pressure in the third set as she nosed ahead 5-3. The Dane would also not go down without a fight as she survived three match points for the hold, leaving Kalinina to serve for

the match. Kalinina would need four match points to complete the comeback, securing victory on her third ace of the contest. Next up for Kalinina is world number two Aryna Sabalenka or Paula Badosa. All eyes will be on Hard Rock Stadium court for the first match on Friday as Sabalenka plays for the first time since the tragic news on Monday that her former boyfriend Konstantin Koltsov had died. The former professional ice hockey player's death sent a shockwave through the Miami Open with players rallying to support Sabalenka. Adding more drama to the second round match, Sabalenka will be going up against Badosa, one of her best friends on the Tour. Brazilian 11th seed Beatriz Haddad Maia dropped the opening set to Diane Parry before rallying for a 3-6 6-1 6-4 win to reach the Miami third round for the fourth time and the third straight year. It was the first victory for Haddad Maia over the Frenchwoman, who had won their other two meetings both on clay. Americans Madison Keys and qualifier Taylor Townsend both enjoyed smooth passage into the third round. Keys, who has never advanced past the quarter-finals in 12 previous tries in Miami, dispatched teenager Diana Shnaider 6-2 6-4 while Townsend dumped Belgian 25th seed Elise Mertens 6-2 6-2.

SC declares Justice Siddiqui's removal...

FROM PAGE 01 proceeded against Justice Siddiqui on the "assumption that the truth or falseness of the allegations levelled" by the former judge was "irrelevant". It also noted that the SJC opined that Justice Siddiqui had failed to substantiate, independently corroborate, substantiate or prove the allegations levelled by him. The judgment did note that the allegations made by the former IHC judge against Maj Gen Faiz Hameed and a few of his subordinates were "very serious". "However, Justice Siddiqui was not given an opportunity to establish his allegations nor brought face to face with those he had accused. When we noted this lapse we issued notices to all those against whom he made allegations and provided them with an opportunity to admit/deny them. All of them have denied their stated involvement," the order said. The court order further highlighted that in view of the rejoinders submitted to the judicial panel, it was all the more necessary for the SJC to have inquired into the matter and to have determined who was telling the truth. "The SJC did not give any credence to Justice Siddiqui's own words and to the contents of his replies; the SJC assumed that they were false; and having made this assumption concluded that Justice Siddiqui was guilty of misconduct. It would be difficult to categorise such a determination as fair or one which accorded with the requirements of due process. Justice Siddiqui was not given an opportunity to establish the veracity of his allegations, which was incumbent on the SJC when the same formed the basis of Justice Siddiqui's removal from office," stated the judgment.

KP: Opp to move court over assembly...

FROM PAGE 01 Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to convene the provincial assembly session. The development comes after provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru said that the KP Assembly session will not be held today due to KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali's "illegal step" of summoning a session. "The governor took an illegal step by writing a letter summoning the assembly session. In this regard, we have sought law department's opinion, however, we haven't received a reply yet," said Toru. He added that the governor should not become a part of the opposition, adding that Governor Ali should leave his post if he does not know about his authority. Kundi, during a presser in Islamabad today, said that his party had written a letter to the KP Assembly speaker after which the governor had requested to convene a session. "They are worried about reserved seats being given to the opposition," he added. "We request the KP Assembly speaker to administer oath to successful candidates on reserved seats," said the PPP leader, adding that the parties should raise their concerns on the elections on the relevant forums. The KP governor summoned the assembly session today after he was approached by the opposition parties so that the members-elect on women and minority reserved seats could take oath as members of the provincial assembly. However, the ruling party wrote a letter to the law department to seek its opinion on the matter. It also moved the court as well against a notification of MPAs from the opposition parties on all the reserved seats.

Embraced martyrdom in DI Khan

FROM PAGE 01 Sepoy Tahir Naveed (Age: 34 years, resident of District Kohat) who embraced martyrdom. "Security forces of Pakistan remain determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve. Moreover, the perpetrators of this cowardly attack will be brought to justice," the ISPR said.

Briefs

Australia
Commits
\$3 Billion
for AUKUS
Submarines

SYDNEY : Australia is set to provide 4.6 billion Australian dollars (\$3bn) to British industry to help support the construction of nuclear-powered submarines under the AUKUS deal with the United Kingdom and the United States and ensure its new vessels arrive on time. Senior officials from the UK and Australia, as well as the US ambassador to Australia, visited the naval shipyard where the submarines will be built in the South Australian city of Adelaide on Friday. "The three governments involved here are working at pace to make this happen," Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles told reporters at the Osborne shipyard where he was accompanied by his British counterpart Grant Shapps, as well as the foreign ministers of the two countries. "Nuclear-powered submarines are not cheap, but we live in a much more dangerous world where we are seeing a much more assertive region with China, a much more dangerous world all around with what's happening in the Middle East and Europe," Shapps told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. The announcement came a day after Australia and the UK signed a defence pact to better meet security challenges such as China's increased activity in the South China Sea and the Pacific.—APP

Uganda's
President
promotes son
to army chief

KAMPALA : Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni has promoted his son as head of the army, raising concerns that he is grooming his eldest child for the presidency. The Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs announced late on Thursday that General Muhoozi Kainerugaba had been appointed the chief of defence forces, capping his rapid ascent through the Ugandan army ranks since the late 1990s. The veteran leader's move led to speculation that he is preparing his son, 49, to succeed him as president. In a now-deleted post on X last year, Kainerugaba said he intended to run for the presidency in the 2026 elections, although he has reportedly also denied claims he is eyeing the top job. Recently, the president's son has been holding rallies around the country, violating a law barring serving army officers from engaging in partisan politics. But Kainerugaba says his activities, including the launch of activist group the Patriotic League of Uganda, are nonpartisan. Museveni, 79, first took power by force in 1986 and has since been elected six times. He has no rivals within the ruling National Resistance Movement party, which has led many to believe the military will have a say in choosing his successor.—APP

Global water
crisis
fuelling more
conflicts

WASHINGTON : Increasing global water scarcity is fuelling more conflicts and contributing to instability, the United Nations warns in a new report, which says access to clean water is critical to promoting peace. The UN World Water Development Report 2024, released on Friday, said 2.2 billion people worldwide have no access to clean drinking water and 3.5 billion people lack access to safely managed sanitation. Girls and women are the first victims of a lack of water, said the report, published by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), especially in rural areas where they have the primary responsibility of collecting supplies. Spending several hours a day on fetching water, coupled with a lack of safe sanitation, is a contributing factor to girls dropping out of school. "Water shortages not only fan the flames of geopolitical tensions but also pose a threat to fundamental rights as a whole, for example.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD : A delegation of the National Party called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.—DNA

Gaza is on verge of
famine: EU leaders

EU leaders call for humanitarian pause and two-state solution amid Gaza crisis

NEWS DESK

LONDON : European Union leaders Charles Michel and Ursula von der Leyen issued a resolute call for immediate humanitarian action and reiterated the EU's support for a two-state solution in the ongoing Gaza crisis at a joint press conference. Their statements come after the first day of the European Council in Brussels. Michel emphasized the gravity of the situation, cautioning against any Israeli ground operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. "Imagine what would be the consequences if such an operation were launched," he said, underlining the potential dire humanitarian fallout of such a move. He reiterated the EU's stance on international law, particularly condemning illegal Israeli settle-

ments and advocating for the resumption of the political process. Echoing his sentiments, von der Leyen stressed the urgent need for a humanitarian pause leading to a sustained cease-fire. "Gaza is on the verge of famine, a catastrophic humanitarian situation," she emphasized. The European Council, she announced, had unanimously endorsed measures for full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access into Gaza, with a specific endorsement of a maritime corridor from Cyprus to bolster assistance efforts. The leaders jointly called for the unconditional release of hostages and the provision of essential humanitarian aid to alleviate the dire conditions faced by the people of Gaza. They emphasized the necessity of 500 trucks or equivalent entering Gaza daily via all available routes, including

land, air and sea. They also reiterated the EU's steadfast commitment to a lasting and sustainable peace firmly rooted in a two-state solution. "We urge the Israeli government not to undertake a ground operation in Rafah," von der Leyen stated unequivocally. Israel has waged a deadly military offensive on the Gaza Strip since an Oct. 7 cross-border attack by the Palestinian group Hamas in which some 1,200 Israelis were killed. Nearly 32,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have since been killed in Gaza, and nearly 74,200 injured amid mass destruction and shortages of necessities. The Israeli war, now in its 167th day, has pushed 85% of Gaza's population into internal displacement amid a crippling blockade of most food, clean water and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has

