



# Islamabad POST

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**China-Germany cooperation not 'risk' but opportunity: Xi**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Israel-Hamas talks on truce 'stalling': Qatar**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Nadal wins on injury comeback at Barcelona**

Detailed News On Page-06

## After Saudi delegation visit

# Pakistan eyes billions of dollars Saudi investment

No obstacles or hindrances in this regard will be allowed, says premier Shehbaz Sharif

STAFF REPORT/DNA

ISLAMABAD: A day after a Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan concluded his two-day visit to Islamabad, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has hinted at the kingdom investing billions of dollars in Pakistan. Chairing a meeting of the federal cabinet in the federal capital on Wednesday, the premier said that billions of dollars' worth of investment was expected as a result of the recent visit by the high-level Saudi delegation. Commending the efforts of the federal cabinet and relevant authorities for the successful visit, he said the Saudi delegation was impressed by the preparations of Pakistani ministers and officials.

Addressing a joint press conference along with his Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar, Saudi FM Prince Faisal said on Tuesday described his visit to Pakistan to discuss investments as positive saying he was extremely impressed by the proactive attitude of the Pakistani government. The Saudi foreign minister there are various avenues for kingdom to increase its investment in Pakistan. The prime minister, in today's cabinet meeting, also thanked Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin

Continued on Page 06

## Fin Min holds key meetings with WB, ADB chiefs

WB reaffirms support for reforms, digitalisation programmes.

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Minister of Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb Wednesday held key meetings with various heads of various financial institutions and forums including the heads of World Bank and Asian Development Bank. As per details, Aurangzeb, who is in Washington to hold negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new bailout package and attend World Bank meetings, met WB President Ajay Banga. During the meeting, the finance minister accentuated Pakistan's progress in the ongoing stand-by arrangement (SBA) with the IMF and the reforms undertaken by Islamabad with regards to taxation, energy and privatisation. With both sides agreeing upon the need for a 10-year rolling Country Framework Plan and the Washington-based lender reaffirming its support for reforms and digitisation programmes, the finance minister also extended an invitation to the WB president to visit Pakistan. Separately, Aurangzeb also led the Pakistani delegation's meeting with Asian Development Bank

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

**Pak Army starts inquiry against ex-DG ISI**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Army has constituted an inquiry committee to probe charges against former DG ISI Lt. Gen Faiz Hameed. The inquiry committee has been formed on a complaint lodged by a property tycoon and in the light of the apex court of Pakistan. Meanwhile, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that the report made by the inquiry commission established to investigate the Faizabad sit-in holds no value as it is neither authentic nor reliable. He made these comments after the Faizabad sit-in inquiry commission exonerated former ISI DG Lieutenant General (ret'd) Faiz Hamid in its report. Speaking during an interview with a private TV channel, Asif said: "Faizabad commission was a joke as General (ret'd) Hamid and former COAS Gen (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa did not appear before the commission."

**Qibla steps down as CII chairman**

ADILSHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Council of Islamic Ideology Dr Qibla Ayaz on Wednesday had a formal adieu after completing his three-year illustrious tenure. At a ceremony attended by administrative and research staff of the Council, Dr Qibla reflected on the major issues and challenges faced during his stewardship. His departure coincides with the completion of terms for 12 Council members, marking a significant transition in the CII's leadership. Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Maulana Syed Ziaullah Shah Bukhari, Mufti Muhammad Zubair and others have completed their tenures.

## Curbing social media

**SHC asks interior ministry to revoke X closure letter**  
X banned due to company's failure to address concerns, Islamabad High Court told

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI/ISLAMABAD: The Sindh High Court (SHC) Wednesday directed the Ministry of Interior to revoke its letter regarding suspension of social media platform X, formerly Twitter, within one week. "What are you [interior ministry] achieving via shutting down trivial things [...] The world must laugh at us," SHC Chief Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi said while hearing multiple petitions filed by Zarrar Khuro, Jibran Nasir and others. The SHC chief justice's remarks come as X, which is used by millions of Pakistanis, has been suspended since February owing to the government's decision to curb access to the social media platform citing national security threats. Last month, the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) told the court that it blocked the social media platform after receiving directions from the Ministry of Interior and intelligence agencies. The PTA said that the directions for temporary suspension of mobile internet data

Continued on Page 06

**Tarar hopes May 9 cases will reach logical conclusion**

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday said the credibility of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his government had started producing results, adding that Saudi Arabia was interested in investing in different sectors. The world knew that the prime minister had always delivered and worked 24/7, he remarked and told a press conference after a federal cabinet meeting that the privatisation of PIA as well as airports would lead to positive results. However, the minister added that privatisation had nothing to do with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). When asked about the May 9 violence, the information minister said the

Continued on Page 06

## President Zardari for strengthening economic, cultural ties with Turkiye

He said that Pakistan looked forward to welcoming Erdogan to the 7th High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council session in Pakistan

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has called for further enhancing bilateral cooperation with Turkiye in the areas of trade, economy, education and culture. He said that Turkish companies should benefit from the investment-friendly policies of the country and invest through the Pakistan Stock Exchange. The President expressed these views while talking to the Ambassador of Turkiye to Pakistan, Dr Mehmet Pacaci, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. Welcoming the Ambassador, the President said that the people of Pakistan and Turkiye had historic and long-standing ties, adding that the two nations had always supported and stood by each other in difficult times. The President stated that Pakistan could benefit from the Turkish development experience, especially in the area of infrastructure development. In order to promote



**PTI leader sees Saudi role in Imran govt removal**  
PTI disavows Marwat's remarks on Saudi Arabia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Wednesday unequivocally distanced itself from the recent remarks made by party's leader Sher Afzal Marwat concerning Saudi Arabia. In a statement issued by the party's spokesperson, PTI expressed its disapproval of Marwat's stance, asserting it as entirely incongruent with the party's position on Saudi Arabia's role in regional affairs. The spokesperson emphasised that Sher Afzal Marwat's comments do not reflect PTI's strategy or standpoint in any manner. They reiterated that Marwat's views, perceived

**7 terrorists killed, trying to infiltrate Pakistan**

DNA

RAWALPINDI: On 16 April 2024, movement of a group of seven terrorists, trying to infiltrate Pakistan-Afghanistan border, was detected by security forces in general area Spinkai, Ghulam Khan of North Waziristan District. The infiltrators were surrounded, effectively

Continued on Page 06

## NATIONAL DAY OF BANGLADESH



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaisar Sheikh, former Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chief Justice of the Federal Shariat Court Iqbal Hameedur Rehman, High Commissioner of Bangladesh Ruhul Alam Siddiqui and others cutting cake to celebrate the Independence and National Day of Bangladesh. - DNA

## Demands PM's resignation

**PTI demands CJP to public Faizabad report forthwith**

PTI spokx seeks actions against Shahbaz for being declared guilty in the report

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) demanded that Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) should make the Faizabad Dharna Commission report public forthwith and issue orders regarding the execution of the commission's recommendations in order to bring the culprits to justice. Reacting over Faizabad Dharna Commission report, PTI Spokesperson stressed the need that action should be taken against the then Punjab government, especially Shehbaz Sharif, who was found guilty of dereliction of duty and misconduct in view of the recommendations of the commission. He pressed that the Faizabad Dharna Commission

Continued on Page 06

**Toshakhana reference**  
**Nawaz Sharif gets clean chit by NAB**  
Car purchased by Nawaz Sharif not part of Toshakhana

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Wednesday exonerated Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif in the Toshakhana vehicle reference. The anti-graft body, in its report, has requested an accountability court

Continued on Page 06

**TURKISH AIRLINES**

**BEST PART OF THE JOURNEY**

*Stopover*

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## Punjab govt reiterates to dismantle drug trade

MULTAN: The Punjab government reiterated to dismantle criminal networks dealing in drug trades and facilitate timely rehabilitation of the drug addicts. This was stated by Commissioner Multan Division Mariam Khan while visiting Drug Rehabilitation Centre, situated at Matital road, here on Wednesday. She inspected different areas of the Drug Rehabilitation Centre and took keen interest in vocational training centre, especially introduced for the addicts in order to make them useful and productive citizens of the state. The DRC is offering different technical courses with collaboration of TEVTA and Social Welfare Office. Mariam Khan stated that the drug addicts after rehabilitation could help perform role. Regional Police Officer Capt Retd Suhail Chaudhary was also accompanying the delegation led by Commissioner Mariam Khan. The RPO also reiterated to expedite action against the persons involved in sale of drugs. He remarked that special focus was being done on elements who were found responsible for spread of drugs in educational institutes. The drug addicts, during rehabilitation process, were given complete security. City Police Officer Sadiq Dogar also added that it was essential to discourage drug addiction through collaboration at community level.—APP

## High Tobacco tax prevails over propaganda

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The consumption of cigarettes in Pakistan has witnessed a significant decline after the government took a bold decision to increase taxes and address the dual challenge of public health and revenue generation. A study by the Capital Calling, a network of academic researchers and professionals, a few months back has been proved right. The study has revealed that one in every 94 smokers has quit smoking after the price increase. "The government's decision to increase taxes emerged as a pivotal strategy to address both public health concerns and revenue deficits," said the report. The government had finally agreed to increase taxes following persistent lobbying efforts by numerous anti-tobacco and social activists. In a groundbreaking move, the FBR had elevated the duty on tier-1 cigarettes from 130 rupees to 330 rupees, resulting in a significant net increase of 154 percent. The decision was aimed at increasing the revenue to Rs 200 billion from Rs 148 billion in the current fiscal year. According to details, the survey was conducted in major cities including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Peshawar. The voices of the surveyed smokers echoed a common sentiment - purchasing cigarettes had become financially burdensome, leading them to prioritize spending on essential needs like food and the education of their children. The survey findings presented a compelling evidence in favor of the higher taxes.

# Need to explore new avenues to promote Pak-Uzbek trade

Uzbek Ambassador Oybek Arif Usmanov calls on FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan Oybek Arif Usmanov called on FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh at capital office Islamabad and discussed various issues including bilateral trade, mutual cooperation, investment, Pakistan Uzbekistan Business Council and exchange of trade delegations. The Uzbek ambassador was accompanied by Bakurum Yusov Economic and Trade Consul Uzbekistan. FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh said on the occasion that Pakistan is a brotherly country of Uzbekistan, Pakistan's exports with Uzbekistan have increased gradually in the last years, which has to be further increased, bilateral trade can be promoted in textile, pharmaceutical, rice, machinery, agriculture machinery, electrotechnical and other sectors. We have to explore different avenues to further promote this bilateral trade. Atif Ikram added that we will participate in the single country exhibition to be held in Uzbekistan on June 28. Pakistanis have the problem of business visa, tourist visa, flights to Uzbekistan which should be solved. The first Gems and Jewellery Exhibition is being held in Pakistan in collaboration



with TDAP and Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry in which Uzbek businessmen who belong to this sector should participate and you provide us their names too. Uzbek Ambassador Oybek Arif Usmanov said that Uzbekistan is organizing an International Business Forum on May 3 and 4, in which

the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the business community are invited to participate, while the Minister of Uzbek Foreign Affairs will visit Pakistan on May 9-10. There will be G2B and B2B meetings. Trade between Pakistan and Uzbekistan is suffering due to Afghanistan, we have to

start The Afghanistan-Pakistan Corridor. Direct flights will be started from Islamabad and Lahore, resolving visa issues soon. Chairman FPCCI Capital Office Karim Aziz Malik, Convener Diplomatic Committee FPCCI Ahmed Waheed, Vice President FPCCI Ashfaq Ahmed, Chairman Coordination Malik Sohail

Hussain, Acting President ICCI Fahad Waheed, Vice President Engineer Azharul Islam, Advisor President FPCCI Dr Afshan Malik, Executive Member FPCCI Farrukh Alvi, Chairman Pakistan Russia Business Council Mohsin Sheikh and others were also present in the meeting.

## Our Aim Foundation provides ration packs to Tharparkar families

### Our Aim Foundation provides essential food items during Ramazan to 400 deserving families that have impacted the lives of 2,000 people

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Our Aim Foundation, a humanitarian organization dedicated to alleviating hunger and poverty, has undertaken a significant initiative to support vulnerable communities in Tharparkar, Pakistan. In response to the dire conditions faced by many families in the region, Our Aim Foundation has conducted a comprehensive ration drive, providing essential food items during Ramazan to 400 deserving families that have impacted the lives of 2,000 people. Tharparkar, known for its harsh climatic conditions and persistent challenges,

has long struggled with food insecurity. The recent drought exacerbates the situation, leaving many families without access to an adequate and nutritious food supply. Recognizing the urgent need for assistance, Our Aim Foundation has stepped in to offer support and relief to those most in need. The ration packs distributed by Our Aim Foundation are carefully curated to provide sustenance and nourishment to families facing hunger. Each pack includes essential food items such as wheat flour, rice, lentils, tea, sugar, cooking oil, ghee, salt, vermicelli, shabat, and milk powder. These

items are vital for meeting the nutritional needs of families and ensuring their well-being during challenging times. The distribution took place in March and April during Ramazan, with 400 deserving families from Village Karangri and its vicinity being selected based on their urgent need for assistance. Our Aim Foundation remains committed to ensuring that no family in Tharparkar goes hungry, and this ration drive demonstrates our commitment to the cause. "We are deeply committed to extending compassion and support to communities in need," said Nisha Mandani, Founder & President at Our Aim Foundation.

"Through initiatives like the Tharparkar Ration Drive in Pakistan, we aim to provide essential relief to families facing hunger and hardship, empowering them to overcome their challenges with dignity and resilience." Our Aim Foundation acknowledges the generous support of donors and partners who make initiatives like the Tharparkar Ration Drive possible. With the collaborative support of partners, Our Aim Foundation is making a meaningful difference in the lives of vulnerable populations and ensuring that no one is left behind in the fight against hunger and poverty.



ISLAMABAD: Representatives of PRCS, IFRC, ICRC, Norwegian Red Cross, Turkish Red Crescent, German Red Cross and volunteers participating in hiking on the occasion of World Hemophilia Day at Margalla Hills, Trail 5 in Federal Capital. —APP

## National consultation workshop introduces new courses

NAEAC, HEC in collaboration with the GAIN to organized a National Consultation workshop on introducing new courses on food system transformation in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Universities and Higher Educational Institutions gathered to deliberate Food Systems and the Food Systems Transformation into the curriculum of Pakistan universities related to the agriculture and food sciences. The National Agriculture Education Accreditation Council (NAEAC), Higher Education Commission (HEC) in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) organized a National Consultation Workshop on Introducing New Courses on Food System Transformation in Pakistan. The workshop will take place on April 17th - 18th, 2024, in Islamabad. The workshop aimed to address the critical need for integrating

food systems transformation into education, particularly in agriculture and food sciences. This initiative was part of Pakistan's commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG-2) and advancing food security for vulnerable populations. At the opening of workshop Prof. Dr. Fayyaz-ul Hassan Sahi, Chairman of National Agricultural Education Accreditation Council (NAEAC), stated, The role of Academia and the NAEAC is crucial to improve the understanding on food system and transform Pakistan Food Systems. He ensured the high of support and the technical leadership on behalf of the NAEAC. He also mentioned that NAEAC domain is to guide academic institutions to improve the curriculum and these efforts on adopting Food Systems into

the curriculum of agriculture and food science related degree programmes is well aligned with the NAEAC vision, Farrah Naz, Country Director at GAIN spoke about Adopting robust approaches in improving the understanding about the Food Systems and the Food System Transformation and the role of NAEAC, HEC and PARC is very important and GAIN as a development partner for the improvement of the enabling environment towards food system transformation to improve the Food security situation in the country. Faiz Rasool Head of Policy & Advocacy at GAIN spoke about Key objectives of the workshop were Designing and implementing innovative curriculum modules integrating food systems transformation into existing undergraduate, graduate, and

post-graduate programs. Providing training opportunities to enhance faculty expertise in food systems transformation. Facilitating interdisciplinary research collaborations to generate evidence-based solutions for advancing food systems transformation. Advocating for the importance of food systems transformation within the higher education sector and beyond. Implementing a robust framework to assess the impact and effectiveness of the introduced curriculum and educational initiatives. During his remarks the chief guest Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali, Chairman PARC Stated that "The workshop brought together stakeholders from academia, government, non-governmental organizations, and international partners to discuss course outlines, finalize action plans, and ensure alignment with national priorities and international standards.

## CM Punjab met MPAs from different districts

Chief Minister apprised the MPAs that 100% free medicines and their free home delivery will be started soon

DNA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif had a meeting with the Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) from different districts of Punjab to discuss public issues, and development needs of their respective constituencies. Madam Chief Minister apprised the MPAs that 100% free medicines and their free home delivery will be started soon. She added, "600 roads, 5 expressways and 3 motorways will be constructed, repaired and rehabilitated in the province." The Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif highlighted, "We have started a program to provide 20,000 motorbikes to students." She

added, "Rural and primary health centers across the province will be revamped within 06 months." Madam Chief Minister asked the MPAs to monitor sale of bread and naan on official rate in their respective constituencies. "The MPAs paid tribute to the Chief Minister for starting many people-friendly projects in a short span of time. They acknowledged, "Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is working faster than expected." Members Provincial Assembly (MPAs) Zahid Akram, Mohammad Ajmal Khan, Mohammad Kashif and Agha Ali Haider attended the meeting. Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Senator Pervaiz Rashid, and Special Assistant Zeeshan Malik were also present in the meeting.

## Poor performance of Health Department KP recorded

PESHAWAR: The performance of 38 health officers of the health department, including the director health, is disappointing, revealed through public complaints received on the Citizen Portal regarding the Health Department by the Provincial Management Reforms Unit established in the Office of the Chief Secretary Office. MS, 10 DHOs and two program directors of 24 hospitals in the province have been declared unable to solve public problems. The concerned officers have been warned to improve their performance after receiving many public complaints. The Health Department has sent a letter expressing disapproval to all the above officers. Indignation over the poor performance of the directors of the TB Control Program Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Independent Monitoring Unit, the text of the letter. Concerned officers were sent to solve the problems on behalf of the public but the implementation has been disappointing, said a letter issued to the health department. Less than 50% of targets have been achieved in resolving complaints and problems, with which people are not satisfied at all, the letter said. In this regard, Secretary Health has appointed District Health Officers Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, Tank, Upper Chitral, Charsadda, Mansehra, Lower Kohistan.

## Roti prices fixed at Rs 15 in Dera district

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The district administration on Wednesday fixed the price of roti at Rs 15 and Rs 30 with immediate effect. According to a notification issued by the district administration the price of roti or Naan weighing 100 gram would be available at Rs15 while the rate for the roti or Naan that weighs 200 grams has been fixed at Rs 30 in the district. The new prices were notified on the recommendation of the District Price Review Committee in consultation with Nanbai Association in a meeting held on April 15. All Nanbai have been directed to place digital weighing machines at their tandoor to weigh naans. The shopkeepers have been asked to adhere to the notified prices and the list should be displayed at conspicuous places at their shops. The relevant officials have been instructed to ensure the implementation of the new prices of roti and naan.—APP

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### April

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

## Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



## Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15  
Bomb Disposal.....115  
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 Exchange9270831-5  
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

# NDMA alerts for intense rainfall, thunderstorms from April 17

The forecast indicated that a weather system would enter Pakistan on April 17th, initiating a period of heavy rainfall and thunderstorms lasting until April 22nd

DNA

ISLAMABAD :The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) as per the latest projections from the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) and multiple weather models, in its advisory has highlighted a series of moderate to intense weather systems to cause rainfall and thunderstorms in the country from April 17th to 29th. "These weather patterns are anticipated to bring heavy rain, thunderstorms, and hailstorms, posing significant risks to various parts across the country," said the NDMA news release issued here Wednesday. The forecast indicated that a weather system would enter Pakistan on April 17th, initiating a period of heavy rainfall

and thunderstorms lasting until April 22nd. "The system will influence Balochistan from April 17th to April 19th, followed by impacts on Punjab and Sindh from April 18th to April 19th. Upper Punjab will experience the effects from April 18th to April 21st, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) will be affected from April 17th to 22nd April," the advisory said. Following this, a weaker weather system was expected to enter Pakistan on April 23rd, bringing low rainfall and thunderstorms to certain parts of the country until April 24th. While Balochistan and upper Punjab would experience slight impacts from April 23rd to April 24th, KP, GB, and AJK would also be affected. How-

ever, Sindh was not expected to be impacted during this period. Subsequently, a strong weather system is forecasted to enter Pakistan on April 25th, bringing heavy rain, thunderstorms, and hailstorms with occasional gaps until April 29th. This system will affect Balochistan from April 25th to April 29th, with intermittent gaps. Sindh will experience impacts on April 25th, 26th, and 28th, while South Punjab will be affected from April 27th to April 28th. Upper Punjab will face the brunt from April 26th to April 29th, while KP will experience effects from 25th to 29th April, potentially impacting GB and AJK from April 25th to April 29th. The expected rainfall may trigger flash floods in local nullahs of vulnerable areas, including Khuzdar, Ziarat,

Zhob, Sherani, Muslim Bagh, Quetta, Pishin, Kech, Panjgur, Gwadar, and Turbat. Flooding may also occur in low-lying areas during the forecast period, particularly in southern western Balochistan. In the light of these projections, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued instructions for Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs), District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs), and other relevant line departments to remain vigilant and prepared to respond to any emergent situations. It is imperative for departments to ensure the pre-placement of machinery and the availability of relevant staff in vulnerable areas. Local departments are urged to sensitize residents liv-

ing along riverbanks and associated nullahs about the expected increase in water flows, and to facilitate timely evacuation of at-risk populations from low-lying and flood-prone areas as per evacuation plans. Additionally, citizens are advised to take extreme precautionary measures, such as staying away from electric poles and weak infrastructure, and refraining from driving or walking in waterways. Farmers, cattle owners, tourists and travelers are also advised to remain cautious during this period, checking weather and road conditions before traveling, and taking necessary steps to protect crops, livestock, and personal safety. For further updates and information, citizens are encouraged to stay tuned to local weather forecasts and advisories.

## CEC Raja leads delegation to study Brazil's EVM system

ISLAMABAD: A high-ranking delegation, headed by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja traveled to Brazil to assess the viability and examine the electoral procedures related to Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

The delegation comprising Provincial Election Commissioner Aijaz Anwar Chohan, Director General (IT) Muhammad Khizer Aziz, and Director Nadeem Zubair, is implementing electronic voting machines (EVMs) across the country, following the example of Brazil and India, according to ECP spokesperson. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) acknowledges Brazil's electoral process as one of the most advanced and technologically superior globally. Consequently, the ECP has opted to visit Brazil and engage in discussions with high-ranking officials from the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court (TSE). Across a span of three days, numerous sessions were convened with various department heads of Brazil's Election Management Body, the Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (TSE). These gatherings featured engagements with the Secretary of Communication & Multimedia, the Secretary of Information Technology, and the Head of Identification Management, each delivering in-depth presentations on their electoral methodologies and the Brazilian Electronic Voting Machine (EVM). The demonstration of the EVM was also conducted. The major topics which were discussed include 'Initiatives for strengthening the social confidence on the electoral processes', 'Introduction to the Brazilian EVM', 'Identification System being used in polling process', and 'Special Advisory for fighting Disinformation'. Finally, an important meeting was held between the Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja and the Chief Justice of Superior Court of Brazil /President Tribunal Superior Eleitoral.—DNA

## E-rozgar centers providing top-notch facilities to freelancers

ISLAMABAD: E-rozgar centers, established by the government, are providing top-notch facilities to freelancers, including high-speed internet, UPS, training centers, individual cabins, meeting rooms, and separate office rooms for startups. An official from the Ministry of IT told here Wednesday that this initiative aimed to propel IT exports to a remarkable \$10 billion annually. Through a robust public-private partnership model, these centers are poised to significantly enhance the capacity and income of freelancers, thereby fostering economic growth. The Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) is tasked with providing freelancers the necessary technical support for these centers.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Mr. Khazar Farhadov extended invitation to Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq for visit of Parliament of Azerbaijan at Parliament House.—DNA

## Romina vows close collaboration with USAID on climate initiatives

According to global climate risk index Pakistan was currently the fifth most climate vulnerable country in the world

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: PM's coordinator on climate change, Romina Khurshed Alam Wednesday said the government warmly welcomed close collaboration and partnership with United States on climate initiatives aiming at bolstering its nation's climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation efforts.

She was addressing the launching ceremony of the USAID's Pakistan climate financing activity, a news release said. While highlighting the disastrous effects of global warming on Pakistan, she said Pakistan produced less than 1 percent of world's carbon footprint, but it was suffering serious consequences of climate change. According to global climate risk index

Pakistan was currently the fifth most climate vulnerable country in the world, she added. She noted that in the wake of 2022 floods one third of country was deluged under water with 81 districts of Pakistan declared calamity hit and about 33000000 people affected. All this is a clear indication of our perturbed ecology, she underscored. While emphasizing on the climate resilience, Romina

Khurshed Alam stressed upon region wise solutions, focusing on public private partnership by bringing in banks, real estate and industries. She remarked that climate sustainability was the greatest need of the hour as it was matter of everyone living on this planet. The coordinator concluded with the assurance of fullest support of government of Pakistan to this initiative of USAID.

## Govt wants to make youth self-employed through tech skills

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Coordinator for Youth Affairs Mr. Rana Mashhood has said that the government wants to make youth self-employed by providing them with various technical skills. During his visit to the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) Headquarters Islamabad yesterday,

he took a briefing regarding its performance. According to the details, all the senior officers of NAVTTTC participated in this briefing. Chairperson Gulmina Bilal Ahmed and Executive Director NAVTTTC Muhammad Amir Jan gave the briefing. While giving a briefing on this occasion, Executive Director

NAVTTTC Muhammad Amir Jan told Rana Mashhood that how NAVTTTC is empowering and training the youth in terms of technical training, self-employment in various projects. He added, that at the same time, it is increasing foreign exchange reserves by sending trained manpower abroad.—APP

## ME tensions pose a threat to global economic recovery

The government is already collecting a levy of Rs. 60 per litre on petrol and diesel, and a tax of around Rs. 82 is also being collected. Due to the increase in oil prices, the purchasing power of the people is further reduced, while transportation has become more expensive

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Wednesday that Middle East tensions pose a risk to the recovery of the global economy. A new economic whirlpool has seized the world and can have an impact on billions of people; therefore, the superpowers must resolve the problem without delay, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that an increasing number of people are losing faith in the global political system, which should be noticed. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the shipping sector was already affected by Yemeni militants, and business costs had increased. Now the whole

Middle East is in the grip of problems. If tensions are allowed to escalate, oil and gas prices will skyrocket, affecting all oil and gas-importing countries, and their people will have to bear the brunt of further inflation. The business leader said that there is anxiety in the whole world due to the Israeli aggression and its undue support by Western countries. People are protesting, and their confidence in the international system is badly affected, he added. In these circumstances, the superpowers must take steps to normalise the situation and prevent Israel from committing further atrocities in Gaza; otherwise, militancy will flourish. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the policymakers in Pakistan should also monitor the situation and plan to protect the people from the possible effects of this tension. The majority of the people in Pakistan are

already very worried about inflation and unemployment and are not able to bear any more burden. He further said that the lives of the poor people were already tough, and now the government has increased the prices of petroleum products, which has added to their problems. The government is already collecting a levy of Rs. 60 per litre on petrol and diesel, and a tax of around Rs. 82 is also being collected. Due to the increase in oil prices, the purchasing power of the people is further reduced, while transportation has become more expensive. To give relief to the people who are worried about inflation, the losses should be eliminated in the electricity and gas sectors by reforming them. Failing government institutions should be privatized immediately to save around eight billion dollars annually, he demanded.

## Kaspersky uncovers malware types

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As the malware development market continues to flourish with new stealers such as Lumma, for the last three years Redline still remains the dominant data-stealing malware used by cybercriminals. As per the latest finding of Kaspersky Digital Footprint Intelligence, 55% of devices targeted by password-stealer attacks in 2023 have been infected with the Redline malware. According to information gleaned from log-files traded or distributed freely on the dark web, Redline was used in 51% of infostealer infections from 2020 to 2023. Other notable malware families included Vidar (17%) and Raccoon (nearly 12%). In total, around 100 distinct infostealer types were identified by Kaspersky Digital Footprint Intelligence between 2020 and 2023 using metadata from log-files. Infostealers infiltrate devices to illicitly obtain sensitive credentials such as logins and passwords, which are then peddled on the shadow market, posing significant cybersecurity threats to personal and corporate systems.—APP

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## Briefs

## Pakistan Railways develops solar strategy

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways intends to transition the power network of all its stations, including major railway stations, offices, workshops, and factories, to solar systems in various stages. This initiative is expected to result in substantial savings for the department, amounting to billions of rupees. An official from the Ministry of Railways informed APP that the initiative is projected to save Rs. 1.8 billion in the initial phase for the department. Subsequent phases will see more stations, offices, and facilities being included. In the first phase, Pakistan Railways aims to transition approximately 99 formations, encompassing major railway stations, nine divisional headquarters, and other essential offices, to solar energy. The official stated that Pakistan Railways will enlist the expertise of the National Engineering Services Pakistan (NESPAK) to convert its network to solar power. The department has opted to transition the railway network to solar energy to alleviate the economic strain on Pakistan Railways. He stated that the choice to adopt solar power is a strategic measure aimed at easing the financial burden on Pakistan Railways, which has been facing economic difficulties.—APP

## Renowned Qawwal Aziz Mian remembered

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Renowned Qawwal and poet Aziz Mian was remembered on the occasion of his birthday anniversary on Wednesday. Born on April 17, 1942, in Delhi, his birth name was Abdul Aziz. He migrated to Pakistan from Meerut in 1947, at the time of independence. He was an alumni of the University of Punjab in Lahore and got degrees in Persian, Urdu literature and Arabic. The Qawwal holds the record for singing the longest commercially released Qawwali that goes slightly above 115 minutes. Unlike several qawwals, Aziz Mian wrote his lyrics besides reciting those of different poets. It was only in 1966 after spending years under the tutelage of Abdul Wahid Khan of Lahore starting from age ten that he would deliver his first breakthrough performance. The first time Aziz Mian tasted admiration at a mass level was when he was awarded a gold medal by then Shah of Iran as he had performed before him in a ceremony in 1966. From this moment on, Aziz Mian gained popularity and started releasing albums. In addition to singing qawwalis, he was also an expert at singing Ghazals. He became a noted member of the qawal community due to his unique and crisp voice. Late Mian was conferred upon Pride of Performance by the government of Pakistan in 1989. He died on December 6, 2000 and was laid to rest in the land of Sufis, Multan.



ISLAMABAD: Book binders busy in their work in the G 6 market. Bookbinding is a fascinating craft that blends artistry and practicality. It's about creating a vessel for knowledge that not only protects its contents but also enhances the reading experience.— Photo Mudassar Raja

## Pakistan's rice exports set to reach a record high

As per estimated, Pakistan will produce some 9 million metric tons of rice during the year and this will help to export more commodity," noted Rafique Suleman, Convenor FPCCI Standing Committee on rice

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's rice exports set to reach a record high in recent year on good crop output, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday quoting Chela Kewani, chairman, Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan. In terms of value, rice exports in seven months of the fiscal year have already reached what the country achieved in the last financial year. Pakistan's rice exports soared owing to a good crop size and a jump in prices, with shipments expected to exceed 5 million ton for the first time in history, said Kewani. And on the basis of the latest report from the United States Department of Agriculture, Pakistan's rice exports in 2023/24 are expected to reach a record 5.5 million tons, a significant increase of 46.3% from the previous year's 3.76 million tons. "As per

estimated, Pakistan will produce some 9 million metric tons of rice during the year and this will help to export more commodity," noted Rafique Suleman, Convenor FPCCI Standing Committee on rice. "We could expect the volume to reverse decline last year." The country's rice exports will not only be higher than previous year but likely to touch an all-time high level, Suleman indicated. Thanks to the expansion of planting area and the improvement of technology, growers will be the direct beneficiaries of the export expansion. "As compared with last year, the price of rice has increased by 25% to 30%, which has helped the country earn more of foreign exchange through shipments of the commodity," said Kewani. Global rice prices are up because of an export ban imposed by the Indian government in a bid to curb inflation, with the country's market share previously

around 40%, said a commodity expert. Taking this golden opportunity, Pakistan's rice exports have been shifting to new markets by actively marketing to more distant countries and regions. On the basis of relying on core markets, Pakistani rice has expanded into several new markets in Southeast Asia and the Western Hemisphere. Basmati rice exports fetched on an average USD 1,146/ton compared with USD 1,044/ton last year while non-basmati on an average fetched around USD 567/ton whereas last year it worked out to be USD 449/ton, Hamid Malik, a commodity expert, said. Pakistan's rice export to China in 2022 surpassed USD 455 million with a volume of more than one million tonnes, for the first time between China-Pakistan rice trade, said Ghulam Qadir Commercial Counsellor. And Chinese traders are also looking forward to seizing the chance to gain

a greater share of Pakistani rice in the domestic market. "We started importing Pakistani rice in 2018, with the annual import volume has been stable at more than 200,000 tons in recent years. Both basmati and non-basmati rice are within our scope. In China, basmati is used as a kind of high-end rice, mainly for Southeast Asia and South Asia restaurants. This long-grain rice, which has a chewier taste, requires less water when cooking. It is suitable for making baked rice and hand-picked rice," Ding Yong, East China Regional Manager, Shenzhen Vintop Import and Export Co., Ltd. told Gwadar Pro. "More Chinese should be promoted to learn about basmati rice, to my way of thinking, which will be of great help to stimulate the export of Pakistani rice. Basmati rice is a business card of Pakistan, thus more publicity on local customs will be of great benefit to expanding the domestic market," Ding added.

## Minister stresses local sugar supply for public welfare

The forum will again review the data in next meeting before recommending export of this essential food commodity, which may have any adverse impact on domestic price and food inflation, particularly on low-income segments

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Industries and Production, Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry. Among others federal government officials, representatives from provinces, and representatives from the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) also attended the meeting. The agenda of the meeting was to evaluate proposal submitted by Pakistan Sugar Manufacturing Association to export surplus stock of sugar available in the country after meeting local consumption needs. It was suggested to link export with sugar price stability in the local market. Government and Pakistan Sugar Manufacturing Association to devise a mechanism where by price stability of sugar will be ensured before

exporting surplus stock produced in the country. The provinces and PSMA would ensure smooth supply of commodity in the domestic market and the price stability till start of next crushing season. It was agreed to seek authenticated data on available sugar stocks, including expected sugar production from beet, and recommendations regarding export from provinces before taking any final decision on the export of sugar. The forum will again review the data in next meeting before recommending export of this essential food commodity, which may have any adverse impact on domestic price and food inflation, particularly on low-income segments.—APP

Secretary for Industries and Production, Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry. Among others federal government officials, representatives from provinces, and representatives from the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) also attended the meeting. The agenda of the meeting was to evaluate proposal submitted by Pakistan Sugar Manufacturing Association to export surplus stock of sugar available in the country after meeting local consumption needs. It was suggested to link export with sugar price stability in the local market. Government and Pakistan Sugar Manufacturing Association to devise a mechanism where by price stability of sugar will be ensured before

## So-called elections no alternative to Kashmiris' right to self-determination

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Incarcerated senior leader of All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Shabbir Ahmed Shah has urged India to create a favorable environment for a durable and permanent settlement of the lingering Kashmir dispute instead of staging so-called election dramas in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. According to Kashmir Media Service, Shabbir Ahmad Shah, who is also the chairman of Jammu Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party, in a message from the notorious Tihar Jail in New Delhi, while reacting to the upcoming Indian par-

liamentary elections in IIOJK, said that such an exercise can never be a substitute for the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people. He said, "Kashmir is an unresolved political issue that cannot be resolved by force means but only through meaningful and result-oriented talks between the three principal parties, the Kashmiris, India and Pakistan". Shabbir Shah said the Kashmiri people have nothing to do with the Indian parliamentary elections and they only want that they be given their inalienable right to self-determination. Expressing serious concern over unrealistic and rigid attitude of the Indian rulers regard-

ing the Kashmir dispute, he said that they (the Indian rulers) must know that they could not change the ground realities by adopting aggressive policies. He said that it was due to the sacrifices of the martyrs that the dispute over Kashmir had become the center of attention at the international level, adding that the Kashmiri people would never let these sacrifices go in vain. Senior APHC leader maintained the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir have rejected the hollow slogans of the Indian rulers and their stooges in the occupied territory and they are determined to continue their struggle till achieving freedom from Indian illegal rule. He

pointed out that thousands of Kashmiris, including Hurriyat leaders and activists were currently languishing in jails for demanding the right to self-determination. Shabbir Shah said that the Modi government had turned the occupied territory into a military garrison and snatched away all the rights of the Kashmiris. He made it clear that Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally recognized disputed territory and that lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the region hinged on giving the Kashmiris their birthright, the right to self-determination, in line with the United Nations resolutions.

## Ambassador Hashmi confers Hilal-e-Quaid-i-Azam upon Chairman CIDCA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Khalil Hashmi on behalf of the President of Pakistan, conferred the civil award "Hilal-i-Quaid-i-Azam" on Luo Zhaohui, Chairman of the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), at an auspicious investiture ceremony held here at the Embassy of Pakistan, China Economic Net (CEN) reported. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Khalil Hashmi felicitated Luo on receiving the prestigious award that marked a recognition of his outstanding contribution to China-Pakistan friendship. Paying rich tribute to Luo for his meritorious services, the Ambassador called him a 'great friend of Pakistan' who had always been at the forefront of supporting the people and government of Pakistan.

## Drive with motorcycle safety wire

ISLAMABAD: The city traffic Police have launched a campaign to install safety wires on motorcycles to protect against fatal accidents caused by metal wires. According to PTV news channel, the Superintendent of Police (SP), Shehzad Khan said that the distribution of safety wires among motorcyclists is being carried out free of charge. Capital City Police Officer Shehzad Khan highlighted that the installation of safety wires on motorcycles will help save valuable human lives from metal wire accidents. "Three things are necessary to fix the basic traffic: enforcement, education and road engineering. If these three things are combined and run properly, traffic will always be better", he added. He emphasized that the distribution of safety wires aims to protect motorcyclists from fatal accidents caused by metal wires. Additionally, a special awareness campaign is under way to protect citizens from metal wire hazards, he concluded.—APP

## Beijing NGO invited for agri coop

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from Beijing Jingwa Agricultural Science and Technology Innovation Center was invited to visit Islamabad in April by Pakistan's National Food Security & Research Division. Jingwa Center is a private non-profit organization jointly initiated by China Agricultural University, Beijing Academy of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences, Beijing Capital Agribusiness Group, New Hope Group, and Jingdong Group, according to Gwadar Pro. As an NGO, the Center is willing to leverage its own advantages and act as a bridge and link between the governments, research institutions, and enterprises of the two countries, the delegation noted during the meeting with the Pakistani side.—DNA

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## Final Fantasies

The end of last month saw the resignations of two relatively junior members of Britain's Conservative government. One was armed forces minister James Heappey; the other was universities minister Robert Halfon. Both had already announced their intentions to quit parliament at the next general election. When Mr. Halfon went from being Half-on/Half-off to being Fully-off, he did so with a modest homage to his favourite books, J. R. R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy. "I am reminded," he observed in his farewell message, "what Gandalf said to Frodo Baggins after the defeat of Sauron..." Suffice it to say, it was a dignified but slightly surreal exit. Out of respect for our readers, I won't trouble to regale you with the 72-word quote that followed. We might have been reminded by this strange dip into popular culture of the time when our lacklustre Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May danced to ABBA's 'Dancing Queen' at her party's annual conference – or the moment when former Tory Chancellor Kenneth Clarke quoted the 1990s music quintet Spice Girls in parliament: "I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want... healthy, sustainable growth." Older heads may even recall former Chancellor Geoffrey Howe's surprisingly devastating use of a curious cricketing metaphor in his resignation speech in the House of Commons in November 1990: "It is rather like sending your opening batsmen to the crease only for them to find, the moment the first balls are bowled, that their bats have been broken before the game by the team captain." His boss, Margaret Thatcher, was out of office before the end of that month. One might wonder in this context whether the self-professed Star Wars fan Rishi Sunak, when his time comes (as it must), will end up channeling the spirit of Yoda, the diminutive and verbally eccentric Jedi master, as he hovers disconsolate outside the door of Number 10 Downing Street. If so, he'll have quite a few appropriate lines from which to choose. Perhaps the most obvious of those comes from 'Star Wars: Episode V – (1980) The Empire Strikes Back: "Size matters not. Look at me. Judge me by my size, do you?" One suspects though that he might be tempted to echo a warning to his party to avoid a takeover by its less moderate members – the likes of snarling former Home Secretary Suella 'Cruella' Braverman or that upper-class Victorian stick insect, the definitively snooty Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg. "Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering," Mr. Sunak might well warn. "Once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny. Consume you, it will." In these dying days of a politically bankrupt administration, it often feels like we've entered the realms of utter fantasy. The news of his knighthood simply seemed unreal. Broadsheet editors may have wondered whether their tea had been spiked with LSD. Jaws dropped at both ends of the political spectrum. While Labour denounced the "utterly corrupt" Prime Minister's "blatant disrespect" for his office, the leader of Reform UK declared that it stank "like rotting fish". The Liberal Democrats said that it showed the premier was "out of touch" with the reality of ordinary people's lives. Indeed, the arrogance of this brazen cronyism certainly seemed totally detached from any concern for the nobles of the real world. Even the blithering Boris Johnson and that blithering booby's doomed successor, loopy old Liz Truss, must surely have been scratching their heads in the face of such unmitigated madness.



## China, US boost exchanges in finance

China and the US have recently engaged in intensive dialogues and communications across multiple fields, involving military, financial and economic aspects. Observers believe the current frequent interactions between the world's two largest economies are positively meaningful and conducive to better managing differences between the two sides, and also beneficial for the US to form correct understanding and judgments about China's actions and policies. However, the most prominent feature of the current China-US relations is that Washington continuously raises demands with China but lacks sincerity in responding to many of China's reasonable requests. Although bilateral relations have relatively stabilized, whether they can progress further remains to be seen, observers said, who also warned to be vigilant against Washington's "tricks," especially in military sector. Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun spoke with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin via a video call on Tuesday at the latter's invitation. Dong said China will never compromise on the Taiwan question and urged the US to recognize China's firm stance, respect China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights in the South China Sea, according to a handout published by Chinese Ministry of National Defense on Wednesday. The Taiwan question is at the very core of China's core interests, and it will never be compromised. The PLA will not tolerate any Taiwan secessionists' activities or external support, Dong told Austin via the video call. The current situation in the South China Sea is generally stable, and regional countries have the willingness, wisdom and capability to resolve issues. The US should recognize China's firm stance, respect China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights in the South China Sea, and take practical actions to maintain regional peace and stability and the stability of China-US military relations, Dong said. Meanwhile, the economic and financial working groups of China and the US held their fourth meeting in Washington DC on Tuesday, with the two sides engaging in "in-depth, pragmatic and constructive" dialogue on how to implement the consensus reached earlier by the leaders of both nations, the macroeconomic situations of both countries and the world, how to achieve balanced growth, and other topics. The fourth meeting came after the US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen wrapped up a high-stakes six-day visit to China last week, during which the two countries reached new areas of consensus in economic and financial fields and also agreed on future meeting arrangements. From the meeting between the leaders of China and the US in San Francisco last November to their phone call in early April this year, there has been effective communication between the two sides in practical areas. Regardless of whether differences still exist, the communication itself is effective and represents a breakthrough, some Chinese experts said. It's also difficult to predict whether tensions in the economic and trade sectors between the two countries will ease following the latest interactions, but the two sides could focus on areas of mutual benefits before moving on to topics where there are greater disagreements.

## Innovative diplomacy with the US, KSA and Iran

Qamar Bashir



Pakistan's diplomatic overtures are paramount especially following the Iranian direct attack on Israel on 13th April, countered by a coalition of US, UK, and French military assets, with ground support from regional allies including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, and Jordan. Against this backdrop, Pakistan's invitation extended to President Raisi signifies Pakistan's delicate and risky diplomatic maneuvering as Pakistan's Finance Minister is currently in Washington DC to engage

The convergence of diplomatic engagements between Pakistan, USA, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Iran amidst heightened regional tensions underscores a pivotal moment in Middle Eastern geopolitics. As the Saudi Foreign Minister embarks on a visit to Pakistan to overtly solidify initial Saudi investments of \$7 billion, Pakistan's President has extended an invitation to KSA's archrival Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, with Raisi accepting a visit on 22nd April. This timing is particularly noteworthy, occurring merely nine days after Iran's unprecedented direct attack on Israel—an action that has incensed the USA and its Western allies.

Pakistan's diplomatic overtures are paramount especially following the Iranian direct attack on Israel on 13th April, countered by a coalition of US, UK, and French military assets, with ground support from regional allies including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, and Jordan. Against this backdrop, Pakistan's invitation extended to President Raisi signifies Pakistan's delicate and risky diplomatic maneuvering as Pakistan's Finance Minister is currently in Washington DC to engage with the IMF to secure the release of the final tranche of \$1.1 billion under the Stand-By Agreement and to explore possibilities for a new three-year IMF program knowing very well that apparently, the visit of Iranian President to Pakistan would annoy the US which has almost veto power over IMF decision making process. A compelling angle emerges from this tripartite diplomatic activity, as all evidence suggests that Pakistan is acting as a crucial interlocutor between the USA and Iran, as well as between Saudi Arabia and Iran. As Pakistan uniquely holds strong diplomatic ties with both Iran and Saudi Arabia, alongside a strategic relationship with the USA. Given the entrenched animosity and divergent interests between these key players in the Middle East, direct negotiations seem improbable. Therefore, as major stakeholders in the region's conflicts, the USA and Saudi Arabia require a third-party intermediary to facilitate discussions on Middle East peace prospects with Iran—and Pakistan appears poised to fulfill this

pivotal role. This evidence-based theory holds considerable weight, particularly given the current context. Notably, Saudi Arabia's overtly intent to solidify substantial investments of \$7 billion (or potentially \$5 billion according to other sources) in Pakistan, but the Saudi delegation is led by the Foreign Minister, rather than by the Ministers of industries, trade and investment, or commerce. Conversely, Pakistan's response to this visit, spearheaded by the Foreign Minister despite the economic focus involving the Ministry of Finance, Board of Investment, and Ministry of Industries, highlights the diplomatic nature of the engagement.

Assuming this theory holds true, let's consider the potential benefits for the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, as well as the broader impact on the Middle East under these circumstances.

By leveraging Pakistan's diplomatic influence, the U.S. could advance dialogue with Iran to potentially de-escalate tensions in the region, achieve guarantees from Iran in lieu of restraining from imposing further economic and financial sanction on Iran to preserve the safety of the world supply chain, prevent Iran from using its proxies to escalate tension in the Middle East and protect Israeli interests in the region. Saudi Arabia may view Pakistan's diplomatic interlocution as an opportunity to mitigate regional tensions and foster stability in the Gulf, obtain guarantees of cessation of attacks by the Houthis in the red sea to ensure uninterrupted supply of its petroleum products, the mainstay of its economy, and prevent spread Israel-Hamas-Iran stand off to other parts of the Middle East which could have disastrous consequence for the entire Middle East and the world peace. For Pakistan, acting as a mediator between the US, KSA and Iran carry significant diplomatic and economic advantages. It could enhance Pakistan's regional influence and reinforce its position as a key player in Middle Eastern affairs. Moreover, attracting substantial investments from Saudi Arabia would bolster Pakistan's economy and contribute to its long-term development goals. Reducing tensions between KSA and Iran and Iran and

USA will pave the way for broader cooperation and confidence-building measures in the Middle East. It would enhance the diplomatic status of Pakistan which in the long run would help it to improve its financial and economic outlook. If Pakistan effectively contributes to regional diplomacy and helps de-escalate tensions in the region and continue its policy of hand off from Israel-Hamas-Iran staff off, and succeeds in establishing viable and sustainable communication channel between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the United States, the U.S. could be more inclined to support the release of the outstanding \$1.1 billion tranche under Pakistan's existing Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with the IMF and could pave the way for the approval of a new three-year IMF program for Pakistan. Above all, this will open the door for Saudi investment in Pakistan. The USA might turn a blind eye as Pakistan and Iran finally complete the long-awaited gas pipeline, allow affordable power and oil to flow from Iran, facilitate the next rollover of Saudi and UAE deposits, and allow the IMF to enter into a long-term agreement with Pakistan. Should this theory prove to be accurate, Pakistan is pursuing innovative and unorthodox diplomatic strategies during a global period marked by a convoluted geopolitical terrain, notably in the Middle East, the Russia-Ukraine crisis, and the most recent Iranian reprisals in Israel. Pakistan's success in this creative and inventive diplomacy will be beneficial in a variety of ways. Pakistan will be able to overcome its diplomatic isolation and regain relevance by managing the most delicate and sensitive diplomatic maneuvering in the globe. This would give Iran some comfort, as the result of this diplomatic endeavor might make it less likely that Israel-US will attack Iran in reprisal. It would ensure better possibilities for peace in the Middle East and smooth, risk-free exports of Saudi Arabia's oil products. If this diplomatic move is successful, there is a greater chance that Israel and Hamas would reach a peace agreement, which would provide the Palestinian people some relief.

*The writer is Former Press Secretary to the President Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC*

## Technology and the changing food industry

Alishba Iftikhar



This technology allows for precise control over the composition and shape of food items opening up possibilities for personalized nutrition and unique culinary experiences. By layering food ingredients in a controlled manner, 3D printing can create intricate designs and tailored nutritional profiles to meet individual dietary needs and preferences

Food technology is a rapidly evolving field that aims to revolutionize the way we produce, process, and consume food. It encompasses a wide range of innovations from novel farming techniques to advanced food processing methods. One notable example of food technology is the use of 3D printing to create customized food products. This technology allows for precise control over the composition and shape of food items opening up possibilities for personalized nutrition and unique culinary experiences. By layering food ingredients in a controlled manner, 3D printing can create intricate designs and tailored nutritional profiles to meet individual dietary needs and preferences. Additionally, food technology plays a critical role in reducing waste and enhancing sustainability through improved storage, preservation and packaging methods. It also extends the shelf life of products and enhances safety standards. In the whole, food technology is transforming the food industry, leading to healthier, more efficient and more sustainable food production and consumption. Food security remains a major issue in developing countries, with sub-Saharan Africa serving as a prime example due to the frequent droughts and floods that disrupt food production. These extreme weather events can lead to food insecurity and malnutrition, affecting the livelihoods of many in the region. In addition, traditional meat production methods contribute significantly to environmental challenges. For instance, the practice of clearing forests for beef farming not only reduces biodiversity but also leads to higher methane emissions, exacerbating climate change. Furthermore, the food industry often relies on conventional farming methods that involve the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, posing health risks to both farmers and consumers. These practices also contribute

to environmental degradation, as the widespread use of pesticides has resulted in a decline in pollinators like bees which are essential for crop yields and maintaining biodiversity.

In response to the growing challenges in the food industry, food technology companies are adopting a range of innovative solutions to revolutionize the way we produce, distribute and consume food. Plant-based meat alternatives have gained popularity, offering consumers environmentally friendly options that mimic the taste and texture of traditional meats. Personalized nutrition services are catering to individual health needs by providing tailored dietary plans that optimize well-being. Vertical farming and urban agriculture technologies are transforming urban spaces into productive farmland, enabling the efficient cultivation of fresh, locally grown produce and reducing the carbon footprint associated with long-distance food transportation. Furthermore, efforts to combat food waste are leveraging technology to monitor and minimize waste across the entire supply chain, from farm to table. The integration of block chain technology is also playing a pivotal role in enhancing food traceability, allowing for greater transparency and safety in the food system. Such advancements are paving the way for a more sustainable and resilient food system. Using 3D printing technology, food production can be revolutionized by offering the ability to create customized shapes and textures. This innovative approach allows for the production of visually appealing and intricate foods, such as 3D-printed chocolates and pastries, which can be designed with complex patterns and structures. Additionally, the technology can facilitate the use of alternative ingredients, such as insect-based foods, which offer a sustainable

source of protein. By incorporating crickets, mealworms, and other insects into the production process, 3D printing can help reduce the consumption of traditional meat products and promote environmental benefits. This approach not only introduces novel culinary experiences but also supports sustainable and efficient food production practices for the future.

As the result, food technology holds immense potential to address the challenges faced by the food industry, offering innovative solutions that can transform the way we produce, distribute, and consume food. By embracing advancements such as vertical farming, precision agriculture and alternative protein sources, we can significantly improve efficiency, reduce waste and enhance resilience in our food systems. These technologies have the potential to contribute to a more sustainable and secure food supply for future generations, ensuring that resources are used more efficiently while minimizing the environmental impact. However, it is essential to consider the ethical implications of these technologies, including fair access to food, the treatment of workers and the potential for unintended consequences. Additionally, prioritizing consumer safety throughout the development and implementation of food technology is crucial, ensuring that new products and methods adhere to the highest standards of health and safety. By balancing innovation with ethical considerations and safety measures, we can leverage food technology to create a more sustainable and equitable food future.

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Briefs

Pakistan eyes billions ...

FROM PAGE 01

Salman for his special interest in Pakistan, which led to a successful visit by the Saudi delegation. "We must ensure the completion of this investment in Pakistan with the same spirit and dedication," he added. The premier warned that no obstacles or hindrances in this regard will be allowed. He also reiterated his commitment to working day and night for Pakistan's progress and prosperity, as promised to the people. "If we continue to work hard, we will soon achieve Pakistan's development, prosperity, and economic stability." Islamabad also identified the much-awaited Diamer Bhasha Dam with an equity investment of \$1.2 billion. Pakistan has also sought an investment for conducting the feasibility of a luxury five-star hotel for which the land is available with the Capital Development Authority (CDA). The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), jointly run by the military and civilian sides.

FinMin holds key meetings with ...

FROM PAGE 01

(ADB) President Masatsugu Asakawa which saw the two sides discussing matters pertaining to further enhancing Islamabad's partnership with the ADB protecting the country's envelope of concessional financing and future project pipeline. Furthermore, during his meeting with United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) CEO, Scott Nathan, FinMin Aurangzeb mulled over the prospects of widening DFC's investment in Islamabad and "amicable resolution of outstanding issues". During the meeting, the minister apprised the senior DFC official of the government's measures towards improving the country's economy including the steps taken to encourage innovative financing models to leverage private sector investment and the potential of public-private partnerships.

PTI leader sees Saudi role ...

FROM PAGE 01

as indifferent towards Saudi Arabia's role in a purported regime change operation, are solely his personal opinion and do not garner support from PTI's leadership or grassroots. "Saudi Arabia stands as one of Pakistan's closest and most trusted allies in the Islamic world," the PTI spokesperson affirmed. "The founding principles of PTI underscore the utmost value placed upon Pakistan's relationship with the Saudi government and its people." Highlighting the significance of the bilateral ties, the spokesperson emphasised the mutual respect and trust shared between PTI's founder, Imran Khan, and the Saudi Crown Prince. PTI is committed to fostering and enhancing the cooperation and brotherhood between the two nations.

PTI demands CJP to ...

FROM PAGE 01

report should be divulged before the nation sans any further delay because the contents of the reports revealed through various media sources were of great importance from many aspects; hence the people had their fundamental and constitutional rights to know about its verified contents. PTI Spokesperson asserted that the commission had held the then chief minister Punjab Shehbaz Sharif and his Punjab government responsible for Faizabad Dharna in the light of the testimony of the then prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and interior minister Ahsan Iqbal and some other key figures of the PML-N government's cabinet. He said that if Shahbaz Sharif had a little bit of shame and modesty, then he should resign and answer to the nation for his criminal dereliction of his duties.

PSG beat Barcelona 1-4 to reach UEFA semi-finals

Kylian Mbappe, who seems set to join Real Madrid in the summer, scored twice to lead PSG to the semifinals

SPORTS DESK

MADRID: France's Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) triumphed over Spain's Barcelona with 1-4 victory as the two teams went head-to-head in the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Champions League quarter-final. In a thrilling match between both teams, the early lead captured by Raphinha for Barcelona was remarkably countered by Ronald Araujo's expulsion in the 29th minute. Additionally, Ousmane Dembele and Vitinha levelled the tie, setting the stage for fellow Kylian Mbappe's brace, propelling PSG into the coveted final four for the first time since 2021. Despite substantial investment, PSG had yet to clinch the trophy, but their arsenal of attacking prowess showcased their potential to seize it. Luis Enrique, the PSG coach

and former Barcelona legend who steered Barca to Champions League glory in 2015, instilled confidence in his team's ability to reverse the deficit. "It looked bad but the team concentrated - whatever happened, we had to beat Barcelona," said Dembele, whistled heavily by fans of his former club. For five-time winners Barcelona, aspirations of a semi-final return for the first time since 2019 were dashed by Araujo's dismissal, amplifying their European woes, with their last Champions League triumph dating back to 2015. "In Europe playing with 10 you know you are going to suffer," Barcelona midfielder Frenkie de Jong told Movistar. "We tried and we fought to be in the semi-finals, it's a tough blow because we were convinced we could get through."

The match's narrative unfolded with Barcelona momentarily seizing the lead through the dynamic Lamine Yamal, only to be countered by PSG's relentless assault, particularly spearheaded by Bradley Barcola. As the final whistle

blew, PSG emerged victorious, leaving Barcelona to grapple with the harsh re-



less assault, particularly spearheaded by Bradley Barcola. As the final whistle

ality of another European setback. Meanwhile, Paris Saint Germain's Kylian Mbappe said that he is eager to win the first Champions League title for his hometown club. Mbappe, who could exit PSG in the summer with Real Madrid as the biggest favourite to rope him in, told reporters that he is not thinking about his future at the moment. "I have the dream of winning the Champions League for Paris," Mbappe told reporters at Barcelona Olympic stadium on Tuesday. "I'm proud to be at PSG since the first day. It's not because there are good times and bad times that my pride takes a hit. The pride of playing for this club, of representing the club of the capital of my country, it's something special for me who grew up there. To experience an evening like this one as a Parisian, it's great. We have one more step to go before we reach the

final in Wembley, so we need to stay calm." After suffering a 3-2 loss in the first leg in Paris, PSG came back from 1-0 down to beat 10-man Barcelona. PSG will lock horns with Borussia Dortmund in the semi-finals after the Germans beat Atletico Madrid. Having failed to go beyond the round of 16 in the previous two seasons, PSG took full advantage of the home side's mistakes to make a grand comeback. "We beat a great team this evening, but even if we had lost, I would be proud to be Parisian. Now it's certain that during evenings like this, the pride is even greater," Mbappe said. "We are very happy, we beat a team that we wanted to beat and to be closer to the final. This one is for the fans that came here to support us and those back home. It's a night to be proud."

Dubai airport chaos as Gulf reels from deadly storms

UAE witnesses record-breaking rains, highest in 75 years

FOREIGN DESK

DUBAI: Heavy rain has been battering Gulf states, causing flash floods that have killed 20 people and disrupted flights at the world's second-busiest airport. Dubai Airport said it was facing "very challenging conditions" on Wednesday. It advised passengers not to turn up as runways were inundated with water. Further north, a man died when his car was caught in flash floods. In Oman, rescuers found the body of a girl in Saham, bringing the death toll in the country to 19 since Sunday. Authorities also warned that more thunderstorms, heavy rain and strong winds were forecast, with many low-lying areas still under water. The United Arab

Emirates, Oman's northern neighbour, experienced on Tuesday its largest rainfall event since records began 75 years ago. The National Centre of Meteorology announced that 254.8mm (9.9in) had fallen on Khatm al-Shakla, in the emirate of al-Ain, over less than 24 hours. The country averages 140-200 mm of rainfall per year, while Dubai typically receives only 97mm. The monthly average for April is only about 8mm. Footage from the centre of Dubai showed dozens of submerged vehicles on a flooded part of Sheikh Zayed Road, as well as long traffic jams elsewhere on the 12-lane highway. British tourist Caroline Seubert, 29, from Leyland in Lancashire, told the media that she and her husband were currently stranded at

a shopping centre in Dubai. Ms Seubert, who is 22 weeks pregnant, said they had headed to Dubai Mall on Tuesday morning because they had booked tickets for its aquarium and had not been warned by their hotel that it could be unsafe because of the storm. "The mall was flooded, ceilings were collapsing, the place shut at 7.30pm. We were told to leave, but the metro was shut and the taxis were not running or picking up in the area," she said. "We were stranded, had to sleep in the mall lobby overnight." They managed to catch a taxi in the morning, but it could not reach their hotel and dropped them off at another mall on the way, she said. "We still can't get taxis to agree to take us to our hotel 15 minutes down the road, and our hotel

refused to put their usual mall shuttle bus on in order to help people," she said. Another British citizen who lives in Dubai, Ross Moore, told the BBC the storm was "an incredible sight to see". "I have never seen anything like it in the UAE and I've been here since 2017," said the 35-year-old. "The thunder and lightning was incredible, the noise was something I'll never forget." He said his home was in an area on higher ground, so a little water came in but they have managed with sandbags and towels against the door. "I went out with my son yesterday afternoon, just within our community, and everything was flooded, all the roads. Last night trucks came in and collected all the water." No deaths were reported in Dubai.

Mark Chapman says depleted squad won't affect results

RAWALPINDI: Mark Chapman hoped that the absence of some key New Zealand players from the T20I series against Pakistan would have no bearing on the results as both teams gear up for the opening match tomorrow. The first match of the five-T20I series will be played in Rawalpindi. "We know that we are missing a few players. The team we have got here comprising an exciting bunch of players. There are some very talented players in the team the ones who have shown great skills and performance in domestic cricket. Boys are excited to give their best in the series," Chapman said during a press conference. Chapman rated Pakistan team as a very strong outfit. "The team is a strong unit. Pakistan is playing their best team against us so it would be a great opportunity for our young players to show their talent against the best of Pakistan players. The team members are excited to perform and impress the selectors." He also hoped to make the series a real competitive one. "There is some quality talent in the New Zealand team. Hopefully, the series will be a competitive one." Michael Bracewell will lead New Zealand during their tour of Pakistan. Trent Boult, Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Mitch Santner and Kane Williamson won't feature in the series due to Indian Premier League commitments. Colin Munro was also unavailable for selection, while Tim Southee has been rested. Will Young was also unavailable for selection due to his contract with Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club, as was Tom Latham, who is awaiting the birth of his second child.—Agencies

7 terrorists killed ...

FROM PAGE 01

engaged and after an intense fire exchange, all seven territories were sent to hell. A large quantity of weapons, ammunition and explosives was also recovered from the killed terrorists. Pakistan has consistently been asking Interim Afghan Government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border. Interim Afghan Government is expected to fulfill its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by terrorists for perpetuating acts of terrorism against Pakistan.

SHC asks interior ...

FROM PAGE 01

service, social media websites and applications are only issued by the said ministry after careful consideration of all the relevant reports and circumstances. Following the regulatory body's remarks, the interior ministry, in a separate case, informed the Islamabad High Court (IHC) that "content uploaded on the internet" is a "threat" to the country's national security. During the hearing today, SHC CJ highlighted that the "law does not empower the interior ministry to act on reports forwarded by intelligence agencies". Lamenting the suspension, the petitioner's lawyer said using X and other social media platforms does not lead to "blasts". "In hindsight [it seems that] no justification was given to suspend X," the SHC chief justice said, adding that the court will issue its orders if the interior ministry does not withdraw the directives issued on February 17.

Tarar hopes May 9 ...

FROM PAGE 01

government wanted to see those involved in attacking defence and sensitive installations punished. He regretted that those facing serious charges had obtained relief from courts, but hoped that the May 9 cases would soon reach logical conclusion. International financial institutions were projecting a marked decline in inflation, he noted and mentioned the recent positive reviews of Pakistan's economy at world level to argue his case. The federal cabinet had decided to instruct the four provinces to ensure providing right wheat prices, Tarar, as harvesting has begun in the country and there are indications of a bumper crop which will help alleviating the food inflation. About the contradictions in the statements of PTI leaders, he said they were unable to create unified position even within their own party and added that they had no nothing to offer to the people. He reminded the rival party that their leader was in jail on corruption charges.

Nawaz Sharif gets clean ...

FROM PAGE 01

in Islamabad to acquit the former premier. The court had directed NAB to include the PML-N leader in the investigation. The court may acquit Nawaz Sharif from the Toshakhana reference, the watchdog stated in its report submitted before the court today, highlighting that the car in question was not a part of the Toshakhana at the time of purchase by the former prime minister. According to the anti-corruption body's findings, the Saudi government gifted a car to then-prime minister Nawaz in 1997 which he deposited in Toshakhana. Later in 2008, the report mentioned, then-premier Yusuf Raza Gilani offered the PML-N supreme to buy the same car. Therefore, Nawaz bought the car not from the Toshakhana, but from the federal transport pool, the report maintained, adding that the vehicle was not purchased using a fake bank account.

Nadal wins on injury comeback at Barcelona Open

BARCELONA: Rafael Nadal made light work of Flavio Cobolli on a triumphant return from injury at the Barcelona Open. The 22-time Grand Slam champion had not played an ATP Tour match since January but dispatched the Italian 6-2, 6-3 in one hour and 25 minutes to reach the second round. Nadal, 37, was able to play on clay for the first time since winning the French Open in 2022 and showed flashes of his usual brilliance in a solid display. "It was a good start - when you return you can't get rid of the doubts in one day, above all, on a physical level," Nadal told TVE. "Within what it could be, it was a good first round. He made mistakes and I think I played the game that I had to play." Nadal who has triumphed at Roland Garros a record 14 times, is hoping to play there in May in what he expects to be the final year of his professional career. The clay court king, who missed most of 2023 injured, will face Alex de Minaur on Wednesday after breezing past Cobolli. "It will be at a speed that I don't know if I will be able to keep up with, but I'll try," Nadal said of facing the 11th-ranked De Minaur. After a double fault to fall 30-0 behind Nadal found his rhythm, with Cobolli intimidated by the fervent support for the Spaniard on the court named after him.—Agencies



SARGODHA: Players participating in tug-of-war competition during Inter Girls Collegiate Tug-of-War Tournament organized by Education Board Sargodha.—APP

Women's development key to economic sustainability

Lansana Woneh emphasized that dismantling structural barriers in their way is crucial for achieving gender parity and that tackling multi-forms of vulnerability and violence against women

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Lansana Woneh, Country Representative, UN Women has said that Women's economic empowerment is not just a women's issue but a human rights issue, there development is imperative and by supporting women entrepreneurs, we can create a more inclusive and sustainable economy. He emphasized that dismantling structural barriers in their way is crucial for achieving gender parity and that tackling multi-forms of vulnerability and violence against women through improved policies, programmes and funding mechanisms is of paramount importance. He said this during his address as Chief Guest at National Women Trade Fair Certificate Distribution Ceremony and Eid Milan Party held in collaboration with Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and National Commission on Status of Women at Chamber House on Tuesday. He assured his institution's full-



est support to all the stakeholders to achieve the objectives of women empowerment for promoting their advancement in all the sectors. Chairperson National Commission on Status of Women Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar said that empowering women economically is crucial for the development of our society. She said that there is no dearth of talent and creativity in the women of Pakistan, what they lack is opportunity to hone their talents to cultivate and that

they should not be looked as beneficiaries but as equal drivers of the economy. She went on to say that, NCSW is committed to pull the women out of poverty by their economic empowerment, education, skill development, health facilities and especially by curbing violence against them. She appreciated the support of academia, civil society and all other partners especially the UNWOMEN, ICCI and IWCCI in making this event a success. Acting President ICCI Faad Waheed called for collaborative efforts to end poverty in all its dimensions and pushing for peace and dignity for women and girls everywhere adding that women are not a burden on the economy rather they are the missing piece that will drive our economy to prosperity. He said that in today's Pakistan, women are enjoying equal opportunities to excel in the fields of their choice and that they are exceptionally proving their abilities. He extended all out support of ICCI to women entrepreneurs for necessary guidance for the flourishing their businesses. Engineer Azhar ul Islam Zafar Vice President ICCI drew attention to the pressing need for women to hold leadership roles in all the fields of life.

Court Notice

ابعدالت چٹاب سردہ پانچ پوری صاحبہ سول جج قاضی کورٹ راولپنڈی درخواست حفاظت ازواج کی ماہانہ نمونہ مقدمہ شاہد رمضان بنام سردہ عظمت وغیرہ بنام سردہ عظمت و خیر عظمت محمد سمان کاؤل برک ڈاکٹرز خالص تحصیل و تحصیل راولپنڈی برک محمد عثمان بالائیں درمیان کیا گیا ہے سہ ماہی عدالت لہذا پانچ پوری اڈیشنر مشنری کیا جاتا ہے کہ آپ عدالت کاؤل مورخہ 19 اپریل 2024ء کو 8 بجے جج صاحب عدالت آؤ اور درج کردہ تاریخ کارفرم آپس میں لائی جائے گی

## Briefs

## Luo Zhaohui emphasizes development coop with Pakistan

BEIJING : Terming China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, Chairman China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), Luo Zhaohui has said that strengthening development cooperation with Pakistan was the top priority of China and it is also his firm personal commitment. Pakistan is the first country to participate in the joint construction of the Belt and Road and we will continue to strengthen development cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiatives, he made these remarks after receiving Hilal-e-Quaid-e-Azam at a befitting investiture ceremony held in Pakistan Embassy, Beijing. Luo Zhaohui said that this honor not only belongs to him personally, but also to everyone in both countries who works hard for China-Pakistan friendship. He remarked that Hilal-e-Quaid-e-Azam carries the deep affection of the Pakistani government and people towards China and symbolizes the great friendship, mutual respect, unity and firm mutual trust between our two great countries.

