



# Islamabad POST

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**War a real threat and Europe not ready, warns Tusk**

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**Bugti: Federal, provincial govts on same page**

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**Babar's return as Pakistan captain imminent**

Detailed News On Page-06

## Biden tells PM in first letter US to stand with Pakistan in tackling challenges

President Biden stated the United States remains committed to working with Pakistan to protect human rights and promote progress. Together, we will continue to forge a strong partnership between our nations



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In the first diplomatic correspondence between United States (US) president and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Joe Biden has vowed that Washington will "continue to stand with Pakistan" in tackling the "most pressing global and regional challenges". This is the first communication between a US president and Pakistani leader in a long time. The letter also holds significance as Islamabad's ties with the White House were strained after the cipher saga and allegation levelled by the former ruling party - Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Biden, in his letter, wrote, "The enduring partnership between our nations remains critical to ensuring the security of our people—and people around the world—and the United States will continue to stand with Pakistan to tackle the most pressing global and regional challenges of our time." "That includes advancing our shared vision for a future of greater health

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### Pakistan, Kabul report progress in trade talks

Afghan interim government claims agreement on several issues with Islamabad

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Afghanistan reported progress in trade talks on Thursday, as the Afghan Taliban government claimed Islamabad agreed to reverse some recent decisions amid tensions between the two estranged neighbours. The two-day talks took place in Kabul, with the Pakistani delegation led by its Commerce Secretary and the Afghan government represented by its commerce minister. These talks unfolded against the backdrop of simmering tensions over continued cross-border terrorist attacks, which Pakistan insists mostly originate from Afghanistan. Despite these tensions, both sides deemed the talks in Kabul a success. While the Pakistani side didn't delve into specifics, the Afghan interim government issued a statement claiming agreement on several issues. A statement from the foreign office stated that Secretary of Commerce Khurram

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, Ahmed Jawad Rabei, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The Ambassador briefed the President about the latest situation in Gaza. He also congratulated the President on assuming the office of President of Pakistan. - DNA

### IG Islamabad Akbar Nasir removed

Khurram Aga appointed interior secretary

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: In a recent decision, the government has opted for a change in leadership within Islamabad's law enforcement sector. Inspector General Islamabad Police, Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, has been relieved of his duties, effective immediately. Stepping into this role is Nasir Rizvi, a seasoned Grade 20 officer within the police group, bringing with him a wealth of experience and expertise to uphold the safety and security of the capital. Moreover, to streamline administrative affairs and bolster coordination, Captain Khurram Aga, a distinguished Grade 22 officer of the DMG group, has been appointed as the new Interior Secretary. With his extensive background and administrative acumen, Captain Aga is poised to contribute significantly to the effective governance of Islamabad.

Reinforcing Governance in Peshawar: Meanwhile, in Peshawar, a strategic administrative appointment has been made. Riaz Mehsud, a seasoned official who has previously served with distinction as Peshawar's Commissioner, has been reinstated to this pivotal position. His return promises to further strengthen governance structures and promote development initiatives in the region, building upon his prior accomplishments. These appointments mark a concerted effort by the government to optimize administrative functions and enhance public service delivery across key regions, ensuring sustained progress and prosperity for all citizens.

## Army Chief attends briefing Military, political top brass vows to end smuggling

Prime Minister Shehbaz says provinces, institutions, and armed forces will have to collaborate with govt to revive economy

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said the government will not allow any political or bureaucratic interference in its move to curb smuggling, corruption, power theft and tax evasion in the country. "No political and bureaucratic influence will be allowed to interfere in this major surgery which we have to undertake collectively for the good of Pakistan and its 250 million people," the prime minister said while chairing a meeting on measures against spectrum of illegal activities. Members of the federal cabinet, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir, provincial chief ministers and high-level government officials were present in the meeting. The participants were briefed in

Continued on Page 06

## In a first FM Ishaq Dar replaces finance minister in CCI

The CCI is being headed by PM Shehbaz and all four chief ministers are among the council's members

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approved reconstitution of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) on Friday, replacing the finance minister

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### Briefs

#### Baloch refutes Gohar's claim

Jl doesn't take decisions under pressure'

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami leader Liaquat Baloch Friday refuted claims made by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan regarding his party being "under pressure" and their failed meeting plans in Islamabad for talks on government formation following the February 8 general elections. After the polls, the two parties were reportedly mulling to unite with PTI's successful independent candidates looking to join other parties in the parliament, so that they could jointly form a government in the provinces and Centre where they could have possessed a majority number of parliamentarians.

#### Inflation to hover at 22.5-23.5pc

The ministry's report said the March inflation outlook was moderate despite a hike in fuel prices

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Inflation in Pakistan is expected to hover between 22.5 per cent and 23.5pc in March and to further ease in April, the finance ministry said on Friday in its monthly economic update. The country has been struggling with high inflation and stunted growth for over a year, and in 2023 narrowly staved off default with a last-gasp, short-term International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout programme.

#### Holiday Notice

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

### Oath on reserved seats

## KP govt to challenge PHC ruling in SC

Alam said that a "writ petition" has been prepared which will be filed after two days

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to move the Supreme Court to challenge the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) ruling regarding the oath of KP Assembly lawmakers elected on reserved seats. "We will challenge Peshawar High Court's verdict in the Supreme Court," KP Law Minister Aftab Alam said in a statement, adding that senior lawyers Salman Akram Raja, Hamid Khan, and Faisal Siddiqui were included in the legal panel. Alam said that a "writ petition" has been prepared which will be filed after two days. He clarified that the oath of members of the provincial assembly (MPAs) elected on reserved seats for minorities and women will not be administered until the top court's verdict comes in on this matter. Subsequently, the provincial government will hold consultations in a cabinet meeting today regarding the expected postponement of the Senate election.

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### Judges issue: PTI devises a multi-pronged strategy

PTI to hold protest demonstrations across the country on daily basis, says Raof Hasan

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Core Committee hammered out a multi-pronged strategy to deal with the judges' letter issue, ensure independence of judiciary and rule of law in the country. Giving a briefing about the decisions taken in the PTI Core Committee, PTI Central Information Secretary Raof Hasan said that the forum strongly rejected an inquiry

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## Culprits of Bisham attack to be brought to justice: Naqvi

During his interaction with the Beijing's probe team at Chinese Embassy in Islamabad, the security czar informed them about the progress made so far in the investigations



ABID RAZA/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Briefing an special investigation team of China, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi Friday expressed the government's resolve to

bring culprits of Besham terrorist attack to justice at all costs. The development comes after a terror attack in Shangla's Besham city claimed the lives of at least six people, including five Chinese engineers, working on the Dasu Dam, earlier this week.

The victims were killed when an explosive-laden vehicle hit the bus carrying them on the Karakoram Highway in the Bisham area on Tuesday. During his interaction with the Beijing's probe team at Chinese Embassy in Islamabad, the security czar informed them about the progress made so far in the investigations into the tragic incident. Measures pertaining to protection of Chinese nationals and overall security were also discussed on the occasion. The federal minister also met the Chinese ambassador and updated him on the probe into Besham incident. In the meantime, civil work at the sites of the Dasu and Diamer-Bhasha Dams has been temporarily suspended by the Chinese companies overseeing operations due to security concerns.

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## Minister pledges completion of PMDFC schemes by 2025

DNA

LAHORE : Punjab Minister for Local Government and Community Development (LG&CD) department Zeeshan Rafique has pledged that all ongoing World Bank-funded schemes under Punjab Municipal Development Fund Company (PMDFC) will be completed by March 2025. PMDFC is working on municipal services projects in 16 cities including Daska, Hafizabad, Jhelum, Kamonke, Muridke, Wazirabad, Gojra, Jaranwala, Jhang, Kamalia, Okara, Bahawalpur, Borewala, Khanewal, Kot Addu and Wahari in a transparent manner, which will significantly improve the quality of life there. He was speaking in a briefing by Managing Director Syed Zahid Aziz during a visit to the PMDFC office, here on Friday. The minister expressed his happiness that PMDFC was the oldest company of the Punjab government which had been playing an important role in providing municipal services in different areas for last twenty five years. He said that it was gratifying that as a pilot project, traditional ponds in the selected villages were being cleaned using modern techniques. "Phase-wise cleaning of the polluted ponds is not only promoting aquatic life but also providing water for local agricultural purposes", he said. The minister emphasized measures to increase capacity building of municipal committees because the lack of efficiency of some municipal committees was hindering the timely completion of development schemes. He said that the problem of sewage needed more attention than solid waste management. "Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif wants all drains to be repaired and cleaned in a phased manner", the minister added. He directed that sewage projects should be prepared keeping in mind the needs of the next fifty years. He said that in view of the serious sewage problems in Jhang city, work was going on there on priority basis. Zeeshan Rafiq directed PMDFC to take concrete steps to solve the sewage problems at Daska city, pointing out that the problems of sewage and sanitation, especially in small towns, were very painful and needed immediate attention.

## Crackdown on gas pilferers in Sargodha

SARGODHA :The Sui Northern Gas Pipeline (SNGPL) Sargodha started a crackdown on pilferers of gas in the region. According to a spokesman for SNGPL Executive Engineer Abdullah here on Friday, a total of four cases had already been registered during the financial year 2023-24 against pilferers. A fine of Rs 1.4 million was imposed on the accused while Rs 7.5 million fine was also imposed due to under billing, he said. He said the SNGPL management had committed that no gas pilferer would be spared. Citizens were requested to share information against theft of gas on 1199 and 048-224401, he added. —APP

# CM Maryam to launch 'Nawaz Sharif Kissan Card'

Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Information Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari, Agriculture Minister Mohammad Ashiq Hussain, Former Senators Pervaiz Rashid, Saud Majeed, Chief Secretary, Secretaries Agriculture, Finance, President Bank of Punjab and other senior officers concerned attended the meeting

QALB-E-ABBAS HASHMI

DNA

LAHORE : Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is all out for the welfare and prosperity of farmers in the province. She approved the launch of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif Kissan Card to provide subsidised farm inputs to farmers in Punjab, while chairing a special meeting on agricultural reforms for the second consecutive day. Chief Minister said, "Muhammad Nawaz Sharif Kissan Card project in Punjab is the biggest in the history of Pakistan." She added, "Under the

project, agricultural loans worth Rs 150 billion will be provided to 5 lakh small farmers on easy terms. Farmers will be given an agricultural loan of Rs 30,000 per acre for the purchase of best quality seeds, fertilizers and pesticides." Chief Minister said, "Various types of other subsidies will also be provided to the farmers through Nawaz Sharif Kissan Card." She said, "Model Agriculture Centers (MAC) will be established across Punjab in collaboration with the private sector. These model agriculture centers will have modern agricultural machinery, training, pesticide seeds and demonstration plots." She

added, "In the first phase, one model agriculture center will be set up in each district. Farmers will get rid of fake fertilizers and medicines." Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed the Agriculture Department to compile complete data of production and demand of each crop. She approved to set up state-of-the-art center of excellence for research and development on cotton, wheat and rice crops. She agreed to control administrative affairs of the Center of Excellence through a Board and link these Research Centres with the Regional Universities. Madam Chief Minister also directed to build a research and develop-

ment center at the cost of Rs 2 billion in Agriculture University Faisalabad with the cooperation of China. This Pak China R&D Center will have genome center, germplasm resource, speed breeding and research facility on climate change. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif also directed to present amendments to the Agriculture Pesticides Act and the Fertilizers Control Act to prevent the sale of spurious agricultural drugs and fertilizers. She also reviewed the restructuring of Punjab Seed Corporation and Punjab Agricultural Research Board. A proposal to introduce a law to prevent the use of agricultural land for

residential purposes was also considered in the meeting. She agreed to equip Agricultural Extension Wing with modern technology and recruit 500 agriculture graduates. Earlier, Chief Minister was briefed that 24,800 latest agricultural implements will be provided to the farmers at a cost of Rs 7 billion in two years. Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Information Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari, Agriculture Minister Mohammad Ashiq Hussain, Former Senators Pervaiz Rashid, Saud Majeed, Chief Secretary, Secretaries Agriculture, Finance, President Bank of Punjab and other senior officers concerned attended the meeting.

## DC orders making water filtration plants functional immediately

MULTAN : Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rizwan Qadeer directed departments concerned to make all the water purification plants functional immediately. He expressed these views while presiding over meeting of district departments. Managing Director Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), Chief Officers Municipal Corporation, District Council and Education department officers participated in the meeting. DC said that 343 water purification plants were fully operational across the district. He said that the survey of water purification plants which were closed due to technical failure has been completed. He said that district departments have been given ultimatum to make their respective plants functional immediately. He ordered to re-survey and water tests be carried out in rural areas. He directed to sought services of private sector for the functioning of plants established in educational institutions. —APP

## Pakistan, Azerbaijan enhance IT, Telecom cooperation

Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima said Pakistan wanted tangible ties between the two countries in the field of IT and Telecom sector

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD :Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Mr. Khazar Farhadov called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima in her office on Friday. Matters of mutual interest and related to IT and Telecommunication sector were discussed in the meeting. The Azerbaijan Ambassador congratulated Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima for assuming her office. The two-side agreed to enhance cooperation in IT and telecom sector. Shaza Fatima said that Pakistan and Azerbaijan have brotherly relations, adding that Pakistan greatly values its ties with Azerbaijan. She said Pakistan wanted tangible ties between the two countries in the field of IT and Telecom sector. Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima said that Pakistan aspired to start youth



exchange program with Azerbaijan. She noted that the exchange of startups between the two countries will give fillip to relations. Shaza Fatima also emphasised upon starting the joint IT training program for the youth of two countries. She went on to say

that the Pakistan has conducive atmosphere for foreign direct investment especially in IT and Telecom sector. She said there was great potential in IT and telecom sector of Pakistan, adding that we will fully cooperate with Azerbaijan in the field of IT and Telecom.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador of Azerbaijan said that Pakistan's IT and Telecom sector was progressing, adding that Azerbaijan wanted to further boost ties with Pakistan in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) field.

## Passing-out of 51st CTP held at Civil services academy

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Secretary Establishment Division Inamullah Khan Dharejo on Friday stressed upon officers to stay loyal to the country's constitution and follow an approach aimed at bringing about a positive change to serve people in the real sense. Addressing the passing out ceremony of the 51st Common Training Programme at Civil Services Academy Walton here, he said that today all porbationary officers had accomplished a significant milestone. He said that the Civil Services Academy had also achieved a milestone by conducting an extremely productive training programme for 232 officers. He said, "It is heartening to see that a good number of lady officers are passing out today. There was time

when the civil service was described as men bureaucracy but today the things have changed. Now women were working on most challenging fronts without any hesitation." He further said that the inclusion of women in all tiers of the government would surely bring more objectivity and inclusiveness in public policy formation and implementation. He said, "Your presence here is a testimony to the fact that you have passed a very competitive selection process." Inamullah Dharejo said that officers must keep in mind that they owe this success to the country and nation which provided them with an opportunity to avail it. He said that officers had not only gone through conventional academic modules but

they also undertook multiple field exercises that helped them understand challenges of the common man. The secretary said that it was very good that the training programmes consistent with evolving national requirements and international best practices, with the aim of enabling young officers to develop into responsible, responsive, empathetic, accountable and efficient civil servants, capable of creating public value by keeping public governance and institutional effort well-aligned with the community's welfare. He said it was a pleasure for him to announce that Islamabad study tours of officers would continue as it was devised for officers of the 51st Common training programme.

He said, "Military attachment stands resumed from the 52nd common training programme as this exposure will be very beneficial for officers." He said that the government intended to make the CSS exam more competitive, analytical and logical besides re-defining the model of promotion. Civil Services Academy Director General Farhan Aziz Khawaja, Common Training Programme Director Fizza Parvez Afzaal and others were also present. Shields and prizes were also distributed among officers who showed best performance during the 5-month training. The Civil Services Academy DG also presented a souvenir to the Secretary Establishment Division.

## Qissa Khawani market beautification without traffic disruption

The district administration must ensure the protection of traders in the Qissa Khawani market and other related areas so that this decoration and embellishment project can be completed peacefully

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR ....President of the Markezi Tanzeem e Tajaran Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Malik Mehr Elahi, President of Peshawar Traders Chamber Gulam Bilal Javid, and other members stated that last night heavy machinery provided by the district administration was used for decorating and embellishing. The closure of traffic from both sides of the Qissa Khawani market for this purpose was strongly opposed. Traders from related markets and other associated areas were filled with waves of

sorrow and frustration, feeling that the administration has become their enemy during these blessed days. If traffic is halted for work, it will not only affect the Qissa Khawani market but also the livelihoods of traders in related markets. The district administration must ensure the protection of traders in the Qissa Khawani market and other related areas so that this decoration and embellishment project can be completed peacefully and in stages. Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali had assured that traders' businesses would not suffer, and this work would be

completed through mutual agreement. Construction work will take place after Eid ul-Fitr. However, the district administration has disregarded even Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali's assurance. We appeal to the higher authorities of our provincial government and district administration to complete this project while addressing the concerns of traders regarding decoration and embellishment. Otherwise, traders will be forced to protest to protect their rights, and the responsibility for all circumstances will lie with the district administration.

## Uniform Cigarette Taxation: solution to Economic Losses and Health Concerns

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has suffered significant economic losses due to the dominance of the cigarette industry, high consumption rates and subsequent health cost over the years and to deal these challenges the IMF has recently proposed a uniform taxation on tobacco sector. IMF, in its report, urged Pakistan to implement uniform taxation on cigarettes, emphasizing the need to address health concerns and generate maximum revenue from the sector. The IMF's recommendation comes in the wake of a significant decline in cigarette consumption by 20-25 percent following an increase in taxes on tobacco products. It also advocates subjecting e-cigarettes to similar taxation as traditional tobacco products, highlighting comparable health impacts. Health activists have rallied behind the IMF's recommendations, echoing the need for restructuring tobacco taxation in Pakistan. The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) has previously highlighted discrepancies in the tax collection framework. According to SDPI's report based on FBR data, Pakistan suffered a loss of Rs 567 billion in revenue over the past seven years. Former federal Minister for National Health Services, Dr. Nadeem Jan, also advocated for a substantial 50 percent tax increase on tobacco products to deter consumption, especially among youth, citing severe health concerns. His demand is based on article 6 of WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Pakistan's commitment to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) underscores the importance of a unified pricing system for cigarettes to regulate the industry effectively and discourage consumption. The World Health Organization (WHO) advocates for robust tax measures to reduce tobacco consumption, citing the effectiveness of a 10% increase in tobacco prices typically leads to a 4% decrease in overall tobacco consumption in high-income countries and up to an 8% decrease in low- and middle-income countries. —DNA



TUSDEC (Technology Upgradation and Skill Development Company) was established by Ministry of Industries & Production, Government of Pakistan to upgrade technology and skills of strategic industrial clusters of Pakistan. TUSDEC is implementing a project titled "Industrial Designing & Automation Centres (IDAC)" to address the automation and design related issues of Pakistan's industry. Centres will be established in Lahore, Karachi and Sialkot. These interventions will help local industries on improving their manufacturing processes through industrial automation.

Technology Upgradation and Skill Development Company (TUSDEC) invites sealed bids under Single Stage Single Envelope procedure from eligible firms for supply of Items for Furniture & Fixtures, Office Equipment and IT equipment (LOT wise) of the IDAC Project at Lahore and Sialkot.

1. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by an interested bidder on submission of a written application to the TUSDEC address and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Rs. 1000/-.
2. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security @ 2% of bid amount (Lot wise) in shape of CDR/bank draft/ pay order in favor of Technology Upgradation and Skill Development Company.
3. All bids must be delivered to Technology Upgradation and Skill Development Company (TUSDEC) on or before 02:00 PM, on April 24, 2024.
4. Each bid shall comprise one single envelope containing financial and technical proposal. Bids will be opened on the same date at 02:30 PM in the presence of bidders or their authorized representatives who wish to attend, at same address. This advertisement is also available on PPRFA website at www.ppra.org.pk.
5. TUSDEC reserve the rights to reject bids prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposal as per the rules and regulations under PPRFA Ordinance, 2002.

Submission of any false statement / documents shall disqualify the bidder.

Contact Details: Chief Projects & Operations  
Technology Upgradation & Skill Development Company (TUSDEC)  
Ministry of Industries & Production, Government of Pakistan  
State Cement Corporation Building, Kot Lakhpal, Lahore 54770, Pakistan  
Tel: +92-42-35215890, 35145793-5; UAN: +92-42-111 000 143 Ext. 256  
Fax: 042-35121658, Website: www.tusdec.org.pk,  
Email: idacprocurement@tusdec.org.pk

PID L 3004



ISLAMABAD: Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Aybek Arif Usmanov, calls on Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, aiming to elevate economic relations between the two nations.—DNA

## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### MARCH

March 01/Bosnia

National Day

March 03/Bulgaria

National Day

March 06/ Ghana

Independence Day

March 12 /Mauritius

National Day

March 17/Ireland

St. Patricks Day

March 20/Tunisia

Independence Day

March 21/Namibia

National Day

March 25/Greece

National Day

March 26/Bangladesh

National Day

March 27/Myanmar

Armed Forces Day

## Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



## Emergency

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



## Enquiry

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



## Hospitals

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



## Departments

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

## Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Malaysia attaches great importance to its relations with Pak: Envoy

## Malaysian envoy hosts iftar dinner for the MTCP ex-participants

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Ambassador Mohammad Azhar Mazlan hosted the "Iftar Dinner Reception for Pakistan's former participants of the Malaysia Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP)" at the Malaysian High Commission in Islamabad. The reception was attended by distinguished guests including officials from Pakistan's key ministries, the Malaysian High Commission and Pakistan's former participants of the MTCP. The purpose of the reception was to promote continuous engagements with the aim of fostering a long-lasting and strong bond of friendship between the officials of both countries.

During the reception, Ambassador Azhar in his speech welcomed the guests and shared salient features of the program. He stated that the event aimed to establish closer relations and strengthen networking between the High Commission of Malaysia in Islamabad and Pakistan's former MTCP participants. Malaysia attaches great importance to its bilateral relations with Pakistan. He added that the long-standing bilateral relations



and close cooperation between the two brotherly countries have covered various areas including trade, investment, education, tourism, culture, defense, and technical assistance on human capital development, among others. The MTCP was officially launched on 7 September 1980 at the Second Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to signify Malaysia's commitment to South-South Co-

operation in particular technical cooperation among developing countries, with its main objective to achieve sustainable economic and social development among the countries. The MTCP is a flagship programme of the Malaysian government, aimed at providing technical assistance and capacity-building to developing countries. The MTCP also emphasises human resources development mainly through training,

short-term courses in public and private Malaysian training institutions, and long-term courses in Malaysian public universities. It entails prioritising developing countries of strategic interests, focusing on Malaysia's area of expertise, demand-driven courses/ programmes, cultivation of potential participants who would later serve as 'Friends of Malaysia', Public-Private Partnership, and collaboration with

new development partners beyond MTCP's traditional partners. Annually, Malaysia's flagship MTCP offers more than 60 technical training and capacity-building programmes in vast areas of development in collaboration with leading local training institutions and international development partners. Since its inception, the MTCP has benefited thousands of participants from various countries, including

Pakistan, by offering training and knowledge-sharing opportunities in various fields. The High Commissioner ended his remarks by mentioning that Malaysia aims to encourage more future participation from Pakistani officials in the MTCP, as it would not only be beneficial for the bilateral relations, but would also assist in the career development of the participants. He reaffirmed Malaysia's commitment to further enhancing cooperation with Pakistan through programmes like MTCP. Ms. Maryam Mushtaq, Assistant Director of Economic Diplomacy and International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who is also a former MTCP participant, expressed her sincere gratitude to the Malaysian government for managing the MTCP efficiently. She stated that the MTCP not only provided a chance to further enhance her professional skills but also provided an opportunity to truly immerse in a cultural experience. She added that the MTCP has provided participants from an array of professional backgrounds to further polish their skills. She hoped that the MTCP would be continued as it benefited thousands of participants from various countries including Pakistan.

# Islamabad needs urban climate resilient infrastructure

ISLAMABAD: The experts at a seminar on Friday underlined that amid growing population and climate-induced disaster risks it has become imperative for the federal capital to maintain a climate resilient infrastructure to sustain as a livable metropolis. The seminar titled, 'Building Urban Climate Resilience in Islamabad', was jointly organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSAs) here. CANSAs representatives participated in the seminar online. Stressing the need to establish some model municipalities having climate resilient infrastructure, SDPI Deputy Executive Director, Dr Shafiqat Munir said that Pakistan needs to have a strong local government system to develop climate smart urban centers whereas devolution at the small-scale needs to be achieved as every disaster hits local tier or bottom level of states, such as cities or municipalities. Referring to the SDPI Report on the same title, he said: "In Nepal, a mayor from a small municipality has developed climate smart infrastructure in his municipality, but in Pakistan, financial constraints for local level authorities are the main impediments to achieve the goal of urban resilience." He, however, pointed out that there is a lack of strong local government system in the country, which needs to be made stronger, and democratic with maximum powers rest with the elected local leadership. He informed that the SDPI is also engaging with provincial governments to convince them to invest in peri-urban areas and local governments for the sake of climate resilience. Aleena Kareem said transparency in public projects, better reporting and impact evaluation mechanisms and public-private partnerships could support urban resilience initiatives. She suggested the authorities concerned to come up with net zero targets for Islamabad to contain its carbon emissions to avoid climate disasters. Nakul from CANSAs said Pakistan has highest population growth and urbanization rates needs a proper mechanism and effort in this regard. Since the cities in South Asia are at the receiving end due to the economic nature of development, robust efforts are required other than COP forums to meet its urban resilience goals, Nakul added. Associate Research Fellow, SDPI, Zainab Naeem delivered a brief presentation on the Report which said: "around 4.3 billion people, i.e. 55% of world population, live in urban centers whereas the South Asia has accelerated growth trend with one of the highest urbanization trends in Pakistan". She highlighted that the nexus between climate change and urban growth is prevalent in major economic sectors in the entire South Asia. "Climate Change can exacerbate existing health risks in urban areas due to factors like air pollution and extreme heat. However, South Asia would require \$215 billion annually by 2030 for flood protection due to recurring flood risks," she added. "Annual mean temperature per decade increased by 0.32° Celsius in Pakistan with a significant increasing trend of annual mean temperature between 1961-2022 following rapid population increase due to rural-to-urban migration," she noted. The Report suggests some action points leading to institutional building, coordination and governance, policy interventions, planning frameworks like green procurement, supply chains, pollution laws and liabilities on polluters and financing to create sustainable revenue streams for green and resilient urbanization. Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) Ashiq Nawaz said the federal capital was established to cater to the needs of the federation.—DNA

# ICCI takes charge for the maintenance of public toilets



DNA

ISLAMABAD: (While the administration of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) is busy around the clock to provide the best facilities to the citizens, vigorous measures are also being taken to promote the economy. In this regard, an MoU was signed between Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Islamabad Chamber of Commerce on Friday. Under this MoU, male and female public toilets established in different commercial centers of Islamabad will be handed

over to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce so that the families coming for the purpose of shopping do not have to face any kind of problem. According to the details, these toilets have been constructed at suitable places connected to various commercial centers and hospitals. Each unit has 10 public toilets including 5 female and 5 male. It should be noted that all the constructed public toilets will be equipped with modern facilities so that the families coming for the purpose of shopping in the commercial centers do not have to face any kind of difficulties. It should be noted that

under this MoU, the administration of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce will be responsible for the construction and repair of all these public toilets, workers' salaries, sanitation and other arrangements. While the land of toilets will remain the property of CDA. Similarly, the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce will use the said toilets only for public welfare and will never be allowed to use this land for any other purpose, otherwise the MoU can be canceled at any time. On this occasion, the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) directed the concerned departments to regularly visit these public toilets and also keep a detailed review of the facilities provided to the public in order to ensure the provision of the best facilities to the citizens. On this occasion, the business community hailed the agreement between CDA and Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and expressed their determination that this agreement will not only promote the economy but also provide a good environment to the consumers. He further said that the construction of public toilets in commercial centers was the need at present because due to the lack of these facilities, families started turning to shopping malls because all these facilities were available there, but now all these facilities are available to families in the commercial centers as well, which has strong potential to boost the economy.

## IESCO issues power suspension notice

ISLAMABAD: According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance/ Development Work is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned feeders/areas will be temporarily suspended as per given schedule: On 30th March 2024, From 07:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Islamabad Circle, Shikar Padian, Karpal, F-8/2, G-9/1, I-8/3, H-8, New Exchange, PHA-II, Shah Allah Dutta, NIH, Pindi Point, Beirut, Balawara, Mangyal, Athal, Shahpur, Treat, T&T, Bhara Kah-I & II, NIH Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Ghousia Colony, Iqbal Road-II, Zeeshan Colony, P&T Wani, Chakra, Rata, Pandhoo, Masrial Road, Nest Road, APHS, Sadiqabad, Fourth Road Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Bank Road-I, Jehangir Road, Kot Jabi, NPF-I, Model Town, Jhanda, Major Riaz, Shahpur, Dhamial, Chontra, Hamid Jhangal, New Kalliam, Sukhu, Nisahan Haider, Mahuta, AFSKari-7, Sir Syed Road, FFC, Khadam Hussain Road, Adamji Road Feeders, Attock Circle, Sangiani, Pind Pran, Dharek, Nawababad, Mushtaq Hussain, Purmia, Islampura, Fowara Chowk, Akhuri, Haji Shah, Pindi Gheep City, Azim Shaheed.—APP

## Qawwali evening featuring Ustad Shahid Ali Khan held at Lok Virsa

This initiative by Lok Virsa aims to promote cultural and spiritual engagement during Ramadan, fostering a sense of community and reverence for the holy month

ISLAMABAD: Qawwal Ustad Shahid Ali Khan entertained the audience with a devotional Qawwali performance here at Lok Virsa - National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage. He performed at "Mah-e-Isar O Aman - a cultural extravaganza featuring Naat and Tilawat competition, a captivating calligraphy exhibition, and tantalizing cultural foods organized by Lok Virsa. The mesmerizing performance of Qawwali connected the audience with spiritual and cultural richness. Lok Virsa, commenced its Ramadan festivities titled 'Maah-e-Isar O Aman', which will run until Eid, and features a range of activities to celebrate the holy month. Each day, starting at 5 PM, the festivities will include Tilawat and Naat competitions, offering spiritual reflections, Islamic calligraphy exhibitions, and devotional Qawwali performances. Additionally, cultural food stalls were also set up, providing attendees with a taste of traditional cuisine. This initiative by Lok Virsa aims to promote cultural and spiritual engagement during Ramadan, fostering a sense of community and reverence for the holy month.—DNA

## IRSA Advisory body to meet on April 2

ISLAMABAD: The Advisory Committee of the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) will meet here on April 2 to finalize water share of the provinces for the upcoming Kharif season scheduled to commence from next month. The meeting will be presided over by Chairman IRSA Abdul Hameed Mengal. The meeting would attend member Federal Asjad Intiaz Ali, member Punjab Amjad Saeed, member Sindh Muhammad Ehsanul Haq Leghari, member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Syed Zahid Abbas, Chairman Federal Flood Commission, members Water and Power WAPDA, irrigation secretaries of all provinces. The IRSA technical committee has already met with Director of Operations IRSA Khalid Idrees Rana on March 25 to finalise the preliminary findings about water availability in the upcoming Kharif season. WAPDA has also been asked to come up with a detailed presentation on Tarbela Dam constraints for the advisory committee.—APP

## MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES NOTICE OF TENDER

Sl No	Name of Work Executed during the Last 2 Years and in Hand	Agency	Amount of Work	Time Allowed (Months)	Date of Commencement	Date of Completion	Percentage Progress of Work in Hand	Departmental Performance Report on each Work by the Engineer in Charge
01	The office of GE (Air) AHQ Peshawar invites sealed tenders for the following Work in light of PPRA Rule 13 (1) of 2004.							
02	(a) Provision of Certain Facilities at PAF	(L)	3.994	(L)	2.795	(L)	3.300	
		(L)	3.985	(L)	2.982	(L)	3.600	
		(L)	3.860	(L)	3.000	(L)	3.400	
		(L)	3.990	(L)	2.990	(L)	3.700	
		(L)	3.890	(L)	2.900	(L)	3.800	
		(L)	3.870	(L)	2.800	(L)	3.900	
		(L)	3.650	(L)	2.700	(L)	4.000	
		(L)	3.200	(L)	2.500	(L)	2.000	
		(L)	3.100	(L)	2.886	(L)	2.983	
		(L)	3.980	(L)	3.200	(L)	3.950	
		(L)		(L)	3.500			

03 The contractors are required to submit their applications for issuance of tender documents alongwith their complete credentials as shown at (Serial 9). The applications shall be scrutinized and the tender documents will only be issued to the firms who have sufficient experience in the relevant filed and satisfies other special conditions required for the job and area. Tenders will only be issued to the scrutinized contractors. The tender must be received in the office of the accepting officer by 1130 Hrs on **19 Apr, 2024** and will be opened at 1200 Hrs on the same date.

NOTE:- Contractors shall provided certificate that they are not involved in any type of litigation with government Department in the Court of Law and that no special report of Directorate of Inspection and Evaluation (E-in-C's Branch GHQ) is outstanding against them.

04 All contractors, will certify in writing that they are registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), and will submit a copy of their registration. Contractors not registered with PEC are ineligible to apply.

05 Contractor born on approved List of MES in categories "E" and also having experience of this type should only apply.

06 Contractors who desire may be present at the time of opening of tenders.

07 The accepting officer reserves the right to accept or reject the tender. Rejected tenders will be dealt with as per Para 33 (j) of PPRA Rules.

08 The interested parties can contact **GE (Air) AHQ Peshawar** / authorized representative for further details from 0745 to 1445 hours on all working days.

S No	Name of Work Executed during the Last 2 Years and in Hand	Agency	Amount of Work	Time Allowed (Months)	Date of Commencement	Date of Completion	Percentage Progress of Work in Hand	Departmental Performance Report on each Work by the Engineer in Charge
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PID(P): 094/2024

# Pakistan, Uzbekistan vow to strengthen trade, economic ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Aybek Arif Usmanov and Pakistan's Commerce minister Jam Kamal Khan on Friday forged path for enhanced economic and trade relations. Uzbekistan's Ambassador, Aybek Arif Usmanov, met with Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan,

aiming to elevate economic relations between the two nations, said a press release issued here. Usmanov praised Minister Jam's experience in politics and expressed confidence in his ability to enhance bilateral trade. Stressing the longstanding friendly ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, Usmanov emphasized the necessity of bolstering economic cooperation across

various sectors through Business to Business and Government to Government agreements. Uzbekistan's foreign minister and deputy trade secretary have planned to visit Pakistan soon for B2B and G2G discussions aimed at boosting trade, he added. Highlighting the potential in sectors like agriculture, pharmaceuticals, building materials, textiles, and leather, Usmanov un-

derscored the importance of tapping into these opportunities. Minister Khan echoed the sentiment, acknowledging the untapped potential between the two countries and emphasizing the need for improved connectivity and new trade routes to enhance trade volume. Both dignitaries pledged for close coordination to facilitate the business community from both sides.



ISLAMABAD: The ambassador of Ethiopia Jemal Beker Abdula hosted an Iftar Dinner at his residence. Senator Mushaid Hussain Syed, senator Sana Jamali, Husnain yousaf (DG Africa) Khalid Iqbal Malik, Zafar Bakhtawari were also present on the occasion.—DNA

## PM coordinator on health visita PIMS

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmed, Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination, undertook a comprehensive visit to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) to assess and review the medical facilities provided by the medical institution. Accompanied by Secretary Health, Mr. Iftikhar Ali Shalwani, the visit aimed to ensure the highest standards of healthcare delivery to the citizens. During the visit, Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmed personally inspected various wards of the hospital, including the emergency section, and engaged with patients to determine any concerns they might have faced during their treatment journey. He emphasized the importance of patient-centric care and reiterated the government's commitment to address any shortcomings in the healthcare system on priority basis. Furthermore, the Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Health Services issued directives to enhance the hospital's operational efficiency. These directives included the initiation of evening shifts in the O.P.D., the establishment of dedicated Kidney and Liver transplant centers, and the formation of a specialized committee to spearhead these initiatives. Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmed also pledged full cooperation to fulfill the human resource requirements of the hospital to ensure uninterrupted healthcare services.

## PTC rebuts misleading tax loss figures

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tobacco Company (PTC) on Friday expressed concern about the recent misinformation spread across the media regarding loss to the national exchequer due to non-payment of taxes by legitimate tobacco companies. PTC officials have expressed their concerns about the figures presented by an Islamabad-based think tank, showcasing a substantial revenue loss inflicted upon the national exchequer by legitimate tobacco companies around Rs 567 billion, said a news release. It is important to note that this figure is incorrect, misleading and detached from ground realities. The only loss incurred to the Government of Pakistan by the tobacco industry is because of tax evasion of illicit manufacturers as the legitimate industry pays all applicable duties and taxes.—DNA

## 26.6% increase in FED on cigarettes can recover 19.8% healthcare cost

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) has urged the government to reduce the health cost burden by increasing taxes on cigarettes. Tobacco use, particularly smoking, is linked to a plethora of health issues, including lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, respiratory diseases, and various other cancers. Smoking-related illnesses and deaths cost Pakistan 1.6% of its GDP annually. The earlier individuals start smoking, the higher their risk of developing these health problems later in life.

Malik Imran Ahmad, Country Head Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK), said that smoking-related illnesses cost a significant portion of the economy for their treatment. One effective strategy to discourage tobacco use and to save our youth and healthcare systems, as well as the economy, is to increase taxes on cigarettes. He urged for a 26.6% FED increase on cigarettes in 2024, which can recover 19.8% of healthcare costs spent on smoking-related diseases. The government needs to immediately increase cigarette taxes in the federal budget 2024-25 to earn an additional 17 billion in revenue. Ahmad further discussed

that studies have shown that higher prices are cost barriers that lead to decreased tobacco consumption, especially among youth and low-income individuals. By making cigarettes more expensive, higher taxes can deter young people from initiating smoking. Moreover, the revenue generated from tobacco taxes can be used for improved public health initiatives and healthcare services, further contributing to efforts to discourage tobacco use and mitigate its harmful effects on society. Dr. Khalil Ahmad Dogar, Program Manager at SPARC, said youth are more price-sensitive than adults, so increases in cigarette prices can have a

significant impact on their decision-making regarding tobacco use. He stated that research has consistently shown that raising tobacco taxes is one of the most effective ways to reduce smoking rates. Lower smoking rates result in improved public health outcomes, including a reduced incidence of smoking-related diseases and premature deaths. Dr. Khalil emphasized that discouraging tobacco use among youth is critical for safeguarding public health, and increasing taxes on cigarettes is a proven strategy to achieve this goal while also generating revenue for public health programs.

## “Electoral Trend in Iran is Changing, says Iranian expert

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: “The current pattern of conservatism and reformism would change in Iran”, said Mr. Pooya Mirzaei. He was speaking at the event hosted by Iran Program of Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad. Mr. Mirzaei highlighted that the Middle East, West Asia and South Asia did not have any record of holding elections prior to the arrival of western culture. While the civilization of this region was much older than the western civilization, the concept of democracy actually prevailed in the west, he added. While analyzing the low voters' turnout in the elections, Mr. Mirzaei argued that lack of voters' participation didn't mean the opposition to the system. In fact, many countries in the west had much less voters' participation. He further alluded to the fact that opposition of Iran mainly resided outside of the country. When asked about the future of reformist front, Mr

Mirzaei reasoned that reformists were still a powerful minority within the parliament. He also mentioned that unlike the popular narrative, Supreme Leader seat in Iran was not an unelected post, instead, the leader was elected through the Assembly of Experts who contested elections every eight years through city councils. In this sense, the system of Iran was quite similar to the electoral systems of France and the US, Mr. Mirzaei debated. Mr. Fraz Naqvi, the head of Iran Program said that elections in Iran reflected the divisions within the conservative camp as four separate coalitions of conservative faction came at top. He further argued that the differences within the Iranian coalitions were not the manifestation of deep-rooted disagreements that could disrupt the state's system, instead they were reflective of Iran's vibrant electoral culture. While concluding, Mr. Naqvi predicted that these elections would prove crucial for the upcoming presidential elections in Iran in 2025.

## Korean envoy meets commissioner

*The people of the district are very hospitable, he added*

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Pakistan Mr. Park Kijun called on Commissioner Siwat Saeed at her office here on Friday. The commissioner extended a warm welcome to the ambassador and informed him about the divisional administrative structure, historical importance and the textile sector. She also provided details about the agriculture sector and the objective of establishing a Business Facilitation Center to provide required NOCs to the business community under one roof. They also agreed to further promote relations between two countries and talked to take advantage of numerous developments in agriculture sector, information technology, industry, trade and other sectors in addition to exchanging experiences of experts of both countries. The Commissioner thanked the Korean Ambassador for his visit to the district. The Korean Ambassador thanked the Commissioner for his excellent hospitality. He said that he was pleased to visit Faisalabad. The people of the district are very hospitable, he added.

## Weekly inflation falls slightly

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.09 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on March 28, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 323.20 points as compared to 323.50 points during the past week. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 29.41 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16=100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, decreased by 0.27 per cent and went down to 313.35 points from last week's 314.20 points. The SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517; Rs. 29,518-44,175 and above Rs. 44,175, decreased by 0.22 percent, 0.17 percent, 0.12 and 0.03 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 04 (7.84%) items increased, 18 (35.30%) items decreased and 29 (56.86%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included tomatoes (12.04%), wheat flour (3.80%), garlic (2.59%), LPG (2.42%), onions (1.74%), potatoes (1.07%), bananas (0.77%), pulse gram (0.57%) and sugar (0.49%). The items that recorded an increase in their prices included LPG (1.49%), chicken (4.92%), eggs (1.61%), shirting (0.56%) and rice Irri 6/9 (0.15%). On Year-on-Year basis, the commodities that witnessed decrease included cooking oil 5 litre (20.50%), bananas (20.20%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (17.87%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (17.72%), mustard oil (14.02%), diesel (2.47%), wheat flour (0.27%) and cigarettes (0.06%). The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices on year-on-year basis included gas charges for Q1 (570.00%), chillies powder (86.05%), onions (78.98%), sponges chappal (58.05%), gents sandal (53.37%), garlic (52.20%), gur (37.70%), chicken (37.57%), salt powder (33.29%), sugar (31.56%), energy saver (29.83%) and pulse mash (27.09%).—APP

## Women empowerment nucleus of US Mission efforts, says envoy

ISLAMABAD: US Consul General to Lahore Kristin Hawkins has said that women empowerment has been the nucleus of their efforts at the Consulate and women participation is encouraged through exchange programs, educational scholarships and internship programs. In an interview with APP in connection with Women's History Month here on Thursday, she said the U.S. Mission shares the belief that gender equity is essential to economic growth and development, democracy, and political stability in all societies. About the Women's History Month, Kristin Hawkins said the month of March, besides observing International Women's Day on March 8, was commemorated throughout the United States and other countries to celebrate the strengths, resilience and accomplishments of women across all sectors ranging from business, academia, sports and others. To a question, she said her efforts towards empowerment of women were not limited to Women's History Month only as women-centered initiatives occupy the whole calendar, adding that it is not only about celebrating women but making them independent, vocal, self-sufficient and leader. Charismatic Kristin Hawkins, passionate about women empowerment and cultural preservation in Punjab, said “during the past 20 years, the US Mission Pakistan has funded 35 cultural preservation projects worth \$8.4 million through the AFPC,” adding costing approximately one million dollars, 20 out of these projects are in Punjab and scores of young women have been involved in these projects to revive and restore the past glories of architectural wonders side by side their male counterparts. She said a US-funded internship program in conservation techniques for local youths to acquire marketable skills has provided opportunity to girls at the Lahore Fort and Wazir Khan Mosque, adding the program is intended to make the youth more resourceful. “Fulbright Scholarship, International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP), Student Exchange Programs and multiple High school scholarships are different opportunities offered to young girls to make their mark,” the diplomat said. Meena Arham, a conservationist and team lead at the Wazir Khan Mosque Restoration Project, told APP that she has been part of the Agha Khan Cultural Services in Pakistan (AKCSP) in Pakistan since 2014.—DNA

## Onic & Careem sign MoU to forge strategic alliance

ISLAMABAD: Onic, the new digital telco brand in Pakistan and Careem, the leading ride-hailing platform in Pakistan, are thrilled to announce the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to foster a strategic partnership to build a digital ecosystem for respective consumers in the country. The MoU was signed by Omer Bin Tariq, Country Head, Onic Pakistan, and Imran Saleem, General Manager Ride Hailing, Careem Pakistan, in the presence of Hatem Bamatraf, President and Group CEO, PTCL & Ufone 4G. The ceremony marks the beginning of a collaborative journey between Onic and Careem that aims to combine expertise of both the brands to deliver innovatively enhanced customer experiences. Speaking at the occasion, Hatem Bamatraf, President and Group CEO of PTCL & Ufone 4G, emphasized Onic's commitment to prioritizing the needs of the Pakistani people. He stated, “Onic is dedicated to a larger vision for our customers, positioning itself as the forefront digital telco brand with a challenger mindset. We aspire to redefine the current landscape in Pakistan.” Highlighting the significance of the collaboration with Careem, Hatem added, “Our partnership with Careem marks a pivotal moment in our journey towards leveraging technology for positive change. Together, we will enhance the digital sphere in Pakistan, offering customers an all-encompassing platform for their lifestyle requirements. Not only this, Onic is evolving into a holistic solution provider through its innovative app that will create convenience and ease for its customers.” Commenting on the partnership, Imran Saleem, General Manager Ride Hailing, Careem Pakistan, said, “We are extremely excited to join forces with Onic to drive innovation and shape the future of digital lifestyle within the country.—DNA

## Ethiopian embassy, PIPD to collaborate for Int'l seminar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Significant meeting took place at the Embassy of Ethiopia in Islamabad between Jemal Beker, the esteemed Ambassador of Ethiopia, and Arsalan Khattak, Executive Member of the Pakistan Institute for Peace and Development (PIPD). The meeting was marked by a constructive exchange of ideas aimed at fostering stronger ties between Ethiopia and Pakistan through cultural diplomacy initiatives. During the meeting, Ambassador Baker and Mr. Khattak engaged in fruitful discussions on the pivotal role of cultural diplomacy in enhancing people-to-people contacts and fostering mutual understanding between nations. Ambassador Baker, drawing from his expertise and passion for cultural di-



plomacy, emphasized the importance of leveraging cultural exchanges to strengthen the bonds between Ethiopia and Pakistan. Mr. Khattak commended Ambassador Baker's proactive approach towards his diplomatic mission and expressed admiration for his dedication to promoting bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Pakistan. The discussions

reflected a shared commitment to exploring innovative avenues for collaboration in the realm of cultural diplomacy. A noteworthy outcome of the meeting was the agreement between Ambassador Baker and Mr. Khattak to collaborate on an upcoming international conference themed “Unity in Diversity for National Cohesion.” Under this overarching theme,

a conference focusing on Cultural Diplomacy will be jointly organized by PIPD and Air University Islamabad. The Embassy of Ethiopia has pledged its support as a partner for this significant event, highlighting the mutual desire to harness the power of cultural diplomacy in fostering global harmony and cooperation. Speaking about the partnership, Ambassador Baker expressed his enthusiasm for contributing to the conference, citing his background in cultural diplomacy as a driving force behind his commitment to the initiative. Mr. Khattak echoed Ambassador Baker's sentiments, underscoring the importance of international cooperation in addressing shared challenges and promoting peace and stability.

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## Risk of global conflict

**D**O ironclad defensive alliances serve as a deterrent to the escalation of conflicts? Or do they set up a domino effect that can plunge all allies into the middle of an all-out war? This question is being raised as the war in Ukraine continues to rage and possible scenarios are suggested in which it might expand to other countries. With Sweden officially joining NATO this month, the discussions refer mainly to Article 5 of the alliance's treaty. This states that if one NATO ally is the victim of an armed attack, it will be considered an attack against all members and they will take whatever actions are necessary to assist the ally under assault. The reality is that the true deterrent here is, as it has been many other times throughout history, the overwhelming superiority of a military force, in this case that of the US, that lends substance to proposition of a defensive alliance. If we turn to the history books and look at the First World War, for example, we can see that when one side perceives its enemies to be of matching or weaker power, defense alliances can indeed be the domino that, once toppled, plunges an entire region, or the world, into war. In 1914, the primary alliances in place were the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance. The Triple Entente comprised France, Russia and the UK. It was formed to counterbalance the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, the aim of which was to provide mutual defense and cooperation. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary on June 28, 1914, by a young Serbian nationalist in the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo, was the trigger for the start of the First World War but the dominoes required for the escalation of the conflict had already been set in place by these alliances, with geopolitical differences and the effects of domestic issues in various nations pushing them toward a confrontation. In short, we are at risk of seeing the stability the world has known since the end of the Second World War come to an end. As the debates in the US continue about the country's role in a changing world, we need to acknowledge that this role of protector has encouraged unilateral decision-making in Washington when it comes to strategic geopolitical issues. This is why it is important for the US to develop better regional partnerships in Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia and Asia with what analysts like to describe as "middle powers." I prefer the term "supra-regional powers." This transition will not be an easy one because of the differences between the US and its allies in terms of sheer military power. But the right degree of balance between the US and its partners is required to help find solutions that can avoid conflicts and war. Moreover, there is a need for more stable and consistent US interactions that strike a balance between the extremes of unilateral, over-muscular decision-making, and yielding to regional bullies, which encourages their bad behavior. Consistent and true engagement by the US with its partners will provide support through deterrence and help keep regional bad actors under control. This in turn will require regional powers to make a strong commitment to shouldering more of the burden of their own security and defense. This is the only true deterrent.



## Sanctions and arms embargo on Israel

**H**UMAN Rights Watch (HRW) recently issued a call for the global community and its stakeholders to implement sanctions on "Israel" for a fundamental reason: its absolute failure to adhere to the International Court of Justice (ICJ)'s orders to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza. For the settler-run regime, punitive sanctions and an arms embargo are a bare minimum, given the sheer gravity of war crimes, collective punishment imperatives, and genocidal actions committed for months. "Israel's" onslaught has killed at least 31,700 Palestinians in Gaza and displaced some two million residents since October 7. Sustained war-mongering within "Israel's" so-called "war cabinet" and efforts to step-up the genocide in Rafah make political agreements on all sanctions a firm necessity. "States must impose sanctions and an arms embargo on Israel, to compel it to comply with the order issued by the International Court of Justice," wrote the organization in a post on X. From open assassinations to genocide by starvation, "Israel's" manufactured devastation in Gaza knows no bounds. Western states identify with the highest degree of humiliation and hypocrisy for providing scores of weapons to a bloodthirsty cluster of Israeli war leaders. Their open support effectively ensures a carte blanche for "Israel" to sidestep ICJ's anti-genocide order, a move that HRW's Palestine chief makes clear has put Gaza's population under even more "peril than before the World Court's binding order." Sanctions on arms, finance and critical resource access are long overdue for "Israel", which spares no effort in micromanaging its genocide. That includes oppression through the theft of civilian organs, theft of farmers' lands and deliberate obstruction of incoming aid to prevent any meaningful international humanitarian response from gathering steam. For long, "Israel" has touted falsehoods about facilitating life-saving aid access into Gaza and has lobbied to deflect critical scrutiny. It insists on projecting its dehumanization of Palestinians as a new normal. But damning reporting from Refugees International has already driven that propaganda to the ground, confirming that the Israeli regime has used aid obstruction as an intentional design to keep Gazans in the throes of mass starvation. Thus, Israeli designs to alter the facts on the ground, including efforts to intensify the mass suffering of children, are a deliberate attempt to keep such evidence out of reach and skirt the consequences of ethnic cleansing. The regime deserves to be sanctioned for triggering a five-digit casualty toll of innocent children in Gaza, and the cold-blooded injuries sustained by legions of others in the midst of the genocide. "Thousands more [children] have been injured or we can't even determine where they are. They may be stuck under rubble ... We haven't seen that rate of death among children in almost any other conflict in the world," United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Catherine Russell recently said on air. "Israel's" push to create alternative facts, projections, and realities on Gaza also has other roots. It is supported by a political press that projects the occupation as relieved of any wrongdoing.

