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France seeking 'clear message' from China over Ukraine war

Detailed News On Page-08

CM announces to establish agri centres

Detailed News On Page-08

Sinner opens up after record-breaking triumph

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PM assures foolproof security

Bisham attack aimed to harm Pak-China ties

PM said the government would ensure that the perpetrators and culprits of March 26 incident should get the exemplary punishment

DNA

DASU: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday assured foolproof security measures for the Chinese nationals working on Dasu Hydropower Project as well as across the country and resolved to ensure exemplary punishment for the perpetrators of March 26 incident. Addressing a gathering of the Chinese engineers and workers, he said the government would ensure that the perpetrators and culprits of March 26 incident should get the exemplary punishment, so that it would be a lesson and that no one could commit such dastardly act in future. The prime minister said that the sole purpose of his visit was to offer deep and sincere condolences and express feelings to the Chinese brothers and sisters in Dasu over a sad incident that took place on March 26 in which five Chinese and one local lost their lives. He said it was a cowardly act on part of the terrorists to kill innocent Chinese and a Pakistani for no other reason except to disturb and damage exceptional friendship between Pakistan and China.

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CTD 'arrests' over 10 terrorists, facilitators

Confirms TTP's hand behind Besham terror attack

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) has "arrested" more than 10 terrorists, facilitators involved in the attack on Chinese engineers in Shang-la's Bisham city last week, sources told Geo News on Monday. As per the sources, a Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)-affiliated outfits are believed to be involved in the March 26 deadly attack. During the attack, five Chinese citizens, including a woman, and a Pakistani driver were killed when their vehicle was attacked in Shang-la's Bisham city as a suicide bomber crashed his explosives-laden vehicle into the car carrying the victims. Following the incident, the country's civil

and military leadership notably Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir condemned the attack vowing that the perpetrators responsible for the heinous attack would be brought to justice. Meanwhile, a wreath-laying ceremony was held at Rawalpindi's Nur Khan Airbase and a 30-second silence was observed as bodies of the deceased Chinese nationals were airlifted back to China. Floral wreaths were laid on behalf of the president, prime minister, army chief, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu and Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) General Sahir Shamsah Mirza.

Continued on Page 06



DAASU: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets the Chinese Engineers and government officials at Kass camp of China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC). - DNA

Ex-CJP Jilani refuses to head commission

Says it is not his mandate to proceed in this case

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Minutes after the Supreme Court took suo motu notice on Islamabad High Court's (IHC) judges' letter, former chief justice of Pakistan Tassaduq Hussain Jilani recused himself from heading the one-man commission formed by the government to probe the allegations regarding the intelligence interference in judicial matters. The former CJ, while excusing himself, noted that since the letter was written by the judges to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) and chief justice,

Continued on Page 06

Annual inflation gauge drops to 20.7%

Compared with the previous month, inflation for March registered a 1.7pc rise

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics on Monday showed that the consumer price index (CPI) for March was up 20.7 per cent from the same month last year, the lowest reading in nearly two years and below the finance ministry's projections for the month. Compared with the previous month, inflation for March registered a 1.7pc rise. The economy has been beset by

Continued on Page 06

Constitutes 7 members bench

SC takes suo motu notice of IHC judges' letter

Apart from the CJP the bench also comprises Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Mussarat Hilali, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Monday took suo motu notice of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges' letter alleging interference by intelligence agencies in judicial matters despite the government forming a commission to probe the matter. A seven-member bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa will hold the maiden hearing on the issue on Wednesday. Apart from the CJP the bench also comprises Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Mussarat Hilali, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan. The explosive letter which surfaced last week triggered a crisis and the Supreme Court led by CJP Isa has been under pressure to hear the matter under Article 184(3) of the Constitution.

Continued on Page 06

Demands full court

PTI rejects 7-member bench

Vows PTI standby legal fraternity to take the matter to its logical conclusion

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vehemently rejected the seven-member larger bench of like-minded judges headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan to probe into the six judges' letter documenting intelligence agencies' interference in judicial affairs, demanding that the matter should be

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Afghanistan

9 children killed by landmine

An unexploded mine left over from the time of the Russian invasion

AGENCIES

KABUL: Nine children were killed in a blast in southeastern Afghanistan caused by a landmine, laid during the country's decades of conflict, a provincial official said on Monday. The mine went off as a group of young boys and girls were playing with it in the Geru district of Ghazni province on Sunday, said the provincial head of the information and culture department, Hamidullah Nisar. "An unexploded mine left over from the time of the Russian invasion went off when they were playing with it," Nisar told AFP.

IHC orders Fawad's release

CJ questioned that NAB first arrested man and later sought evidence

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court Monday granted bail to former information minister Fawad Chaudhary in the case of misappropriation in construction projects in Jhelum. The court, approving the politician's bail, issued the orders during the hearing of the case in which Chaudhary was arrested by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in December last year. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri granted bail to the politician who remains imprisoned in Adiala Jail on judicial remand in the said case.

Toshakhana case

IHC suspends Imran, Bushra Bibi's sentence

IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq said appeal against the conviction would be fixed for hearing after Eid holidays



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday suspended sentence of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his spouse, Bushra Bibi, in the Toshakhana case. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq said appeal against the conviction would be fixed for hearing after Eid holidays. Accountability court's Judge Muhammad Bashir had sentenced Khan and Bushra to 14 years in prison with rigorous punishment in the Toshakhana reference in January.

Continued on Page 06

Reserved seats

SIC moves SC against PHC's verdict

Party maintains judgment based on fundamental misinterpretation of Article 51 and 106

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Sunni Itehad Council (SIC), comprising PTI-backed lawmakers, challenged on Monday the Peshawar High Court's March 14 order that deprived the party of reserved seats. The PHC through its verdict dashed the PTI's hopes of getting reserved seats as it dismissed the SIC's petition challenging the Election

Continued on Page 06

Israel hits consular section of Iranian embassy in Syria

A commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in Syria and Lebanon has been martyred in an Israeli attack on the Consular Section of the Iranian Embassy

FOREIGN DESK

DAMASCUS: The Consular Section of the Iranian Embassy in the Syrian capital of Damascus has come under a missile attack, with immediate reports of casualties as a result of the act of aggression. Syria's official news agency, SANA, said the strikes were carried out by "the Israeli enemy" and targeted the Mezzeah neighborhood in Damascus on Monday afternoon. "At approximately 00:17 p.m., the Israeli enemy launched an air aggression from the direction of the occupied Syrian Golan, targeting the Iranian consulate building in Damascus," SANA said, citing a military source as saying. "Our air defense media responded to the aggression's missiles and shot down some of them. The aggression led to the destruction of the entire building and the martyrdom and injury of everyone inside, and work is underway to recover the bodies." SANA, citing one of its correspondents, said the Israeli aggression also caused major destruction to "neighboring buildings." A commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards

Continued on Page 06

Israeli army 'executed' innocent civilians at al-Shifa

The scale of the destruction inside the complex and the buildings around it is very large," the ministry said

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: The Gaza Health Ministry says Israeli forces have withdrawn tanks and vehicles from Gaza's main hospital al-Shifa after a two-week siege of the medical complex. In a statement on Monday, the ministry said that dozens of bodies, some of them decomposed, had been found at the complex after

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President pushes for swift Turkmenistan trade agreement

Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan Atadjan Movlamov who called on him, said that the agreement, once signed, would help expand trade, promote regional connectivity as well as enhance economic activities in the region

DNA

Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday called for an early finalization of the Transit Trade Agreement with Turkmenistan to further boost bilateral cooperation between the two brotherly countries. The President, talking to the Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan Atadjan Movlamov who called on him, said that the agreement, once signed, would help expand trade, promote regional connectivity as well as enhance economic activities in the region. The ambassador congratulated President Zardari on assuming the office of the President for the second time, according to a President House press release.

Both sides expressed the desire for the early completion of the TAPI Gas Pipeline, which would not only support Pakistan's economy but would also help meet its energy needs. Welcoming the ambassador, the president said that Pakistan attached special value to its bilateral relations with Turkmenistan due to the centuries-old historical, religious and cultural links and wished to increase high-level exchanges to give fresh impetus to bilateral ties. He expressed Pakistan's desire to work with Turkmenistan to further enhance mutually beneficial cooperation. The president highlighted that the existing volume of trade between the two countries needed to be improved for the mutual benefit of the two countries. President Zardari

fondly recalled his visit to Turkmenistan during his first term as the president in 2010 to participate in the TAPI Summit as well as the 4th International Nauroze Festival in 2013. The ambassador of Turkmenistan conveyed the warm greetings of the Turkmen President, Serdar Berdimuhamedov, and former President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov to President Asif Ali Zardari on his election. He said that the Transit Trade Agreement was not only important for both friendly countries but also for the region as it would generate huge transit trade activities. The president expressed warm wishes for the leadership of Turkmenistan and thanked them for their felicitation message on his election.