He said, China will actively promote livelihood assistance. In 2018, the agency took the lead in establishing a social and livelihood working group under the framework of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Joint Committee, focusing on practical cooperation with Pakistan in six fields: agriculture, education, medical care, water supply, poverty alleviation and vocational education.—APP

## Climate migrants flee fatal landslide threat in Tajikistan

KHURUSON : Peeling onions in her new home, Yodgoroy Makhmalieva recalled the terrifying moment four years ago when a landslide buried her family home in mountainous Tajikistan. Heavy snow and rain, she said, sent a deluge of rocks, water and mud crashing into the house in the Central Asian country estimated to be among the most vulnerable to effects of climate change. "We had lived in fear until the day the mountain collapsed and destroyed our house," the 61-year-old said, wearing a shimmering headscarf. Makhmalieva and her husband Jamoliddin had feared a torrent of earth would destroy their home, and are now among thousands of Tajiks displaced by a growing number of natural disasters. Authorities in the ex-Soviet country of around 10 million believe hundreds of thousands live in regions threatened by mudslides, landslides, avalanches, floods and earthquakes. They have made relocating people to safety a priority — a daunting task for one of the world's poorest countries.—APP

## Apple CEO meets Indonesia leader to talk investments

JAKARTA : Apple chief executive Tim Cook met Indonesia's president on Wednesday, as the tech giant explores ways to invest in Southeast Asia's biggest economy and diversify supply chains away from China. The visit comes as US President Joe Biden's administration seeks to boost other Asian trade partners' roles in the global tech supply chain to reduce American dependence on China. Cook travelled to Indonesia's presidential palace in Jakarta to meet Joko Widodo, the outgoing leader more popularly known as Jokowi, who has promoted a burgeoning tech sector. "Indonesia is a very important market for us. We talked about the president's desire to see manufacturing in the country, and it's something that we will look at," he told reporters.—DNA



WASHINGTON : DC Finance Minister, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, met with Mr. Ajay Banga, President World Bank Group.—DNA

## China-Germany cooperation not 'risk' but opportunity: Xi

China can provide the certainty Germany is in urgent need of as three uncertainties - the Ukraine crisis, US presidential elections and the European Parliament elections, are lingering, Wang told the media

## NEWS DESK

BEIJING : Chinese President Xi Jinping called on both China and Germany to view and develop bilateral relations from a long-term and strategic perspective, and work together to inject greater stability and certainty into the world. Xi made the remarks during a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who concluded his three-day China visit in Beijing after leading a grand delegation to Chongqing and Shanghai. Against the backdrop of the EU's subsidy accusations on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) and wind turbines, and the US-initiated "overcapacity" hype, Xi called for viewing the production capacity issue objectively and dialectically. The two leaders also had an in-depth exchange of views on the crisis in Ukraine and other international and regional issues of mutual interest, the Xinhua News Agency reported. On Tuesday, Xi and Scholz also took a stroll around

the grounds of Diaoyutai State Guesthouse amid the mild breeze in the verdant spring, according to media reports. A friendly atmosphere could be felt throughout Scholz's visit, during which he visited German companies' China plants and had exchanges with students at Tongji University in Shanghai, an institute founded by a German doctor a century ago which has close cooperation with Germany. Scholz's full and extensive schedule and the US-initiated "overcapacity" hype, Xi called for viewing the production capacity issue objectively and dialectically. The two leaders also had an in-depth exchange of views on the crisis in Ukraine and other international and regional issues of mutual interest, the Xinhua News Agency reported. On Tuesday, Xi and Scholz also took a stroll around

media reporters on Tuesday. The positive results of the visit are beyond the expectations of some observers, and Wang also sees the leaders' meeting and Scholz's visit as injecting valuable and much needed positivity into turbulent China-EU relations.

When a populist wind seems to be growing stronger within the EU, leading to biased and combative opinions on China, it is hoped that Germany, after an in-depth engagement with China, will continue to lead the rational voices inside the EU, analysts said. During the Tuesday meeting, Xi noted that the industrial and supply chains of China and Germany are deeply intertwined and the markets of the two countries are highly interdependent. The mutually beneficial cooperation between China and Germany is not a "risk," but a guarantee for the stability of bilateral relations and an opportunity for the future, Xi said. The two countries have huge potential for win-win cooperation in both traditional fields such as ma-

chinery manufacturing and automobiles and emerging fields including green transformation and digital artificial intelligence, Xi noted. The two sides should carry forward the distinctive characteristics of mutual benefit and win-win outcomes and achieve mutual success, Xi said, adding that China's exports of electric vehicles, lithium batteries and photovoltaic products have not only enriched global supply and alleviated global inflationary pressure, but also contributed greatly to the global response to climate change and to a green and low-carbon transformation. Noting that both China and Germany depend heavily on industry and support free trade and economic globalization, Xi said the two sides should be vigilant against rising protectionism, look at the issue of production capacity objectively and dialectically from a market-oriented and global perspective, adhere to economic principles and foster further cooperation, Xinhua reported. For his part, Scholz said that through his visit in the past days, he was impressed by China's

development achievements and the close, sound cooperation between German and Chinese companies. Germany is willing to continue to strengthen the relationship with China, deepen bilateral dialogue and cooperation in various fields, promote people-to-people exchanges in such areas as education and culture, which is important for both countries and the world at large, he said. Germany opposes protectionism and supports free trade. As an important member of the EU, Germany is willing to play an active role in promoting the good development of EU-China relations, Scholz said. On Tuesday, Chinese Premier Li Qiang and the German chancellor jointly attended the Symposium of the China-Germany Economic Advisory Committee in Beijing with about 20 entrepreneurs from the two countries. Li stressed that the Chinese government is willing to work with the German government to provide more policy support to make cooperation between the two sides smoother and more efficient.

## Iran operation inflicted strategic defeat on Israel

TEHRAN : President Ebrahim Raisi says Iran's retaliatory operation against Israel inflicted not only a military defeat but also a strategic setback on the occupying Tel Aviv regime, and dissuaded certain regional Arab countries seeking to normalize diplomatic ties with the Zionist entity. "The Zionist regime's defeat was an intelligence, security and military one; but it was a strategic setback above all. Some countries sought to normalize relations with the Zionist regime, but they are now humiliated in the eyes of their own nations. This was a strategic failure for that regime," he pointed out. Raisi made the remarks on Wednesday as he addressed a ceremony in the capital Tehran on the occasion of the National Army Day, where forces with various divisions of Iran's Army attended a large-scale military parade, and displayed their new defense achievements, and advanced military equipment and hardware. The Iranian president went on to point to the growing global support for Palestine as well as simmering resentment against the United States and Israel, emphasizing that support for Palestine and the resistance front has now become the ensign of all nations and religions. "Our armed forces are ensuring security and peace and establishing sovereignty across the region, and are completely reliable," the Iranian president stated, urging regional countries to rely on their own assets and Muslim forces rather than foreign interference and partnerships with Israel. Raisi also underscored that Iran's Operation True Promise was "limited and punitive," warning the Tel Aviv regime against any military adventurism as a stronger strike could have totally wiped it out.—DNA

## Erdogan vows defense of Palestinian cause

Hamas leader Haniyeh to visit Turkiye this weekend: Erdogan

## WEB DESK

ANKARA : In the sixth month of Israel's relentless military campaign in the Gaza Strip, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has vowed to defend the Palestinian cause "even if I am left alone." "By killing over 14,000 innocent children in Gaza, Israel has already outdone Nazi leader Adolf Hitler," Erdogan told his ruling Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) parliamentary meeting in Ankara on Wednesday. He once again hit out at the "unconditional support from the West" for Israel, which he said was helping Israel "carry out massacres that went down shamefully in human history, both in Gaza, West Bank." Erdogan has harshly criticized Israel and accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu of committing a "massacre" since the latter launched a deadly military offensive on Gaza after an Oct. 7 cross-border attack led by Palestinian resistance group Hamas, in which some 1,200 Israelis were killed. Comparing Hamas' struggle to the Turkish War of Independence 100 years ago, Erdogan said, "We are well aware of the cost of saying this but the world must know the truth." Stressing that no one can question Turkiye's sensitivity to the Palestinian issue, Erdogan said that the Palestinian cause gave his life new meaning. "I will fight for the Palestinian cause and be the voice of oppressed Palestinian people even if I am left alone," he declared. Erdogan's government maintains links with Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip. Unlike some

European countries and the United States, Turkiye does not classify Hamas as a terrorist organization. "We are the only ones who have been brave enough to call Hamas a liberation movement," the president added. "Despite those who try to pander to Israel by classifying Hamas as terrorists, Turkiye will continue defending Palestine's struggle for independence at every turn." Erdogan also said he would host Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh this Saturday in Istanbul to discuss "a number of issues." Ankara has been in touch with Hamas over the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, Israel's lawless attacks, a cease-fire and hostage release discussions. It has also sent its condolences to Haniyeh after he lost three of his sons and

some of his grandchildren while visiting relatives at a refugee camp in Gaza last week. Nearly 33,800 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have since been killed in Gaza and nearly 76,500 have been injured amid mass destruction and shortages of necessities. The Israeli war has pushed 85% of Gaza's population into internal displacement amid a crippling blockade of most food, clean water and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the U.N. Israel is accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice, which in January issued an interim ruling ordering Tel Aviv to ensure its forces do not commit acts of genocide and guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

## Musk's \$2-\$3bn India investment unveiling expected

NEW DELHI: Tesla chief Elon Musk is set to announce an investment in India of \$2-\$3 billion, mainly for building a new factory, when he visits New Delhi next week to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, two sources familiar with the discussions said. Musk will meet Modi on Monday during his India trip, when the billionaire is expected to unveil his plans to enter the world's third-largest auto market where electric car adoption is still in its infancy. India's EV market is small but growing and dominated by local carmaker Tata Motors. EVs made up just 2% of total car sales in 2023, but the government is targeting 30% of new cars to be EVs starting 2030. Dutch, Singapore firms set to invest \$7bn in India Musk's visit comes as Tesla battles slowing sales in the major markets of the United States and China, and has this week announced layoffs affecting 10% of its workforce. Details of Musk's India visit are closely-guarded, with the CEO only publicly confirming on his social media platform X that he will meet Modi in India. The two sources said Musk will likely give an investment figure for India without sharing details such as a timeline or an Indian state where the plant will be built. Tesla did not immediately respond to a request for comment.—APP

## Tokyo shares dip as US rate cut hopes fade

TOKYO : Tokyo stocks closed lower on Wednesday after the head of the Federal Reserve warned that interest rates would likely have to stay elevated for some time to combat sticky inflation. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index dropped 1.32 percent, or 509.40 points, to 37,961.80, while the broader Topix index lost 1.26 percent, or 33.96 points, to 2,663.15. Traders reversed early gains and the market stumbled to its lowest close in two months after benchmark US Treasury yields spiked and weighed on high-tech shares, analysts said. Fed boss Jerome Powell's comments came after data showed inflation had edged up for three months and the jobs market remained resilient despite borrowing costs being at two-decade highs. He said: "Given the strength of the labour market and progress on inflation so far, it is appropriate to allow restrictive policy further time.—APP

## Crisis-hit Ethiopia urgently needs \$1B in aid: UN

WASHINGTON : The UN has appealed for pledges to address the "critical" humanitarian situation in Ethiopia, where more than 21 million people need aid and a dire food crisis is deepening. A donor conference at the United Nations' European headquarters on Tuesday aims to raise significant pledges towards the \$1 billion urgently needed to cover aid for just the next three months. "We need to mobilise," Ramiz Alakbarov, the UN humanitarian coordinator in Ethiopia, said ahead of the conference. "The people of Ethiopia need our solidarity and our support." Ethiopians are facing rumbling internal conflicts amid economic and climate shocks and an increasingly dire food and malnutrition crisis. Today the UN has pledged £100 million to help hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians as the humanitarian crisis in the country worsens. This vital assistance will support people facing the devastating impacts of climate change, conflict and disease outbreaks. pic.twitter.com/F5L-prnCzjW The UN has said \$3.24 billion is needed this year alone, including to assist some four million internally displaced people. But so far, that plan is less than five percent funded. "The gap remains very wide... We have really to act before it is too late," Shiferaw Teklemariam, commissioner of the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission, told reporters in Geneva.—Agencies

## Petro suspends meeting with Ecuadorian leader

## WEB DESK

BOGOTA: Colombian President Gustavo Petro suspended a planned meeting with Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa, in response to an Ecuadorian police raid on Mexico's Embassy in the capital Quito earlier this month. "The bilateral Cabinet meeting planned during the previous term of President Guillermo Lasso has been suspended. I believe the events at the Mexican Embassy are very serious. If we want world peace, it is imperative to rebuild international law,"

Petro said. Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador called for Ecuador to be expelled from the UN due to the raid on its embassy in Ecuador's capital. Speaking at the extraordinary meeting of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) via video conference, Lopez Obrador said: "We appreciate the solidarity shown by the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean." "If you deem it appropriate and feasible, we invite you to join us by signing the complaint to the International Court of Justice," he added.



ISLAMABAD : Pakistan's High Commissioner to Singapore, Ms. Rukhsana Afzaal in a group photo with the ASEAN Ambassadors/High Commissioners on Wednesday.—DNA

**Briefs**

**14 dead in Russian missile strike**

KIEV: A Russian missile attack has killed 14 people in the city of Chernihiv in northern Ukraine, according to Ukrainian officials. Ukraine's interior minister said there were more than 60 injured in the attack, which hit an eight-storey building in a densely populated area. Three missiles had struck close to the centre of the city, officials said. The attack came hours after reports of a Ukrainian strike on a Russian military airfield in occupied Crimea. Details have yet to be confirmed, although local social media channels shared video of an apparent fire on the airfield at Dzhankoy in northern Crimea. In Chernihiv, acting mayor Oleksandr Lomako said one building had suffered a direct hit from one of the Russian missiles and several floors had been damaged. The presidential office in Kyiv said another four high-rise buildings, a hospital, dozens of cars and a higher education institution were all damaged in the attack. Ukrainian Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said that two children were among the casualties, and police were searching the rubble for further victims.

**Iranian envoy lauds Pakistan's defence capabilities**

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran Reza Amiri Moghaddam called on Minister for Defence and Defence Production Khawaja Asif on Wednesday and lauded the defence capabilities of Pakistan. The defence minister said Pakistan and Iran enjoyed cordial and fraternal ties, nourished by centuries old religious and cultural affinities, a news release said. Khawaja Asif reiterated Pakistan's stance on Palestine issue and highlighted early achievement of ceasefire in Gaza as well as resolution of Palestine issue. Underlining the importance of Joint Border Commission, the Minister said that Pakistan had taken all necessary measures in the domain of border management and the joint efforts on the issue should continue in days ahead. On the occasion, the Iranian Ambassador appreciated Pakistan's defence capabilities and said the two countries had potential for further collaboration in the field of defence and energy cooperation.

**Gandapur blasts Fazl, says he wants to 'set his price'**

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Kyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur Wednesday lambasted Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman for looking to "set his price" amid Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) attempts to secure support for its protest movement. "Fazlur Rehman doesn't even have a [single] vote in his own house [...] Even my [PTI's] worker will beat him [in elections]," Gandapur said while talking to journalists in Islamabad. He appeared before an anti-terrorism court today in cases pertaining audio leaks, violation of Section 144 and alleged involvement in vandalism at Islamabad's judicial complex. His remarks come days after the PTI and the JUI-F "agreed on increasing party-level contacts" following Asad Qaiser's telephonic conversation with Fazl wherein the duo exchanged views on the current political situation and the process of forming a government. Stressing that both parties have "ideological coordination" regarding the public

**Women empowerment priority of French foreign policy: envoy**

We indeed believe that the contribution of the private sector is critical to achieving the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals by creating employment, building skills, giving opportunities and reducing poverty and inequalities: Nicolas Galey



ANSAR M BHATTI/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France to Pakistan Nicolas Galey has said women's empowerment and gender equality are priorities of French foreign policy, which includes an ambitious "feminist diplomacy." "Today we have a perfect demonstration of this convergence with this series of "inspiring stories" - short videos which highlight the contribution of four French companies to the promotion of women's empowerment in Pakistan". Ambassador of France made these remarks during a ceremony held to honour the contribution of French companies in Pakistan to women empowerment and corporate social responsibility. A panel discussion was also arranged on the occasion where representatives of the four companies detailed their activities undertaken under their corporate social responsibility initiative. The ambassador further said, "We are gathered here to recognize the role of the private sector for causes of general interest,

which are often considered to be the responsibility of public institutions. But fortunately, times are changing, and for the better". Ambassador Galey said, some companies have been pioneers in this regard and have introduced CSR before the concept was even known. Others became aware of this responsibility following legislations which organized CSR in many countries. He noted that companies are not philanthropic organizations. But what is important, and which is a very significant development over the last few decades, is that public and private interests and concerns have converged more and more to promote developments and changes that, in certain cases, societies were expecting and, in other situations, which societies find difficult to engage in spontaneously. While giving the background of the project, he said it was launched by four French companies and the Embassy - namely L'Oréal, Schneider, IPSOS and Servier. "We indeed believe that the contribution of the private sector is critical to achieving the U.N. Sus-

tainable Development Goals by creating employment, building skills, giving opportunities and reducing poverty and inequalities, and we are convinced that, in this regard, French investors abroad have duties and responsibilities in their host countries". For their activities have both a systemic impact through the promotion of values and standards, but also an impact on individuals - and this exactly what these short videos are about, as you will see in a few minutes, he added. He said he was very happy and proud that French companies in Pakistan developed good practices in terms of governance, gender equality and human rights, as well as working relations and conditions, environment, and local development. He mentioned about a legislation adopted in France in 2019 to include consideration of social and environmental issues in the management of French companies. And as far as public and government policies are concerned, all our international development and cooperation projects must now systematically integrate actions related to wom-

en's rights and gender equality, as well as climate change issues. The ambassador was of the view, the initiative that brought them together was also an opportunity to highlight that the French economic presence in Pakistan - 20 subsidiaries, 1.2 billion Euros of investments - was beneficial not only to the economy of this country but also to its people, and to show that these companies, apart from the business perspectives, actively participate and locally contribute to the development of Pakistan. "Also, in some particularly tragic moments, like the floods of summer 2022, French companies demonstrated their solidarity and their involvement in the Pakistani social and economic fabric by helping local communities, directly or through funding of NGOs, some of them represented here". Despite difficult economic conditions for all businesses in Pakistan during the recent years, these NGOs have not given up on this essential part of identity, which is to be more than a business - a responsible actor in the Pakistani society.

**MBS, MBZ urge 'maximum restraint' amid ME crisis**

FOREIGN DESK

RIYADH: UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman held a phone call on escalating tensions in the Middle East and sought "maximum restraint" among all parties. The call came in the wake of Iran's strike on Israel in retaliation of an airstrike on the former's embassy compound in Damascus on April 1 that was attributed to Israel. UAE state news agency WAM reported Wednesday that Sheikh Mohamed and the Crown Prince reviewed the situation in the Middle East and the grave threats it poses to regional security and stability. They urged all parties to exercise "maximum restraint" and prevent the region and its people from suffering the consequences of a broader conflict. The two leaders also discussed the efforts being made to address the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, stressing the importance of intensifying endeavors to bring about an

immediate ceasefire, provide full protection to civilians in accordance with the rules of international humanitarian law, and ensure sustainable and unimpeded flow of aid to the people of Gaza. They stressed the need for determined international action to prevent further escalation of the conflict and highlighted the importance of establishing a clear political pathway towards achieving a just and comprehensive peace based on the two-state solution, to ensure the security and stability of the region and its people. WAM reported. Sheikh Mohamed and the Crown Prince also discussed ways to strengthen bilateral ties and boost collaboration for the mutual benefit of the two nations. Meanwhile, the health ministry in Gaza said Tuesday at least 33,843 people have been killed in the territory during the more than six months of war between Israel and Palestinian militants. Earlier, on October 7, Hamas' attack on Israel had resulted in the deaths of 1,170 people, most of them civilians, according to Israeli figures.

**Israel-Hamas talks on Gaza truce 'stalling': Qatari PM**

NEWS DESK

DOHA: Negotiations between Israel and Hamas to secure a truce in Gaza and a release of hostages have stalled, Qatar's prime minister said on Wednesday. "We are going through a sensitive stage with some stalling, and we are trying as much as possible to address this stalling," Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani told a news conference with Romanian Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu. Qatar, with the United States and Egypt, has been engaged in weeks of behind-the-scenes talks to secure a truce in Gaza and the release of Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails. Negotiators are trying to "move forward and put an end to the suffering that the people in Gaza are experiencing and returning the hostages," Sheikh Mohammed said. The mediators had hoped to secure a ceasefire before the start of Ramadan, but progress repeatedly faltered without any cessation of hostilities in the Muslim holy month which ended last week. Instead, fears have grown of the months-long war in Gaza spilling over into a regional conflict after Iran's first-ever direct attack on its arch-foe Israel this weekend. The Qatari premier said Doha had "warned from the beginning of this war against the expansion of the circle of conflict, and today we see conflicts on different fronts." "We constantly call on the international community to assume its responsibilities and stop this war," he added, saying people of Gaza faced "siege and starvation" with humanitarian aid being used as a "tool for political blackmail." As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 194 on Wednesday, aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and target different areas, and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. A reporter for the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza, killing and injuring scores of citizens. According to media sources, 13 citizens were massacred and others were injured when the Israeli army bombed them near the Sheikh Radwan Bridge in Gaza City. The Israeli army also bombed an apartment in ash-Shuja'iya neighborhood in eastern Gaza, killing and injuring a number of civilians. Other casualties were reported in different areas of Gaza following Israeli aerial, artillery and shooting attacks

**UNSC to vote today on Palestinian state UN membership**

NEW YORK: The United Nations Security Council will vote Thursday on the Palestinians' application to become a full UN member state, several diplomatic sources have told AFP. Amid Israel's military offensive in Gaza, the Palestinians in early April revived a membership application first made to the world body in 2011, though the veto-wielding United States has repeatedly expressed opposition to the proposal. The General Assembly can admit a new member state with a two-thirds majority vote, but only after the Security Council gives its recommendation. Regional bloc the Arab Group issued a statement Tuesday affirming its "unwavering support" for the Palestinians' application. "Membership in the United Nations is a crucial step in the right direction toward a just and lasting resolution of the Palestinian question in line with international law and relevant UN resolutions," the statement said. Algeria, a non-permanent Security Council member, has drafted the resolution that "recommends" to the General Assembly "the State of Palestine be admitted to membership of the United Nations." The vote on Thursday will coincide with a Security Council meeting scheduled several weeks ago to discuss the situation in Gaza, which ministers from several Arab countries are expected to attend. - Agencies

last night and today. The health ministry in Gaza said on Wednesday that the Israeli occupation army committed six massacres in different areas of the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours, killing at least 56 civilians and injuring over 89 others, while a large number of victims are still under the rubble of bombed buildings or lying on roads. In a statement, the health ministry said that the Israeli army killed and injured a large number of civilians in different areas of Gaza during the past 24 hours, but only 145 of them, including 56 martyrs, were transported to hospitals.



Islamabad: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of Federal Cabinet. - DNA

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