## "The indomitable spirit of China-Pakistan cooperation"

Qamar Bashir



Expressing China's staunch opposition to terrorism in all its forms, the spokesperson reiterated firm support for Pakistan in its fight against terrorism. Promising even stronger commitment to safeguard the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects, and institutions in Pakistan, the statement delivered a resounding message to the terrorists and their backers. This robust and unequivocal response undoubtedly dealt a significant blow to the terrorists and their network of masterminds, handlers, financiers, abettors, and facilitators

**T**HE tragic incident that deeply shook the core of the Pakistani nation was the malicious, deceitful, and heartless attack on our Chinese brothers. These selfless individuals left behind their homeland, families, and loved ones to contribute to the construction of vital energy, transport, and communication infrastructure in remote areas of our country, far from the bustling urban centers. They dedicated their days, weeks, and years to this noble cause, with the sole aim of providing a conducive environment for all Pakistanis to enjoy reliable electricity, safe transportation on well-constructed roads, highways, and motorways, and access to efficient public transport systems such as Metro bus services, green buses, and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The attack on them not only robbed us of invaluable lives but also struck at the heart of our collective aspirations for progress and development. The enemy, driven by ulterior motives, callously disregarded the longstanding tradition of Pakistani hospitality, which dictates that even the fiercest adversary's guests should be protected and cared for. The ruthless and heartless terrorists, with their stone-eyed resolve, cowardly attacked innocent, unarmed Chinese civilians around 1 p.m. on March 26 near Bisham, resulting in the martyrdom of five Chinese nationals and one Pakistani working on the Dasu Hydropower Project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Their sole aim was to strike at the heart of our nation by targeting our Chinese friends, who selflessly offer their assistance to our country without seeking anything in return. The profound bonds of friendship and brotherhood with our Chinese allies are treasured and esteemed deeply. Their unwavering support and genuine gestures of affection resonate profoundly within our hearts. The enemy, recognizing the significance of our relationship, maliciously targeted our Chinese friends, knowing that such an act would evoke intense pain, sorrow, and outrage across every corner of Pakistan. This collective anguish transcends geographical, social, and governmental boundaries, profoundly impacting every Pakistani who holds our Chinese brothers and sisters close to their hearts. In times of adversity, our Chinese counterparts have consistently extended their helping hands to us, demonstrating unwavering support and solidarity without any expectation of reciprocity. They epitomize true family members, standing by us through thick and thin. The cowardly attack not only inflicted physical harm but also inflicted a deep wound on the collective spirit of our nation, serving as a stark reminder of the invaluable bond we share with our Chinese brethren. What the enemy failed to comprehend is that the bond between the Chinese and Pakistanis transcends mere material considerations—it is a connection of blood and soul. The people of both nations are intertwined as one body

and one soul. When any part of this body is harmed, the entire entity feels the pain. However, rather than driving a wedge between us, cowardly attacks only serve to strengthen our resolve and deepen our unity. In the face of such heinous and reprehensible acts, the consequences could have been dire if they had targeted nationals of any other country. There may have been swift actions such as the withdrawal of nationals from Pakistan, issuance of travel advisories, halting of ongoing projects, and advisories to cease business activities with Pakistan. Threatening statements may have been issued, placing blame on Pakistan and its security forces for failing to protect their citizens and workers within the country. The statement issued by the articulate spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry stood in stark contrast to what might have been expected from any other nation under similar circumstances. Strongly condemning the terrorist attack, the spokesperson reaffirmed the unwavering bond between China and Pakistan, describing them as "all-weather strategic cooperative partners" and "iron-clad brothers." Furthermore, the spokesperson emphasized the critical role of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistan's socio-economic development, asserting that no attempt to undermine this cooperation would succeed. Expressing China's staunch opposition to terrorism in all its forms, the spokesperson reiterated firm support for Pakistan in its fight against terrorism. Promising even stronger commitment to safeguard the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects, and institutions in Pakistan, the statement delivered a resounding message to the terrorists and their backers. This robust and unequivocal response undoubtedly dealt a significant blow to the terrorists and their network of masterminds, handlers, financiers, abettors, and facilitators. It must have left them feeling frustrated and dejected, as their sinister aims and objectives were thwarted. The statement served as a powerful deterrent, rendering their strategy, planning, financial resources, and human assets futile in the face of unwavering solidarity between China and Pakistan. The heartless terrorists are undoubtedly well aware of the formidable prowess, professional competence, and the far-reaching effectiveness of the Pakistani armed forces and security forces. Once a target is set, they execute their operations with meticulous planning and finesse. Retribution for such cowardly acts will not be delayed. These terrorists are also cognizant of the history of the Pakistani military, which has a track record of delivering swift and decisive responses. From repelling Indian aggression to defending the nation's sovereignty against incursions from Iran and Afghanistan, the Pakistani armed forces have demonstrated their strength and resolve time and again. Furthermore, the

same military force stood resilient against the might of the USSR during its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Not only did Pakistan resist the invasion, but it also played a pivotal role in ultimately defeating and dismantling the USSR, freeing numerous nations from its dominance in the process. It's only a matter of time before the long arm of our security forces tracks down the perpetrators of this heinous and cowardly attack whose target wasn't an equal adversary but innocent, unarmed civilians. This wasn't an act of bravery or gallantry, but one of cowardice and cunning. Rest assured, such actions will not go unpunished, regardless of the cost. The highest echelons of Pakistani leadership, both civilian and armed forces deeply aggrieved, hurt and anguished by these cowardly attacks has also set in place an elaborate mechanism to rootout terrorism once for all. This includes full activation of the fourteen-point National Action Plan which unanimously conceived after the APS Peshawar incident played a pivotal role in defeating terrorism on our soil. Furthermore, tighter and foolproof border control measures will be enforced to halt the cross-border movement of terrorists. Efforts to push out illegal aliens will be intensified to shrink the space for abettors and facilitators of terrorism. Both foreign and local facilitators and abettors will be held accountable and brought to justice. Moreover, all safe havens and sanctuaries of terrorists will be identified and neutralized. Equally aggressive actions are likely to be initiated on the diplomatic front to garner international support in countering terrorism and addressing its root causes. Diplomatically, Pakistan will engage in active diplomacy by convening multilateral forums such as the United Nations and regional organizations to advocate for collective action against terrorism. Politically, Pakistan is working to address the root causes of terrorism by promoting socio-economic development, education, and by implementing policies aimed at reducing poverty, inequality, and marginalization, which are often exploited by extremist groups to recruit followers. Furthermore, Pakistan actively counters extremist narratives and propaganda through public diplomacy campaigns and religious outreach programs by challenging extremist ideologies through education and media initiatives. Despite the cowardly act of terrorism targeting our esteemed Chinese brothers and sisters, and irrespective of the outcomes of kinetic and diplomatic counter-terrorism efforts, the enduring friendship between China and Pakistan, along with the profound bond of love and affection between the Chinese and Pakistani people, will only grow stronger with each passing day.

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

## Alarming rise of kidnapping in the Philippines

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Manila has become the number one hotspot worldwide for online gaming, in front of Malta, the Isle of Man and Curacao, according to David Lee, a lawyer at Taiwanese firm Lin & Partners who specializes in gaming laws. "The Philippines pioneered online casinos in the early 2000s, when Cagayan, a province to the north of the country, started awarding licenses to a handful of operators," explains Ben Lee, the founder of GamiX

**C**HINESE women are reportedly being targeted in a new wave of gambling-related kidnappings in the Philippines, alarming Beijing's ambassadors in Manila and the local Filipino Chinese community. The Philippine Daily Inquirer reported that the Chinese Embassy has also investigated and verified specific cases to protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens in the country. The victims are "mostly Chinese women, and recently Cambodian and Vietnamese," said Teresita Ang-See, founding president of the Movement for the Restoration of Peace and Order (MRPO). Several organized crime syndicates focusing exclusively on kidnap for ransoms operate in and around the National Capital Region. Some criminal groups target workers or customers of POGO companies, Chinese nationals, East and South Asian expatriates, short-term travelers, and members of the Chinese-Filipino business community and their families. Criminal abductions of Westerners occur less frequently, though the threat remains. Most victims are rescued by authorities or released unharmed relatively quickly after the abductors receive a ransom payment. In the past three years, the Philippines has emerged as a major hub for online gaming, according to Filipino officials, attracting more than 100,000 Chinese nationals who work in virtual casinos catering to players back in China where gambling is illegal. The online casinos generate tax revenue and desperately needed jobs in Manila's crowded downtown area. But at the same time, they've pushed up rents and created new challenges for the Philippine National Police. Online gaming platforms allow players to gamble remotely. They sign up, choose a game and it is played over a live stream in another jurisdiction. Manila has become the number one hotspot worldwide for online gaming, in front of Malta, the Isle of Man and Curacao, according to David Lee, a lawyer at Taiwanese firm Lin & Partners who specializes in gaming laws. "The Philippines pioneered online casinos in the early 2000s, when Cagayan, a province to the north of the country, started awarding licenses to a handful of operators," explains Ben Lee, the founder of GamiX, a Macao-based consultancy firm focused on the gaming industry in Asia. "But they really took off in 2016, when President Rodrigo Duterte came into office." Duterte handed the right to issue offshore gambling licenses to the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR), a government entity that operates casinos and regulates the industry. "It began to aggressively develop the industry by awarding dozens of

licenses," said lawyer David Lee. Chinese businessmen were quick to seize the opportunity and the number of POGOs mushroomed. Last November, Manila expelled hundreds of Chinese nationals who had been arrested in a series of raids against online gaming operations and other cyber-crimes in Palawan province, for allegedly working illegally in the country, according to CNN Philippines. Many Chinese nationals working in the Philippine casino industry are attracted by the promise of jobs not available at home, experts say. "These are mostly young people, in their 20s, with little job prospects in China," said Ben Lee. Some are lured to the Philippines with the promise of high-paying jobs in prestigious tech companies, but upon arrival they discover they will be working for an online gambling platform and paid a fraction of what they were promised, he added. "The workers frequently have their passports confiscated, are crammed 10 to a room meant for three to four people and have to work 12-hour shifts, with only one day off per month," said Pitlo. On the job, they are expected to approach prospective players in social media chat groups and convince them to give online gaming a try, according to Lee. Once players are hooked, they are encouraged to wager increasing amounts of money, he added. POGOs cater to foreign customers and thus employ foreign nationals as customer service representatives to "effectively invite players and attend to their needs and concerns," the PAGCOR spokeswoman said. Most of these foreigners are Chinese nationals, she said. "But we can't categorically say they are based in China or are targeting players in China," she added. "They might be catering to Mandarin speaking people in other countries. "In their free time, their Chinese employees often gamble at the casinos and end up in debt," explained Elmer Cereno, a spokesman for the Philippine National Police-Anti Kidnapping Group. "They are then approached by loan sharks who offer to lend them money. "When they fail to pay it back, the loan sharks kidnap them and try to get ransom from their relatives back home, he said. On October 2019, police rescued two Chinese POGO workers, whose families had been asked to pay ransoms ranging between 68,000 yuan and 80,000 yuan (about \$9,800 to \$11,500) for their release, according to a summary of the case seen by CNN. They had been abducted from a hotel six days earlier and held by five Chinese nationals in an office building in Taguig, a suburb south of Manila. Between January 2017 and October 2019, Philippine police

dealt with 65 cases of kidnap-for-ransom involving POGO workers or casino customers, leading to the arrests of 132 people, according to an official tally provided to CNN by the Philippines police. "Almost all the victims and perpetrators were Chinese nationals," said Cereno. Manila has its own concerns about the industry, with top officials suggesting that the influx of Chinese workers could turn to spying, posing a risk to national security. "You would also start getting worried when a whole building, a condominium tower is occupied by only one nationality where you might not be able to guard their activities," Philippine National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon, Jr. said in July 2019. The recent kidnapping cases led by Chinese are getting worse and worse! A Chinese national who is working in Philippine just released a guess how much to kidnap a Filipino Chinese to remind everyone to be wary of being used as a "walking peso"; Unexpectedly, because of the incentive of the high kidnapping reward, these scam without convergence, but intensified, is bound!. The worst areas of kidnapping are now concentrated in Makati and Pasay, as these two places have a large number of gaming parks and homes, such as 1322, TechZone, and some bars popular with Chinese people. As long as you dare to step out of your house, the chance of being randomly kidnapped in the street is very high! And this rampant army of kidnappers is said to be from Cambodia up to a thousand people! Some abductees said they were scared to escape: "On July 22, I am Angelina, angel city is in the van slammed to a car, get in the car after I had a meal with blindfold my eyes, with handcuffs handcuff me, after 15 minutes I was taken to a village, in after they took me 80000 pesos, and my We Chat borrow money from friends and relatives, with my pay treasure to loans, After two days of signed, they persecute me and forced me to record video to their borrowing 1 million yuan for commercial turnover, he ask my family to 1 million yuan, with a gun on my head, my family have got 560000 yuan, the last is powerless, they open video beat me in front of my family, If you don't pay off a million dollars, 100,000 for one hand." Here has been more than one victim broke the news, kidnappers from the northeast, Hunan, we do not say that the region is black, but vigilance is better! Now in the Philippines, no Chinese can be trusted. Chinese Embassy in Manila urged Philippine agencies to strengthen law enforcement. It also reminded Chinese citizens to "stay away from immoral activities" and avoid online gambling and telecom fraud.

## Briefs

## US to stand with Pakistan in tackling...

FROM PAGE 01 security, economic growth, and access to education for all." "Through our US-Pakistan "Green Alliance" framework, we will also continue to strengthen our climate resilience, support sustainable agriculture and water management, and assist with Pakistan's recovery from the devastating floods in 2022," he added. President Biden stated the United States remains committed to working with Pakistan to protect human rights and promote progress. Together, we will continue to forge a strong partnership between our nations, and close bond between our people, he concluded. After the formation of the new government led by PM Shehbaz, both countries came closer after an improvement in ties as an increase was witnessed in bilateral engagements.

## Pakistan, Kabul report progress...

FROM PAGE 01 Agha visited Afghanistan from the 24th to the 27th to discuss bilateral and transit trade matters with Afghanistan's Commerce Minister, Nooruddin Azizi. The discussions encompassed topics such as the bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement, implementation of Temporary Admission Document (TAD) for trade vehicle drivers, multimodal air transit, and addressing issues related to transit trade. "We are encouraged by the progress made on these issues and remain committed to promoting trade and people-to-people ties with Afghanistan," said Mumtaz Zahra Baloch during a weekly briefing for reporters. The official statement from the Afghan government was more explicit, noting that both sides agreed on several matters while emphasizing the need to separate trade from political issues.

## Culprits of Bisham attack to...

FROM PAGE 01 Approximately 991 Chinese engineers were working on both projects, while the local staff has been told to stay at home till further instructions, an official working on the project confirmed to the publication. Similarly, GM Diemer-Bhasha Dam (DBD) Nazakat Hussain also confirmed that the Chinese company had suspended work on the dam. He said around 500 Chinese nationals were engaged in DBD but the FWO staff continues to work. Around 6,000 locals are busy in dam construction. He hoped that the situation would normalise in a few days, leading to the return of Chinese employees. The Diemer-Bhasha Dam would produce 4,800 MW of electricity through hydropower generation. However, the GM of Mohmand Dam Asim Rauf told media that 250 Chinese continue to work on the Mohmand Dam and they have not stopped work.

## Judges issue: PTI devises...

FROM PAGE 01 commission tasked to probe the judges' letter and demanded a commission comprising of sitting judges to conduct open and transparent investigation into the matter. He said that judicial conference should also be summoned and all judges including the six who faced coercions and intimidations should be invited and they should be listened. Raouf made it clear that the country cannot go forward and make progress until put a stop on the institutional interference, as PTI's people were kidnapped and tortured and their homes were destroyed. Raouf Hasan announced that PTI would hold protest across the country for independence of judiciary and reclaiming stolen mandate on daily basis especially in Islamabad. PTI CIS went on to say that PTI leaders and workers would tell the nation their stories of detentions and hardship they faced during incarceration.

## Babar Azam's return as Pakistan captain imminent

Babar will replace Shaheen in the role ahead of New Zealand series

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Babar Azam is set to return as Pakistan captain ahead of the upcoming T20I series against New Zealand on home soil, according to sources. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has finally taken the decision to reappoint Azam, who had stepped down as captain from all formats in November last year. The decision to bring back Azam as captain was taken after recommendation from the selection committee. Meanwhile, Shaheen was thinking about stepping down as T20I captain after the development. However, sources close to the pacer have advised him against it since appointing captain is the prerogative of the cricket board and whatever the PCB decides he should accept it. It must be noted that Shaheen replaced Azam as skipper in T20I cricket and Shan Masood in Tests last year. The development comes after the PCB said that it will take the decision on Shaheen's future as the captain of the T20I side after the ongoing fitness camp in Kakul, which will conclude on April 8. While talking at a presser after the announcement of the selection committee on March 24, PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi didn't talk



much on Shaheen's future as captain. "Even I don't know who the captain will be," Naqvi said. "Whether Shaheen continues or a new captain comes in will be determined after the fitness camp [starting on Monday]. "There are a number of technical factors we will consider, the details of which I do not want to go into. We want a long-term solution, whether it's Shaheen or a new man. And then we intend to stick by that man, instead of just

changing a captain just because you lose a match or captain," he added. Azam stepped down as the skipper of the national side from all formats, ending his years-long stint in the leading position, in November following a humiliating World Cup campaign. The former skipper was under fire for several months after Pakistan failed to perform in the Asia Cup and continued the same momentum into the World Cup – where they crashed out before reaching the semis. Azam was previously appointed white-ball captain in 2019 and as Test skipper in 2020, but the Green Shirts have not won any ICC or Asia Cup titles under his leadership. Gary Kirsten, Jason Gillespie likely to take role as coaches Meanwhile, the cricket body has decided to appoint separate coaches for white-ball and red-ball cricket, said the sources, adding that the matter regarding their appointment has entered final stages. Sources said that South African coach Gary Kirsten is expected to be appointed for white-ball cricket and Australian coach Jason Gillespie for red-ball. Talks with both coaches on various issues including sports staff and domestic coaches are ongoing, said the sources. They added that Gillespie may take over the responsibilities during Kirsten's other commitments.

## Collins dominates to set up Miami final with Rybakina

American beats Russian 6-3, 6-2 to book her first ever 1000 series final in Miami

MIAMI: Danielle Collins, in her final year on the WTA Tour before retirement, booked her first ever 1000 series final in Miami with a dominant 6-3, 6-2 victory over Ekaterina Alexandrova. The 30-year-old Collins, will face fourth-ranked Elena Rybakina in Saturday's final. The Kazakhstan player was pushed all the way by veteran Victoria Azarenka before coming out with a 6-4, 0-6, 7-6 (7/2) victory. Collins denied this week that her great run to the last four was a result of her playing with freedom after announcing her intention to retire at the end of this year. But once again the American looked relaxed and in control as she took full charge of the contest against Russia's Alexandrova, who had beaten world number one Iga Swiatek in the fourth round before downing fifth-seed Jessica Pegula of the United States. "It's even more special



coming in my home state," said Collins, who hails from St. Petersburg near Tampa. "I've had a couple of good years here, but this is definitely the most memorable," she added. Alexandrova broke early in the first set but Collins swiftly got the contest back on serve before breaking again to go 4-2 up and take the set. The American then broke on Alexandrova's first service game in the second and ran away with the set to complete a 74 minute victory. "I've followed all of her matches this tournament, it was fun watching her because we have a very similar game style. It is tricky when it is like that," said Collins. "That forced me to concentrate harder, react faster and really forced me to play up at my highest level," she said. The 24-year-old Rybakina returns to the Miami final for the second straight year after losing to Czech Petra Kvitova in 2023. Her form – and the absence of any of the top three in the world – suggests she will be the strong favorite against Collins. So far this year Rybakina has won titles in Brisbane, Abu Dhabi and her first WTA 1000 final of the year in Doha. Her serve looked too much for Azarenka in the first set but then faded badly in the second before breaking to go 3-2 up in the third. But the 34-year-old Azarenka, a three-time winner at Miami, showed all her dogged spirit as she broke back to make it 5-5 and keep alive her hopes of an unlikely run to the final. But in the tie-break, Rybakina found her serve in spectacular fashion, leaving Azarenka helpless with a fearsome ace to go 30 up. The outcome never looked in doubt from that point on but 2022 Wimbledon champion Rybakina, who withdrew from her Indian Wells title defense this month because of illness, said she had been in trouble physically in the second set. "There was a pause where I stayed on the court and I think I should have maybe left (for) a bit because it was really humid and tough conditions, the energy just went down and Vika came back very aggressively. "After three games when I lost so easily it was very difficult to regroup so I knew there would be a third set and I was just trying to prepare for it," she added. Rybakina said she was able to get in the zone for the tie-break. "I switched off the mind a bit for the tie-break and I just went for it," she said. – Agencies

## Bangladesh peg hopes on Shakib return for Test lift

They had been performing well in the last few matches. I have no doubt that they will definitely perform in this match

CHITTAGONG: Bangladesh were counting on the return of veteran all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan for a much-needed energy lift ahead of the second and final Test against Sri Lanka, standing coach Nic Pothas said Friday. Sri Lanka thrashed Bangladesh by 328 runs in the first match of the series, with the hosts failing to post 200 in either innings. Shakib is returning to the Test squad for the Chittagong match starting Saturday after more than a year's absence, and after being elected to the Bangladesh parliament in January. "I think any team that has Shakib in it is very fortunate. We welcome him back," Pothas told reporters. "It is always great to have him in the change room. His energy is very infectious," he said. "He has a lot of experience for the guys to learn from, and whenever Shakib is back, he's a giver. So we really enjoy having him around the group." Bangladesh coach to miss second Sri Lanka Test Pothas also defended Bangladesh's under-fire batsmen, saying the team was in the middle of a generational change. "We have a very young and inexperienced group. There was a very elite group before this. Now we have to build," he said. "The only thing that we request is that people be patient. These are very good young players, but they are young, and they're playing against an experienced team, and it will take time." Sri Lanka captain Dhananjaya de Silva said he expected his side's top order batters to come good in Chittagong after failing to shine in the first Test. "They had been performing well in the last few matches. I have no doubt that they will definitely perform in this match," he told reporters. Sri Lanka were untroubled in Sylhet despite losing Nishan Madushka for two and 10. De Silva and fellow middle-order batsman Kamindu Mendis scored a century in each innings of the game, becoming only the third pair from the same country to do so in a Test. Brothers Greg and Ian Chappell of Australia and Pakistan's Misbah-ul-Haq and Azhar Ali were the other two duos to make the feat. – Agencies

## KP govt to challenge PHC ruling in SC

FROM PAGE 01

The provincial law minister said that the government could also have approached the court over the expected delay in the Upper House poll, however, the cabinet will make a final decision. Pointing towards Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) which merged with Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) after the February nationwide polls, Alam termed it "injustice" to ignore a political party with highest number of seats during the allocation of reserved seats. He alleged that injustice was done with the Imran-founded party on reserved seats issue just like unjust moves of stripping the PTI of its election symbol. Yesterday, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) signalled to postpone Senate election – which is scheduled to be held on April 2 – in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa amid ongoing issue regarding oath-taking of the lawmakers on reserved seats in the province. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) issued the seven-page verdict on application regarding issuance of orders for administering of oaths to the lawmakers and suspension of the Senate poll till the administration of oaths to the extent of KP province.

## Military, political top brass...

FROM PAGE 01

detail on steps taken against the criminal mafias, smuggling, hoarding, money laundering, power theft and repatriation of illegal foreigners etc. The participants acknowledged the importance of such actions and their positive impact on the economy and well-being of the people of Pakistan. The meeting showed firm resolve to take action against smugglers, hoarders and market manipulators, who have impacted the economic trajectory and to provide immediate relief to common citizens. The meeting gave approval of agreements among federal and provincial governments on anti-power theft policy, restructuring of power distribution companies on modern lines, installation of smart meters for full eradication of power theft and ordered strict action against the corrupt officers. The army chief assured unwavering resolve of Pakistan Army to support government's initiatives aimed at economic recovery of the country. PM Shehbaz said it was very important to understand the real challenges of the country and then immediately fix them to revive and stabilise the economy.

## FM Ishaq Dar replaces finance...

FROM PAGE 01

with the foreign minister. President Asif Ali Zardari, on the advice of PM Shehbaz, constituted the eight-member CCI under Article 153 of the Constitution, said a notification. The CCI is being headed by PM Shehbaz and all four chief ministers are among the council's members. The notification read that Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, and Saffron Minister Amir Muqam are also included in the CCI. The CCI is the largest decision-making forum of the country which decides all those matters, including distribution of natural resources, upon which there is a disagreement between the centre and provinces. This is not the first instance that PM Shehbaz has snubbed the finance minister and given a task to Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. Last week, PM Shehbaz constituted six separate cabinet committees on economic coordination, energy, Chinese investment projects, privatisation, State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and disposal of legislative cases. In his decision, the PM decided to keep the ECC with himself while he tasked Foreign Minister Dar to head the Cabinet Committee on Privatisation. Traditionally these committees have been headed by the finance minister. However, a day after the announcement and receiving backlash PM Shehbaz reshuffled the ECC and tasked Finance Minister Aurangzeb as head of the key economic body.

## No timescale for Murray's return after injury

PARIS: Andy Murray has pulled out of events in Monte Carlo and Munich next month with no timeline set for the three-time Grand Slam champion's return to court after tearing ankle ligaments at the Miami Open. Murray said earlier this year he did not plan to "play much past this summer" after slipping down the world rankings due to fitness problems and a struggle to recapture his best form. A two-time Wimbledon champion, Murray was preparing for a farewell appearance at the All England Club and hopes to take part in one more Olympic Games in Paris in July. However, with just over three months until Wimbledon, Murray faces a race against time to be fit. The Scot said he had suffered a full rupture of his anterior talofibular ligament and a near full-thickness rupture of his calcaneofibular ligament in a third-round defeat in Miami to Tomas Machac on Sunday. "Following consultation with his team and medical experts, Andy Murray has taken the decision to miss the Rolex Monte Carlo Masters and BMW Open Munich," said a statement from Murray's management team on Friday. "At this stage, it is still not clear how long Andy will be out of action, and he is continuing to review options with his medical team. "Obviously this is very disappointing news for Andy and he has reiterated his desire to get back on court as soon as possible." – Agencies

## Mbappe faces Marseille for final PSG showdown

LONDON: Kylian Mbappe is set to sample the fiercest rivalry in French football for the final time before his expected departure at the end of the season as Paris Saint-Germain make the trip to Marseille on Sunday. There is no love lost between the two biggest clubs in France, even if Marseille have struggled to compete with PSG for honours since the Qatari takeover of the capital side over a decade ago. The Parisians come into this game with a huge 12-point lead at the top of the table from nearest challengers Brest with just eight matches remaining, meaning Mbappe is surely certain to win a sixth title in seven seasons with the club. Marseille, in contrast, are seventh, three points outside the European places despite a recent revival under new coach Jean-Louis Gasset, a former PSG assistant boss. Kylian Mbappe has already told PSG that he intends to leave at the end of the current campaign when his contract expires, with Real Madrid his expected next destination. That means he is unlikely to sample the heated atmosphere of the 67,000-capacity Velodrome again any time soon after this Sunday. This will be his second visit there this week after he turned out for France at the same venue in their 3-2 friendly win over Chile on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old's status as national team captain did not prevent him from being whistled by sections of the crowd in the Mediterranean city, who were unable to forget his connection to PSG for the evening. "Honestly I would understand if I were jeered," he said said before the France game. "I am a PSG player. If I am whistled, that's life. I wouldn't take it personally." "It shouldn't happen," complained France coach Didier Deschamps, himself a former Marseille captain. He admitted hearing the jeers for Mbappe was "disappointing". Follow us on our Official WhatsApp channel. Mbappe recaptured his best form for PSG just before the international break after a run of games in which he lost his status as an undisputed starter. A hat-trick in a 6-2 win at Montpellier two weeks ago took him to 38 goals in 37 appearances for PSG this season. Luis Enrique's side appears to be finding their best form at the right time and are undefeated in 24 matches since early November. This game begins a vital few weeks in which they will also host Rennes in the French Cup semi-finals and face Barcelona in the Champions League quarter-finals. – Agencies

## Army, Wapda, Navy triumph in Ramadan basketball

Pakistan Army, Lycans A, Wapda and Navy registered big wins on the first day pool round matches All Pakistan 3x3 Ramadan Cup Basketball Tournament

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Army, Lycans A, Wapda and Navy registered big wins on the first day pool round matches in the Women's and Departmental categories of All Pakistan 3x3 Ramadan Cup Basketball Tournament here at outdoor basketball courts of Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad organized by Federal Basketball Association (FBBA). According to organizing secretary of the tournament Ouj E Zahoor, large numbers of basketball teams are participating in the four-day event played under floodlights with the support of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB). In Women's category Pakistan Army with a brilliant game de-



feated AK White by 16-3 points. Army's Aamina Mohsin scored 6 and Aiman Riaz scored four points. In the second match, Lycans A won by 11-2 points against Lycans Juniors with the help of Farhana Naz's five points and Farha Mushtaq's three points, while in the third match, Lycans B defeated AK Purple by 6-2 points. In the departmental category Wapda (A) beat Army (C) team by 19-16 points with the help of Zain ul Hassan who scored 15 points for the winning side. In second match Navy Beat Police (B) by 18-2 points in one sided match Navy's Zia ul Rehman scored 8 and Usman Khalid scored 6 points in the match while Wapda (C) won against Police by 21-13 points, thanks to Aalijah and Sajid Ali who scored 10, 10 points in the match. Wapda (A) thrashed Army (B) by 21-11 and Wapda (C) beat Police (A) by 21-13 points respectively.

## Briefs

## Ukraine urges India to rethink 'Soviet legacy' of Russia ties

NEW DELHI : Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba has urged India to stand by Kyiv, saying the South Asian nation's close ties with Russia are based on a Soviet legacy that is evaporating, the media reported on Friday.

India has traditionally had close economic and defence ties with Moscow and refrained from criticising Russia over its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, instead increasing purchases of Russian oil to a record.

Kuleba, who began a two-day visit on Thursday looking to advance Kyiv's vision of the path to peace in Ukraine and strengthen ties with India, said it had much to gain from expanding trade and technology ties with his country.

"We are interested in importing some of the heavy machinery items that India is producing," he said, as Ukraine looks to restore trade with India, particularly of farm products such as sunflower oil and other Indian goods. He offered Indian companies a role in postwar reconstruction.

"The co-operation between India and Russia is largely based on the Soviet legacy," he added. "But this is not the legacy that will be kept for centuries; it is a legacy that is evaporating." Ukraine foreign minister visits India to build support for peace blueprint—DNA

## Japan to resume funding of UNRWA

TOKYO: Japan is preparing to resume funding to the UN's crisis-hit Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA), which coordinates nearly all aid to Gaza, the government said. Once the sixth-largest contributor to the agency, Japan joined more than a dozen countries in pausing funding after Israel claimed that 12 of UNRWA's 13,000 Gaza employees were involved in the deadly October 7 Hamas attack. Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa met UNRWA chief Philippe Lazarini in Tokyo on Thursday to discuss measures taken by the agency to strengthen governance and transparency. "Japan and the UNRWA confirmed that they will advance final coordination about necessary efforts to resume Japan's contribution," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Japanese media reports said the resumption of funding, which was suspended in January, was expected to come in the first half of April. —APP

## Saudi e-commerce soars: \$3.76bn Mada card sales

RIYADH: Saudi e-commerce sales using Mada cards reached SR14.11 billion (\$3.76 billion) in February — an annual increase of 25 percent, the Kingdom's central bank has revealed. This figure includes transactions through online shopping, in-app purchases and e-wallets, and excludes transactions by Visa, MasterCard and other credit cards. The number of e-commerce transactions also increased by 44 percent on a year-on-year basis to reach more than 84 million in February. The shift in consumer behavior post-COVID-19, supported by regulatory reforms, robust internet infrastructure, and the continuous advancement of sophisticated e-commerce businesses, has been key drivers of the shift away from cash. In the past three years, online sales in Saudi Arabia surged by almost 60 percent across various categories, with significant growth seen in media products, apparel, and footwear segments, according to the American International Trade Administration in a January commercial guide. Additionally, the average spend per e-commerce user in the Kingdom rose by over 50 percent.—Agencies



KARACHI : Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Inaugurating the gong ceremony during his visit Karachi Stock Exchange (PSX).—DNA

## New era of war

## Polish PM Warns: next 2 years deciding everything

I don't want to scare anyone, but war is no longer a thing of the past. It is real and in fact it started over two years ago,' Donald Tusk

## 'NEWS DESK

WARSAW : Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk has said the world must accept the fact that a new era of war has arrived, describing it as the most critical moment since the end of WWII, with the next two years deciding everything. "We are living in the most critical time since the end of WWII. The next two years will decide everything," Tusk said in an interview with five European newspapers, including the Polish Gazeta Wyborcza, which

was published on Friday. "I don't want to scare anyone, but war is no longer a thing of the past. It is real (and) in fact it started over two years ago. What is currently most disturbing is the fact that literally any scenario is possible," Tusk said. "I understand that it will sound devastating, especially to the younger generation, but we have to mentally prepare for the arrival of a new era. The pre-war era. I am not exaggerating. "Our main task should be to protect Ukraine from Russian invasion and maintain Ukraine as an inde-



pendent and integral state (...) today its (Ukraine's) situation is much more difficult than a year ago, but also much bet-

ter than at the beginning of the war." Tusk said "We need a strong alliance with the US and at the same time we must be independent and self-sufficient in terms of defense. Our task is to cultivate transatlantic ties, regardless of who will be the US president." When asked about Poland's agricultural and trade policy disputes with Ukraine, Tusk responded: "I am probably the most pro-Ukrainian politician in Europe, but I am responsible to my citizens. As prime minister of Poland, I am responsible for protecting the country's fun-

damental interests." "Poles pay a high price. No one can compete with Poland when it comes to supporting Ukraine (...). We want to help Ukraine as much as we can. But at the last European Council summit, I argued that the idea of free trade with Ukraine needs to be remodeled. I want a fair agreement with Ukraine on this matter," he argued. On Wednesday, EU ambassadors reached an agreement to extend duty-free trade with Ukraine. Wheat and barley, however, were excluded from the list of products subject to quantitative restrictions.

## London mayoral candidate condemned for 'dismissing' Islamophobia

LONDON: The Conservative mayoral candidate for London has faced condemnation after claiming that Islamophobic tweets are just "hurty words." The media reported on Friday. Susan Hall, 69, has faced mounting criticism over a series of social media blunders on X, including supporting a tweet that referred to London's Muslim mayor, Sadiq Khan, as "our nipple-height mayor of Londonistan." Hall responded to the tweet by Katie Hopkins, a controversial media commentator, with the words "thank you Katie." The mayoral candidate, a former Conservative leader of the London Assembly, was asked in an interview whether Muslims may find her response to the tweet jarring. She said: "Jarring is the fact that poor people are having to pay £12.50 a day that they literally cannot afford. That is real. And that isn't just hurty words." Hall was referring to London's Ulez charge, an environmental tax on vehicle emissions implemented by Khan. In response to her comments, the Muslim Council of Britain said: "Just as we would not consider antisemitic comments as 'hurty words,' nor should we Islamophobia. "Susan Hall's comments only demonstrate the hierarchy of racism at play. With a 300 percent rise in Islamophobic hate crimes, our elected representatives have a duty to ensure they are not part of the problem.—Agencies

## Ukraine receives \$1.5bn WB funding tranche

KYIV : Ukraine has received a \$1.5 billion tranche of funding under a World Bank programme, Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said on Friday, helping it pay for its budget and social spending as it defends itself against the Russian invasion. Ukraine is reliant on financial aid from its Western partners but foreign financing dwindled in the first two months of this year, and a U.S. aid package has been blocked by Republicans in Congress for months. The new block of World Bank aid was funded by Britain and Japan, Shmyhal said.

"984 million dollars come from Japan and 516 million dollars from the UK. The funds will cover budget spending for social and humanitarian needs and reconstruction," he wrote on X. Earlier in March, Ukraine received a 4.5 billion euro (\$4.9 billion) first tranche of aid under a European Union bridging finance programme. France, Poland push for greater Ukraine food import curbs Kyiv spends most of its own revenues to finance its defence efforts since Russia invaded in February 2022, leaving Kyiv heavily reliant on funding from Western partners to cover its social spending.—APP

## Turkiye bolsters EV sales

ANKARA : Turkiye has been shown to have performed better compared to many European Union countries in fully electric car sales in the first two months of this year, according to report, based on industry data. Accordingly, the sales of fully electric cars reached 8,255 units in January-February, according to the data compiled by AA from the Automotive Distributors and Mobility Association (ODMD). Looking at the overall sales, the petrol cars ranked first with 97,861 units sold, while hybrid cars came in second with 21,594 units sold in Turkiye during the same period. Diesel sales stood at 15,910 units, and LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) sales were at 1,181 units, according to the data. Furthermore, while electric vehicle sales stood at 8,255 units when vehicles with an extended range (which operate by running an electric motor with a petrol engine generator to charge the battery) were included, the sales figures for electric cars rose to 9,772.—APP

## North Korea rules out any meetings with Japan

SEOUL: North Korea has no interest in dialogue with Japan, state media KCNA reported on Friday, citing foreign minister Choe Son Hui. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has said he wants to hold talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "without any preconditions" and is personally overseeing efforts to realize the first such leaders' summit in 20 years in an attempt to defuse decades of tensions. But North Korea has said it had no interest in a summit with Japan and would reject any talks, signalling no thaw in relations between the two countries. Choe also said Pyongyang has no intention to help with the issue of Japanese abductees, according to KCNA, adding North Korea will "respond sharply" to Japan's interference with its sovereignty. erstand why he persistently adheres to the issue that cannot be settled," Choe was quoted as saying by KCNA, referring to Kishida. North Korea admitted in 2002 to kidnapping 13 Japanese citizens decades earlier. Five abductees and their families later returned to Japan, saying the others had died. However, Tokyo believes 17 Japanese were abducted, and continues to investigate the fate of those who did not return, according to Japanese media. North Korea's ambassador to China, Ri Ryong Nam, also said there would be no meeting at any level with Japan, a separate KCNA report said. Ri made the remark in a statement, adding that an official at the Japanese embassy in Beijing proposed a contact via email to a councillor of the North Korean embassy. "I make the stance clear once again that no meeting at any level will take place between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan's side," Ri was quoted as saying in the KCNA report.—DNA

## ICJ orders Israel: allow Gaza aid without delay

Since the start of the offensive, the Tel Aviv regime has killed more than 32,500 Palestinians and injured nearly 75,000 others

## WEB DESK

WASHINGTON : The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has announced new measures, ordering Israel to "ensure, without delay" that humanitarian aid is provided to the Gaza Strip to halt famine. The order comes just two weeks after South Africa requested that the ICJ issue additional provisional

measures against Israel in light of reports of widespread starvation. South Africa hauled Israel before the ICJ, also called the World Court, late last year declaring that the regime was committing genocide in the war on Gaza. In January, the ICJ issued an interim ruling on the emergency measures requested by South Africa, ordering Israel to take all measures to prevent genocide in Gaza, but stopped short of ordering a ceasefire. The ICJ said Thursday Israel must take "all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay, in full cooperation with the United Nations, the unhindered provision at scale by all concerned of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance." Since January 26, it said, "the catastrophic living conditions of the Palestinians

in the Gaza Strip have deteriorated further, in particular in view of the prolonged and widespread deprivation of food and other basic necessities to which the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been subjected." The additional measures run counter to Israel's claim that it is not blocking aid deliveries to Gaza. The court unanimously mandated Israel to increase the number of land crossings into Gaza and keep them open for "as long as necessary." It also ordered Israel to ensure with "immediate effect that its military does not commit acts which constitute a violation of any of the rights of the Palestinians in Gaza as a protected group" under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The ICJ said Israel must submit a report on all measures it has taken to comply with this order, within one month from the date of the order. The UN and other aid agencies have warned of imminent famine due to Israel's prevention of the land-based delivery of life-saving aid to Gaza. Israel unleashed its war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian Hamas resistance group carried out Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the usurping entity in retaliation for the regime's intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people. The Tel Aviv regime has also imposed a "complete siege" on the territory, cutting off fuel, electricity, food, and water to the more than two million Palestinians living there. Since the start of the offensive, the Tel Aviv regime has killed more than 32,500 Palestinians and injured nearly 75,000 others.

## Macron, Lula unite on global issues, differ on Ukraine

Lula hailed a relationship between the two countries as one that created "a bridge between the global South and the developed world"

## FOREIGN DESK

PARIS : French President Emmanuel Macron and his Brazilian counterpart Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva that displayed their unity on major global issues, while skirting differences on the war in Ukraine. Macron wrapped up his three-day tour of the Latin American giant with a solemn, but warm, trip to the presidential palace in the modernist capital Brasilia. The French leader paid tribute to "the spirit of resistance" of Lula's government for "restoring democracy" after a crowd of extreme-right supporters of former president Jair Bolsonaro stormed the seats of power in the city in January 2023. Lula hailed a relationship between the two countries as one that created "a bridge between the global

South and the developed world." While the two men firmly reset the frosty ties of the Bolsonaro years, they retain deep differences over the war in Ukraine, a subject which only briefly reared its head. While France and the West support Kyiv wholeheartedly, Lula has in the past said that Ukraine and Russia share responsibility over the conflict and has refused to isolate Moscow. Putin at G20 summit? Responding to a question from a journalist, Macron said that Brazil, as the current chair of the G20, could invite Russia's President Vladimir Putin to a summit in Rio de Janeiro in November if other members agreed. "The meaning of this club is that there must be consensus with the 19 others. That will be a job for Brazilian diplomacy,"

he said. If such a meeting can be "useful, it must be done," Macron said. Lula responded only that "diversity" must be accepted in organisations like the G20. Putin missed last year's G20 summit in the Indian capital New Delhi, avoiding possible political opprobrium and any risk of criminal detention under an International Criminal Court (ICC) warrant. In September 2023, Lula said there was "no way" that Putin would be arrested if he attended the Rio de Janeiro summit. Shortly after, he backtracked and said that it would be up to the justice system to decide on Putin's eventual arrest and not his government. Lula's only remarks on the conflict were that "the two stubborn" leaders will "have to get along," referring to Putin and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky. Unity on

Venezuela However, he highlighted that Ukraine was not Brazil's priority, and turned to a crisis in his own neighborhood, that he and Macron agreed upon: Venezuela. Both leaders condemned the exclusion of the main opposition coalition's chosen candidate, Corina Yoris, 80, from July 28 elections. "We very firmly condemn the exclusion of a serious and credible candidate for this process," Macron said. Lula described the situation as "serious" and said there was "no legal or political explanation for banning an opponent from being a candidate." "I told Maduro that the most important thing to restore normality in Venezuela was to avoid any problems in the electoral process, that the elections be held in the most democratic way possible." From the protection of the Amazon to cooperation in the building of

submarines and economic ties, the two leaders showed off the broad Franco-Brazilian partnership over the three-day visit. Macron and Lula also brushed over tensions about the long-delayed EU-Mercosur free trade agreement, which Brazil has pushed for and France has blocked. Macron blasted the deal as "a really bad agreement" and said it should be buried in favor of a new one that "is responsible from a development, climate and biodiversity point of view." Lula said he was "very calm" and noted only that Brazil "does not negotiate with France" but with the EU. The two leaders' close relationship was highlighted by a warm meeting in the Amazon, in which they were pictured beaming and clasping hands, to the delight of Brazilians who spawned a raft of memes comparing the images to a wedding album.

## Briefs

### PIA airhostess detained in Canada

DNA

LAHORE: A flight attendant of PIA hailing from Lahore was detained at the Toronto Airport. The airhostess, who was identified as Hina Sani, had been warned earlier not to carry prohibited items with her. The accused hostess is a kith of a famous singer besides she herself is famous social media figure. On the other hand, seven other PIA hostesses were sent back to Pakistan on a special flight by the Canadian authorities as they were banned from flying to Toronto. PIA spokesperson Abdullah Khan reacting upon the happening said the incident was in the knowledge of the high-ups and they were in touch with the Canadian authorities.

### Enhanced understanding vital for regional peace, stability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's charge d'affaires in India said that the goal of regional peace and stability could be achieved by enhancing mutual understanding, addressing shared concerns and resolving longstanding disputes including Jammu and Kashmir. "A cycle of perpetual conflict and tensions, is not our ordained destiny. We can emerge from the shadow of the past and script a future of hope for our two peoples based on peaceful coexistence, sovereign equality and mutual respect, Saad Ahmad Warraich said addressing the Pakistan Day reception held at the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi, said a press release received on Friday. He said that the founding fathers of Pakistan and India had envisioned amicable relations between the two countries. Unfortunately, the history of their bilateral relationship remained challenged for the most part, he added. The grand reception was attended by a large number of guests including political figures, members from the diplomatic corps, businessmen, representatives of media and civil society, and prominent Muslims personalities including the custodians of different shrines in India. The charge d'affaires, who earlier received the guests at the chancery lawns, highlighted the significance of the Pakistan Day saying that the historic resolution adopted by the All India Muslim League at its annual session in Lahore, on March 23, 1940, provided the basis for the Pakistan Movement.

### Hezbollah targets Israeli settlements

BEIRUT: Hezbollah has carried out multiple strikes against Israeli settlements and positions in the northern sector of the 1948 Israeli-occupied territories, as part of another round of retaliatory operations amid the Gaza war. The Lebanese movement said in a statement that it targeted the Shlomi and Goren settlements on Thursday in response to attacks on civilians, especially Israeli strikes on Naqoura and Tayr Harfa towns that killed at least nine Hezbollah and Amal paramedics. Hamas fighters on Thursday struck a "newly created" command center in Liman moshav, located in the Western Galilee region, in support of Gaza. Additionally, Hezbollah released video footage documenting its fighters targeting a gathering of Israeli troops in Horsh Ramim close to Lebanon's southern border with the occupied territories. The group also fired a salvo of rockets at Kiryat Shmona city. The Israeli regime has been attacking southern Lebanon off and on since October 7, when it launched its onslaught on Gaza, killing at least 32,552 Palestinians, most of them women and children, so far. In retaliation, Hezbollah has launched near-daily rocket attacks on Israeli positions. - Agencies

# President for promoting economic ties with Iran

He called for working together to overcome the common challenges faced by both sides

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday underlined the need for promoting barter trade and economic relations with Iran for the mutual benefit of the two brotherly countries. The president, talking to Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Reza Amiri Moghadam, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, said that both countries had great scope for expanding bilateral economic cooperation in diverse fields. Talking to the ambassador, the president expressed his commitment to further strengthen bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries. He called for working together to overcome the common challenges faced by both sides. The Iranian ambassador congratulated the president on assuming the office. He said that both Iran and Pakistan enjoyed historical, religious and cultural ties, which were becoming stronger with time. He emphasised the need for increasing the bilateral trade volume, banking cooperation, and air and business linkages between the two countries. The ambassador said that Pakistan could benefit from the Chahbahar-Zahedan rail-



road for trade with Central Asia, Europe and Turkey. He expressed the hope that Pak-Iran relations would receive fresh impetus under the leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari. He also conveyed warm regards from the Iranian President Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, for the President Zardari.

Later, Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, Ahmed Jawad Rabei, also called on President Asif Ali Zardari and congratulated him on assuming the office. The ambassador highlighted the atrocities and the reign of terror unleashed by the Israeli forces against innocent Palestinians in the Gaza

Strip. Talking to the Palestinian ambassador, the President said that it was very painful to see the tragic sufferings of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli forces. He stated that Pakistan had historic ties with Palestine, and would continue to stand by its Palestinian brothers and raise its voice at all fora. He lauded the bravery and resilience of the Palestinian people, who had been waging a long struggle against Israeli occupation. President Zardari urged the international community to make efforts for the free flow of humanitarian assistance to Gaza by lifting all the barriers and ensuring the protection of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip. He said that Pakistan would send additional relief goods, including food and medicine, to the Palestinian people. The ambassador appreciated Pakistan's support in the field of education as over 50,000 Palestinians had graduated in various disciplines from educational institutions in Pakistan. He also conveyed the warm regards of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and thanked the government and the people of Pakistan for their consistent support and solidarity with the Palestinian people.

### Aseefa secures NA-207 seat unopposed

DNA

NAWABSHAH: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, daughter of President Asif Zardari, has been elected unopposed as MNA from Nawabshah's NA-207 constituency. According to the returning officer, eleven candidates initially submitted their nomination papers. Among them, seven candidates were rejected, while three candidates withdrew their nomination papers today (Friday), thereby allowing Aseefa Bhutto to secure her seat in the National Assembly without contest. Aseefa Bhutto Zardari was nominated by the PPP after President Asif Zardari vacated the seat upon assuming the presidency. RO Sher Ali Jamali confirmed that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed independent candidate, Sardar Sher Muhammad Rind, did not appeal against the rejection of his nomination papers.

### Aliya, Sanam arrested in another case

DNA

LAHORE: Police have arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders Aliya Hamza and social media activist Sanam Javed in connection with a case registered in Mianwali. According to sources, the jail administration will present the accused in an anti-terrorism court. Mianwali police are set to seek a transitory remand for Aliya Hamza and Sanam Javed. Read more: Detailed verdict on Sanam Javed's Senate election permission issued. It's pertinent to note that just a few days ago, the anti-terrorism court had accepted the bail plea of Aliya Hamza and Sanam Javed in the Shadman attack case related to the May 9 riots. Also read: Sanam Javed, Aliya Hamza granted bails in May 9 cases. Earlier, an anti-terrorism court had granted bail to Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) leaders Aliya Hamza and Sanam Javed in Shadman police station attack case. ATC Judge Arshad Javed heard the bail application of the accused in Shadman police station attack case. During the hearing, the prosecutor took the stand that the women were the part of May 9 incidents.

## Russia shuts down UN watchdog tracking North Korea sanctions

Russia has consistently denied using North Korean weapons and its representative at the UN again dismissed the accusations

MOSCOW: Russia has shut down a panel of UN experts that have for years monitored sanctions against North Korea. The panel last week said it was probing reports that Russia violated rules by buying North Korean weapons like ballistic missiles for use in Ukraine. The UN's Security Council has imposed a series of sanctions on Pyongyang since 2006 for its nuclear weapons programme. Those restrictions are still in force - but the experts group set up to monitor violations will now be disbanded. In a Security Council vote on Thursday, Russia used its veto power as a permanent member to block the renewal, while 13 of the other 14 member states present voted for it. China, Pyongyang's closest ally, abstained. Russia's block triggered a wave of condemnation from the US, UK, South Korea and other Western allies and comes after a year of high-profile public meetings between Moscow and Pyongyang leaders. This is the first time Russia has blocked the panel - which has been renewed annually by

the UN Security Council for 14 years. Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on social media Russia's veto was tantamount to "a guilty plea" that it was using North Korean weapons in the war. The US, UK and France all told the Council that Russia was silencing the watchdog because it had begun to report on Moscow's own violations of the rules - specifically purchasing weapons from North Korea for the battlegrounds in Ukraine. Meanwhile, South Korea's representative at the UN criticised Russia's "blind self-centeredness" and said it had no justification "for disbanding the guardians" of the sanctions regime. "This is almost comparable to destroying a CCTV to avoid being caught red-handed," Ambassador Hwang Joon-kook said. Russia has consistently denied using North Korean weapons and its representative at the UN again dismissed the accusations on Thursday. Vasily Nebeniza also argued that the panel of experts had no added value. "The panel has continued to focus on

trivial matters that are not commensurate with the problems facing the peninsula," said Mr Nebeniza, who also added that sanctions had imposed a "heavy burden" on the North Korean people. Since 2019, Russia and China have sought to persuade the Security Council to ease sanctions. The Security Council first imposed sanctions in 2006 in response to a North Korean nuclear test, and has since passed 10 more resolutions strengthening them as Pyongyang's nuclear activity has continued. However Kim Jong Un's regime has largely ignored the sanctions despite their impact on the economy. The North Korean leader has rapidly continued nuclear weapons development and has pursued a more aggressive and dangerous military strategy in recent years. The UN experts say North Korea continues to flout sanctions through increased missile test launches and developing nuclear weapons. The regime launched a spy satellite this year - with technology believed to have been provided by Russia. In breach of the sanctions, it also continues to import refined petroleum products and send workers overseas, and the UN panel's most recent report detailed a campaign of cyber attacks. - Agencies

## Federal, Balochistan governments unite to address challenges

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti stated on Friday that both the federal and Balochistan governments were on the same page in their commitment to addressing the issues confronting the province. Speaking at a press conference alongside leaders of allied political parties in Islamabad, the chief minister said that the state was employing appropriate measures to counter threats and root causes of insurgency in Balochistan. Bugti highlighted the unified leadership in Balochistan dedicated to resolving the province's challenges. He underscored the efforts of the provincial government to foster good governance, noting that the primary beneficiaries were the ordinary people who suffered most from poor governance. Bugti noted the active involvement of all parties in providing relief to the populace in Balochistan. He highlighted the historic unopposed election of senators from the province as a significant milestone. Responding to a query, Bugti asserted that violence could not secure rights for Balochistan, underlining that all rights granted to the province had been conferred by the country's parliament. The chief minister expressed gratitude to the Pakistan People's Party, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Awami National Party and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz for entrusting him with the opportunity to serve as chief minister. Bugti also paid tribute to the security forces for thwarting terrorist attacks in Gwadar and Turbat, commending the swift response of vigilant personnel in neutralising the threat in Gwadar within 20 minutes. In response to another query, Bugti disclosed that over 2,000 teachers were receiving salaries without fulfilling their duties, while doctors were also being remunerated without rendering services. He affirmed determination to address such malpractices. Regarding smuggling, Bugti clarified that while the government discouraged it, leniency was sometimes exercised due to the dearth of employment opportunities. Nonetheless, he underscored that the government did not condone smuggling. - Agencies

## Economy commences on better note in 2024: Finance Minister

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Friday that with significant improvements in key economic indicators the economy in year 2024 commenced on a better note. Addressing the business community at Gong Ceremony at Pakistan Stock Exchange, the minister said that the Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the Ministry of Law and Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), was working to eliminate leakages in tax revenue and bring more people into the tax net. The minister also highlighted the completion of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) review and the potential for future relations with the fund. He also mentioned that government was working to bring reforms in State-owned enterprise (SOEs), privatization and energy sectors besides improving tax system. He, however highlighted the role of the private sector in economic development.

The Finance Minister acknowledged the importance of the capital market in advancing economic growth adding that the government would work with Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) to create a conducive regulatory environment for economic growth in the capital market. He said, the government would focus more on improving the efficiency, transparency, and protection of investors in the capital market to enhance its performance. He said, the finance ministry would collaborate with the capital market to facilitate access to capital for small and medium-sized businesses. Aurangzeb expressed gratitude for Chinese participation and investment in Pakistan's capital market and stock holdings. He emphasized that the growing cooperation between PSX and Chinese exchanges was vital for the economic development of Pakistan and mutual benefits for both countries. - DNA

## Interior Minister visits FC headquarters Peshawar



PESHAWAR: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited Frontier Constabulary (FC) headquarters in Peshawar. Commandant FC Moazzam Jah Ansari welcomed the Interior Minister on this occasion and introduced other FC officers to him. Interior Minister laid floral wreath on the Martyrs Monument and offered prayers for them. He also paid a fitting tribute to the martyrs, praising their commendable efforts for peace as they sacrificed their lives while fighting for the sanctity and security of the country. Commandant FC also explained the working and performance of the FC in a meeting presided by the Interior Minister. A plant was also

planted in the lawn at the end of the meeting as part of the plantation drive by the Interior Minister. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi: "The Frontier Constabulary should be made a more effective force to curb the anti-state elements. I will make sure to visit the FC headquarters again in order to take a follow up. "The enemies of the state are trying hard to disrupt the peace in the country. We will beat them with the force of unity. The terrorists and their support groups will not be allowed to operate at any cost. There is no place for terrorism in Quaid's Pakistan. I assure the nation that we will go all out to establish peace in the country." - DNA

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