ISLAMABAD : Minister for Power Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari holds a meeting with PITC.—DNA

Rescue remains high alert on Youm-e-Ali

MULTAN :Rescue 1122 remained high-alert across the district along with specially trained staff equipped with the essential logistics to handle any sort of emergency on Youm-e-Ali was observed peacefully here Monday. The Emergency Cover Plan (ECP) had been developed with more than a hundred staffers, nine fire vehicles, a special rescuer vehicle, and 19 ambulances with as many motorbike ambulances put on alert at about 31 rescue posts. District Emergency Officer Dr. Kaleemullah ensured in a statement that the entire staff performed duty diligently on the day in accordance with the ECP. Multiple checkpoints were built particularly around the imambargah of Lal Kurri, internal and external routes of Hussain Aghai, the clock tower, and all other related premises of the holy congregations. Provision of the emergency service was continued the whole day as per the Emergency Cover Plan in the city including tehsils of Jalalpur and Shujabad, it's said. Meanwhile, foolproof security arrangements were devised in Muzaffargarh today on Youm-e-Ali. According to DPO, Husnain Haider, as many as 650 police officials performed a duty to protect about 34 religious gatherings, and 11 processions were taken out on the day. The mourners had come through strictly checking physically and through metal detectors at three-tier security placed around the sensitive locations. APP

07 illegal arm holders held

RAWALPINDI : Police have arrested seven illegal arm holders and recovered arms and ammunition from their possession during crackdown here on Monday, informed police spokesman. Naseerabad police conducted raid and held three illegal arm holders namely Irfan, Sarhad Khan and Muhammad Iqbal. Police have recovered 02 rifle 30 bore and 01 pistol 30 bore from their custody. Similarly, Westridge police nabbed Salman and recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from his possession. Following operation, Mandra police held Nasir and recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from his possession. Jatali police recovered 01 Kalashnikov from Mujtaba. Rawat police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Prince. —APP

Americans pioneer BC tech; LONGi Pak unveils Hi-MO X6

LAHORE : LONGi, a global leader in solar panel manufacturing, has captured the attention of visitors to the Solar Pakistan exhibition held at Lahore's Expo Centre with the long-awaited debut of its game-changing Hi-MO X6 bifacial product, with attendees queuing to view the innovative piece of solar technology first-hand. If the Americans invented BC technology, LONGi has, on this basis, invented HPBC technology, combining the features of TOPCon and BC technology to significantly improve the efficiency and reliability of both cells and modules. The Hi-MO X6 bifacial marks a paradigm shift in the industry by offering unmatched efficiency and performance. With power efficiency ranging from 560 to 585W, this cutting-edge panel outperforms traditional models and sets a new benchmark for the distributed market, its exceptional maximum module efficiency of 23% heralding a new era of energy production. The Hi-MO X6 Guardian (Anti-Humidity & Heat) experiences only 45% of TOPCon's DH deg-

radation and has better performance in low irradiation conditions, offering a 1.54% improvement compared to TOPCon. In DH1000 testing, Hi-MO X6 double glass heat and humidity modules have shown that, at 85 and 85% humidity, module degradation is only 0.89%, far below the IBC industry standard of 5%. Hi-MO X6 moisture and heat-resistant modules have also presented industry-leading degradation data, with only 1% degradation in the first year and 0.35% linear degradation. The module has a 30-year power warranty, and after this period can still offer more than 88.85% of the output power warranty, with a power temperature coefficient optimized to -0.28%. A further highlight at the exhibition was the presence of the Hi-MO X6 anti-dust module, which proves resilient even in challenging conditions. Showcasing LONGi's anti-dust technology, the product inherits the high-efficiency performance of the standard Hi-MO X6. Equipped with high-efficiency HPBC cells, it performs efficient-

ly in the areas of light absorption, photoelectric conversion and power transmission. The maximum power of the module can reach 600W, with a conversion efficiency of 23.2%. Visitors noted the innovative frame design, enabling the efficient removal of dust and ensuring an impressive 95% exposure for maximum power generation. In contrast, conventional panels struggle with melting snow, resulting in less than 10% exposure and reduced efficiency. LONGi country director Ali Majid commented: 'We are delighted to have introduced the Hi-MO X6 bifacial modules at Solar Pakistan. LONGi's commitment to pushing the boundaries of solar innovation is evident in this groundbreaking product, and the enthusiastic response from visitors reinforces our position as industry leaders. The launch of the Hi-MO X6 bifacial modules is without doubt a significant milestone in the journey towards sustainable energy solutions.'

Govt monopoly on vehicle number plates ends

LAHORE : The Punjab Excise Department has taken steps to overhaul the issuance of computerised number plates for vehicles, including a shift away from the government's monopoly towards an open competition in the manufacturing and distribution of the essential identifiers. According to officials, the decision comes after years of public grievances and administrative challenges. Despite collection of fees from approximately three million vehicle owners in the province over the past three years, many had been left waiting for their number plates to be issued. Recognising the need for reform, the provincial cabinet has approved the abolition of the government's monopoly on number plate manufacturing. Instead, an open licensing regime has been endorsed, allowing multiple companies and institutions to participate in the production process. Under the new system, applicants will no longer be required to pay fees for new computerised number plates, signalling a departure from the previous practice. The sources said the move aims to streamline the registration process and eliminate unnecessary financial burdens on vehicle and motorcycle owners. Excise Director General Faisal Fareed has initiated the implementation of the cabinet's decision. A notification has been sent to Excise Secretary Masood Mukhtar, outlining the immediate cessation of fee collection for number plates with new or duplicate registration requests. The officials said the transition to an open licensing regime is expected to foster healthy competition among private companies registered under the framework. They estimate that vehicle owners stand to save up to Rs500 on number plates compared to the current government prices. However, challenges remain as the department grapples with the legacy of past inefficiencies. The backlog of pending number plates for millions of citizens poses a complex logistical and administrative dilemma.—APP

Online mobilisers to push vaccination Move aimed at countering misinformation regarding polio

LAHORE: The Punjab Emergency Operation Centre is set to launch an online campaign to help eradicate poliovirus from the province. The campaign will be launched in Lahore and other districts under an online global strategy in the coming weeks. The emergency operation centre has decided to take help of online social mobilisers to spread awareness about polio vaccination and the disease. According to sources, the Punjab Emergency Operation Centre will solicit the services of top social mobilisers to dispel misinformation about the vaccination, disease and health issues. The decision had been taken because misinformation and propaganda about the vaccination and disease on social media were confusing the public. Although Punjab has been polio-free for the past three years, the threat of polio per-

sists. Especially the detection of wild poliovirus last year in environmental samples from Gulshan-e-Ravi in Lahore left the Punjab government, health department and related officials concerned. After the development, several major anti-polio campaigns were launched, but it has been evident that still area instances of denial in some areas amidst misinformation regarding polio vaccination, especially on social media. In view of the situation, the departments concerned are focusing on strategies to counter the misinformation. For the first time, the focus will also be on online awareness to eradicate polio. In this regard, an event was organised in Lahore under the Unfluencers umbrella. The initiative, supported by a network of social media influencers, aimed to tackle health-related misinformation, particularly that concerning polio vaccination. According to a

statement, with a turnout of over 10,000 volunteers from the country, Unfluencers emerged as a powerful advocate to promote children's health and immunisation across digital platforms. The event marked a milestone as it transitioned from the digital realm to a physical gathering, bringing together 36 online volunteers from the outskirts of Lahore. The young individuals, representing a cross-section of society, immersed themselves in the realities of polio vaccination through hands-on experiences and informative presentations. The online social mobilisers also visited the Lahore Railway Station for a firsthand look at the dedicated efforts of health workers vaccinating the children. They learned about the scale of the campaign, with approximately 20,000 children vaccinated each day during the period.

Ophthalmologist emphasizes preventive measures against eye allergies

He advised the eye patients to use eye drops provisionally to treat severe chronic ocular allergies while prolonged use of these drops can lead to negative effects

RAWALPINDI : Leading ophthalmologist at Al-Shifa Trust, Dr. Tayyab Afghani on Monday said that pollen allergy effects could be avoided through preventive measures. Talking to media, he said that the springtime brings an extremely high pollen count, which can cause burning and redness in the eyes, adding eye allergies can cause watery and puffy eyes, but the same therapies and self-care practices that relieve the symptoms of slurred allergies also work for eye allergies. In addition to sneezing and a stuffy runny nose, the symptoms can include red eyes, irritation, itching, tearing or runny eyes, swollen eyelids, soreness, burning, or pain, he added. Dr. Tayyab said that optical allergies result from the body overreacting to an allergen like any other allergy. "The immune system produces antibodies that release histamine and other chemicals from the eyes, causing red, watery eyes and irritation," he added. Typically, seasonal allergies occur in early spring during the summer, he said and added that allergens in the atmosphere such as spores from mold and pollen from grasses, trees, and weeds, were known as triggers. He claimed that aside from causing momentary blurriness, ocular allergies, commonly known as allergic conjunctivitis or eye allergies do not significantly endanger vision. In many cases, symptoms appear as soon as the allergen comes into contact with the eyes. Dr. Tayyab Afghani said the first step was to avoid triggers by staying inside during high pollen count periods which were often mid-morning and early evening. In order to protect their eyes from pollen people should drive with closed windows and wear sunglasses or eyeglasses, he suggested. He advised the eye patients to use eye drops provisionally to treat severe chronic ocular allergies while prolonged use of these drops can lead to negative effects.—DNA

IGP instructed to speed up crackdown on kite flying

Special teams ensure action against law breakers across the province under zero tolerance, IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar issued orders to intensify the crackdown against kite flying. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that special teams should ensure action against law breakers across the province, IG Punjab said that there is zero tolerance against the accused involved in the manufacture, sale and use of metal strings and kites. Spokesman Punjab Police said that during the last 24 hours, 41 suspects were arrested while registering 32 cases under the Kite Flying Act across the province. 957 kites and 23 strings were recovered from the possession of the accused. The spokesperson

of Punjab Police further said that during the last 34 days, 3603 suspects were arrested under the Act of Anti-Kite Flying across the province, including Lahore, while 3469 cases were registered. 217461 kites and 14693 strings were recovered from the possession of the accused. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar appealed to the parents to stop their children from flying kites. Dr. Usman Anwar directed that the supervisory officers should personally monitor the crackdown against metal strings and kites. Earlier on, Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has directed to intensify tge crackdown against electricity thieves. IG Punjab said that FIRs of electricity theft should be registered immediately in all districts of the province, arrest

of the accused and timely execution of challans should be ensured. IG Punjab said that Punjab Police's performance against electricity thieves is clearly better than other provinces. Punjab Police registered 83 thousand 645 cases against electricity thieves during 06 months. Dr. Usman Anwar said that the security of the Chinese residents has been tightened as well as the traffic routes have been secured. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar directed to increase checking at inter-provincial police check posts to prevent terrorism and smuggling. He issued these instructions today while presiding over a video link meeting at the Central Police Office and talking to the officers. In the meeting, tasks given by chief minister

Punjab, such as crime control, kacha area operation, and implementation of other tasks were reviewed. IG Punjab also reviewed the ongoing measures to prevent kite flying, drug selling, motorcycle theft, crimes related to women and children. IG Punjab issued orders to speed up measures to improve traffic flow on the highways. IG Punjab said that zero tolerance should be adopted against aerial firing, display of weapons, vehicles with dark glasses. In the meeting, the security arrangements on the martyrdom day of Hazrat Ali (RA) were also reviewed. CCPO Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamrya, DIG Operations Lahore, DIG Special Branch Faisal Ali Raja, DIG Investigation Azhar Akram, DIG CTD Usman

Akram, SSP SPU Usman Bajwa, SSP Operations Lahore, AIG Operations Punjab were present in the meeting while all RPOs, CPOs, DPOs participated through video link. Meanwhile, Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar is taking historic measures for the health welfare of police employees and their families, in continuation of which IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has released 67 lakh 50 thousand rupees for the treatment of 150 children affected by thalassemia of police employees. Each child affected by thalassemia will get 45 thousand rupees. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that this money has been given for the children of police employees for medical expenses of first quarter from January to March.

Measles claims over 13 lives in K-P

PESHAWAR: A measles outbreak in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has resulted in the loss of at least 13 lives over the past six months, official sources disclosed. According to reports, there have been a total of 3,889 suspected cases and 1,445 confirmed cases of measles recorded in the province. Out of the 22 deaths reported during this period, measles has been

confirmed in 13 cases. The most vulnerable demographic appears to be children aged between two to five years. The Director of the Expanded Program on Immunisation (EPI) indicated that an outbreak response is currently underway across 118 union councils spanning the province's 24 districts. Among the worst-hit districts is DI

Khan, reporting 185 cases, followed by Peshawar with 147, Charsadda with 113, Swabi with 92, and Lower Dir with 83 cases respectively. Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah has responded swiftly to the measles outbreak in the province by instructing the director of the EPI to furnish an urgent report on the situation.—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

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



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 Railway Inquiry.....117
 Railway Exchange9270831-5
 WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
 CAA.....9281092



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 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



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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Govt to create enabling business environment

Meeting of Country Director WB and Country Manager IFC with Minister for Finance and Revenue

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, was called on by Mr. Najy Benhassine, Country Director of the World Bank (WB) and Mr. Zeeshan Ahmed Sheikh, Country Manager of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), to discuss the collaborative development strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting economic growth, enhancing financial stability, and fostering sustainable development within the country. During the meeting, the importance of strengthening partnerships with international financial institutions like IFC and WB was highlighted. Discussion was done to leverage their expertise and resources for the country's development agenda. The Minister also highlighted the Government's commitment to creating an enabling environment for private sector investment and ensuring transparency and accountability in financial matters. Respective representatives from WB and IFC appreciated the ef-



orts of the Government aimed at bringing reforms in economic and financial sectors to ensure sustained economic growth in

terms of expanding the tax base, SOEs restructuring, and Privatization. They also discussed potential areas of cooperation and

investment opportunities in various sectors, including agriculture, power sector, and IT. The delegates expressed their organ-

izations' continued support for the country's development goals and agendas for the welfare of the people of Pakistan.

Pollen allergy results in burning of eyes and other symptoms

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Leading ophthalmologist at Al-Shifa Trust, Dr. Tayyab Afghani, stated on Monday that the springtime brings an extremely high pollen count, which can cause burning and redness in the eyes. He said that eye allergies can cause watery and puffy eyes, but the same therapies and self-care techniques that relieve the symptoms of nasal allergies

also work for eye allergies. In addition to sneezing and a stuffy, runny nose, the symptoms can include red eyes, irritation, itching, tearing or runny eyes, swollen eyelids, soreness, burning, or pain, he added.

Dr. Tayyab Afghani said that ocular allergies result from the body overreacting to an allergen, just like any other allergy. The immune system produces antibodies that release histamine and other chemicals from the eyes, causing red, watery eyes and irritation. Typi-

cally, seasonal allergies occur in early spring, during the summer, and into the fall. He informed that allergens in the atmosphere, such as spores from mold and pollen from grasses, trees, and weeds, are known as triggers. He claimed that aside from causing momentary blurriness, ocular allergies, commonly known as allergic conjunctivitis or eye allergies, do not significantly endanger vision. In many cases, symptoms appear as soon as the allergen comes into contact with the eyes.

According to Dr. Tayyab Afghani, the first step is to try to avoid triggers by staying inside during high pollen count periods, which are often mid-morning and early evening. In order to protect their eyes from pollen, people should drive with their windows closed and wear large sunglasses or eyeglasses. He said people frequently use eye drops to treat severe, chronic ocular allergies. However, prolonged use of these drops can lead to negative effects; therefore, it is advisable to use them temporarily.

Faysal Bank and Sehat Kahani Join Forces

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Faysal Bank, one of the leading Islamic financial institutions of Pakistan, has partnered with Sehat Kahani, a one-stop telemedicine solution for various primary healthcare issues. Through this collab-

oration, Faysal Bank cardholders can avail exclusive privileges and discounts of up to 25% across a diverse array of healthcare services offered by Sehat Kahani. In furtherance of the partnership, Mr. Muhammad Feroz Khan, Head of Unsecured Business & Cards at Faysal Bank, expressed enthusiasm

for the transformative journey ahead with Sehat Kahani stating, "Today marks the beginning of a profound collaboration that transcends mere financial transactions. It signifies our dedication to the health and well-being of our customers and the communities we are privileged to serve."



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif presenting a souvenir to Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), H.E. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al Zaabi.—DNA

New Punjabi movie "Babul Veer" to be released on Eid-ul-Fitr

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A new Punjabi movie titled "Babul Veer" directed by Ghulam Hussain Taunsvi would be released on Eid-ul-Fitr, featuring Haider Sultan Rahi in the lead role. Film Star Haider Sultan Rahi talking to APP said that this new Punjabi movie would rule the hearts of the audience on Eid ul Fitr. Rahi expressed his hope that the film fans would also love to watch him in his new style and role in the new movies. Haider Rahi is the eldest son of the most famous Punjabi actor and action hero late Sultan Rahi who dominated the cinema screens for decades without any failure.

Mediterranean cold winds cause Gwadar flooding

ISLAMABAD: Mediterranean cold winds cause Gwadar flooding, said Ahmed Kamal, Chief Engineering Advisor & Chairman Federal Flood Commission. Responding to the misinformation from some media on Gwadar's flood situation and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he pointed out that main reason for recent torrential rains in Gwadar is the stream of cold winds coming from the Mediterranean. He told Gwadar Pro here on Monday that between mid-February to mid-April the temperature has been a bit higher, and this time this condition and the temperature were higher. Due to the higher temperature and the penetration of the system, there had an impact of the seaside also in Gwadar. That's why there was increased rainfall due to higher temperatures at that time and sea surface vapor being sucked into it," Ahmed Kamal explained. "Such incidents have happened in the past in Gwadar and nearby areas such as Kage or Lasbela, but not with the intensity that has happened this time. This is very much indicating the impact of climate change, and this is an indication of western wave or cold winds coming to Pakistan and increasing its impact in Pakistan," he further said.—DNA

HEC announces April 14 deadline to apply for SEE-LAW test

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has announced that April 14 is the deadline to apply for the Special Equivalence Examination (SEE-Law) a pre-requisite test to appear in Bar Entrance Test - Law-GAT. According to official sources, HEC is conducting SEE-Law for Law Graduates of foreign universities recognized by HEC/PBC. They must pass the SEE-Law before appearing in the Law Graduate Assessment Test (Law-GAT), which is mandatory to apply to the Bar Council for enrollment as an advocate. It is also to mention here that the SEE-Law test will be held on April 28, 2024 (Tentative). HEC encouraged the students to register at etc.hec.gov.pk.

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Briefs

Tarbela power house generation to touch 6418 MW in 2025

ISLAMABAD: Tarbela Power House will emerge largest hydropower generation unit in the country having 6,418 megawatts (MW) capacity after the completion of the 1530-MW 5th Extension. The total power generation of Tarbela Power House would jump to 6418 MW from the existing 4,888 MW after the commissioning of the 5th Extension Hydropower Project, official sources told APP here Monday. The 1530 MW-Tarbela 5th Extension Hydropower Project would commence electricity generation in 2025, they said. They said that the project would generate 1.347 billion low-cost and environment-friendly electricity per annum. World Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank were providing US\$ 390 and \$ 300 million respectively for the project, they said. —APP

Chicken, eggs prices reach at Rs 445 per kg, Rs 290 per dozen

ISLAMABAD: The price of poultry chicken during the second half of the holy months of Ramadan reached at Rs 445 per kg and the price of poultry eggs reached Rs 290 per dozen in the open market in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The meat of the poultry chicken has reached Rs 650 to 660 per kg in the open market, according to the survey conducted by APP here on Monday. The price of poultry chickens and eggs has been going above Rs 445 to 290 per kg and dozen for the last months, which is getting away from the purchasing power of consumers day by day. The prices of poultry items have increased by 30 percent in the twin cities during the last month after Ramadan began, which has created huge volatility in the market. According to the market survey, during the last two months in the twin cities, a 28% increase was witnessed in the price of poultry chicken, while as same a 30 percent increase in the price of poultry eggs in the same period. Meanwhile, talking to APP, the former Chairman of the Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA), Dr Sajjad Arshad said that the increase in the current prices of poultry was due to demand and supply factors during Ramadan. He said that the increase in poultry business inputs and cost of doing business was seen across the country due to which the market was in crisis. Sajjad said that the country's economic conditions are also an important issue and the poultry feed ingredients imported from foreign countries are expensive, in which soybean is important. He said that many soybean ships have stopped at Karachi port, which has an inevitable impact on poultry prices. —APP



ISLAMABAD: People standing a queue to draw their salary outside bank at Aabparra. — APP

Motorcycle-trailer collision claims life of man

ISLAMABAD: A man was killed after his motorcycle collided with a speeding trailer near the Beijing Underpass area Lahore. According to rescue officials, the incident was happened due to reckless driving of the trailer driver, caused the collision from behind, instantly claiming the life of the rider. The police and rescue teams swiftly arrived at the scene and transported the deceased to a nearby hospital. Authorities revealed that the trailer driver fled the scene following the accident, a private news channel reported. —APP

(PITC) directed to ensure timely compliant resolution

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power, Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari chaired a meeting concerning the operational effectiveness of Customer Care Centers within the power sector today. The discussions yielded several crucial directives aimed at enhancing service quality and ensuring customer satisfaction. During the meeting, Minister Awais Leghari directed the Pakistan Information Technology Company (PITC) to ensure that every complaint received at customer centers nationwide is promptly followed up with a phone call to provide customers with regular updates on the progress of their complaints. This initiative seeks to improve communication and transparency in the complaint resolution process. Additionally, Minister Leghari tasked PITC with conducting a comprehensive data analysis of all complaints received since 2018. The objective is to determine the percentage of complaints initially marked as resolved but later deemed invalid, thereby enhancing accountability and transparency within the sector. The Minister emphasized the importance of making this data accessible to the general public. In efforts to expedite complaint resolution, Minister Leghari directed a thorough reevaluation of complaint redressal timeframes. He also reiterated the importance of strict adherence to load shedding guidelines. —APP

ICCI chief appreciates SIFC's initiative to establish IT Park

The ICCI President praised that the gigantic project, to work under public-private partnership, will have immense attraction for country's burgeoning freelance economy

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has highly appreciated the Special Investment Facilitation Council's (SIFC) decision to establish country's largest IT Park in Islamabad. In a statement here on Monday he said that the landmark decision is

indeed a manifestation of a significant stride-forward for Pakistan's expanding tech landscape and promising unparalleled opportunities for innovation and progress. He said that the mega project covering an area of 3.3 acres to be built in G-10 Sector of the federal capital will hopefully be a hub of technological advancement and array of facilities to foster creativity and entrepreneurship. The

ICCI President praised that the gigantic project, to work under public-private partnership, will have immense attraction for country's burgeoning freelance economy, will have a research center, a well-stocked library, software houses, conference rooms, dedicated work spaces for freelancers and start ups and an exhibition area for showcasing cutting-edge IT products. Ahsan Zafar Bakhta-

wari further said that the project will not only create business opportunities for young entrepreneurs but will turn a big source of foreign exchange earnings for the country. The President said the construction of an IT Park of such a paramount importance in Islamabad was the long-standing demand of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and that

the business community wholeheartedly welcomes the initiative and assures that every possible cooperation will be extended for the materialisation of the project. He also expressed the hope that Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry will be taken on board at all the stages for the benefit of the business community and making the project a state of the art in real sense.

Teachers call for end to centralized exams

This proposal aims to relieve teachers of the financial burden associated with centralized exams and ensure a more sustainable and equitable system for teachers and institutions.

ISLAMABAD: Teachers engaged in conducting centralized primary and middle standard exams under the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) have come forward with grievances regarding unpaid remuneration and burdensome expenses incurred during exam duties for the last three years. Frustrated by unmet promises and financial strain, these teachers advocated for a shift towards local exams to alleviate their plight. Despite assurances from FDE authorities, teachers allege that for the past three years, they have not received their rightful remuneration for conducting exams and assessing papers. Speaking on condition of anonymity, several female teachers while talking to APP lamented the dire situation, highlighting the financial hardships they endure to fulfill their duties. One of the teachers revealed, "FDE conducts centralized exams and teachers have to bear the exams expenses from their own pocket which is ridiculous. The expenses include transportation costs to exam centers, purchasing materials for sealing answer scripts, and covering transport expenses to deliver materials to FDE." Another teacher recounted, "I hired a taxi, collected the exam material from FDE and deposited answer scripts on daily basis during the exams but FDE never provided transport facility or paid transportation cost. I paid from my personal pocket. The absence of reimbursement for expenses incurred

during exam duties has left me feeling undervalued and disrespected. Promises made by FDE officials regarding payment for exam duties remain unfulfilled." "For three consecutive years, the FDE has failed to reimburse teachers for their diligent efforts in administering exams and assessing papers. While appointing teachers for examination duty, teachers are assured for payment but unfortunately, the promise of FDE officials never fulfilled, shared another teacher. The situation is compounded by the lack of support from FDE in providing necessary materials and facilities for conducting exams. Teachers report purchasing materials such as cloths, sealing wax, and packing material with their own money, without any reimbursement from FDE. Additionally, the absence of paper collection facilities further adds to the logistical challenges faced by the teachers. Despite assurances of payment, teachers lament the recurring excuse of the Accountant General Pakistan Revenue (AGPR) withholding funds, leaving them to shoulder the expenses personally. In light of these grievances, teachers have proposed the abolition of the centralized exam system in favor of local exams conducted within respective schools. This proposal aims to relieve teachers of the financial burden associated with centralized exams and ensure a more sustainable and equitable system for teachers and institutions.

ANF accelerates operation against drug dealers


RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has accelerated its ongoing operation to bust gangs involved in supplying drugs to students, said an ANF spokesman here on Monday. He informed that the crackdown on drug-supplying gangs in educational institutions in twin cities had been stepped up. In an operation, 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a BS Computer Science student netted from Khanna Pull area. —APP

AIOU to close admissions on April 15

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced that the last date for admissions for Semester Spring 2024 is April 15. According to AIOU, the programs offered in this phase include Associate Degree (BA/BCom), BBA, BS (ODL) programs, teachers training programs (1.5, 2.5 and 4 Years B.Ed.), postgraduate diploma programs, and certificate courses. Admission forms and prospectuses for these programs can be found on the university website. For students in remote or backward areas without internet access, or those facing difficulties applying online, manual applications for BA, B.Com, and B.Ed programs can be submitted at regional offices. Overseas Pakistanis and international students living all over the world can enroll in these programs. The university offers academic programs for international students through an online learning management system. All educational activities, from admission to examinations, will be conducted online. It is pertinent to mention here that Allama Iqbal Open University has the largest teacher training program in Pakistan. —APP






ISLAMABAD: Abdullah H. Khan General Manager of PIA receiving the Shield from Khurshid Barlas Founder Chairman of Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry during the meeting at his office and Fahad Barlas Convener Exhibition was present at the occasion. —DNA









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Haitian crisis and its causes

ONCE upon a time, sailors and travelers considered Haiti the pearl of the Caribbean. But now this territory is beset by a wide range of problems, including an economic crisis, a surge in crime, internal civil conflict, and rising poverty levels. Prospects are vague: few people can currently accurately predict how events will develop. Against the backdrop of ongoing armed clashes in Port-au-Prince, which are still ongoing, this article delves into the root causes of the turmoil. Formally, the current crisis in Haiti began in 2018, when unrest broke out due to fuel shortages. However, this interpretation is too simplistic. In reality, the Haitian crisis has persisted for several decades, with its roots tracing back to the American occupation that began in 1915. In fact, the events a hundred years ago caused irreparable damage to Haitian statehood. For 19 years, US troops illegally controlled the territory and resources of the Caribbean republic. And even after Haiti managed to regain its independence, American influence did not dissipate. It continued and was aimed at economic exploitation. This was 20th-century colonialism. However, now they rarely remember this. Describing current events in Haiti, the Western press does not talk about their background. Not a word about the forced labor of Haitian citizens, which American sugar companies used in the 20s of the last century on the island's plantations. Not a word about how, during the occupation, Haiti's financial structures were dominated by US banks. Not a word about how the American military regime in Haiti from 1915 to 1934 violated the rights of the Haitian population and harmed the culture and traditions of the occupied country. But those events explain a lot. In 1915, American Marines invaded Haiti, under the pretext of "protecting American interests"; especially economic interests (American sugar companies were afraid of losing control over Haitian plantations). Now, in 2024, the US Army Command and the State Department have not publicly ruled out sending troops to Haiti. What has changed in 109 years? It turns out... almost nothing. America still considers the Caribbean its backyard and interferes in the internal affairs of the regional countries. The American occupation of Haiti was so brutal that since 1915, a guerrilla war for liberation from US troops had been ongoing on the island. In 1919, Haitian guerrilla leader Charlemagne Peralte died at the hands of the American soldiers. But his name forever became a symbol of heroism in Haiti. As in those days, so do many Haitians now stand for the sovereignty and independence of their homeland against colonial dependence on the United States, because they understand well that the plight of their state is the consequence of Western colonialism. From all of the above, three conclusions can be drawn: The severe consequences of the American occupation of Haiti in 1915-1934 still have a dire impact on the internal life of the republic. The economic interference of Western companies in the affairs of Haiti has persisted from then until the present.



Polarization in the US

GROWING political polarization within the US is increasingly serving as a potent catalyst propelling the burgeoning "prepper" movement forward, reflecting a broader societal disquietude regarding the nation's political and economic trajectory. Spanning the entire ideological spectrum, Americans are grappling with mounting apprehension surrounding the state of the economy and the increasingly fractured political landscape. This pervasive sense of uncertainty has engendered a marked uptick in individuals harboring profound distrust toward both governmental institutions and societal frameworks, prompting them to adopt a proactive stance toward self-sufficiency and preparedness. Recent data cited by Reuters, drawing from comprehensive research on the subject, indicates a staggering doubling in the number of "preppers" in the US since 2017, with an estimated 20 million individuals now identifying as adherents of this movement. What was formerly primarily associated with far-right ideologies has now permeated mainstream America, with individuals hailing from diverse political backgrounds embracing practices such as firearm ownership, stockpiling essential supplies and fortifying their residences against potential crises. While prior analyses predominantly focused on the ramifications of events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and its attendant disruptions, along with incidents like the Texas power grid failure, attention is increasingly being redirected toward the broader backdrop of political polarization within the country. The occurrences of recent years, including the surge of civil unrest sparked by movements such as Black Lives Matter, have laid bare the deep-seated fault lines running through American society. This polarization transcends mere ideological and policy disagreements, encompassing fundamental questions regarding the role of government, the essence of democracy and the legitimacy of societal institutions. Set against this backdrop, episodes such as the storming of the Capitol in 2021 serve as stark reminders of the fragility of democratic norms and the potential for political instability to escalate into full-blown crises. Such events coupled with ongoing partisan skirmishes and heightened rhetoric across the political spectrum have contributed to a pervasive sense of uncertainty and insecurity among the populace. In addition to political tumult, concerns regarding environmental degradation and climate change are also assuming an increasingly prominent role in shaping the trajectory of the "prepper" movement. The escalating frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, juxtaposed with the gradual but inexorable march of climate change, have underscored the imperative for individuals to prepare for a future characterized by environmental instability and ecological disruption. The trajectory of the "prepper" movement reflects a broader shift toward individual empowerment and autonomy in the face of perceived threats. From concerns about government overreach to fears of environmental catastrophe, this movement represents a diverse array of motivations united by a shared desire to mitigate risk and safeguard their families and communities. Moreover, the evolution of the "prepper" movement from a fringe subculture to a mainstream phenomenon underscores the depth of societal disquietude and the widespread desire for proactive solutions to pressing challenges.

"Beyond interference: Redefining the scope of judicial protection"

Qamar Bashir



The analyst and jurists believe that the TORs assigned to the commission lack specificity and urgency in addressing the issue of unlawful interference. While they include provisions for investigating interference and recommending action, they may not adequately address the need for proactive measures to prevent future interference or hold accountable those responsible. Additionally, the assigned TORs may not fully acknowledge the complexity of the issue or provide clear guidance on how to address challenges such as fixing responsibility in the absence of concrete evidence

CHIEF Justice Qazi Faez Esa, nearing the end of his tenure, chose not to address the complaint filed by six serving judges through the Supreme Judicial Council or by convening a full court of the Supreme Court. Instead, he passed it onto the civilian government, which many perceive as being under the complete influence of the powerful establishment. This decision has been viewed as a missed opportunity to restore judicial independence from the alleged overwhelming control exerted by the establishment, which is often equated with the state itself. This control extends to all facets of governance, including the parliament, governments, cabinets, electoral processes, judicial proceedings, and foreign policy decisions, as well as the management of trade, business, investment, agriculture, and livestock. The Chief Justice's decision to avoid addressing the complaint prompted over 300 members of the legal fraternity to stage a protest before the Supreme Court today (31.03.2024), urging the Court to take responsibility for adjudicating the matter under Article 184(3) of the Constitution. They argued that any government-led commission would lack the necessary independence and authority to properly investigate the claims. Analysts, jurists, and lawyers have widely criticized the appointment of Tassaduq Hussain Jilani, who served as the 21st Chief Justice of Pakistan from 2013 to 2014, to head the one-man commission tasked with adjudicating the complaint of six judges. Many have deemed this appointment highly inadequate, inappropriate, and out of context, given Jilani's age—barely two years younger than Pakistan itself. They argue that since the complaint directly implicates the executive branch as the culprit, appointing a commission headed by someone associated with the executive undermines the integrity of the process. It's seen as illogical and unfitting for the accused to be tasked with providing justice to the complainants. Meanwhile, the PTI, emerging as one of the largest stakeholders, has been particularly affected by judicial decisions allegedly manipulated by the establishment. These decisions have targeted the incarceration of PTI's former chairman and top-tier leadership, resulting in significant upheaval within the party. PTI has not only lost its founding chairman, top and second-tier leadership, but also its iconic symbol and brand name. Currently, it has been absorbed into an irrelevant and sectarian party, Sunni Ittehad, thereby alienating sympathizers from other sects. The heavy toll this has taken on PTI appears irreversible at this juncture. The terms of reference assigned to the commission are notable for their focus on investigating direct involvement of officials in judicial interference

and recommending appropriate action against implicated agencies, departments, or state institutions based on evidence uncovered. However, the absence of mention regarding indirect involvement suggests a potential gap in the scope of the inquiry. Additionally, the commission's starting assumption that no interference has occurred places the burden of proof on the six judges, who must substantiate their claims comprehensively with evidence, witnesses, and circumstantial evidence. Failure to do so could lead to the judges facing accusations of lodging false or concocted complaints, adding a significant layer of complexity to the proceedings. Moreover, granting the commission the authority to explore additional matters deemed totally inappropriate. The analyst and jurists believe that the TORs assigned to the commission lack specificity and urgency in addressing the issue of unlawful interference. While they include provisions for investigating interference and recommending action, they may not adequately address the need for proactive measures to prevent future interference or hold accountable those responsible. Additionally, the assigned TORs may not fully acknowledge the complexity of the issue or provide clear guidance on how to address challenges such as fixing responsibility in the absence of concrete evidence. Rejecting the Terms of Reference (TORs), analysts and jurists argue the letter written by the six judges transcends mere complaints or allegations. Instead, it resembles a decision by a six-member high court bench. After conducting investigations, gathering facts, and recording witness testimonies, the bench unequivocally declared the unlawful elements within the country's prime spy agency and the establishment guilty of blatant and brute interference in judicial matters. The bench highlighted the unlawful elements within the establishment use coercive tactics, including intimidation, blackmail, and eavesdropping, to influence bench formations and court decisions aligning with their political and administrative agendas. Furthermore, by openly defying or frustrating court orders that contradict their objectives, the unlawful elements within the establishment undermines the judiciary's independence. The bench sought guidance from the Supreme Judicial Council on defensive measures to safeguard against such unlawful interference and ensure the judiciary's autonomy to dispense justice impartially and transparently. Analysts and jurists criticize the use of the phrase "interference of the executive". They argue that the type of interference faced by the judiciary transcends constitutional boundaries and legal frameworks. Rather than being categorized as executive interference, it should

be characterized as unlawful coercion perpetrated by rogue elements within state institutions. These elements employ illicit means to manipulate and intimidate the judiciary, undermining its independence and impartiality therefore cannot be legally termed as executive. As such, they should not be regarded as lawful actors but as unlawful elements seeking to subvert the rule of law through coercion and intimidation tactics. Henceforth, the Terms of Reference (TORs) for the Commission should reflect a proactive approach, beginning with the acknowledgment that unlawful interference with the judiciary has already been substantiated. The Commission should then focus on recommending measures to safeguard the judiciary from undue, unlawful, and blatant interference perpetrated by rogue elements within state security institutions. Secondly, the Commission should provide practical and actionable recommendations regarding how the lower and higher judiciary can respond effectively to such unlawful interference. These recommendations should empower the judiciary to maintain its independence and integrity in the face of external pressures. Thirdly, the Commission must address the challenge of fixing responsibility on unlawful elements within the state security apparatus, even in the absence of concrete evidence and witnesses. Given the sophisticated techniques employed by these elements to conceal their activities, the Commission should explore innovative strategies for holding them accountable. Fourthly, the Commission should propose the enactment of new legislation and regulations aimed at establishing dedicated security forces tasked with protecting the lower and higher judiciary from unlawful interference, whether originating from within state institutions or external non-state actors. Lastly, the Commission should recommend mechanisms to ensure the implementation of court decisions and prevent their violation or frustration through selective administrative, legal, or illegal means. These measures should reinforce the rule of law and uphold the authority of judicial decisions in the face of external pressures. The proposed Terms of Reference (TORs) present a comprehensive and proactive approach to addressing the issue of unlawful interference with the judiciary. They prioritize acknowledging the existing problem and recommending concrete measures to safeguard judicial independence and integrity. By focusing on empowering the judiciary to respond effectively, holding accountable those responsible for interference, and proposing legislative reforms, the proposed TORs offer a robust framework for addressing the challenges at hand.

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

The new conservative rain Iran

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Despite serious financial difficulties and the need for domestic stability, talks with the U.S. caused divisions in the Iranian political establishment. Rouhani's pragmatic approach clashed with the more ideologically driven clerics and the IRGC. The 2015 nuclear deal was a win for the pragmatists, but it didn't last

A NEW group of leaders in Iran is coming up and they are stricter in their beliefs than those who have been in charge for the past 45 years. This change is happening because the government wants to stay in control, especially since many people in the country are losing faith in the system that has been run by religious leaders for a long time. In the 2024 elections, there is a big internal power struggle happening as the country prepares for a new top leader. The elections on March 1 had the lowest voter turnout since the government was established in 1979. Only about 40% of eligible voters participated and some reports say it might be even lower. Key figures, like the speaker of the outgoing parliament, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, did not do well in the elections. In Tehran, the capital, only 25% of people voted. In the Assembly of Experts, which is a group that helps choose the top leader, Sadeq Larijani lost his position. Even former President Hassan Rouhani could not run for the Assembly of Experts. This manipulation of the elections has been going on since 2004, when the Guardian Council, a group that approves candidates, disqualified many reformists. Instead of solving political issues, this move made things worse over the next 20 years, leading to conflicts between different conservative groups. The struggle between more practical thinkers and strict ideologues continued during the presidencies of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Hassan Rouhani, who both served two terms from 2005 to 2021. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has been mediating between different groups trying

to gain power and influence for a long time. In the past 20 years, this process, usually done in private, increasingly needed his direct involvement and became more public. This was most noticeable during the Ahmadinejad era (2005-13) when the then-president not only clashed with fellow conservatives but also opposed Khamenei in his second term. This made divisions among conservatives more pronounced, especially when the U.S. imposed more sanctions. To address this, Khamenei allowed the return of pragmatic conservative forces. In the 2013 elections, Rouhani, a pragmatic conservative, won decisively. This move helped Khamenei in two ways. First, it restored public support for the regime, which had suffered from the controversial 2009 elections and the subsequent uprising. Second, it created room for Tehran to negotiate a nuclear agreement with the U.S. amid severe sanctions. Despite serious financial difficulties and the need for domestic stability, talks with the U.S. caused divisions in the Iranian political establishment. Rouhani's pragmatic approach clashed with the more ideologically driven clerics and the IRGC. The 2015 nuclear deal was a win for the pragmatists, but it didn't last. The Trump administration's 2018 decision to withdraw from the deal and reinstate sanctions undermined Iran's pragmatic conservatives. In response, Iran retaliated, leading to the U.S. killing Qassem Soleimani in early 2020, further strengthening the ideologues and weakening the pragmatic conservatives, who had already lost ground during Rouhani's second term (2017-21).

Before the 2021 presidential elections in Iran, the Guardian Council limited the candidates to ensure Ebrahim Raisi, a strict and influential figure, would win. This move also weakened the power of others, like Ali Larijani, who was disqualified despite attempts to reverse the decision. Over the years, Supreme Leader Khamenei's influence declined and the IRGC-led security establishment gained strength. Raisi's presidency marked a shift to a more conservative government.

To solidify control, especially after protests due to economic hardships, Raisi's administration enforced stricter public restrictions, especially for women's dress codes. This led to the death of Mahsa Amini in 2022, triggering widespread protests that lasted almost a year. The government faced criticism from within, with senior figures expressing concerns about the regime's stability. Khamenei had to defend the government's actions and there were promises to revise laws related to women's dress codes, although no concrete actions followed. The protests eventually subsided in mid-2023. Amidst public discontent, economic challenges, and internal power struggles, the upcoming elections were crucial. Ideologues aimed to secure a majority in the parliament and the Assembly of Experts, which plays a role in choosing the next supreme leader. While ideologues controlled the Guardian Council, runoffs for parliamentary seats were expected and the Assembly's composition remained uncertain. With widespread dissatisfaction, economic issues and power struggles among elites, the future of the Iranian regime might hinge on the armed forces which are not immune to public sentiments.

Briefs

Bisham
attack aimed
to harm...

FROM PAGE 01
Federal Ministers Amir Muqam, Attaullah Tarar, Chairman WAPDA Lt Gen. (ret'd) Sajjad Ghani, Chinese Ambassador in Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, members of the Chinese company and senior officials were also present on the occasion. Terming it a job of the enemies of Pakistan, the prime minister said that it was a dastardly act on part of the perpetrators who found every opportunity to harm this friendship which was strengthening by each passing day and expanding and moving forward with speed. "That is the reason enemies do not spare any opportunity to damage and create a wedge between the two Iron Brothers," he added.

CTD
'arrests'
over 10...

FROM PAGE 01
In the aftermath of the attack, Chinese companies overseeing operations at the sites of the Dasu and Diamer-Bhasha Dams, temporarily suspended the civil work at both sites owing to security concerns. Around 991 Chinese engineers were working on both projects, while the local staff has been told to stay at home till further instructions, an official working on the project confirmed to the publication. Last week, a Chinese investigation team has also arrived in Pakistan to investigate the incident after China's military expressed its willingness to work with Pakistan to enhance the capability of the two countries to tackle various security risks and challenges including terrorist attacks

Israel hits
consular
section...

FROM PAGE 01
Corps (IRGC) in Syria and Lebanon has been martyred in an Israeli attack on the Consular Section of the Iranian Embassy in the Syrian capital of Damascus. Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi and his deputy, Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, were killed in the Israeli attack on Monday. Syria's official news agency, SANA, said the strikes were carried out by "the Israeli enemy" and targeted the Mezzeh neighborhood in Damascus on Monday afternoon. Iran's Ambassador to Damascus Hossein Akbari confirmed the reports of the Israeli attack and said the regime had targeted the consular building with six missiles.

Israeli army
'executed'...

FROM PAGE 01
The Israeli pullout, which also left behind a vast swath of destruction. It emphasized that Israel retreated from the hospital "after burning down the complex buildings and putting it completely out of service." "The scale of the destruction inside the complex and the buildings around it is very large," the ministry said. All buildings in the hospital were exposed to fire or sustained damage, including the mortuary and the hospital's courtyards and corridors. The Israeli military also confirmed withdrawal from the hospital. The Gaza government's media office said dozens of the Israeli airstrikes and shells around the complex had provided cover for the withdrawing vehicles.

SC takes
suo motu...

FROM PAGE 01
Just a day earlier, over 300 lawyers belonging to different bar associations across the country lauded the judges' and called upon the apex court to hear the matter under its suo motu jurisdictions. The IHC judges – Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani, Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Justice Babar Sattar, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir, and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz – wrote the letter to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), urging the body to convene a judicial convention over the alleged interference of intelligence agencies in judicial affairs.

PCB chief to meet Shaheen Shah, Babar Azam in Kakul

PCB chief will visit Kakul fitness camp, where he will take Shaheen Shah Afridi on board in connection with the captaincy

SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi expected to meet nominated white-ball captain Babar Azam and pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi today (Monday). Sources divulged that the PCB chief will visit Kakul fitness camp, where he will take Shaheen Shah Afridi on board in connection with the captaincy. Following the meeting with Babar and Shaheen, Naqvi is expected to join the rest of the players for iftar dinner. Meanwhile, according to the sources, Shaheen is not happy with his removal from the captaincy. Sources privy to the development said that Shaheen was of the opinion that he was neither taken on board ahead of being removed from the captaincy nor was given answers to his queries.

It is expected that the selection committee will announce the T20I squad for the forthcoming home series against New Zealand



Board (PCB) issued the press release without talking to pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi. Earlier on Sunday, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) issued the press release without talking to pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi. Sources divulged that Shaheen was taking

All Pakistan 3x3
Ramadan Cup
Semifinalists Decided

Timber Wolves, YMCA, Bulls A qualified for Ramadan Cup Basketball SF

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Timber Wolves, YMCA, Bulls A and Reapers Red reached into the last-four stage in the Club category of All Pakistan 3x3 Ramadan Cup Basketball Tournament here at outdoor basketball courts of Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad. According to tournament organizing secretary Ouj E Zahoor, Under the supervision of Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) part of Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) taking part in the tournament organized by Federal Basketball Association (FBBFA) in three different categories. In the club category quarter-final round, Timber Wolves outclassed Mustang club by 21-12 points in a one sided match. Ali Kazmi scored 12 and Muhammad Osama scored 6 points for the winning side. YMCA thrashed United Kings in the second quarter final as YMCA commanded the match all the time with 21-15 points which they maintained lead till the end. Muhammad Hamza scored 8 while Hamad Ali scored 6 points for YMCA. In the third quarter final Bulls A beat Bulls B by 17-14 points while Reapers Red thrashed Raptors White 20-8 points to enter into the last four stage in the club category.

Miami Open: Sinner opens up
after record-breaking triumph

PARIS: Jannik Sinner was elected after making a remarkable start to the 2024 season as he bagged the Miami Open title. Sinner is the first player to claim the men's singles titles at the Australian Open and Miami Open in a calendar year since Roger Federer (2017). The Miami crown was Sinner's third title of the year. The Italian was in sublime form as he eased past Daniil Medvedev in the semis and Grigor Dimitrov in the final of the Miami Open. Sinner also improved his record to 22-1 this season and rose to a career-best world number two. "This is a special moment," Sinner said after beating Dimitrov 6-3 6-1. "You never know if this is the last time or not. So you have to enjoy this for one day, and now a new chapter is coming, clay-court season is coming, so completely different. "Let's see how I will play from now on. But for sure, the hard-court season until now has been very good." Sinner has impressed one and all this season, which includes winning the Australian Open in January. His only defeat in 2024 came to Carlos Alcaraz in the last four at Indian Wells. "Being number two, it's an amazing feeling," Sinner said. "I never thought to come to this point. I

come from a very normal family. My dad is still working, as my mom, too. For me sport is one thing and life is different." Sinner's coach Darren Cahill said that the 22-year-old was enjoying his life on and off the court. "He appreciates every single moment that is happening to him, but he's also got his feet on the ground knowing it's just a sport, it's just a tennis match," Cahill said. "Whilst he's professional in everything he does, he enjoys his life. He's a normal 22-year-old kid.

There's a lot to learn from him, a lot of good to learn from both him and Carlos. I think they're very similar in many, many ways. "That's why I think tennis is in great hands at the moment with the likes of those two and many other players coming through that are going to carry the torch through a generation we have been so fortunate to sit through the last 20 years. "It's important to have these types of sports people coming through." –Agencies

Pakistan selectors earmark
players for NZ T20I series

Shaheen and Naseem will play in selective matches against New Zealand, whereas Imad and Amir will receive ample playing time to attain the match fitness requisite for international cricket



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is expected to announce the squad for the upcoming five-match T20I series against New Zealand on April 5th. The selection committee

members are currently assessing the fitness levels of the players at the Kakul fitness camp. They will provide a detailed report to PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi, who is scheduled to visit Kakul today to meet the players. Naqvi has directed the selectors that there

will be no compromise on fitness. Discussions are in progress among the selectors concerning potential players for the squad. Recommendations, following consultations with captain Babar Azam, will be submitted to the Cricket Board Chairman for approval. According to sources, selectors are contemplating the implementation of a rotation policy to mitigate the risk of injuries in preparation for the forthcoming T20 World Cup 2024 in the USA and West Indies. Specifically, Shaheen Afridi and Naseem Shah are earmarked to play in selective matches against New Zealand to manage their workload and mitigate injury risks before the T20 World Cup. A thorough discussion with Babar Azam regarding the workload of Shaheen and Naseem is planned. Fast bowler Mohammad Amir and all-rounder Imad Wasim, both recently re-

turned from international retirement, are slated to receive ample playing time to attain the match fitness requisite for international cricket. Fakhar Zaman and Haris Rauf are still recovering from injuries they sustained during the ninth edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL). Usman Khan is likely to be included in the squad and is expected to bat at number four spot in the playing XI against the Kiwis. The selectors are expected to name approximately 17 to 18 players for the home series, with the final 15-member squad for the T20 World Cup to be chosen from this pool. The national team's fitness camp will conclude on April 8. Meanwhile, the New Zealand team is set to arrive in Pakistan on April 14th for the five-match T20 series commencing on April 18th, with three matches scheduled in Pindi and the remaining two in Lahore.

Rodrygo shines
in Real Madrid's
win streak

Los Blancos earned the advantage early on with Rodrygo dribbling through the middle and easing past goalkeeper Julen Agirrezabala to open the scoring

MADRID: Brazilian star Rodrygo scored struck twice to lead Real Madrid to a 2-0 victory against Athletic Club during the La Liga 2023-24 match at Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday. Real Madrid extended their lead to eight points ahead of defending La Liga champions Barcelona at second spot. Meanwhile, Girona are following Barcelona closely with a difference of two points only. Los Blancos earned the advantage early on with Rodrygo dribbling through the middle and easing past goalkeeper Julen Agirrezabala to open the scoring. The visitors struggled throughout the first half, however, they had a faint chance towards the end of the first half as Gorka Guruzeta found Oihan Sancet in the box and attempted to equalize only to be saved by the goalkeeper. Athletic Club made some aggressive attempts after the first half to level but could not get past the strong opposition. But Rodrygo rained on their parade as he doubled the lead in the 73rd minute with a brilliant goal following a fast break. This proved to be the last nail in the coffin as Real Madrid denied any chances of a comeback from the visitors to stay on top of the La Liga points table. In another La Liga clash, Girona defeated Real Betis 3-2 at Municipal de Montilivi to close the gap with second-positioned Barcelona. – Agencies

Mohamed Salah caps fightback as Liverpool go top

Egyptian striker scores winner as Reds come from behind to strengthen Premier League title bid

LIVERPOOL: Mohamed Salah fired Liverpool to the top of the Premier League as the Egypt star's clinical finish capped a stirring fightback to beat Brighton 2-1. Jurgen Klopp's side were rocked by Danny Welbeck's blistering strike after just 85 seconds at Anfield. Luis Diaz restored order with an equaliser later in the first half, before Salah netted after the interval to seal a vital victory. Salah's third goal in his last three games was his 22nd in all competitions this term. Unbeaten in their last six league matches, Liverpool sit two points clear of second-placed Arsenal, who drew 0-0 with third-placed Manchester City at the Etihad Stadium just a few hours later. Thanks to Salah, treble-chasing Liverpool are in the driving seat as they eye a record-equalling 20th English title – and first since 2020 – in Klopp's final season. "Being that calm in the decisive moment with the biggest chance we had from the best football we played, then that makes a real goalscorer so we are happy with everything," Klopp said of Salah. "Brighton's centre-halves were outstanding and it was just a really good game, against an op-

ponent you know it will be the hardest work. "To defend them needs the highest intensity in English football and we did well. More possession, better possession, a really good rhythm." Unbeaten in their last 27 home league games, Liverpool are back in action at Anfield against lowly Sheffield United on Thursday. Affected former

Liverpool star Xabi Alonso confirmed he intends to stay at Bayer Leverkusen, Brighton boss Roberto De Zerbi is a reported candidate to replace Klopp when the German steps down at the end of this term. Klopp is a big fan of De Zerbi's attacking philosophy and praised him as a "top coach" this week. Asked after the game about the link to Liverpool, De Zerbi said: "I have another two years

of contract. My focus is on Brighton this season, the next season. "But before starting next season I would like to listen to the plan of the team. I think it is a serious thing." Playing for the first time since their painful FA Cup quarter-final defeat at Manchester United before the international break, Liverpool had a shocking taste of De Zerbi's enter-

prising tactics after just two minutes. Brighton's Simon Adingra broke quickly in a devastating counter-attack that caught Liverpool right-back Conor Bradley out of position. When Virgil van Dijk's scuffed clearance rolled to Welbeck just inside the penalty area, the Brighton forward lashed a strike into the top corner to leave Klopp shaking his head. Salah was making his first league start since New Year's Day after an injury-plagued beginning

to 2024. Looking to make up for lost time, Salah nearly grabbed the equaliser with a curler that whistled just wide. The Egypt forward threatened again from Bradley's cross, but he couldn't keep his shot on target from a good position 10 yards out. Liverpool's dominance was rewarded in the 27th minute when Brighton failed to clear Salah's header from a corner and Diaz volleyed home from close range. Liverpool midfielder Alexis Mac Allister squandered a chance against his former club with a header that flashed narrowly wide early in the second half. Dominik Szoboszlai fired past the far post from 20 yards, while Darwin Nunez was denied by Bart Verbruggen at the near post. Wave after wave of Liverpool pressure crashed against Brighton's defensive wall before De Zerbi's men cracked in the 65th minute. Mac Allister was catalyst with a perfectly-weighted pass that picked out Salah's run into the area and the forward dispatched a composed low finish past Verbruggen. In a tense finale, former Liverpool midfielder Adam Lallana should have punished his old team, but he rolled his shot wide to Klopp's immense relief. – Agencies

IHC
suspends
Imran...

FROM PAGE 01
The judge had also disqualified the former prime minister for 10 years while handing over a fine of Rs1.57 billion – Rs787 million each – to the couple. Khan had told the court that his wife had nothing to do with the case and was being humiliated by being forcibly dragged into it. IHC CJ Farooq, during the hearing, said the cipher case would be completed in a few days. "Also, we cannot fix the Toshakhana case for hearing the very next day after holding a hearing on it today." He said the cipher case was fixed for hearing the next day. The court said arguments of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had to begin in the cipher case and he did not know how long it would take. Hence, the Toshakhana case is being postponed till after Eid.

SIC moves
SC against
PHC's verdict

FROM PAGE 01
Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) ruling that denied reserved seats to the party. Advocate Faisal Siddiqui filed the petition, on behalf of the PTI-backed-SIC, that stated, "It is, therefore, most respectfully and most humbly prayed that leave to appeal against the Impugned Judgment dated: 14-03-2024 passed by the Honourable Peshawar High Court in Writ Petition No.1272-P of 2024, may graciously be granted and after granting leave to appeal, this Honourable Court may graciously set aside the Impugned Judgment dated: 14-03-2024 and allow the Writ Petition No.1272-P of 2024, as prayed." The petition states that the PTI candidates joined the SIC after their party lost its electoral symbol, adding that the ECP also raised no objections to the above independent returned candidates joining the SIC.

PTI rejects
7-member...

FROM PAGE 01
heard by the full court and the proceeding should be televised. Speaking at a press conference along with former chief minister Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khurshid, PTI Central Information Secretary Raouf Hasan termed the suspension of PTI Chairman-for-life sentence in Toshakhana case a ray of hope; however, he added that the sentence should have been quashed altogether since it was one of the around 200 frivolous, bogus and politically motivated cases based on political vendetta. Raouf Hasan said that the full court should hear the letter saga and should such decision that no institution could ever dare to interfere in judiciary again.

Ex-CJP
Jilani...

FROM PAGE 01
it would have been "violation of judicial propriety" for him to probe the matter, which he argued, may fall "within the jurisdiction of a constitutional body which is the Supreme Judicial Council or the Supreme Court of Pakistan itself". Justice (ret'd) Jilani also noted that the "terms of the reference for inquiry" were not relevant to the subject asked to probe by the six IHC judges in their letter. He also noted that at the end of the letter the judges had requested for an "institutional consultation" on the issue. "Though, the letter in question may not strictly fall within the parameters of Article 209 of the Constitution, but the Honorable Chief Justice of Pakistan being a paterfamilias may address and resolve the issues raised in the letter at the institutional level.

Annual
inflation...

FROM PAGE 01
inflation above 20pc since May 2022, registering a high of 38pc in May 2023, as it navigates contentious reforms it must implement as part of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout programme. The country has also witnessed stunted growth, with GDP shrinking 0.17pc in the financial year 2023 as economic activity ground to a halt on the back of a historic high interest rate which currently stands at 22pc.

Briefs

Greece hikes Golden visa price amid housing crisis

ATHENS : Greece tightened the rules on its popular "Golden Visa" program increasing the required investment threshold to as much as 800,000 euros (\$864,000) in a bid to help ease a housing crisis. The successful program that has attracted thousands of Chinese launched in 2014 granting foreigners a renewable, five-year residence permit in return for a 250,000-euro property investment. The finance ministry announced that from Sunday, the threshold would climb to 800,000 euros in attractive regions, such as Attica, around Athens, Thessaloniki, Mykonos, Santorini and the islands with a population of over 3,100. In other areas, it would start at 400,000 euros. "These measures are part of the government's overall housing policy, which aims, in cooperation with the private sector, to ensure affordable and quality housing for all citizens," Finance Minister Kostis Hatzidakis said. According to Bank of Greece data, rents have increased by 20% since the country officially exited a near-decade-long crisis in 2018.—APP

Türkiye 'neutralizes' 5 PKK terrorists in Iraq

ISTANBUL : Turkish security forces "neutralized" five PKK terrorists in northern Iraq, the National Defense Ministry said on Monday. The terrorists were targeted in the Hakurk region via airstrikes, the ministry said on X. "We will continue our fight with great perseverance and determination to free our noble nation from terrorism," it added. Turkish authorities use the term "neutralized" to imply the terrorists in question surrendered or were killed or captured. PKK terrorists often hide out across the border in northern Iraq to plot terror attacks in Türkiye. In its more than 35-year terror campaign against Türkiye, the PKK - listed as a terrorist organization by Türkiye, the US, and EU - has been responsible for the deaths of over 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants.—APP

Western France on red alert due to flood risk

ANKARA : The western French department Indre-et-Loire remains on red alert Monday due to flood risk, according to the country's weather authority, Météo France. The French towns and rivers in western France were flooded over the weekend, and residents were evacuated, according to local media. Rescuers continue searching for a kayaker who went missing in the flooded La Vienne river on Saturday, the La Depeche newspaper reported. The Vienne rose on Sunday evening up to 5.24 meters (17.19 feet), and the Creuse river rose to 6.78 meters, surpassing the record in 1982.—DNA

Tokyo shares close lower on profit-taking

TOKYO : Tokyo stocks shed early gains to close lower on profit-taking on Monday, as investors sought fresh direction after the Easter break in the United States. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index fell 1.40 percent, or 566.35 points, to end at 39,803.09, while the broader Topix index dropped 1.71 percent, or 47.40 points, to 2,721.22. Before the opening bell, the Bank of Japan's Tankan poll showed that business confidence among large manufacturers slipped in March - the first decline in the past four quarters, although it was slightly higher than market expectations. The Tankan survey "showed that confidence among Japan's largest manufacturers slipped.—APP

Dead bodies of Chinese engineers taken to Wuhan

Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development arrived in Wuhan, China, on the special flight that carried the mortal remains of five Chinese personnel

DNA

WUHA: To express solidarity with the government and people of China, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development arrived in Wuhan, China, on the special flight that carried the mortal remains of five Chinese personnel, who died in a terrorist attack on 26 March, 2024. The Federal Minister was received by high-ranking government officials and Pakistan Embassy representative at Wuhan airport, where he also attended the special ceremony held to pay homage to the five deceased personnel.



Later, the Federal Minister held a meeting with Ms. