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Zelensky hits back after Moscow links Kyiv to concert attack

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China urged to boost growth with reforms

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T20I: Amir takes back retirement

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Normalisation efforts

Pak-Afghan to hold trade talks in Kabul

Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch confirmed that the Pakistani delegation, headed by Secretary of Commerce Khurram Agha, will undertake the two-day visit

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani commerce ministry delegation is scheduled to arrive in the Afghan capital Kabul on Monday to explore ways to remove obstacles in transit and bilateral trade, said an Afghan official. Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesman for the Afghan Commerce Ministry, confirmed to Dawn.com today that Minister of Industry and Commerce Nooruddin Azizi will lead the Afghan delegation. Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch confirmed that the Pakistani delegation, headed by Secretary of Commerce Khurram Agha, will undertake the two-day visit. "Pakistan remains committed to promoting trade and people-to-people ties with Afghanistan," Baloch added. Other delegates from Pakistan include Joint Secretary (Ministry of Commerce), Maria Qazi, Additional Secretary Commerce Dr Wajid Ali Khan, Director General Transit Trade and Additional Secretary of Interior Khushal Khan. Discussions will be held on overall bilateral and transit trade, said the Afghan Commerce Ministry's spokesman. "We will take up the issue of a ban on several transit items. Pakistan has banned the import of certain items under the transit agreement. Around 50 per cent of transit trade has been decreased due to this ban and shifted to Iran," Jawad said. The talks will be held amid efforts by both sides to normalise relations following Pakistani airstrikes in two Afghan provinces on

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Pakistan to mull restoring trade ties with India

Pakistan downgraded its ties with India in August 2019

STAFF REPORT

LONDON: Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has said that Pakistan will consider restoring trade ties with India that remained suspended since August 2019 when Narendra Modi-led government revoked the special status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). "Pakistani businessmen want trade with India to resume," the foreign minister said while addressing the media at the Pakistan High Commission in London at the end of his visit to the UK and Europe on Saturday. Pakistan downgraded its ties with India after the

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LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on Mines and Minerals of Balochistan with special context to Reko Dik Project. - DNA

Court bans madrasas in UP, ahead of elections

The law, which had governed madrasas in Uttar Pradesh (UP) since 2004, was thrown out after the ruling

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: In yet another move that could potentially drive Indian Muslims further away from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist government, a court in India Friday banned madrasas (Islamic schools) in the country's most populous state ahead of national elections. The law, which had governed madrasas in Uttar Pradesh (UP) since 2004, was thrown out after the ruling which cited constitutional secularism violations and ordered that students be moved to conventional schools, Reuters reported.

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Orders road upgradation PM directs for foolproof security of Reko Dik project

He said the mineral-rich district of Chaghai will benefit a lot from the new railway line and help promote mining industry

ABID RAZA / DNA

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has emphasized appropriate planning regarding the communication infrastructure, especially the railway line, to take full advantage of minerals in Balochistan. Chairing a meeting on Mines and Minerals of Balochistan with special context to Reko Dik Project in Lahore, he instructed the up-gradation of the existing road network at the earliest to connect the Reko Dik project with Gwadar by road. Shehbaz Sharif said also advised to consult all stakeholders at the official level as well as to remove obstacles regarding the project. Regarding the protection and safety of the workers associated with the Reko Dik project, the Prime Minister said security will be ensured for those working on the project and logistics and transport from Reko Dik to the port. Besides, Shehbaz Sharif instructed to expedite the completion of under construction roads. He said a strategy should be evolved regarding the feasibility of a railway network from Reko Dik to Gwadar port.

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Aurangzeb to lead ECC

Prime Minister reshuffled the key economic body

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb will be heading the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reshuffled the key economic body on Sunday. With the reorganisation of the ECC already notified, the body will also include ministers for finance, economic affairs, commerce, power, petroleum and planning, development and special initiatives. The development comes a day after a Pakistani newspaper reported that the prime minister himself was to chair the ECC and the finance minister would only take his place in the wake of

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Barrister Saif concerned about Elahi

Wants to know facts of incident

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Adviser on Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif has expressed his concern on the Punjab government's treatment of PTI President Parvez Elahi. In a statement issued on Sunday, he talked about the reported accident of former Punjab chief minister Elahi. It has been reported that the PTI leader suffered injuries after falling on the ground Adiala Jail. Barrister Saif said the PTI leadership wanted to know facts; whether Parvez Elahi had an accident or he was tortured. He demanded that a team of doctors from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa be given permission to visit him in jail and examine his condition.

Maryam grieved over kite flying incident

DNA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz has expressed her deep sense of sorrow over the death of a young child due to kite flying in Sargodha. CM has expressed her heartfelt sympathy and grief with the bereaved family. Maryam Nawaz has expressed her unwavering resolve to undertake a stern action against those are found responsible for the death of an innocent child. CM expressed her severe indignation over the kite flying incident in Sargodha and ordered IG Police to undertake a strict action against the concerned police officers. CM also ordered to take a stern action against the police officials of the concerned area over non-implementation on the orders for the eradication of kite flying.

President confers awards on officers of armed forces

The investiture ceremony was held at the Presidency and was attended by senior officers of the armed forces, government officials and families of the recipients of the awards

MEHTAB PIRZADA



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari conferring the insignia of Sitara-i-Basalat (Military) upon Captain Abdul Wali (Shaheed) during the Presidential Investiture Ceremony of military. His father is receiving the award. - DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday conferred insignias of military awards on 42 officers of the armed forces. The investiture ceremony was held at the Presidency in connection with Pakistan Day and was attended by senior officers of the armed forces, government officials and families of the recipients of the awards. Recipients of Hilal-i-Imtiaz included Lt-Gen Mohsin Muhammad Qureshi, Air Marshal Abdul Moeed Khan, Air Marshal Tariq Zia, Air Marshal Ghulam Abbas Ghuman, Major-Gen Shoaib Ahmed, Major-Gen Naseer Ahmed Samore, Rear Admiral Habibur Rehman, Major-Gen Shazia Nisar, Major-Gen Ejaz Ghani, Major-Gen Nadeem Ahmed Rana, Major-Gen Waseem Ahmad Khan,

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DC Islamabad disallows PTI power show

DC Memon cites 'law and order' as reason

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon rejected on Sunday PTI's request to hold a public gathering in the federal capital on March 30. The party's request was turned down in view of the "law and order situation". DC Memon stated that the party had already violated NOCs (no objection certificates) issued on earlier occasions. Two days ago, the Islamabad High Court Chief Justice Aamer Farooq directed the capital's DC to decide on the matter and present a report in this regard.

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IS attacks in Moscow likely to give new turn to global strategic moves

The Taliban regime time and again has been making claims of strengthening its intelligence network against IS but all these foreign groups and individuals have already established better understanding with the Afghan Taliban, majority of whom are now in control of important offices

SHAMIM SHAHID

LATEST Islamic State Khorasan firing against occupants of a concert hall in Moscow has not only jolted the world but it is now giving new turns and directions to global strategic battling which is still controlled by two traditional rivals US and Russian Federation (successor of USSR). Whatever may be directions and targets of follow up of Moscow firing incidents, its epicenter would be other than border regions between former British India and Afghanistan, dominated by Pushtoons. No one can deny the fact that Pushtoons are no more independent as they have been made slaves and hostages by spymasters led in the sacred name of Islam and Jihad. The Islamic States (IS) also called Daesh is the latest of Mujahideen, sponsored, trained, financed and encouraged by US led allies against the former Soviet Union. The IS came into being at the time when at the last moment of the first decade of millennium, US lead allies were fed up by continuous resistance by Taliban in war devastated Afghanistan. At early stages, the IS focused almost its attention and strategies against Shia Iran whereas it was engaged in

efforts for the survival of the Syrian government. Despite wholehearted support of US led allies, the IS had failed in the Syrian war. IS militants after its failure, returned to war devastated Afghanistan at the time when Pakistan also pulled Al Qaeda remains out of tribal regions by commencing military operation Zarbi-Azab on June 15, 2014 last. Making Afghanistan as its base camp like Al Qaeda, the IS had made hellish lives of all those progressive, nationalists, democrats and moderate Pushtoon elders who are known for opposition to extremism and terrorism. At this stage, the IS constituted a 40-member council (Shura) for making its decisions and strategies. Majority of the 40-member council were those who remain in important offices in banned Tehrik Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Still the IS is commanded by Pakistani origin Taliban who are in cordial and friendly links with Taliban (Emirate Islami Afghanistan) governing Afghanistan. The Emirate Islami has already declared Afghanistan as a free and safe place for like-minded militants from all over the world. It doesn't mean that with the killing of Osama Bin Laden and Dr. Aiman Al Zawahiri, Al Qaeda lost its existence or its contacts with

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CM KP assures to address problems in metropolis

CM Ali Amin Gandapur leads discussion on Peshawar development, focuses on public service enhancements and infrastructure upgrades

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR :Chief Minister (CM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur met with Members of National Assembly (MNAs) and Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) affiliated with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) here on Sunday to discuss public issues and development matters concerning the provincial capital. The meeting focused on a range of issues including healthcare, security, traffic management, infrastructure improvement, provision of clean drinking water, sewerage, and other related concerns affecting the populace of Peshawar. CM

Ali Amin Khan Gandapur said that Peshawar is everyone's city, and its development is his top priority. "We will strive to make Peshawar once again a city of blossoms", he said. He added, "We aim to transition Peshawar's street lights to solar energy and are considering projects such as running trains to alleviate traffic congestion". Discussions also highlighted the possibility of engaging private companies to implement a train system based on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) model. The issue of sanitation in Peshawar is grave and will be addressed on a priority basis with sustainable solutions, assured Ali Amin Gandapur. The chief min-

ister also emphasized the need to overhaul the city's sanitation system by shifting it underground. In order to enhance public services, in all autonomous institutions, the provincial government will appoint hardworking and professional individuals based on merit, CM reiterated. He made it clear that no political recommendations would be entertained in this process. He said that local governments will be empowered and strengthened to ensure that public issues are resolved at the grassroots level. The meeting concluded with a resolve to work collectively towards the betterment and prosperity of Peshawar, with a focus on addressing the pressing needs of its residents.

Pakistan Navy rescues 8 Iranian fishermen

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI : Pakistan Navy War Ship safely rescued 8 Iranian fishermen from open sea after uncontrollable fire occurred on their boat. The distress call from Iranian fishing boat reported massive uncontrollable fire onboard for assistance to rescue the 8 member crew abandoning the boat. PNS YARMOOK while operating in vicinity of the unfortunate boat, immediately dashed to handle the situation. Despite heavy fire on the vessel, PNS YARMOOK not only safely rescued all 8 crew members from the sea but also controlled the fire onboard the blazing vessel by using its own modern firefighting equipment. Rescue and humanitarian assistance operations by Pakistan Navy at International waters is a fine manifestation of vigilance and professionalism of PN. Pak Navy is committed and obligated to effectively ensure Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) inline with UNCLOS while safeguarding National Maritime frontiers.

CDA imposes heavy taxes on properties in Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Capital Development Authority (CDA) has imposed heavy taxes on real estate properties in federal capital Islamabad. According to notification, owners of 140 square yards plots in sectors and housing societies like Shehzad Town, Margala Town, and Rawal Town will now pay Rs24,000 in taxes. Farmhouse owners with eight kanals will pay Rs180,000, while those with 90 to 120 kanals will pay Rs42,000. Commercial properties in the blue area will be taxed at Rs32 per square foot for ground floor, Rs22 per square foot for basement, and residential apartments at Rs26 per square foot.

Disbursement of quarterly tranche of Benazir Kafaalat

Chairperson, BISP has said that the quarterly payment has been disbursed among 50 percent of the total beneficiaries of Benazir Kafalaat

ISLAMABAD : The disbursement of the quarterly tranche (Jan-March) of Benazir Kafaalat cash assistance to beneficiaries is continuing smoothly across the country. The payment process is continued across the country, including Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan simultaneously to disburse the increased payment of Rs. 10,500 per household among over nine million registered beneficiary families. Chairperson, BISP, Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib has said that

the quarterly payment has been disbursed among 50 percent of the total beneficiaries of Benazir Kafalaat while those remaining will also receive their amounts soon. Dr. Saqib advised the BISP staff to show respect and tolerance to the women while disbursing payments and remain polite to them. He also urged the bank staff to ensure transparency in the payment process. The beneficiaries are also advised to receive their full payment through the agent/representative of their nearest designated

bank and contact the toll-free number 080026477 or the nearest Tehsil offices in case of any deduction. Besides Benazir Kafaalat stipend payments, the disbursement of education stipends is also being carried out across the country. In some areas, the special Ramzan grant is also being issued to the beneficiaries. It is pertinent to mention here that the special control room has been activated in the BISP headquarters to address the complaints of the beneficiaries promptly. —APP

World urged to intervene for peace in Kashmir

ISLAMABAD : Chairman Jammu Kashmir Peace and Justice Organization (JKPO), Tanveer-ul-Islam here on Sunday sought immediate international intervention to address the escalating humanitarian catastrophe in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). He was speaking at a webinar titled "Voices for Kashmir: Seeking Truth, Justice, and Dignity," organized by JKPO with an aim to highlight plight of Kashmiris. Tanveer emphasized that Kashmiri Muslims were being subjected to systemic human rights violations, including arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial killings, torture, and enforced disappearances for decades. He vehemently condemned draconian measures such as arbitrary detentions and violent repression, along with the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution, affecting the special autonomous status of the Jammu and Kashmir region. Tracing the history of the Kashmir conflict, he highlighted that the denial of Kashmiris' right to decide their future with free will gave birth to this dispute since the partition of British India in 1947. —APP

MD WASA urges citizens to use water carefully

RAWALPINDI : Managing Director (MD), Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA), Rawalpindi, Muhammad Saleem Ashraf has urged the citizens to use water carefully. The MD said that WASA was making every possible effort to provide clean drinking water to the citizens, but it is also the responsibility of the citizens to use water carefully. He urged the citizens to cooperate with WASA and pay their water and sewerage bills on time. The MD further said that to save and prevent wastage of water, WASA had improved the quality of water and taken measures day and night to eliminate the leakages of underground water pipes, which would not only save water but help control dengue. WASA Rawalpindi would make efforts to repair and renovate mini-filtration plants across the city, he said adding, chlorine would be added to improve water quality and filters would be replaced at water filtration plants. The MD further said that ongoing efforts being made in this regard would be intensified. It was the need of the hour to make every citizen aware of the importance of water, he added. WASA Rawalpindi was trying to provide clean drinking water to the citizens, he informed. Work had been started on mega projects including the supply of 12 million gallons of water per day from Chahan Dam, additional five million gallons of water per day from Rawal Dam and an uninterrupted supply of water to six union councils of Khayaban Sir Syed. Asian Development Bank is providing funds for these projects, he said and informed that along with this, a rain harvesting system was being installed on 30 different buildings of the city with the support of UN-HABITAT to secure the rainwater. Under the project, the rainwater would be collected from the roofs in the underground tanks and this water would be used for horticulture. The step would help save clean drinking water, he added. He asked the officials to further improve the service delivery so as to enable uninterrupted water supply to the citizens, particularly during Ramazan. The MD said that the supply of clean drinking water to the citizens would be ensured from the mini-filtration plants during Sehaur and Itfar in Ramazan. Solid steps were being taken for immediate repair in case of malfunction of tubewells, he said adding that negligence on the part of the officials concerned would not be tolerated. —DNA



RAWALPINDI: Isphanyar Bhandara Spokesperson Federal Government visited Krishna Mandir and greeted the member of the Hindu community on the occasion of holy ritual. Isphanyar Bhandara's visit to Krishna Mandir in Rawalpindi, where he extended warm greetings to members of the Hindu community, presents a significant opportunity to enhance the fabric of social harmony and inclusivity in the city. — DNA

PFA discards 1500 kg of adulterated tea

RAWALPINDI : The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) in its ongoing drive to check food outlets, discarded over 1,500 kg of adulterated tea while inspecting various sites. The PFA spokesman said that the Deputy Director of PFA on a tip-off conducted a raid in the Kashmiri Bazar area and seized 1500 kg of spurious tea worth Rs 2 million. The team also confiscated different types of material and packing machines from the spot as the tea was being prepared with a mixture of colours. He further said that strict action was being taken against violators to ensure hygienic food to the residents. —APP

PSF invites research proposals under CRP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) has invited research proposals from the faculty members and researchers of public sector institutions under its Competitive Research Programme (CRP) aiming at fostering academia-industry cooperation.

According to an official of PSF, the programme is being executed under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Pakistan Science Foundation Pakistan and The Scientific and Technological Research Institution of Turkey (TUBITAK). —APP

Polio campaign begins in 11 Balochistan districts

DNA

QUETTA : Following the recent emergence of two polio cases in Balochistan after a three-year gap, health authorities are issuing an urgent call to parents and caregivers to prioritize their children's health by participating in the anti-polio vaccination campaign starting on Monday in 11 districts of Balochistan. Despite significant progress in the fight against polio, the recent cases serve as a stark reminder of the persistent threat posed by this crippling disease. In response, the Emergency Operations Center Balochistan, in collaboration with health partners, is launching a comprehensive vaccination drive to ensure every child under the age of five receives two drops of the polio vaccine. Scheduled to commence on Monday, March 25, 2024, the campaign aims to reach the children in Chaman, Dera Bugti, Hub, Lasbela, Nasirabad, Sibi, Jaffarabad, Kech, Khuzdar, Usta Mu-

hammad, and Sobhatpur. In this campaign, around 889656 children will be vaccinated for which around 3378 teams will be deployed including 2641 mobile teams, 306 fixed-site teams, and 228 transit points. Syed Zahid Shah, Provincial Coordinator of Emergency Operations Center Balochistan emphasized the critical importance of vaccination in protecting children from the debilitating effects of polio. "The recent polio cases in Balochistan are a sobering reminder that our work is far from over. We urge all parents and caregivers to ensure their children are vaccinated during this campaign to safeguard their health and prevent the spread of poliovirus", he said. He said that the polio vaccine is safe, effective, and essential in the global effort to eradicate polio once and for all. By vaccinating children up to the age of 5 years, parents not only protect their own families but also contribute to the health and well-being of future generations,

he added. The coordinator also mentioned that despite all sorts of harsh weather conditions, polio workers have fulfilled their national duties with zeal and courage. The success of this campaign depends on the active participation of every member of the community. are urged to cooperate with vaccinators, ensure their children are available for vaccination, and spread the word about the importance of polio vaccination in their circle, he said adding that all teams participating in the polio campaign will be provided with security. Syed Zahid Shah stated that the initiation of this special Anti-polio campaign is due to the presence of the poliovirus in the environment. He urged the civil society, scholars, and religious leaders to ensure their cooperation, particularly in this special campaign. It should be noted that in Balochistan, after three years, two polio cases have been reported in Dera Bugti and Chaman last week.

Railways transfers 16,535 electric meters to DISCOs, KE

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan Railways has shifted as many as 16,535 out of 26,660 electric meters of the railway's residential colonies to Distribution Companies (DISCOs) and Karachi-Electric (KE) to rationalize its expenditure on utilities. "The electric meters of residential colonies are being shifted to DISCOs by the department and the step has resulted in savings of Rs 1,300 million so far," an official in the Ministry of

Railways told APP. He said Pakistan Railways had taken certain austerity measures to moderate its losses and all these austerity measures have been taken in line with the instructions issued by Finance Division from time to time. In addition to austerity measures, he said the department has rigorously followed a diversified approach to reducing its different costs along with measures to improve its revenue streams.

He said in order to further reduce the electricity bills, Pakistan Railways had prepared a plan to shift to solar energy for that purpose the work has been initiated by awarding the feasibility study to M/s NESPAK. The official said around 100 sites with heavy consumption of electricity had been identified and once shifted to solar energy, it would result in savings of Rs 1,000 million. —APP

Organic Food: A booming trend in KP

Pakistan sees 15% annual growth in organic farming, attributes rise to health awareness and concerns over synthetic chemicals

PESHAWAR :The benefits of organic food and its positive effects on human life have drawn peoples' attention towards safe food that is also rich in nutrients and grown by traditional methods using natural ingredients beneficial for health. With the new innovation and developments in medical science that unveiled the hazards of inorganic foods to humans is seen. The scientists are still unaware about the real harmful effects of foods grown from unnatural ways but people are preferring food that is simple, pure and less contaminated by chemicals, fertilizers and pesticides. "Agricultural products that are grown and processed without use of chemicals, pesticides, fertilizers and genetically modified organisms are referred to inorganic food," said Darya Khan, Provincial Coordinator at Nutrition International Peshawar while talking to APP. He said such food was healthy, full of antioxidants and without allergens besides having lasting effects on immunity and life span. He said indi-

viduals who use inorganic food are more prone to various kinds of diseases and ailments and the best option was adaptation of home-based agriculture practices to get organic food. He said that survival rate and life expectancy of people living in remote areas is far better as compared to people living in developed cities, adding the average life span of population residing in remote areas of Pakistan like Hunza, Swat and Chitral are significantly longer and healthier due to their reliance on organic food items. He said the food grown in natural ways was full of nutrients and devoid of harmful effects that increased immunity of human beings and protect them from falling prey to most common diseases such as cholera, diarrhea and other stomach disorders. Besides Japan, Singapore, Indonesia and SAARC countries, he said that culture of organic food cultivation made inroads in Pakistan, adding the kitchen gardens culture at Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and






Peshawar was growing for organic food. "In Ramazan, my first priority is to purchase organic food including banana, citrus and vegetables due to high nutrient value and free of adulteration," said Bakhtair Khan, former General Manager SMEDA at Faqirabad fruit and vegetable market at Peshawar. "I have established kitchen garden at backyard of my house at Hayatabad from where my family collect fresh organic food," he said. Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) report has revealed that organic farming in Pakistan has been growing at an average rate of 15 percent per year over the past decade and this is due to a number of factors such as increasing awareness about health benefits of organic foods and hazardous being caused by synthetic chemicals in conventional farming. "The key principle of organic food production is soil health in which farmers maintain soil fertility through practices such as crop rotation and use of natural fertilizers i.e manure," said Sundas

Manzoor, a diet consultant. She said the approach enriches soil, ensure healthier plant growth besides making plants resistant to pests and diseases and increase immunity of consumers. Organic farming relies on natural methods of production instead of using practices that are dependent on artificial methods of plant growth, she added. The production and use of organic food is also a habit that helps promote ecological balance and conserve biodiversity, said former conservator for Forests KP Niaz Ali Khan. He said farmers that use organic methods cultivate a variety of crops and utilize natural habitats into their agricultural and forest landscapes to support beneficial insects, birds and wildlife. Niaz said this diversity helps maintain a balanced ecosystem besides reducing need for unnecessary chemical interventions. These practices contribute to healthier animals and produce meat, dairy and eggs that are free from harmful residues. —DNA

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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

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Iranian ambassador extends felicitations on Pakistan Day

Ambassador Moghadam shared a poignant message, invoking prayers for the oppressed people of Palestine. He expressed hope that the blessings of the holy month of Ramadan and Nowruz would bring relief to those enduring profound suffering

STAFF REPORT/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam of Iran has conveyed his heartfelt felicitations to the government and people of Pakistan on March 23rd, commemorating Pakistan Day. In his address during the Nowruz event, Ambassador Moghadam shared a poignant message, invoking prayers for the oppressed people of Palestine. He expressed hope that the blessings of the holy month of Ramadan and Nowruz would bring relief to those enduring profound suffering. The event witnessed the presence of esteemed guests, including government and military officials, members of civil society, parliamentarians, and representatives from the media fraternity. Additionally, the Tajik embassy added to the cultural richness of the occasion by presenting a delightful array of Tajik delicacies, further enhancing the spirit of camaraderie and cultural exchange. The ambassador further said, "I am very pleased that on this beautiful



night of the holy month of Ramadan, the month of mercy and grace of Allah, we are hosting this event to commemorate the International Day of Nowruz, in our brotherly and friendly country of Pakistan' He said, Nowruz was the ancient ritual of friendship, compassion and peaceful coexistence. A ritual celebrated by our ancestors in a wider area from beyond the borders of China to the Mediterranean Sea and even beyond.

It is a ritual that is so old, but has not become out-dated, but it is even honoured more brilliantly and beautifully every year than before. This ancient ritual does not belong only to the countries that are called Nowruz area, the representatives of which we are hosting tonight, but it belongs to all the people of the planet, he added. He said, in 2010, the UN General Assembly designated March 21st as the International Day of

Nowruz due to the peace-seeking and love-yearning nature of Nowruz. Nowruz was also registered as the intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO in 2016. 'One of the symbols of Nowruz is 'Haft Seen Table'. This table is decorated with the objects that symbolize purity, light, livelihood and blessing. You can see a sample of it in this hall tonight, as well as a table beautifully decorated by our friendly and brotherly country



of Tajikistan. I appreciate Tajikistan for participating in this event. We declare readiness to hold this event next year with more glory and with the participation of more countries in the Nowruz civilisation area'. During his address, Shafiev Saidjon, the Charge d'Affaires of the Tajik embassy, underscored the importance of the event and expressed gratitude to the Iranian embassy for graciously hosting the guests. Saidjon en-

riched his speech by quoting verses from the renowned poetry of Rumi, offering profound insights into the essence and significance of Nowruz. These poetic references added depth and cultural resonance to his discourse, enriching the understanding of the audience regarding the timeless traditions associated with this auspicious celebration. Former Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed also spoke on the occasion.

CDA set a new standard in urban development

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) sets a new standard in urban development with the introduction of an SDG-11 Cell, marking a pioneering step towards sustainable and inclusive city planning. Under the leadership of a female Director, this initiative not only showcases CDA's commitment to gender equity but also positions Islamabad as a beacon of progressive urban development.

The SDG-11 Cell, approved by the CDA Board, is poised to revolutionize city planning by aligning Islamabad's development with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) - "Sustainable Cities and Communities". With a focus on inclusivity, safety, resilience, and sustainability, the cell aims to set a precedent for urban development initiatives nationwide. Furthermore, the appointment of a female to lead the SDG-11 Cell underscores CDA's dedi-

cation to fostering an inclusive work environment and promoting gender equity in decision-making roles. This milestone emphasizes CDA's commitment not only to sustainable development but also to diversity and empowerment within the organization. As the first housing authority to establish such a cell and appoint a female leader, CDA solidifies its position as a trailblazer in the field of urban planning. This initiative represents a significant leap towards creating vibrant,

Samantha Power honoured with prestigious award

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan—On the occasion of Pakistan Day, March 23, 2024, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan bestowed the prestigious 'Hilal-e-Quaid-i-Azam' (Leadership) award on USAID Administrator Samantha Power for her leadership in supporting Pakistan during the devastating floods of 2022. This significant event, held in Islamabad, symbolized the profound partnership between the United States and Pakistan and their shared commitment to progress and collaboration. Former USAID Deputy Mission Director, Michael Rossmann, was also recognized with an award. Accepting the award on behalf of the Administrator, USAID Mission Director, Kate Somvongsiri, acknowledged the significance of the honor. Also, in a video message, Administrator Power expressed her gratitude, underscoring the pivotal role of USAID in supporting Pakistan during challenging times. She reiterated USAID's steadfast commitment to standing with Pakistan, guiding it through the recovery process and toward a brighter future. She also thanked the people of Pakistan for recognizing the enduring partnership between the two nations. During the 2022 floods, the United States, led by USAID, was crucial to the emergency response. The U.S. contribution, totaling over \$215 million, was further bolstered by significant donations exceeding \$37 million from private American citizens and companies.

Human Rights activist for improving health of PWDs

ISLAMABAD: Human Rights activist Ayub Malik on Sunday stressed the need to focus on improving the physical and mental quality of life for people living with disabilities. Talking to APP, he said that people with disabilities (PWDs) face a variety of structural and ideological challenges that have little to do with their actual limitations. These societal stigmas were often at the root of poor mental health among individuals with disabilities, rather than their disability itself, he added. However, he said that this can be lessened by focusing on ways to promote good mental health and people with disabilities. He said that some encouraging steps have recently been taken in Pakistan, such as the introduction of special identity cards for PWDs to enable them to access a range of concessions. It is also no longer legal to use derogatory terms such as 'disabled', 'physically handicapped' or 'mentally retarded' in official documents, he said adding, "We need a change in mindsets of our policymakers, and the citizenry at large". —APP

Govt: to pursue "One-PlusFour" strategy

ISLAMABAD: Federal Government will pursue "One-PlusFour" strategy to accelerate work on SEZs, under China Economic Net (CEN). This was stated by Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Minister of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives (PD&SI) during his meeting here with Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong, Gwadar Port reported on Saturday. The Minister presented the "OnePlusFour" strategy for accelerating Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under the CPEC framework. He informed the Chinese Ambassador that the Government of Pakistan aimed to align the 5Es Framework with the future developments under CPEC in Phase II. The 5Es framework comprises five key areas including export-led growth: emphasizing the need to harness Pakistan's potential in agriculture, industry, IT, mining, and manpower export to achieve export-led growth and address trade deficits. The Minister stated that under the OnePlusFour model, each SEZ in Pakistan would be partnered with one province from China; one industry group to develop specialized clusters within the SEZs; one SEZ from China to provide technical expertise, and a state-owned enterprise to spearhead SEZ development. This collaborative framework would expedite the establishment and growth of SEZs in Pakistan, enhancing their competitiveness and attractiveness to investors. Discussions also centered on enhancing regional connectivity, with a special emphasis on critical infrastructure projects like the Gwadar Port and the M-8 Motorway, which will enhance trade links and facilitate regional integration. Both officials reaffirmed their commitment to the strategic vision of CPEC, recognizing it as a cornerstone of bilateral cooperation.—DNA

Operation against illegal construction in G-12

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) has launched an encroachment operations against illegal construction in the Mauve Area of G-12. The operation was launched on the direction of the Director General FGEHA, The Enforcement Wing of the Authority headed by the Director (Enforcement) along with the Deputy Director, Assistant Directors and their team were directed to monitor new illegal constructions and encroachments by local people and land grabbers in Mauve Area sector G-12. During the operation the seven illegal constructions were demolished, said an official source. The Authority warned that no more illegal constructions should be done in future, otherwise FGEHA will take further action. Director General Housing Authority said that it has been reiterated that any illegal constructions will be removed immediately.

Rahat Fateh Ali Khan says he is grateful

The singer said: "It is with profound gratitude that I accept the prestigious Hilal-e-Imtiaz & Sitara-Imtiaz awards bestowed upon me by the esteemed President. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my cherished family, friends, and devoted fans whose unwavering support has been my guiding light on this remarkable journey.—APP

Pak-Saudi diplomatic exchange strengthening bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Saturday said the recent exchange of visits between high-ranking officials from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia has underscored the burgeoning alliance between the two nations, setting a robust foundation for future cooperation. Talking to media, he said Saudi Arabia's Defense Minister, Prince Khalid bin Salman, graced Pakistan Day parade as a distinguished guest and was honored with the prestigious Nishan Pakistan by the president of Pakistan. Similarly, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir, reciprocated the gesture with a significant visit to Saudi Arabia, engaging in crucial discussions with Saudi Crown Prince, Muhammad bin Salman, and other key leaders, Ashrafi said adding that these diplomatic endeavors not only reinforced the bonds between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia but also sent a resounding message of stability and progress to the global community. The PUC chairman said General Munir's steadfast efforts in fortifying relations with Saudi Arabia and other Islamic Arab countries had been commendable, reflecting Pakistan's commitment to fostering solidarity within the Muslim world. He said the reciprocal visits served as tangible evidence of the success of diplomatic initiatives aimed at enhancing Pakistan's stature internationally. Ashrafi said the enduring friendship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, characterized by robust cooperation and mutual consultation, remained unwavering. He said in the wake of recent developments concerning Palestine issue after October 7, General Munir's proactive engagement, alongside Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman had further consolidated the partnership between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on critical regional issues. Moreover, he said the long-awaited realization of Saudi investment in Pakistan, epitomized by initiatives such as the Special Investment Facilitation Council, signifies a promising trajectory for economic collaboration not only between the two nations but also within the broader Islamic community. Concluding his remarks, Ashrafi said the visit of Saudi Arabia's Defense Minister to Pakistan had signified not only a milestone for bilateral relations but also underscored the depth of cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan's military leadership.—DNA

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Briefs

Last week of March to witness peak of pollen concentration

ISLAMABAD: The peak of pollen concentration is expected to be observed in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad during the last week of March 2024, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). The PMD has advised the citizens to take precautionary measures in wake of the escalating pollen concentration in Rawalpindi and Islamabad areas. The pollen concentration has started spreading in twin cities due to increase in temperature. The people suffering from pollen allergy are advised to take all precautionary measures in this regard. The most abundant pollen types in Islamabad are Paper Mulberry, Acacia, Eucalyptus, Pines, Grasses, Cannabis, Dandelion and Alternaria. Out of all these species, Paper Mulberry shares about 97 percent of the total pollen count, and its concentration touches the extreme limits of around 45,000 per cubic meter of air, during the peak of the blossom season. The PMD will continue publishing pollen concentration data alert throughout the pollen season (March - April) on its website (www.pmd.gov.pk) and print/electronic media on daily basis.

The general public may contact on following No. 051-9250745, 051-9250364 and 051-9250369 or email at pollen@pmd.gov.pk for queries about pollen.—APP

Pakistan Day sales compel buyers to shop for Eid-ul-Fitr

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Day's lucrative discounts and special offers by different brands outlets in the federal capital are attracting a number of customers especially women who are eager to buy dresses, shoes and all required stuff for the upcoming festival of Eid-ul-Fitr. The trend of online shopping from the official websites of the famous brands is already in practice by a large number of people especially women in capital city while visiting the shops physically are still preferred by majority of the buyers. Sania Mushtaq, a house wife said, "I have visited different brands outlets to complete Eid shopping for my family taking advantage of this sale at the start of the summer season". "The online shopping facility offered by different brands, shopping marts and food outlets have made the lives of citizens quite easier but still visiting markets for buying clothes and shoes is a better option in terms of checking the sizes and quality of dresses and shoes, she said while talking to media. Amina Usman, a government employee said "visiting markets for Eid shopping is a difficult task during the month of Ramadan however the attracting Resolution Day sales by brands offering up to flat 30 has compelled public to rush to the markets".—APP

Pak Day celebrated in Milan, Barcelona, others countries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Day was celebrated with great fervour at different countries' missions abroad that arranged events to mark the historic event with active participation of the Pakistani community. In these events, messages of the President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister were read and Pakistani flag was hoisted on national anthem. The Consulate General of Pakistan Milan arranged an Iftar reception which was attended by the senior Italian officials, consular corps, university scholars, and prominent members of Pakistani diaspora in Italy. Students of different Italian Universities were also present. Speaking at the occasion Consul General Aqsa Nawaz, highlighted the excellent bilateral relations between Pakistan and Italy, including status of high-level contacts, strong institutional mechanisms and outcomes of the recent round of Pakistan Italy Joint Economic Commission held in Rome last year. She also recalled growing bilateral trade relations and social

GDP growth rate below potential due to poor efforts to boost growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has said that country's GDP growth rate has always remained below its potential despite efforts to boost economic growth, as the development of important sectors and investment prospects was hampered by inadequate revenue collection, structural problems, and governance issues. The APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood asked the government to give priority to the economic recovery, emphasizing the necessity of joint efforts to tackle Pakistan's economic difficulties. Since it has been causing serious governance and economic issues for years, the cost of goods, food, petrol, and other necessities has increased, and inflation has almost reached 45 percent, which is not bearable for the common man. On the other hand, there has been an increase in dissatisfaction among the

public that no state institution is performing well and to save them from the haughtiness and bad administration pervasive in the system. The only way for this to go from a failure to a success story, as in other countries, is if the federal and provincial governments defy them and pursue fundamental changes in governance, fairness, openness, accountability, and the consistent economic policies minimum for 15 years. The APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi expressed confidence in the country's ability to overcome these challenges and highlighted the new government should fulfill the commitment to eradicating poverty and unemployment. He said that the government should remain steadfast in its commitment to guide Pakistan through its current economic and political challenges, with a focus on unity, effective governance, and public welfare. Ibrahim Qureshi said that the country has had trouble raising

enough money to cover its expenses. Due to the low tax-to-GDP ratio, borrowing and outside help are heavily relied upon to close the fiscal imbalance. In Pakistan, there is a recurring budget deficit because the government spends more than it takes in. The national debt burden has risen, as a result, needing substantial financial resources for debt repayment. Both internal and external debt in Pakistan has been constantly rising. The APBF President said that budget is largely consumed by debt servicing; leaving little money for social welfare and development initiatives. Circular debt, which is the accumulation of unpaid invoices and pending payments among power generation firms, distribution companies, and the government, is a problem in Pakistan's energy sector. Syed Maaz Mahmood said that this problem has a significant negative impact on the power sector's finances and hinders its ability to meet the

rising energy demand. Other troubling issues also exist, posing obstacles to our economy's expansion. Pakistan is ranked 173rd internationally for tax payments. According to a World Bank analysis, Pakistani businesspeople pay 47 taxes yearly. A single business that conducts business in four different Pakistani provinces annually disburse five corporate income taxes, twelve employer-paid pension contributions, twelve Social Security payments, one property tax, one professional tax, one vehicle tax.

Authorities directed to remove encroachments

RAWALPINDI: The Director General (DG), Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA), Kinza Murtaza has directed the authorities concerned to take strict action against encroachments along Nullah Lai and remove all kinds of encroachments from the banks of the Nullah. According to RDA spokesman, the DG ordered that a large-scale operation should be carried out against encroachments and those dumping solid waste in Nullah Lai. She further instructed that the difficulties being faced in the Nullah Lai project must be resolved so that the residents living near Nullah Lai and in low-lying areas could be saved from flash flood risks during heavy rains. She said that negligence on part of the officials concerned would not be tolerated. The DG had also instructed the authorities concerned to renovate Fawara Chowk Parking plaza.—APP

Govt cognizant of addressing TB as public health priority: PM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that provision of universal access to quality essential health services was the constitutional responsibility of the Government that recognized the importance of addressing Tuberculosis (TB) as a public health priority. The government has implemented various programmes and policies to combat this disease, the prime minister said in a message on World TB Day. "On this World TB Day 2024, I applaud the services of everyone committed to the fight against tuberculosis and reiterate our Government's resolve towards supporting the initiatives aimed at eradicating TB and improving the health and well-being of our citizens," PM Office Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the prime minister as saying. The prime minister said Tuberculosis remained a significant global health challenge, causing immense suffering and claiming far too many lives every year. "It is crucial that we prioritize TB elimination in our global health agenda and allocate resources accordingly. Together, we can harness innovation, research, and technology to accelerate progress towards a TB-free world," he added. The prime minister said that while they strived to provide equitable health services to their citizens, they deeply appreciated the role of the private sector and our global partners. "I call upon all partners, organisations, healthcare professionals, and individuals to unite in our efforts to end TB. We must work collaboratively to strengthen healthcare systems, increase access to quality diagnosis and treatment, and raise awareness about the importance of TB prevention and control measures," he stressed. The prime minister further pledged to work together, leaving no room for complacency, in their mission to eliminate TB from Pakistan.—DNA

Undeterred resolve – only way to end economic woes

ISLAMABAD: Given its location, landscape, environment, weather, shores and fertile land, Pakistan had always been the most potential and business friendly destination offering volumes of dividends to investors and businessmen. Although fluctuating policies of the past landed this potential state into serious economic crunch with putting it back on track becoming a gigantic task, yet it can be vibrant again if consistent, holistic and result oriented approach is adopted. Even today, the numbers of brotherly countries are waiting for a nod to invest billions of dollars in different sectors of Pakistan economy and the newly formed government has already tightened belts for a tough ride ahead. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team is also aware that they would be confronting a myriad of daunting economic hurdles, ranging from soaring inflationary pressures and staggering external debt burden to diminished exchange reserves and fluctuating currency values. As the economic panorama, shrouded in uncertainty and volatility, necessitates adept navigation and resolute action to guide nation towards stability, the government diligently articulated its resolve to fight out this challenge. At the head PML-N led new coalition government, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif soon after assuming office, issued directives to pertinent authorities for formulating proposals to reduce government expenditures and undertaking a comprehensive overhaul of country's economic framework. Responding to this exigency, the new government employs immediate measures for bolstering revenues and curbing escalating fiscal deficit with the Prime Minister also mandating commencement of digitization and automation process within the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). "Reducing inflationary burden on people is one of the most pressing challenges for the government. It would have to go for immediate solutions to ease inflationary burden," said Dr Usman Chohan, Advisor on Economic Affairs at Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS). He said the situation would be more exigent in an environment where on one hand the people would be expecting to bring down inflation while International Monetary Fund (IMF), in a likely follow-up program, pressurizing the government to extract more from public in terms of revenue collecting and electricity price initiatives. Identifying global economic slowdown as a significant contributor to Pakistan's financial woes, with inflation, energy costs and purchasing power constraints exacerbating the situation, Dr Usman proposes a roadmap for economic recovery.—APP

Ustad Rahat Fateh Ali Khan honored with 'Hilal-e-Imtiaz' for musical excellence

ISLAMABAD: Ustad Rahat Fateh Ali Khan was conferred Pakistan's second highest civilian award 'Hilal-e-Imtiaz' by President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Pakistan

Day for his services to the Pakistani and South Asian music industry. Khan, the star of Pakistan and music icon, was honored with the 'Hilal-e-Imtiaz' for his contributions to

the fields of arts, Qawwali, and singing, as well as for elevating Pakistani arts to an international platform with his captivating performances of Qawwali and contemporary music.—APP

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
PAKISTAN PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

No.EE.PCD.II/AB/552 Dated Islamabad the, 22 /03/2024

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

Sealed Tenders, as per "single stage, single envelope", PPRA procedure for the following works are invited on percentage rate basis at the **Pak.PWD Schedule of rate 2022** from Pakistan Engineering Council approved contractors /firms having proper renewal in relevant category as mentioned against each work and above for the current financial year. The contractors /firms should be registered with income tax Department as Active Taxpayers on the list of Federal Board of Revenue. Tender documents can be purchased from the office of the undersigned during office hours on any working day upto **08.04.2024** on written request at company's letter pad accompanied with attested copies of CNIC, PEC, Firm Documents, NTN & Bid Security.

The tenders should reach in the office of undersigned on **09.04.2024** upto **12:00 noon** and will be opened on same day at **12:30 pm** in the presence of participants or their authorized representatives.

S. No	Name of Scheme	N.I.T Cost	Fixed Bid Security as per rule 25 of PPRA	Tender Cost	Completion Time	PEC Category
1	12 NOS DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES UNDER SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAMME (SAP) 2023-24 IN DISTRICT TALAGANG & CHAKWAL.					
i)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT U.C KOT GULLA, U.C PICHNAND & U.C KOT QAZI DISTRICT TALAGANG	15,759,175	630,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
ii)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT U.C MULTAN KHURD, DHOLAR, THOA MEHRAM KHAN & PIRRA FATEHAL TALAGANG	14,470,756	575,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
iii)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT U.C BIDHER WANHAR DISTRICT TALAGANG	4,823,585	200,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
iv)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT DIFFERENT U.C OF PP-23 DISTRICT TALAGANG	6,890,783	300,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
v)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT U.C KOT SARANG TEHSIL & DISTRICT TALAGANG	3,532,866	150,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
vi)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT KALLAR KAHAR TEHSIL KALLAR KAHAR DISTRICT CHAKWAL	3,445,411	150,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
vii)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT U.C MIANI TEHSIL KALLAR KAHAR DISTRICT CHAKWAL	6,890,783	300,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
viii)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT VILLAGE PATALIAN AND ROOPWAL U.C KOT CHAUDHRIAN TEHSIL & DISTRICT CHAKWAL	3,445,340	130,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
ix)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT U.C KARSAL & MAINGAN TEHSIL & DISTRICT CHAKWAL	6,889,992	300,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
x)	CONSTRUCTION OF NALLAH & WIDENING OF ROAD FROM DARBAR STOP TO JINNAZGAH TEHSIL & DISTRICT TALAGANG.	5,870,329	250,000	2,000	03-months	C-6

Other Terms and conditions:-

- Bid security in the shape of Deposit at call in favour of the Executive Engineer, Project Civil Division No.II Pak.P.W.D. Islamabad issued by any scheduled bank functioning at Islamabad /Rawalpindi from the account of the firm may please be submitted with the application.
- The applicant firm should submit separate application for issuance of each bidding along with all relevant documents.
- An affidavit on judicial paper worth Rs.100/- to the effect that the contractor /firm is not in any dispute /litigation with any Government Department is a prerequisite for issuance of tenders.
- The tenders shall be issued only to the owner of the firm or his authorized representative having legal Authority Letter/Power of Attorney. In case of joint venture the applicant shall have to produce partnership deed duly registered with the court of law whereas in the case of a sole proprietor, the tenders shall be issued only to the sole proprietor of the firm.
- No applications for issuance of tenders through e-mail, fax, Telex would be entertained.
- No tenders would be sold on the specified opening date.
- Any information/clarification regarding the details of work, specifications and conditions etc, can be seen in the office of the undersigned on any working day during office hours.
- The submission of bids implies that the bidder is fully conversant with the nature of work, scope, site conditions, applicable rules and codes etc.
- Under Rule 33(1) of PPRA Rule 2004, the undersigned reserve the right to accept or reject all bids /tenders at any time prior to of bid /tender.

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**Executive Engineer,
Project Civil Division No.II
Pak.P.W.D, Islamabad. Ph # 051-9260118**

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US isn't trying to stop Rafah invasion

It is already reported that Benjamin Netanyahu has greenlighted an Israeli operation to attack the southern city of Rafah in Gaza. Rafah, which is situated on the border between the Palestinian strip and Egypt, is the last major settlement in the strip yet to be invaded by 'Israel', and has become a gathering point for the million plus Palestinian refugees who have fled "Tel Aviv's" wholesale and indiscriminate destruction of the strip in their self-proclaimed war of annihilation against Hamas. According to insider sources, the United States, amongst others, outwardly opposes an Israeli invasion of this city, with some sources such as Axios even recently going as far as describing it as a "red line." Indeed, the US has devoted significant effort to trying to give the appearance that it is supporting "humanitarian aid" in the strip, despite having granted effectively unconditional support to 'Israel's' invasion, and despite widespread warnings from the UN amongst others that the conditions in Gaza are facing a famine like scenario with a severe depletion of all resources. So will the US deter 'Israel' from an operation towards Rafah? While as of Tuesday it is clear there are major negotiations going on in Washington D.C. between US and Israeli administrations, we must be mindful of the following realities which will determine the outcome. First, the United States neither has the political will, desire, or capital to seriously punish 'Israel' in any capacity, whether it desires to or not, and therefore any so-called "red line" is merely a bluff. In US domestic politics, the outcome of outright sanctions, embargos, or a cessation of support is simply impossible, and Joe Biden is absolutely not the kind of politician who would take that risk with an election looming. Instead, US "criticism" of 'Israel', so-called attempts at pushing aid to Gaza, amongst other things, are purely for show with the intention to deflect severe criticism at Washington for what is in effect, their unconditional backing of 'Tel Aviv' amidst the disaster inflicted upon Palestinian people than constituting any actual change in policy whatsoever. Even if one looks at the reports constituting the negotiations between Washington and 'Tel Aviv' over Rafah, the disagreement only extends as far as the question of method and the timespan than any true contemplation of "don't do it." With these two factors considered, the best-case scenario is that the US can delay the Israeli operation, or perhaps make them agree to a more limited approach, but in no circumstances whatsoever will they thwart or cease the obvious strategic priority of 'Israel' to seize, control and assumedly close the border of the Gaza strip. 'Israel' for example, may agree to a compromise "evacuation" before proceeding but this is hardly more humane because where in any instance, do these starving refugees go? Do they return to their homes in the north which have been reduced to rubble and ruins? Where there is no food, electricity, water, or anything? The US pretends to be benevolent, but there is little denying it has actively backed one of the most staggering atrocities against an entire population of the people in the modern era. What we instead see is attempts to merely stage manage this event with feeble arguing.



Rwanda's elections

RWANDA will hold presidential elections next July 2024. All indications are that RPF-Inkotanyi's candidate Paul Kagame, who has been in power since 1994, will be elected with an overwhelming majority. Elections are not even necessary in this country, as Paul Kagame is the only one running since he came to power. There is always some other candidate on the ballot, selected by the regime to convey a sense of pluralistic democracy, but who is a straw man, as evidenced by the fact that he usually campaigns for his opponent Kagame, not for himself. Victoire Ingabire is the main opponent of the regime. She has enormous support both inside and outside Rwanda's borders but has never managed to actually run for office. She was arrested in 2010, accused of "genocide ideology" (a very convenient accusation hurled against anyone who criticizes the regime). She spent 8 years in prison after a political trial plagued with irregularities. In 2017, the African Union's Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AFCHPR) declared this trial as political and ordered the Rwandan government to compensate the opponent for the material and moral damages inflicted on her and her family. Not only has the government failed to pay Ingabire any compensation, but on March 13, it also denied her the right to register as a candidate for the presidential elections scheduled for July because of her "criminal record", i.e. because of the insane trial that was deemed political by the African court and many other serious bodies. Rwanda's big problem is not that it cannot have an honest person among its candidates, as happens to most countries in the world, Rwanda's big problem is that it has the butcher of Kigali in its government, and it is going to continue like this after the "elections." Rwanda has in its government the main instigator and the one responsible for the 1994 genocide. It has in its government a man and a group who slaughter innocent people every day in the Democratic Republic of Congo and plunder its resources. The enormous problem in Rwanda is that very expensive international Public Relations companies have built an image of modern democrats for these criminals who have been massacring and terrorizing their people and the peoples of neighboring countries for 30 years. On top of that, victims have to endure Western leaders adulating these evil people. That is the great problem of Rwanda, and of all the good people of that region who suffer their innumerable crimes and this cruel invisibility.

PAF leaps ahead of its adversaries

Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (R)



Combat and Support Aircraft: Under the Smart Induction Programme spearheaded by the military command, the acquisition of the fifth-generation J-31 Gyrfalcon stealth aircraft has been announced. PAF, under its present leadership, has also operationalised various combat and combat support systems equipped with advanced technologies. Notable examples include the J10C and JF-17...

IN an era characterised by rapid technological advancements and evolving geopolitical landscapes, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) is actively engaged in a comprehensive effort aimed at indigenisation, modernisation, restructuring, and enhancing operational efficiency to transform itself into a next-generation air force. As the intricacies of modern warfare prompt conventional forces to adapt swiftly, the PAF is taking a leading role in incorporating cutting-edge technologies to ensure full-spectrum readiness for the challenges of the 21st Century, led by its top command.

Operational Excellence: The PAF is committed to operational excellence and actively engages in international air exercises to enhance its capabilities, fortify partnerships, ensure heightened preparedness, and foster interoperability and coordination with friendly air forces. A pertinent example of this dedication is evident in the recent Operation Marg Bar Sarmachar undertaken against Iran at very short notice, showcasing PAF's operational efficiency. Additionally, the PAF conducts operations against terrorist outfits on an asand-when-required basis with punitive and accurate deliveries, further exemplifying its prowess and effectiveness in diverse operational scenarios.

Combat and Support Aircraft: Under the Smart Induction Programme spearheaded by the military command, the acquisition of the fifth-generation J-31 Gyrfalcon stealth aircraft has been announced. PAF, under its present leadership, has also operationalised various combat and combat support systems equipped with advanced technologies. Notable examples include the J10C and JF-17 Block III, showcasing the PAF's commitment to technological prowess.

Upgrading existing assets such as the F-16 and JF-17 Block I and II aircraft with the latest avionics suite ensures a balanced fiscal approach and operational efficiency. Spadework for acquiring the L-15 trainer from China has also been completed. Moreover, to boost operational support capabilities, it has also inducted air mobility platforms C-130H, Airbus 319 (Cargo and Air Ambulance), Boeing 737 cargo version, BKA-350i and Piper M-600.

Electronic Warfare and UAVs: For electronic warfare, the PAF has inducted Global-6000 SOJ, Electronic Air Defence System (EADS), Multi-function Integrated Ground-to-Air EW System (MIGAES) and AntiDrone Systems. It has also acquired and operationalised

unmanned aerial platforms TB2 and Wing Loong Medium-Altitude Long-Endurance (MALE) and Akinci High-Altitude Long-Endurance (HALE), and loitering munitions. PAF will have the region's first HALE platform, which will be equipped with AESA Radar and EW payloads in the coming months, and is also expected to perform in an Air-to-Ground role. The PAF has additionally acquired Shahpar-II and plans to induct Shahpar-III this year, besides, being actively involved in indigenous efforts to design and develop killer drones.

Integrated Air Defence: For an Integrated Air Defence System, PAF has fortified the outermost tier with the High-to-Medium Altitude Air Defence System (HIMAD), followed by the deployment of Close-in-Weapon Systems in the subsequent tier, culminating in anti-swarm/anti-drone systems forming the innermost ring through the incorporation of advanced technologies such as HQ-9B, HIMADS, HQ-16, and Skydome/JN 614 anti-swarm systems, PAF is poised to deliver the essential safeguarding of vulnerable assets. Radar capabilities are also being upgraded with the introduction of the YLC-8E Mobile UHF Radar System, MMR and YLC18, contributing to maintaining a robust air defence environment.

Cyber and Space: Recognising the significance of the cyber and space domains in modern conflict, the PAF has established a Cyber and Space Command, equipped with state-of-the-art capabilities for both defence and offence. This dual focus on cyber and space capabilities positions the PAF as a comprehensive and forward-thinking force. Restructuring and Development of Human Resource Human resource development remains central to the PAF's modernisation strategy. It has, therefore, initiated substantial organisational restructuring aimed at enhancing its agility and operational efficiency. In order to become lean and mean, PAF is right-sizing its force to cut off the fat and have the right numbers to accomplish tasks effectively. This restructuring also prioritises equipping its personnel with the skills and knowledge required for modern air warfare, emphasising education and training from nurseries to academies and through dedicated hubs such as the Jinnah Centre of Character and Leadership and other higher seats of learning in the service.

Centres of Excellence and Rejuvenating Policies: Revamping centres like the Airpower Centre of Excellence, and adding the UAV Centre of Excel-

lence, and Centre of Excellence for Air Mobility and Aviation Safety, besides the College of Air Defence, along with updated personnel policies, contribute to a culture of excellence within the PAF.

Development of Aerospace Industry (NASTP)

A cornerstone of the PAF's modernisation efforts is the drive towards indigenisation and self-reliance. The National Aerospace Science and Technology Park (NASTP) serves as the flagship initiative in this regard, with clusters in Kamra and techno-parks in Rawalpindi, Karachi, Lahore, and Kharian. These technology divisions span aerospace, cyber, IT, AI, training, certification, and incubation domains, fostering innovation and collaboration with the private sector. The private sector's integration, with over 75 cohorts, start-ups, and SMEs, underscores the PAF's commitment to leveraging external expertise and resources. The Aerospace Design and Innovation Centre, scheduled for inauguration shortly, will further enhance capabilities in designing and developing advanced aerospace technologies. Furthermore, to provide security for these initiatives, NASTP has been placed under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), highlighting the integral role it is expected to play in Pakistan's economic revival.

Self-Reliance: The indigenisation effort extends to the development of Pakistan's first indigenous fighter aircraft. The JF-17 PFX programme, set to be formally launched alongside the Aerospace Village during the first half of 2024, represents a significant milestone in the PAF's pursuit of self-reliance. It has progressed to 30 to 40 percent into the design phase, alongside other development and modernisation initiatives.

Conclusion: Based on the pillars of indigenisation, modernisation, restructuring, and operational efficiency, the PAF's transformation under Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu's leadership is a testament to his forward-thinking approach to addressing the challenges of contemporary warfare. The commitment to the operationalisation of other niche technologies required for the development of the aerospace industry in Pakistan, and self-reliance will not only bolster the PAF's capabilities but also contribute significantly to Pakistan's economic growth.

— Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd) is President at the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore

Privatization: A path to success or another false start?

Qamar Bashir



In the financial sector, which includes banks, insurance companies, Non-Banking Financing Companies (NBFCs), and Development Financial Institutions (DFIs), there has been significant growth and transformation since FY2022. The sector's assets have surged to an impressive Rs. 8.9 trillion, indicating consistent growth over the past four fiscal years. Revenues have also seen a remarkable increase, reaching Rs. 614.648 billion, marking a 31% rise from the previous fiscal year. Additionally, net profits have soared to Rs. 72.569 billion, demonstrating a remarkable 46.5% year-on-year increase

SINCE its inception, the new government has displayed a crucial optimism towards the prosperity and growth of the nation, characterized by an unparalleled determination labeled as "Iron determination" (Fouladi Azm) by the Prime Minister. Backed by the strength and support of the establishment, the unelected finance team is poised to make fundamentally critical and highly challenging decisions. These decisions, which even former dictators refrained from due to political ramifications, demonstrate a readiness to tackle obstacles that could deter progress. The consistent backing from the establishment, which sustained the former coalition government led by Shahbaz Sharif and the interim government led by Anwar Kakar, has primed public sentiment to an extent where the time is now ripe to confront challenges head-on and progress without hesitation. These imminent decisions, projected to yield savings of PKR 6,828 billion per year, are poised to significantly benefit the nation.

The digitalization of FBR is projected to generate over Rs. 3000 billion annually by curbing pilferage and halting the distribution of illicit gains among tax officials. Currently, a predetermined portion of tax evasion, with 50% going to the taxpayer and their lawyer, while the remaining 50% is distributed from the lowest-ranking peon to the regional commissioner. This same ratio is observed within the sales tax and customs departments, from the bottom to the top echelons of the hierarchy. The privatization of PIA, even if it doesn't generate a single penny, could result in savings of over Rs. 800 billion in terms of debt and an annual subsidy of Rs. 294.5 billion allocated to sustain the inefficient, unprofessional, and sluggish airline. Likewise, privatization or outsourcing airports could save the national treasury approximately Rs. 21.4 billion annually.

The privatization of state-owned enterprises, despite potentially yielding no revenue from their sale, would result in significant savings for the state. With accumulated losses exceeding 500 billion, divesting these entities would save over Rs. 500 billion annually in subsidies and transfer the entities' Rs. 1100 billion debt burden to the purchaser. Similarly, privatizing the Distribution Companies (DISCOs) nationwide, even if they generate minimal proceeds from their sale, would yield substantial annual savings for the public. This includes Rs. 500 billion annually in electricity theft prevention and Rs. 639 billion in reduced line losses. According to the Federal Footprint Consolidated SOE report for the fiscal years 2020-2022, published in December 2023, there are a total of 133 State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), consisting of 88 commercially operated and 45 non-commercial entities. Remarkably, the commercial SOEs are making substantial contributions to the national economy through corporate taxes, dividend payments, and employment generation.

In the financial sector, which includes banks, insurance companies, Non-Banking Financing Companies (NBFCs), and Development Financial Institutions (DFIs), there has

been significant growth and transformation since FY2022. The sector's assets have surged to an impressive Rs. 8.9 trillion, indicating consistent growth over the past four fiscal years. Revenues have also seen a remarkable increase, reaching Rs. 614.648 billion, marking a 31% rise from the previous fiscal year. Additionally, net profits have soared to Rs. 72.569 billion, demonstrating a remarkable 46.5% year-on-year increase. In the commercial sector, Infrastructure, Transport, and Communication (ITC) emerge as significant players, boasting an asset base of Rs. 7,983 trillion. Led by entities like the National Highway Authority and PIA, this sector experienced a notable 38% revenue growth. However, despite these gains, challenges persist, with PIA grappling with a substantial net loss of Rs. 294.500 billion. Nonetheless, subsectors such as Ports & Shipping and Communication show promise for sectoral recovery and efficiency improvements. The Manufacturing, Mining, & Engineering sector showcased robust growth, with assets soaring by 49% to Rs. 904.515 billion. Notably resilient, this sector posted a significant net profit of Rs. 12.267 billion. Subsectors like Metals & Mining and Printing played pivotal roles in this transformation, contributing substantial profits and demonstrating operational stability. Such progress underscores the sector's potential for sustained growth and profitability.

In the Oil and Gas sector, boasting assets worth Rs. 5.620 trillion, remarkable revenue expansion of 82% was witnessed, fueled by increased energy prices post-COVID. Despite challenges, SOEs in this sector exhibited operational excellence, exemplified by PARCO's outstanding achievement of a 725% increase in net profit. However, the sector faces ongoing struggles in balancing revenue growth with operational efficiency, particularly in the Marketing & Distribution segment, which remains susceptible to market risks due to high leverage and narrow profit margins. Even in the Power sector, substantial growth has been observed, with assets climbing to Rs. 6.480 trillion and revenue reaching Rs. 3,000 billion in FY2022. However, operational margins remain a concern, particularly for Electricity Distribution Companies (DISCOs). Strategies must be devised to enhance revenue collection and mitigate operational inefficiencies to address losses effectively. The Estate Development and Management sector exhibited impressive growth, with assets rising by 38% to Rs. 36.7 billion. Strong revenue growth of 57% to Rs. 6.256 billion and a robust profit margin of 36.8% underscored the sector's resilience and profitability, positioning it well for sustained success.

In contrast, the Trading and Marketing sector saw a 47% increase in assets to Rs. 446.119 billion, largely driven by agricultural storage. However, challenges in revenue and profitability persisted due to socio-economic obligations, such as subsidized essential food commodities, necessitating a delicate balance between commercial operations and broader strategic objectives.

Despite revenue growth in the Media and Entertainment sector, operational hurdles led to a net loss in FY2022. Entities like PTV sustained losses of Rs. 2.72 billion, while SRBC faced liabilities of Rs. 10 billion.

The commercial portfolio of SOEs plays a crucial role in driving economic activity, contributing over Rs. 430 billion through corporate taxes and dividends. However, from an accounting perspective, a net loss of Rs. 161.820 billion was recorded, primarily due to significant depreciation charges and increased finance costs associated with borrowing, despite the extensive asset size.

In contrast, the non-commercial portfolio of SOEs, comprising 45 entities, including 39 independent companies, displayed a more positive economic outlook. Total assets amounted to Rs. 224.762 billion, with total revenue generated during the year reaching Rs. 34.420 billion and net profits standing at Rs. 8.313 billion.

However, to remain competitive and sustainable in the long run whether SOEs are currency profit or loss making, they must continually enhance their capacity, efficiency, and human resource productivity. This involves establishing a robust framework for research and development, innovation, and product/service enhancement. Regular upgrades to infrastructure, machinery, and technology, including the integration of Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, big data analytics, and computing power, are essential to stay ahead. My own experience at the helm of State-Owned Shalimar Recording and Broadcasting Corporation highlighted the challenges of bureaucratic hurdles and resistance from worker unions, hindering the perpetual upgrades necessary for competitiveness. In contrast, private sector TV channels, unencumbered by bureaucratic red tape, have outpaced public broadcasters in various sectors and disciplines. Privatization is a strategic imperative, regardless of whether State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) are currently profitable or operating at a loss. Unlocking their full potential through privatization can attract strategic investors, alleviate fiscal burdens, and foster market competition in today's fiercely competitive environment.

Hence, the government should prioritize full-throttle privatization of all SOEs, irrespective of their profitability status. Profitable entities are attractive to investors due to their strong financial performance, market presence, and potential for returns. Conversely, privatizing loss-making enterprises presents an opportunity for restructuring, reallocation of resources, and reducing fiscal liabilities.

While some SOEs are vital for national interests, such as those related to infrastructure, national security, and social services, the decision to privatize should be carefully weighed based on economic considerations and long-term developmental implications.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC

Briefs

Pak-Afghan to hold trade talks in Kabul

FROM PAGE 01
March 18. Afghan charge d'affaires Sardar Shokaib Ahmad rushed to Kabul to brief officials about his meetings in Islamabad. Shokaib met acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and briefed him regarding recent developments in the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, deputy foreign ministry spokesman Hafiz Zia Ahmad Takkal said. "During the meeting, Mawlawi Sardar Ahmed Shakib, acting head of the Afghan embassy in Pakistan, shared the report of his recent meetings with the Pakistani officials with FM Muttaqi, and held in-depth discussion thereof," Takkal wrote on X.

President confers awards...

FROM PAGE 01
Major-Gen Arshad Naseem, Rear Admiral Syed Ahmed Salman, Major-Gen Arshad Mehmood, Major-Gen Muhammad Atif Mansha, Major-Gen Javed Dost Chandio, Major-Gen Muhammad Irfan Khan, Major-Gen Syed Asif Hussain, Major-Gen Shehryar Parvez Butt, Air Vice Marshal Zaffar Aslam, Major-Gen Imranullah, Rear Admiral Jawad Ahmed, Rear Admiral Abdul Munib, Rear Admiral Faisal Amin, Major-Gen Muhammad Raza Aizad, Major-Gen Muhammad Ishaq Khattak, Major-Gen Ch Amin Ajmal, Major-Gen Jawad Ahmed Qazi, Major-Gen Ahmad Bilal, Major-Gen Iftikhar Hassan Chaudhry, Major-Gen Ehsan Ali, Major-Gen Kamran Nazir Malik, Major-Gen Wajid Aziz, Major-Gen Muhammad Umer Bashir.

PM directs for foolproof security...

FROM PAGE 01
He added that Rezo Dik to Gwadar rail project will ensure easy and swift access as well as reduce distance as compared to Bin Qasim port. He said the miner-rich district of Chagai will benefit a lot from the new railway line and help promote mining industry. The Prime Minister, on the occasion, also sought a detailed briefing next week on Rezo Dik and Rail Connectivity. The Prime Minister also directed to remove all the hindrances at the official level to complete the Environment and Social Impact Assessment regarding the Rezo Dik project.

Court bans madrasas in UP, ahead...

FROM PAGE 01
According to Iftikhar Ahmed Javed, head of the board of madrasa education in UP, the Allahabad High Court order affects 2.7 million students and 10,000 teachers in 25,000 madrasas, where one-fifth of the 240 million people are Muslims. "The state government shall also ensure that children between the ages of 6 to 14 years are not left without admission in duly recognised institutions," Judges Subhash Vidyarthi and Vivek Chaudhary wrote in their order, which was made on the basis of an appeal by lawyer Anshuman Singh Rathore.

DC Islamabad disallows...

FROM PAGE 01
The former ruling party's regional president Amir Masood Mughal had sought permission for a public gathering either on March 23 or March 30, at Parade Ground, F9 Park or D Chowk at 10 pm. The secretary of interior, chief commissioner, inspector general of police, deputy commissioner, and SSP operations were addressed in the application. It demanded to restrain the law enforcement agencies from blocking the routes to the venue and desist from arresting or baton-charging party supporters. The PTI made formal written requests to the Islamabad DC on March 15 and 18 for securing an NOC, but no response was received until March 21.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Morocco Mohammad Karmoune giving away award to players of the winning team of Iran on the occasion of diplomatic football league played at the UAE premises. UAE ambassador Hamad Al Zaabi is also seen in the picture. - DNA

PCB chairman announces 7-member selection committee

Abdul Razzaq, Asad Shafiq in PCB's new selection committee

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has introduced a new seven-member selection committee for the Pakistan men's national team following the dissolution of the previous committee on Sunday. Wahab Riaz, who previously served as the chief selector, remains a member of the new committee. However, unlike before, there won't be a designated chief; instead, decisions will be made through majority voting. The new selection committee comprises former cricketers Wahab Riaz, Mohammad Yousuf, Abdul Razzaq, and Asad Shafiq. The remaining three members will consist of the head coach, captain, and data analyst of the Pakistan cricket team, whose names have yet to be disclosed. "We have reorganised this selection committee, this [selection committee] will consist of seven members, but what is different



this time is there will be no chairman selection committee, each member would have the same power as the other one," PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi told media in Lahore. "The decision would be [decided] on the majority, they should debate, and talk amongst themselves so a better conclusion can be reached. The previous structure of the committee was different, but this one, I assure you every member was chosen after con-

sidering multiple factors," he added. The chairman further stated that there would be two to three coordinators, though they would not possess any voting authority. "This committee will decide every single decision from now on. They are our key players in the management who will make decisions and I am sure that they will give good results," Naqvi said. "The chairman should have no role in the selection process, we are the management and our job

is to manage the team. I am hopeful that these new members will give you positive results," he added. Naqvi also announced that the appointment of the head coach and coaching panel will be made in four to five days. Furthermore, the decision regarding Shaheen Afridi's continuation as T20I captain will be determined by the selection committee following the conclusion of the national camp in Kabul on April 8. "The matter of captaincy is be-

ing deliberated upon. I believe that the captain is the selection committee's prerogative. They are working on it and I am sure they will finalise their decision after the camp is completed. But once the captain is finalised - whether it is Shaheen Shah Afridi or someone else - we will stick by him for a long time. No matter what the results are on the field, the selection committee will be held accountable. If the captain does not have a say in the team, you cannot hold him accountable as he leads the team. Same with the head coach, because he has to run the dressing room," Naqvi said. The previous selection committee, now dissolved, was headed by former Pakistani pacer Wahab Riaz. Other members included Tauseef Ahmed, Wajahatullah Wasti, and Wasim Haider, with Kamran Akmal and Rao Iftikhar serving as consultant members and Hasan Muzaffar Cheema as the manager analyst.

Muhammad Amir takes back retirement from T20Is

Muhammad Amir expresses his eagerness to play ICC T20 World Cup 2024

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's ace fast bowler Muhammad Amir has announced his decision to reverse his retirement from T20 International cricket. The seasoned pacer expressed his eagerness to represent his country once again in the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup 2024, slated to be held in the West Indies and the USA. Taking to X (formerly Twitter), Amir conveyed his unwavering desire to don the green jersey and contribute to Pakistan's cricketing endeavors. He articulated, "I still dream to play for Pakistan! Life brings us to points where at times we have to reconsider our decisions." Acknowledging the twists and turns that life often presents, Amir reflected on the necessity to reconsider one's choices. "I still dream to play for Pakistan! Life brings us to the points where at times we have to reconsider our decisions. There has been few positive discussions between myself and the PCB where they respectfully made me feel that I was needed and can still play for Pakistan after..." He revealed that constructive discussions with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had played a pivotal role in his decision-making process. "There has been a few positive discussions between myself and the PCB where they respectfully made me feel that I was needed and can still play for Pakistan," Amir stated. Amir further emphasised the importance of familial support and the encouragement of well-wishers in arriving at this momentous decision. With the fervent desire to prioritize his country over personal inclinations, he expressed his readiness to be considered for the upcoming T20 World Cup, reaffirming his commitment to serving Pakistan on the cricketing stage. For Amir, the opportunity to represent Pakistan remains the pinnacle of his ambitions. "Donning the green jersey and serving my country has always been, and will continue to be, my greatest aspirations," he affirmed, underscoring his unwavering loyalty to the nation's cricketing cause. Remember, Amir has represented Pakistan in 36 Tests, 61 ODIs, and 50 T20Is. He last played an international match in 2020. - DNA

Shehzad ready to bat in middle-order for Pak

LAHORE: Pakistan opener Ahmed Shehzad, who has been out of the side for the last five years, has stated that he is ready to bat in the middle-order. While talking to a group of reporters in Lahore, the 32-year-old is hoping to receive an opportunity after performances in domestic cricket. "I have been playing domestic cricket consistently for the past two and a half years. My performances for the country are evident to everyone, but my name hasn't been called up for the national team or the PSL," he said. "I have continued to work hard, and my performance has been outstanding in the current season. My name was included in the camp based on domestic performance; now I hope to get a chance further ahead. - Agencies

PCB restores Haris Rauf's central contract

The pacer's contract was terminated by the board in February

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has restored Haris Rauf's central contract after the pacer appealed a few days ago, confirmed PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi. Rauf's central contract was terminated by the PCB in February 2024 following a probe into the pacer's refusal to join Pakistan's Test squad for the tour of Australia 2023-24. "We received a letter from Haris Rauf and we forwarded it to the tribunal. He stated [in that letter] that there was a misunderstanding and made a wrong decision and we have restored his contract," confirmed Naqvi in a presser on Sunday. "I was worried about him as he had already gotten injured [in the PSL] and there were some issues with the treatment, he is our star player and we will take care of that [his injury] via insurance." Representing Lahore Qalandars in the PSL 9, Rauf picked up an elbow injury and has been out of action since then. During the presser, Naqvi was also asked about Imad Wasim, who on Saturday announced that he is taking back his retirement to be available for the Pakistan cricket team as the 2024 T20 World Cup is approaching. Naqvi stated that the management talked with Imad only on one point, which was to take retirement back and play for Pakistan. There had been no discussion regarding the no objection certificate (NOCs) for league cricket. "Our main requirement right now is the World Cup, which Wahab Riaz was overseeing. - Agencies

IS attacks in Moscow likely to...

FROM PAGE 01
other hardliners, operating/active on the soil of Afghanistan since the so-called cold war. Taliban regime in Afghanistan like in the late 90s, once again gave another life to almost alleged terrorist groups. Similarly like in the past, the US is still maintaining dual standards on the issue of Muslim extremism. Through one or the other ways, the US spy masters are still in command of influencing Taliban (both Afghani and Pakistani), Al Qaeda and its affiliated groups from different countries through its experienced and tested allies like Pakistan and Saudis like Afghan Mujahideen. In 2019, the US helped Afghan in joint combat against IS in Afghanistan's eastern zone bordering with Pakistan. Over three thousand IS militants, mostly Pakistanis have been arrested during the crackdown but the Emirate Islami took credit for their release after returning into power on August 15th 2021 last. Like Pakistani militants associated with both Pakistani and Afghan Taliban, a large number of CAR militants already joined IS. There are also reports of Afghan Taliban and Mujahideen joining the IS. Some of these Afghan Taliban were disheartened when they were neglected in appointment against choice political, civil and military offices. Though apparently, the Emirate Islami Afghanistan is making claims of stern action against the IS militants, it seems hard as it (Emirate) does not want to harm all those who either played a role either in Afghan war against former USSR or War on terror, declared by US against Al Qaeda lead militants after 9/11. The Taliban regime time and again has been making claims of strengthening its intelligence network against IS but all these foreign groups and individuals have already established better understanding with the Afghan Taliban, majority of whom are now in control of important offices. Pakistan is still in a bid to get relevance in the region. The US and China are compelled to have relations with Pakistan. Economically and politically, Pakistan seems to be losing in the race against India. India is considered the biggest consumer market in Asia, therefore, China didn't afford Pakistan-India hostilities. The views expressed in the article are the writer's own.

Pakistan to mull...

FROM PAGE 01
Modified government unilaterally changed the special status of the occupied valley in August 2019 - the decision that Islamabad believed undermined the environment for holding talks between the neighbours. Pakistan has linked its decision to normalising ties with India with the restoration of the special status of the IIOJK. Despite the frosty ties, the two countries agreed to renew the 2003 ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control (LoC) in February 2021. Lately, Indian PM Narendra Modi congratulated Shehbaz Sharif on becoming the head of Pakistan's government, prompting hopes for a diplomatic thaw. "Congratulations to [Shehbaz Sharif] on being sworn in as the prime minister of Pakistan," Modi wrote in a brief message on X, formerly Twitter. Shehbaz Sharif responded days later with an equally curt post, thanking Modi for his "felicitations". In the same presser, Dar condemned threats to the family of Donald Lu, the US Assistant Secretary of State accused by former prime minister Imran Khan of playing a role in the fall of his regime in April 2022. At the Congressional hearing "Pakistan After the Elections: Examining the Future of Democracy in Pakistan and the US-Pakistan Relationship", the US assistant secretary revealed his family had received threats after allegations against him by the former Pakistan PM.

Aurangzeb to lead ECC

FROM PAGE 01
the premier's absence. The prime minister on Saturday constituted six separate cabinet committees on economic coordination, energy, Chinese investment projects, privatisation, State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and disposal of legislative cases in terms of Rule 17(2) of Rules of Business 1973.

Sabalenka exits Miami, Alcaraz starts in style

World number two beaten by 11th seed 6-4, 1-6, 6-1 in third round

MIAMI: A traumatic week for world number two Aryna Sabalenka came to an end with a third round, three set loss in the Miami Open to Ukrainian Anhelina Kalinina on Saturday. The 6-4, 1-6, 6-1 win for the 36th ranked Kalinina prompted Sabalenka, who had kept her emotions in check through both of her games at Hard Rock Stadium, to smash her racket violently into the court. On Monday, Belarusian Sabalenka's former boyfriend, ex-NHL player Konstantin Koltsov, died in Miami after what police called an "apparent suicide". The pair had been in a relationship until recently and Sabalenka only announced they were no longer together following the death. On Friday, she looked in control as she defeated her close friend Paula Badosa of Spain in straight sets. But given the late slot on the main stadium court, Sabalenka looked to be

feeling the strain more as she struggled for any kind of consistency. After losing the opening set, she utterly dominated Kalinina in the second, with her serve and powerful backhand too much for the Ukrainian. But once Kalinina broke in the third, Sabalenka's focus and composure deserted her and her opponent took full advantage. "It's really tough with nerves. But I managed in the tough moments to deal with it," said Kalinina. "So I'm a little bit proud of myself today." World number one Iga Swiatek had no trouble in beating Italy's Camila Giorgi 6-2, 6-1 as the rain impacted tournament packed in the big names including postponed matches from Friday. "I was feeling really pretty confident and I just wanted to see how I'm going to feel the surface. It was all really comfortable, so I'm happy," said Swiatek. Japan's Naomi Osaka continued her increasingly im-

pressive form with a 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) win over 17th ranked Elna Svitolina, in a battle of two women who have returned to the tour after giving birth. Sixth-seed Ons Jabeur suffered an upset with 21-year-old Russian Elena Avanesyan, ranked 65th in the world, running out a 6-1, 4-6, 6-3 winner. Elena Rybakina moved into

the fourth round after a tight tussle with American Taylor Townsend. Townsend, ranked 11th, won a second set tie-break to set up a fiercely contested deciding set before she succumbed to the Kazakh winning 6-3, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4. In the ATP event, top seed Carlos Alcaraz was simply too much for his compatriot

Roberto Carballes Baena as he powered to a 6-2, 6-1 win in 85 minutes. Like Swiatek, Alcaraz is looking to complete the "Sunshine Double" after his victory in Indian Wells last week and the two-time Grand Slam winner looked in formidable form. The 20-year-old was on top from the start, powerful from the baseline but willing to approach the net as he hit 10 winners to one in the opening set. He saved all three break points that he faced against his 64th ranked opponent, who asked some tough questions at times but usually received an emphatic response. Alcaraz will next face French veteran Gael Monfils, a 6-7 (3/7), 6-1, 6-2 winner over Australian Jordan Thompson.

Italy's Jannik Sinner, the Australian Open champion ranked third in the world, made a confident start to his bid in Miami with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over compatriot

and qualifier Andrea Pavasori. Progress was also straightforward for defending champion Daniil Medvedev who advanced into the third round with a 6-4 6-2 win over Hungarian Marlon Fucsovics. But it was a tough day for the American men. Taylor Fritz was upset by Brazilian qualifier Thiago Seyboth Wild in straight sets as three of the four top ranked US men tumbled out of the tournament. Fritz's early departure came shortly after Francis Tiafoe went out to another lower-ranked player in Australian Christopher O'Connell. O'Connell, battled to a 7-5, 7-6 (7/5) win over the 21st-seeded Tiafoe after play began following a three-hour rain delay. Tommy Paul had to retire with an ankle injury in his match against fellow American, wild card Martin Damm. Paul had won the first set 6-4 and was 2-1 down in the second when he abandoned. - Agencies



Briefs

National Day of Pakistan celebrated at Embassy of Pakistan

VIENNA : Ambassador of Pakistan, Aftab Ahmed Khokher, paid homage to the founding fathers of Pakistan and reaffirmed the resolve to make Pakistan a stronger and prosperous nation as he hoisted the Pakistani flag in a ceremony to mark Pakistan Day at the Embassy of Pakistan.

On the occasion, messages by President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif were also read out. They extended their congratulations to the nation, appreciated the vision and determination of our forefathers as the Pakistan Resolution of 23 March 1940 paved the way for the establishment of Pakistan on 14 August 1947 and reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to global peace and peaceful coexistence.

In his remarks, Ambassador Khokher also stressed that Pakistan would continue to extend political, moral and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people in their struggle for the right of self-determination. He also reaffirmed Pakistan's principled support for the people of Palestine and the establishment of an independent, viable, and contiguous state of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders with Al-Quds Al Sharif as its capital.—DNA

China-Indonesia joint scientific expedition

JAKARTA : The joint scientific expedition conducted by Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and Indonesia's National Research and Innovation Agency successfully dived 7,178 meters deep into the Java Trench in the Indian Ocean, setting the deepest dive record for Indonesia, the expedition team has said. According to the team on Saturday, this joint expedition was successfully conducted from Feb. 23 to March 23, using the manned deep-sea submersible "Fendouzhe" of the CAS Institute of Deep-sea Science and Engineering. At the welcome ceremony for the joint expedition held Friday, Chinese Ambassador to Indonesia Lu Kang said China and Indonesia have been deepening research collaboration on marine science in recent years. "I hope scientists from the two countries will achieve more high-quality research achievements in the future, contributing more to the creation of a blue ocean economy and sustainable development.—APP

Nigerian school hostages freed in mass abduction

ABUJA : Over 200 students and staff abducted by gunmen from a school in northern Nigeria earlier this month have been released, the office of the governor of the state of Kaduna has said. Kaduna governor Uba Sani said on Sunday the country's National Security Adviser had coordinated the release of the children. He did not give details. "The Nigerian Army also deserves special commendation for showing that with courage, determination and commitment, criminal elements can be degraded and security restored in our communities," Sani said. The kidnapping, which took place on March 7 in Kuriga, a dusty town in northwestern Kaduna State, was the first mass kidnapping in the country since 2021. The gunmen had last week demanded a total of 1 billion naira (\$690,000) for the release of the missing children and staff. Kidnappings by criminal gangs with no ideological affiliation and demanding ransoms have become an almost daily occurrence, especially in northern Nigeria, tearing apart families and communities who have to pool savings to pay ransoms, often forcing them to sell land, cattle and grain to secure their loved ones' release.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: A priest sharing the Holy Communion with devotees during a Palm Sunday mass at Our Lady of Fatima Church in Federal Capital.—ONLINE

World leaders condemn Russian concert hall attack

Russian President Putin vows retribution for deadly Moscow concert hall attack

NEWS DESK

PARIS : World leaders denounced a deadly attack by gunmen on a Moscow concert hall that killed more than 130 people and wounded dozens more. Four gunmen stormed the Crocus City venue before the start of a rock concert on Friday, opened fire on the audience and set fire to the building, in an assault claimed by the Islamic State group. Here are the reactions from governments and leaders around the world. President Vladimir Putin vowed retribution for the attack on Saturday, saying the "barbaric, terrorist act" was an "atrocious, strike against Russia and our people". In a televised address, he said all four perpetrators had

been "found and detained" after "travelling towards Ukraine". Kyiv, facing a Russian military offensive for the past two years, had "nothing to do" with the attack, presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak said on Telegram. President Volodymyr Zelensky said Saturday that Putin was "just trying to blame it on someone else", in response to claims the attackers were heading towards Ukraine. The main intelligence directorate of the Ukrainian defence ministry said the attack was a "deliberate provocation by the Russian special services" to "escalate" the war with Ukraine. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday condemned the attack "in the strongest possible terms," spokesman Farhan Haq said. Guterres "conveys his deep

condolences to the bereaved families," he added. The UN Security Council also offered condolences and urged all states "to cooperate actively" to hold perpetrators and backers of "these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable". US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called the attack a "heinous crime" saying Washington condemns "terrorism in all its forms". United States stands "in solidarity with the people of Russia in grieving the loss of life from this horrific event," Blinken said in a statement. The White House called Islamic State "a common terrorist enemy that must be defeated everywhere". Washington warned Moscow this month about a "planned terrorist attack" possibly targeting "large gatherings" in

the capital, the White House said. President Xi Jinping "strongly condemned" the attack and sent condolences to Putin, state media reported. Xi "stressed that China opposes all form of terrorism, strongly condemns the terrorist attack and firmly supports the Russian government's efforts to safeguard its national security and stability", Xinhua news agency said. The EU said it was "shocked and appalled" by the attack. "The EU condemns any attacks against civilians. Our thoughts are with all those Russian citizens affected," said a spokesman. Britain's foreign minister David Cameron said the UK condemned "in the strongest terms the deadly terrorist attack". "We offer our heartfelt condolences and express our deepest sympathy to the families

of the many victims," he added. French President Emmanuel Macron said he "strongly condemns the terrorist attack claimed by the Islamic State", according to the Elysee Palace. "France expresses its solidarity with the victims, their loved ones and all the Russian people," the palace said. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz condemned "the terrible terrorist attack against innocent spectators" in a post on X, adding "our thoughts are with the victims' families and all those wounded". Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni called the attack an "odious act of terrorism". "The horror of the massacre of innocent civilians in Moscow is unacceptable," Meloni said, expressing her "full solidarity with the affected people and the victims' families".

IMF chief urges China to boost growth with 'pro-market reforms'

WEB DESK

BEIJING: The head of the International Monetary Fund on Sunday called on China to implement "a comprehensive package of pro-market reforms" to boost a sluggish economy beset by a housing market crisis, low domestic demand and persistently high youth unemployment. Chinese policymakers have so far resisted calls to juice the economy through massive government stimulus, instead stressing the need to pivot toward "high-quality" growth. Speaking at the China Development Forum in Beijing on Sunday, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said the "transition from high rates to high quality of growth is the right fork in the road to take and China is determined to do so." The Bulgarian economist warned that "this transformation would not be

easy," but argued that "with a comprehensive package of pro-market reforms, China could grow considerably faster than a status quo scenario," according to an official transcript of her speech. Beijing should take "decisive steps" to reduce the amount of unfinished housing and give more space for "market-based corrections" in the crucial but heavily indebted real-estate sector, Georgieva said. Authorities should also boost "the spending power of individuals and families" by beefing up China's pension system and taking other steps to hone its vast social security apparatus, she added. Georgieva also pushed China to strengthen "the business environment and (ensure) a level playing field between private and state-owned enterprises." Top Chinese politicians have been bullish on the economy, with Premier Li Qiang telling Sunday's forum that Beijing would "take practical

BMP urges economic plan for manufacturing growth

BMP Chairman Anjum Nisar highlights controlling inflation to ensure affordable living costs

ISLAMABAD : The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has pleaded for formulating economic plan aimed at reviving growth in large-scale manufacturing, small and medium-sized segments, the service sector, and exports. The FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said the government should prioritize resolving the energy crisis by providing sufficient and affordable electricity and gas to industries. The import bill should be reduced by imposing bans on luxury products. He highlighted controlling inflation to ensure affordable living costs for the masses and containing the cost of production for businesses at a local level. He stressed the need for a revisit of the economic policies, as the economic indicators throughout the 2023 remained very depressed amidst high inflation, low exports, depleting foreign reserves and continued uncertain position of the local currency. FPCCI former president Anjum Nisar said that almost all indicators of the economy continued to show poor performance during 2023, including volatile exchange rate, unprecedented hike in markup rate, repeated increases in electricity rates, gas shortage, price spiral, mismanagement and bad governance, becoming the hallmarks of the government. He observed the negative economic indicators and uncertainty over resumption of the International Monetary Fund program continued to push the rupee towards a new historic low against the US dollar especially in first half of the calendar year of 2023. He said that massive fall of rupee value continued to damage the economy, as the rupee witnessed a huge depreciation; one of the highest devaluations of local currency in Pakistan's history in this period. Mian Anjum urged the policy makers to concentrate on increasing tax-to-GDP ratio which was the lowest in Pakistan in the region in 2023. The BMP leader warned if the govt failed to take appropriate measures for economic revival, the trade and industry will face a complete shutdown, asking the government to convene a conference, taking the business community onboard. He called for solid economic plan from all the stakeholders, in view of deteriorating energy crises following the tough conditionalities of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), making this fiscal year more complicated and unstable for the economy. The FPCCI former president said that the government should provide its economic stability plan to avert further losses, warning that numerous global issues are impacting world economies. The FPCCI former president observed that besides increasing exports and controlling imports the government will have to take administrative measures, as a large demand of cash dollars are seen in the market. He argued that this devaluation of the currency was dictated by the IMF through prior actions and it has nothing to do with macro-economic fundamentals. He said that there was a complete breakdown of economic policymaking, as the country's fiscal policy had become subservient to monetary and exchange rate policies. He said that the monetary tightening and exchange rate depreciation resulted in higher inflation, public debt and debt servicing.—Agencies

Erdogan seeks revenge in Turkey's local elections

ISTANBUL : Turks will vote next Sunday in local elections as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, buoyed by a strong showing in last year's general elections, sets his sights on winning back Istanbul. The secular opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) seized back control of the city - Turkiye's economic powerhouse - for the first time since before Erdogan ruled it as mayor in the 1990s in watershed 2019 polls.

That vote also saw the opposition win back the capital Ankara and keep power in the crucial Aegean port city of Izmir, shattering Erdogan's image of political invincibility. Erdogan has entrusted his former environment minister Murat Kurum to run for mayor of Istanbul in the March 31 polls as he looks to avenge the worst political defeat of his two-decade rule when CHP arch rival Ekrem Imamoğlu took the town hall. The powerful president bounced back last year to win a tough presidential election that came in the throes of an economic crisis and a massive earthquake that claimed more than 53,000 lives in Turkiye. Now, Erdogan has set his sights on winning back Istanbul - the city where he grew up and where he launched his political career as mayor in 1994. Imamoğlu edged out an Erdogan ally in a 2019 election that gained international headlines for being controversially annulled.—APP

Powerful Storm kills over 10 in southeastern Brazil

PETRÓPOLIS : A powerful storm has claimed more than 10 lives in southeastern Brazil, mostly in the mountainous parts of Rio de Janeiro state, where authorities on Saturday deployed rescue teams to deal with a "critical" situation. The deluge came as Brazil, South America's largest country, suffers through a string of extreme weather events, which experts say become more likely due to climate change.

The storm caused a house to collapse in the city of Petrópolis, 70 kilometers (45 miles) inland from the capital, killing four people, the Rio state government said. An AFP team witnessed the rescue of a girl Saturday morning who had been buried more than 16 hours in the rubble. Her father, who was found dead next to her, "heroically protected the girl with his body," a neighbor and owner of a local bar told AFP. "We are in pain, but grateful for this miracle," said Luis Claudio de Souza, 63. Other deaths were reported earlier in Santa Cruz da Serra, where a man drowned when his truck plunged into a river; in Teresopolis, where a resident died in a house collapse; and in Arraial do Cabo, where a person was struck by lightning. Farther up the coast, in the state of Espírito Santo, officials reported four deaths. And in Sao Paulo state, two children were hospitalized for injuries sustained during the storm on Friday.—APP

World Bank uses data to attract investors

LONDON : The World Bank will release additional proprietary data, including information on debt defaults, beginning next week, seeking to encourage greater private sector investment in developing nations, its president said Sunday. Ajay Banga, speaking at the China Development Forum early Sunday, China time, said the World Bank Group had mobilized \$41 billion of private capital for emerging markets and raised another \$42 billion from the private sector for bond issuance last year, with both totals to be eclipsed this year. But he said more progress was needed, and the bank was taking action on several fronts to overcome barriers to private sector investment in developing economies. Economic growth has slowed in developing countries, with growth falling to barely 4% from 6% in two decades, Banga said, noting that each lost percentage point dragged 100 million people into poverty.—APP

Pakistan Day celebrated with enthusiasm in Canada

High Commissioner Mr. Zaheer A. Janjua hoisted the national flag to the tune of the national anthem. Ambassador Janjua, paid rich tribute to the nation's founding fathers of Pakistan

DNA

OTTAWA : Pakistan Day was celebrated with zeal and fervour at the High Commission, Ottawa and the three Consulates in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. The High Commissioner Mr. Zaheer A. Janjua hoisted the national flag to the tune of the national anthem. A large number of Pakistani diaspora and Canadians including member of the parliament Mr. Yasir Naqvi, attended the ceremony. Messages of the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan were also read out. In his message, Ambassador Janjua, paid rich tribute to the nation's founding fathers, especially Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Mohammad Iqbal, for their vision and untiring struggle for the cre-



Briefs

**Rana for
downing
inflation**

DNA

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain said that inflation would be on a decline by the next year. Talking to media in Lahore, he said that only one and a half year is difficult as inflation would be controlled by then. "It is hoped that inflation would be brought in single digit by the end of 2025," he said. Rana Tanveer added that the prime minister increased the Ramazan relief package to 12 billion rupees. Also Read: Shehbaz boosts Ramazan Relief Package to Rs12.5bn amid rising prices "We are trying hard to give relief to the public and 19 items are being given in the Ramazan package," he said while adding that chief minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz has also started Ramazan Nigehban package. The minister said that quality items are being sold on cheaper rates at utility stores. The people can buy flour on half price from all the utility stores, he added. The government has also decreased the price of sugar by 44 rupees per kg. "I'll talk to the prime minister after Ramazan to further increase the subsidy in order to give relief to the masses," he said.

**Sirajul urges
govt to tackle
pollution**

DNA

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Emir Sirajul Haq on Sunday urged the government to tackle environmental pollution. Expressing his thoughts, Haq assailed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) over the billion tree project. Only 5.2 per cent of the areas has forests which are even decreasing. According to the foreign media, Lahore is the most polluted city. Few days back, Haq stressed the need for robust democracy. Addressing a press conference in Lahore, Haq said: "There exists such a democracy in the country where decisions are made before and elections are held afterwards." He recalled the recently held elections, saying, "Even as of now, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has not managed to provide clarification over the delay in the poll results." "Though Shehbaz Sharif has not taken the oath as the country's prime minister, But he [Shehbaz Sharif] is still saying that the country has no option but to approach the International Monetary Fund (IMF)." Deeming the elections as "fraud," she said, "Even the recently held elections were based on rigging like the elections held previously."

**155%
increase in
gas price
proposed**

SNGPL has once again demanded an increase in the price of gas and proposed a new price of Rs4489 per mmbtu

DNA

LAHORE: Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL) proposed an increase of 155 per cent in the gas price. According to the channel, the application for increasing gas prices will be reviewed in the head office of the SNGPL at Kashmir Road Lahore today (Monday). The channel reported that the SNGPL has once again demanded an increase in the price of gas and proposed a new price of Rs4489 per mmbtu. The channel said that the increase in gas prices will increase the bills by an average of 155 per cent. Pertinent to mention that the price of sui gas has already been increased twice in a year.

Captivating Qawwali night at Serena Hotels

Legendary Fareed Ayaz and Abu Muhammad Qawal steal the show

Through this collaborative endeavor, Serena Hotels CEO reaffirmed his commitment to promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity, enriching the fabric of society with the timeless beauty of music and tradition: Aziz Boolani



ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: A harmonious fusion of culture and entertainment unfolded as Serena Hotels and Hum TV Presented a captivating Qawwali Night with the Legendary Fareed Ayaz and Abu Muhammad Qawal. In a harmonious collaboration, Serena Hotels and Hum TV came together to curate an unforgettable evening of soul-stirring Qawwali, featuring the renowned maestros Fareed Ayaz and Abu Muhammad Qawal. This captivating event, held under the esteemed Serena Hotels Cultural Diplomacy initiative, not only celebrated the rich heritage of Qawwali music but also fostered cultural exchange and unity. Welcoming esteemed guests with warmth and grace, Aziz Boolani, the CEO of Serena Hotels (Global), set the stage for an enchanting journey through the mystical realms of Qawwali. In his insightful remarks, he underscored the significance of such cultural gatherings in promoting mutual understanding and appreciation among diverse communities.

The event, a highlight of Serena Hotels' cultural calendar, holds special significance as it coincides with the holy month of Ramadan, a time of spiritual reflection and communal harmony. As attendees immersed themselves in the soulful melodies and powerful verses of Qawwali, they were transported to a realm where borders dissolve, and hearts resonate in unison. With every note resonating in the air, the Qawwali night became a testament to the enduring



legacy of art in bridging divides and fostering unity. Through this collaborative endeavor, Serena Hotels CEO reaffirmed his commitment to promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity, enriching the fabric of society with the timeless beauty of music and tradition.

Another notable aspect of the event was the distinguished presence of especially the European diplomats, including Ambassadors from France, Norway, Italy, Poland, Jordan, TRNC who thoroughly enjoyed the festivities. Ambassador Mohammad Karmoune

of Morocco, known for his consistent attendance at Serena Hotels' events, expressed his appreciation for the performances and commended CEO Aziz Boolani for offering the diplomatic community an enriching experience of traditional Pakistani Sufi music.

Torkham border crossing reopened for pedestrians after brief closure

Government sources said that the disagreement between FC and FIA took place over the crowd management at the border; however, higher ups of both the agencies resolved the matter swiftly

KHYBER: The Torkham border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan was reopened for pedestrian traffic after four hours long closure in the wake of a clash between Frontier Corps (FC) and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), security sources said on Sunday. Earlier, citing sources a private news channel reported that the NADRA point at the Torkham border crossing was closed after the clash over some disagreement regarding immigration affairs, leaving several people going to Afghanistan via the border stuck in the middle. However, the crossing was reopened after brief suspension of traffic. Government sources said that the disagreement between FC and FIA took place over the crowd management at the border; however, higher ups of both the agencies resolved the matter swiftly. They said that law enforcement agencies try to fulfill the legal requirements to prevent the movement of terrorists or illegal individuals and crowding increases

the risk of any such untoward situation. Earlier, the hospital sources said that five people were injured in the scuffle and were shifted to Landi Kotal Hospital. Their condition was out of danger, they added. The FIA alleged that the FC staff was interfering with immigration matters. However, the sources said, the fight broke out after the FC officials continued to intervene despite being asked to stop. Following this, the FIA immigration staff also closed offices in protest, added the sources. Meanwhile, FC sources said that the security of the border is their responsibility. "FC officials keep a close watch on passengers for security," they added. The road is a key lifeline for Afghanistan, linking the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar to Jalalabad, the main city in Nangarhar, and the route onwards to the capital, Kabul. The Torkham border point is the main point of transit for travellers and goods between both countries. - Agencies

Memon reappointed as Sindh IGP

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Ghulam Nabi Memon has been appointed as the Inspector General (IG) of Sindh Police for the second time, as per a notification issued by the federal government on Sunday. Sources privy to the development said the federal government, upon the recommendation of the Sindh government, has opted for a change in leadership, replacing Rafat Mukhtar Raja with Ghulam Nabi Memon as the IG Sindh. In light of this development, Rafat Mukhtar Raja, the outgoing IG Sindh, has been directed by the federal government to report to the Establishment Division. Notably, the provincial Interior Minister, Zia Linjar, had raised concerns regarding the delay in appointing the desired candidate for the top policing role. This

delay prompted Linjar to voice the Sindh government's discontent to the federal authorities. After a lapse of 20 days since the initial recommendation, the formal notification to appoint Ghulam Nabi Memon has finally been issued, putting an end to the speculation surrounding the leadership of Sindh Police. Ghulam Nabi Memon, known for his extensive experience and proven track record in law enforcement, has previously held pivotal positions within the Sindh Police hierarchy. Moreover, in addition to his role as IG Sindh, Ghulam Nabi Memon has been entrusted with key responsibilities including Additional IG Karachi, Director Intelligence Bureau Karachi, DIG South, SSP Ghotki, Khairpur, Larkana, Malir, and other significant districts, further amplifying his influence within the law enforcement domain.

Gaza: Death toll surges to 32,226

NEWS DESK

GAZA: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 170 on Sunday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound neighborhoods, homes, shelter centers and aid convoys, and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. The health ministry in Gaza said on Sunday that the Israeli occupation army committed eight massacres in different areas of the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours, killing at least 84 civilians and injuring over 106 others, while a large number of victims are still under the rubble of bombed buildings or lying on roads. In a statement, the health ministry explained that the Israeli army killed and injured hundreds of civilians in different areas of Gaza during the past 24 hours, but only 84 martyrs and 106 wounded citizens were transported to hospitals. The health ministry added that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli bombardments and shooting attacks, which started on October 7, climbed to 32,226 martyrs and the number of the wounded surged to 74,518

people. Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza, killing and injuring hundreds of citizens. According to media sources, four citizens, including two children, were martyred when the Israeli army bombed a house belonging to the family of Abu Hamida in the west of Rafah, south of Gaza. Five other citizens were injured in an Israeli attack on a house in as-Salam neighborhood in eastern Rafah, while bodies of four martyrs were evacuated from al-Qarara area in the northeast of Khan Yunis following Israeli attacks. A little child called Yazan as-Sufi was killed when an Israeli tank attacked tents sheltering displaced families in al-Mawasi area in the west of Khan Yunis. Meanwhile, a number of citizens suffered injuries when Israeli forces stormed a house belonging to the family of Kahil near Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. Local residents in the area appealed to the Red Crescent to save them. Philippe Lazzarini, the director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), announced on Saturday that "Israel has prevented a food aid convoy from reaching northern Gaza for the second time in a week." Lazzarini warned in a post on his X platform account that the residents of northern Gaza are living on the brink of man-made famine that can be avoided. The UN official pointed out that the last time UNRWA teams were able to send food aid to northern Gaza was about two months ago.

Zelensky hits back after Russia links Ukraine to concert attack

KYIV: As news of the Moscow concert hall attack broke on Friday, Ukrainians knew what was coming: Kyiv would be blamed. The next thing they expected was more drones and more missiles. The accusations began almost immediately. They were just hints at first, until President Vladimir Putin openly claimed that the men who attacked Moscow had tried to flee to Ukraine, helped by contacts there. Then shortly before dawn on Sunday came the sound of explosions in Kyiv. When Mr Putin made his comments on Saturday in an address to the Russian nation, Islamic State group (IS) extremists had already announced they had carried out the killings. The US had confirmed that it passed on intelligence of a threat earlier this month. Now IS have released a hideously graphic video of their massacre, filmed on bodycams and including shouts of "God is Greatest" from the attackers. In his evening statement on Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was visibly angry that his country was being blamed. He described the Russian president and others in Moscow as "scum" for linking the attack there to Kyiv. He suggested a "miserable" Russian leader was more concerned about pinning the attack on Kyiv than reassuring his own citizens. - Agencies

Russia mourns concert hall terror victims

MOSCOW: Russia holds a day of mourning for the victims of Friday's concert hall terrorist attack in Moscow Region, one of the deadliest in the country's modern history. Entertainment events and shows have been canceled in the capital and several other cities. In a televised address to the nation on Saturday, President Vladimir Putin declared that Sunday would be a national day of commemoration for those who lost their lives in the atrocity. Flags are flying at half-mast nationwide and at Russian embassies abroad, and Russian TV broadcasters have taken entertainment shows off air for the day, with theaters and other venues also observing the somber occasion. People have been gathering outside Crocus City Hall, where an improvised memorial has appeared. Since the tragedy, mourners have brought flowers, stuffed toys and candles to honor those killed by the terrorists. - Agencies

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