Finland to resume
funding to UNRWA

HELSINKI: Finland will resume funding to the UN Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA, its foreign trade and development minister said on Friday. Several countries, including the United States and Britain, paused their funding to UNRWA after accusations by Israel that a dozen of the agency's 13,000 staff in Gaza took part in the Oct. 7 Hamas attack in Israel. "UNRWA improving its risk management, meaning preventing and initiating close monitoring for misconduct, provides sufficient guarantees for us at this point to continue our support," Foreign Trade and Development Minister Ville Tavio said. He told a press conference some of the Finnish money would be earmarked for risk management. Countries including Canada, Australia and Sweden have also restored funding to UNRWA, while several Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia have increased funding.—Agencies

been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN. Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice, which in January issued an interim ruling ordering Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

EU leaders agree to
open membership
talks with Bosnia

BRUSSELS : EU leaders agreed to open talks with Bosnia on joining the bloc, though negotiations will only begin in earnest once the Balkan country has passed more key reforms. "Congratulations! Your place is in our European family. Today's decision is a key step forward on your EU path," European Council head Charles Michel wrote on X, as leaders met at a Brussels summit. "Now the hard work needs to continue so Bosnia and Herzegovina steadily advances, as your people want." Bosnia has been an official candidate for membership since 2022 but needed to implement a string of reforms before getting the green light on progressing to the next stage. Brussels last week said the country had completed some of the steps required, but outstanding judicial and electoral reforms remain. Russia's war on Ukraine has reinvigorated the EU's drive to enlarge in eastern and central Europe, with its current member states agreeing in December to start talks on joining with Ukraine and Moldova. The drive for new members is part of an effort to push back against Russian and Chinese influence in the EU's backyard. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz posted his congratulations for Bosnia on X and said it was "a clear sign in favour of a strong Europe". Italy's government also hailed the "historic decision" and said it sent a clear signal to the Balkan nations looking to join the bloc. Launching negotiations only puts Bosnia at the start of a long process of further painstaking reforms that usually last for many years before a country finally joins the EU. Bosnia's regional neighbours North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania are already ahead in their efforts to join, but all remain far from membership.—DNA

Kremlin: Russia in a
'state of war' in Ukraine

WEB DESK

MOSCOW: The Kremlin said Friday it is in a "state of war" in Ukraine, escalating the official language it uses to describe the conflict, now in its third year. Russia has presented its offensive on Ukraine as a "special military operation," banned media outlets from using the word "war" and prosecuted anti-offensive campaigners for using the word to describe Russia's military actions. "We are in a state of war. Yes, it started as a special military operation, but as soon as this bunch was formed there, when the collective West became a participant on Ukraine's side, for us it already became a war," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in an interview

to a pro-Kremlin newspaper published on Friday.

Asked to elaborate, Peskov told reporters later: "De jure it is a special military operation. But de facto it has turned into a war." President Vladimir Putin has previously said the West has unleashed a "hybrid war" against Moscow, but largely stuck to calling the conflict in Ukraine a "special military operation." Peskov also said that when it comes to the prosecution of anti-conflict campaigners for using the word "war," the context of his comments was different. "The word 'war' is used in different contexts. Compare my context with those in the cases you cite," he said in response to a question about criminal cases brought against anti-Kremlin protesters. Russia passed sweeping military censor-

ship laws in the days after it sent troops into Ukraine that allow it to send critics of the offensive to jail for years if they are found to have spread "false information" or "discredited" the armed forces. More than 900 criminal cases have been launched over the past two years for opposing the conflict, according to the OVD-Info rights group. Meanwhile, EU leaders on Thursday agreed to "take work forward" on a plan to use the profits from frozen Russian central bank assets to arm Ukraine, as Kyiv pleaded for more ammunition for its outgunned forces. More than two years into Moscow's war against its neighbor, Kyiv's troops are struggling to hold back the Russian army as Western deliveries of weapons have faltered. Meanwhile, Putin has

tightened his iron grip over his country by winning a new six-year term at elections after opposition was crushed. The proposal, at the heart of talks between leaders at a summit in Brussels, could unlock some three billion euros (\$3.3 billion) a year for Kyiv — once given a final green light. "I'm glad that leaders endorsed our proposal to use the extraordinary revenues from immobilized Russian assets. This will provide funding for military equipment to Ukraine," European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen told reporters. The EU froze around 200 billion euros of Russian central bank assets held in the bloc as part of punishing sanctions imposed on Moscow for sending troops into its neighbor in February 2022.

Russia warns
EU of
grain duty
impact

MOSCOW : Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova warned on Friday that the EU's plan to levy duties on grain from Russia and Belarus will worsen global food security. In a statement on Telegram, Zakharova said the West's actions have already caused difficulties in the global food market. EU President Ursula von der Leyen said on Thursday that the European Commission has begun preparations for the introduction of tariffs on agricultural products from Russia and Belarus. "That is how she worries about starving countries? How will such measures contribute to (improve) food security in the world?" Zakharova questioned. She asserted that they will not, in any way, worsen the global food situation, which has already been exacerbated by the West. Earlier on Tuesday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the EU's plans to impose duties on grain from Russia and Belarus require further consideration and analysis of their impact on food security.—APP

IMF
considers
loan for
Ethiopia's
economic
reform

ADDIS ABABA : An International Monetary Fund staff mission is in Ethiopia, a senior finance ministry official has said, as the nation faces a deadline with major creditor countries to secure a loan from the international lender. The IMF confirmed the presence of the staff mission in the Ethiopian capital on Thursday. Last month, IMF spokesperson Julie Zozack had said the fund would send a mission to the Horn of Africa nation to discuss its request for a loan programme. Ethiopia is in talks with the IMF to borrow around \$3.5 billion under a reform programme, three sources familiar with the matter said in December. "An IMF mission is starting discussions with the government of Ethiopia this week to continue the constructive dialogue held to date on supporting Ethiopia's economic reform," said a spokesperson for the fund.—APP

Reddit's wall
street debut
hits \$9 billion

LONDON : Shares of Reddit soared nearly 50 percent as the social media platform made its long-awaited stock market debut. Investors pushed Reddit's value close to \$9bn after it began trading on the New York Stock Exchange on Thursday, with the company's share price peaking at \$57.80 before closing at \$50.44. Reddit, founded in 2005 by entrepreneurs Steve Huffman and Alexis Ohanian, had priced its initial public offering (IPO) at \$34 a share. The strong market debut makes Reddit's IPO one of the biggest by a social media company so far, although the platform's market value is dwarfed by rivals such as Meta, the owner of Facebook and Instagram, which is priced at \$1.2 trillion.—DNA

Redefining Pakistan: Triumphs, challenges, and future prospects

MUHAMMAD HANAN

Determination and earnestness to achieve a goal wield immense power, capable of transforming not only individuals but also the entire world. 84 years ago, a small group convened with a monumental vision: to reshape the global landscape by delineating borders on the world map. Their aim was unprecedented: to establish a nation grounded in religion, devoid of conflict and terror. This historic decision culminated in the birth of Pakistan on August 14th, 1947. Since its inception, Pakistan has encountered numerous obstacles and challenges that have hindered its progress. Persistent issues have impeded the nation's advancement, leading some to believe it has failed and is on the brink of collapse. However, this perception is inaccurate. The notion that Pakistan has achieved nothing in 84 years is a misrepresentation, propagated to tarnish the country's image both domestically and internationally. Negative portrayals overshadow the nation's successes, creating a skewed perception of its progress. Despite setbacks, Pakistan con-

tinues to make strides forward. Pakistan boasts a rich tapestry of culture, traditions, and history, where people of diverse backgrounds peacefully coexist. Despite their appearance, language, and lifestyle differences, they unite in their shared goal of building a better nation. Throughout history, individuals from various ethnicities and religions have significantly contributed to the world, bringing pride to Pakistan. Notable figures such as Dr. Abdus Salam, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Atif Aslam, Arfa Kareem, Imran Khan, Justice Cornelius, Anil Daltap, and Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogan are just a few examples. Their achievements exemplify the dedication of Pakistanis in portraying a positive image of their country to the world. Despite facing numerous challenges hindering its optimal growth, the people of Pakistan are renowned for their generosity and humility, evident in the country's extensive charity network. Despite being labelled as poor and underdeveloped, Pakistan boasts a multitude of philanthropic organizations. Examples include the Edhi Foundation, Chhipa Foundation, and Shaukat

Khanum Cancer Hospitals, highlighting the compassion and generosity of its citizens. Moreover, Pakistan houses the world's largest ambulance services, which have saved countless lives, underscoring the nation's commitment to humanitarian aid on a global scale. Despite the country's low literacy rate, Pakistan is home to an abundance of talent and dedication. Numerous prodigies have emerged, leaving their mark in various fields. Dr. Abdus Salam, for instance, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for his groundbreaking work in electroweak unification theory. Arfa Kareem, the youngest Microsoft Certified Professional, demonstrated the immense capabilities of Pakistani youth when provided with opportunities. Beyond technology, Pakistan has also garnered fame in art and music. Renowned artists like Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan continue to captivate audiences worldwide with their timeless melodies. Platforms like Coke Studio showcase the artistic richness of Pakistan, highlighting its cultural diversity. Furthermore, in sports, individuals like Imran Khan, Shahid Afridi, and Shahbaz Ahmad have brought international acclaim to the nation, further

solidifying Pakistan's presence on the global stage. Despite being labelled as a backward country, Pakistan defies stereotypes of oppression towards minorities and women. The nation exhibits a high level of tolerance towards minorities, backed by comprehensive laws aimed at safeguarding their rights and freedoms. Women, likewise, enjoy significant representation and rights across various fields, including politics, the armed forces, and academia. Icons like Benazir Bhutto, the first female Prime Minister, and Mrs. Mariyam Nawaz, the first female Chief Minister, exemplify the empowerment and rights afforded to women in Pakistan. The army stands as the pride and strength of Pakistan, providing the nation with the necessary power and freedom to thrive. The peacekeeping missions and anti-terrorism efforts undertaken by our armed forces garner praise and honour from across the globe, reinforcing our national prestige. Additionally, Pakistan holds the distinction of being the first and only Muslim nation with control over a nuclear arsenal, serving as a symbol of strength and courage for oppressed Muslims worldwide. While attention to

the business sector has been comparatively less, recent years have witnessed a surge in entrepreneurial activity, with individuals establishing startups and achieving financial independence at a young age. This trend holds great promise for the economic advancement of the country. All in all, Pakistan, from its resolution in 1940 to the present day, holds several distinctions as the first nation born out of ideology and the first Muslim country to possess a nuclear arsenal. It has produced prodigies who have brought pride to the nation, with countless others diligently working towards the same goal. Despite challenges, Pakistan remains rich in natural resources and boasts a sizable youth population. However, the youth are often inundated with a negative portrayal of the country, dampening their motivation and patriotism. As young citizens, it is our responsibility to strive towards national improvement and leave our mark on history. Let us not dwell on past neglect but work towards a brighter future for our nation.

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Briefs

Tough decisions to steer country out of crisis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State Shiza Fatima stressed the need to make tough decisions to steer Pakistan back towards the path to progress. Speaking to the media along with party leaders, she asserted that under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif, the country would improve. She also cited former PM Nawaz Sharif's successful navigation of challenges from 2013 to 2017 when Pakistan gained significant economic growth.

With assistance from the IMF, Sharif's administration managed to extricate the nation from its financial woes. Talking about Shehbaz Sharif's tenure as Prime Minister in 2022, she praised his efforts in stabilizing the nation within 16 months. She said that he averted a looming crisis.

Highlighting the importance of addressing unemployment, wage disparities, and education for the youth, she stressed without them national development would remain stunted. She called for unity among citizens, asserting that despite differences, collective efforts are necessary for national progress. PML-N leader Rana Mashhood highlighted Nawaz Sharif's success in curbing terrorism and alleviating load shedding during his tenure. He also attributed his disqualification in 2017 to false allegations.

Sanam granted permission to vie for Senate poll

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court's (LHC) appellate tribunal has granted permission to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Sanam Javed to contest the Senate election 2024. Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan, of the appellate tribunal, announced the reserved verdict by accepting the appeal filed by Sanam Javed against ECP decision. Previously, Sanam Javed challenged the ECP's verdict of rejecting her nomination papers for the Senate election. Her nomination papers were dismissed by the ECP due to her joint account with her father, which rendered her ineligible to contest the Senate election. The appellate tribunal has declared the ECP's verdict null and void. Sanam Javed will now contest for the women's reserved seat in the Senate.

Islamabad DC's sentence suspended

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: A two-member bench of the Islamabad High Court on Friday suspended DC Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz, SSP Operations, Jameel Zafdar and SHO's sentence awarded in a contempt case. IHC in its judgment, ruled that DC Irfan Nawaz Memon had been found guilty of misconduct for taking actions that were beyond his authority and was awarded 6-month jail sentence. Moreover, the Islamabad police SSP (operations) was sentenced to four-month imprisonment besides a fine of Rs100,000. However, the Saddar SP was acquitted of the contempt of court charges. SHO Nasir Manzoor was also sent to jail for two months and fined Rs100,000. In a written order released by IHC CJ Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Gul Hasan Aurangzeb suspended sentences awarded to the officials in contempt case and fixed their appeal for a hearing on May 7. On March 1, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon challenged the six-month jail sentence awarded in a contempt of court case. As per details, the intra-court appeal was filed in Islamabad High Court challenging the single-bench verdict. The appeal urged the court to declare the verdict null and void and acquit DC Irfan Memon from contempt case.

UNSC fails to pass US draft resolution on Gaza

Russia's ambassador, Vasily Nebenzia, said that the US was doing nothing to rein in Israel, mocking Washington for speaking of a ceasefire after "Gaza has been virtually wiped off the face of the Earth"

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Russia and China on Friday vetoed a US-led draft resolution at the Security Council on Gaza, with Moscow accusing Washington of a "hypocritical spectacle" that does not pressure Israel.

The US, Israel's main ally which has vetoed previous ceasefire calls, put forward the resolution which for the first time would have supported "the imperative of an immediate and sustained ceasefire" and condemned the October 7 attack by Hamas. Russia and China exercised their vetoes, Algeria also voted against and Guyana abstained. The other 11 Security Council members voted in favor, including permanent members France and Britain. Russia's ambassador, Vasily Nebenzia, said that the US was doing nothing to rein in Israel, mocking Washington for speaking of a ceasefire after "Gaza has been virtually wiped off the face of the Earth."

"We have observed a typical hypocritical spectacle," he said. "The American product is exceedingly politicized, with the sole purpose being to play to voters and throw them a bone in the form of some kind of a mention of a ceasefire in Gaza," he said. The resolution will "ensure the impunity

of Israel, whose crimes are not even assessed in the draft." The draft links a potential ceasefire to ongoing talks, led by Qatar with support from the US and Egypt, to halt the war in return for Hamas releasing hostages. The US ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, called the Russian and Chinese vetoes "not just cynical" but also "petty." "Russia and China simply did not want to vote for a resolution that was penned by the United States," she said. "Let's be honest - for all the fiery rhetoric, we all know that Russia and China are not doing anything diplomatically to advance a lasting peace or to meaningfully contribute to the humanitarian response effort," she said. As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 168 on Friday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound neighborhoods, homes, shelter centers, and aid convoys, and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. A reporter for the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza, killing and injuring dozens of citizens. The Israeli warplanes launched at dawn today a new air raid on the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. At least eight martyrs were reported in an

Israeli airstrike on the Abu Thabet family house in the Al-Nasr neighborhood, north of Rafah. The Israeli forces continue their attack on the Al-Shifa Medical Complex in Gaza for the fifth day in a row, amid gunfire and explosions. Families of the sick and wounded people who were trapped in the Al-Shifa Complex launched appeals for help after being denied medical treatment. Over the past few days, the Israeli forces have executed more than 150 Palestinians and arrested hundreds of others in the medical facility. The Israeli warplanes also targeted the Abu Aisha family house in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, A security official of the Hamas resistance group has rejected Israel's latest claim of capturing Palestinian resistance commanders during a deadly raid on the al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City. The official, who was speaking on condition of anonymity, made the remarks on Friday, after the Israeli military released a photo collage showing the pictures of alleged 358 resistance fighters who were detained at the medical complex. The official told Qatari-based Al Jazeera TV network that the pictures of the detainees are not accurate and that they were published in line with Israel's "psychological war" against the resistance in the Gaza Strip. "Some pictures are of those

who are not in Gaza now, as well as Palestinian martyrs and doctors already released by the occupation's army," he added. Israeli forces raid Gaza al-Shifa hospital, open fire inside complex Israeli forces raid Gaza al-Shifa hospital, open fire inside complex Heavily armed Israeli forces have stormed the al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City, firing at people inside the complex. Early on Monday, heavily armed Israeli forces stormed the al-Shifa hospital and fired at thousands of patients, medical staff and displaced civilians inside the medical complex. They killed more than 140 Palestinian in and around the hospital and arrested a total of 650 others, including journalists and health workers. Over the past days, the Israeli military has laid siege on the al-Shifa hospital, with its snipers and helicopters targeting those trying to flee. In November 2023, Israel conducted a similar raid on the medical facility, sparking widespread international condemnation. Israel waged a genocidal US-backed war on Gaza last October after Hamas carried out its historic operation against the usurping entity in retaliation for the regime's intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people. So far, the Tel Aviv regime has killed at least 31,988 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 74,188 others.

President approves remission for prisoners

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday approved remission for the prisoners on the occasion of Pakistan Day annually observed on March 23 and Eid ul Fitr. The president granted a remission of 90 days each, for both occasions in sentences exercising his powers under Article 45 of the Constitution and Rule 15-A of the Rules of Business. However, the remission would not be applicable on the prisoners involved in murder, espionage and anti-state activities.

Besides, the prisoners involved in rape, theft, robbery, kidnapping, terrorism and financial crimes, would also be ineligible for the remission. The reduction in sentences would be applicable on the male prisoners of over 65 years age and female prisoners of over 60 years age, who had completed one-third of the sentence. The juvenile prisoners, who had completed one third of their sentence would also be entitled for the remission.

British HC delegation calls on PA speaker

DNA

LAHORE: The Political Counselor of British High Commission Zoe Ware called on speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan on Friday. The overall political situation and parliamentary issues were discussed in detail during the meeting. Speaker Punjab Assembly acknowledged the role of British institutions in various sectors including education in Pakistan. He emphasized that exchange of parliamentary delegations, economic cooperation, and strengthening relations at the grassroots level could further enhance ties between both countries. He highlighted the potential for bilateral cooperation in industries, agriculture, and other sectors, which could yield positive outcomes if suitable opportunities were provided for youth. Speaker briefed the Political Counselor about the legislative process and standing committee system in the Punjab Assembly.

Pakistan-US discuss investment opportunities in energy sector

US Ambassador Donald Blome calls on Minister for Petroleum, Dr Musadik Malik



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the United States of America H.E. Donald Blome called on the newly appointed Federal Minister for Petroleum, Dr Musadik Malik. H.E. the ambassador extended his congratulations to Dr. Musadik Malik on assuming the office and expressed high hopes for the transformation of the energy sector. Federal Minister appreciated H.E. Ambassador Blome for always extending his support and reaffirmed that together both the countries can achieve the shared energy goals. Taking the opportunity, both sides discussed in detail the potential

areas of cooperation, including technology transfer, investment opportunities, and capacity building initiatives in the energy sector and regional projects. Ways and means to promote sustainable carbon friendly footprint, renewables, green hydrogen were also discussed. During the meeting, Minister highlighted Pakistan's commitment towards fostering stronger ties with the United States. The Minister apprised the US ambassador regarding Pakistan's vast potential in the energy sector, particularly in the minerals sector. Ambassador Blome informed the Minister that a high-level economic dialogue is scheduled to be held in April at Washington where energy related matters including minerals would take the center stage.

Tax on tobacco products

Health activists appreciate IMF recommendations

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Health activists have thrown their support behind the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recommendations for Pakistan, with a specific focus on restructuring tobacco taxation. During the event "Fueling Economic Growth through Increased Tobacco Taxation" organized by the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), activists urged the Government of Pakistan to transition to a Single Tier Tobacco Taxation System, thereby eliminating the second tier. This strategic move is deemed essential not only for boosting revenue but also for relieving the healthcare cost burdens imposed by tobacco-related illnesses. Ma-

lik Imran Ahmed, Country head Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (CTFK), highlighted the alignment between the IMF's recommendations and the ongoing discussions with Pakistan. These discussions aim to tackle the nation's fiscal and external sustainability weaknesses while fostering economic recovery and inclusive growth. A key component involves strengthening public finances through gradual fiscal consolidation, broadening the tax base in undertaxed sectors, and improving tax administration to enhance debt sustainability. Imran emphasized the urgent need to tie these objectives with tobacco taxation, stressing the imperative of reforming Pakistan's cigarette taxation system. Malik Imran further emphasized that revitalizing Pakistan's cigarette taxation system transcends mere fiscal considerations; it is a matter of urgent public health concern. He lamented that despite the substantial taxes imposed on cigarettes, the revenue generated falls short of covering the healthcare costs incurred due to smoking-related illnesses. In the fiscal year 2022-23, taxes covered a meager 16% of these expenses, indicating a significant decline from 19.5% in 2019. Dr. Khalil Ahmad Dogar, Program Manager at SPARC, underscored the alarming prevalence of tobacco use in Pakistan. With approximately 31.9 million adults aged 15 years and above reported as current tobacco users, constituting nearly 19.7% of the adult population, the dire consequences of tobacco consumption extend far beyond individual health.

Million in Ukraine lose power after Russian missiles strikes

Ukraine's energy minister, German Galushchenko, accused Russia of trying to provoke "a large-scale failure of the country's energy system"

KYIV: A million people are without power across Ukraine after Russian missiles targeted energy infrastructure. There is no electricity in the second-largest city of Kharkiv, the regional head says, and more than 53,000 households in Odesa are without power. Ukraine's energy minister, German Galushchenko, accused Russia of trying to provoke "a large-scale failure of the country's energy system". Russia said it was revenge for recent Ukrainian attacks on Russian territory. At least five people have been reported killed and 14 wounded. President Volodymyr Zelensky said the latest wave of attacks showed that Western allies must give more military aid to Ukraine, including additional air defence systems. "There are no delays in Russian missiles like there are in assistance to our country," he wrote on Telegram. Some 90 missiles and 60 Shahed drones were launched into Ukraine during the wave of overnight attacks, he said. Among the targets was Ukraine's largest dam - the DniproHES in Zaporizhzhia. Video footage appeared to show the dam on fire, but authorities say there is no threat of an immi-

nent breach. Social media photos showed a trolleybus carrying passengers, which was crossing the dam when it caught fire after a missile strike. "At 04:30 all hell broke loose. Terrible fireworks and explosions. At one point, our house tilted," Valentyna, an eyewitness whose house overlooks the dam told the BBC. A power line feeding the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant has also reportedly been cut. Regional head Ivan Fedorov said the power station was "on the verge of a blackout", adding that seven buildings in the region had been destroyed and 35 others damaged. Strikes were also reported in President Zelensky's hometown of Kryvyi Rih and in Vinnytsia, both in central Ukraine. They damaged a "critical infrastructure object", said Ukrainian officials. Russia's defence ministry said the assault on Ukraine's power grid was part of a series of revenge attacks against Kyiv for its earlier incursions into Russian territory. Local officials in the Russian region of Belgorod, near the border with Ukraine, said on Thursday that a woman had been killed and many other people wounded by a Ukrainian strike. - Agencies

PTI to celebrate Pakistan Day with national spirit

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Core Committee decided to celebrate Pakistan Day with national spirit and great fervor. During the meeting, the forum gave approval to hold a function in the federal capital to mark Pakistan Day today (Saturday). PTI Core Committee meeting held here on Friday, wherein several important decisions were taken. They reiterated their demand of a comprehensive investigation into the worst elections rigging and daylight robbery of public mandate so as to give power to the really people elected representatives. PTI Core Committee approved holding of a mammoth public gathering against the large scale elections rigging and the continued violation of the constitution in the country in Islamabad on March 30. Moreover, the participants gave formal approval of organizing a huge public rally in Karachi on April 21 in this regard. PTI Core Committee also gave consent of holding a special press conference on the country's economic condition, the new IMF's financial package and its subsequent impacts on the people of the country. In the meeting, the participants were given detailed briefing pertaining to the court proceedings of the cases against PTI Founding Chairman Imran Khan so far and the possibility of his acquittal. The forum declared the acquittal of the PTI Founding Chairman in several cases as a breath of fresh air and urged the judiciary to take early decisions on the appeals against Imran Khan's sentences and decide his cases on merit sans any further delay. PTI Core Committee also endorsed holding of a meeting of PTI Punjab Assembly members at the residence of senior central leader Sardar Latif Khan Khosa regarding preparation for Senate elections today (Saturday). Besides, the forum also reviewed the contents of the statement made by US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu before the US Congressional Committee in detail. - DNA

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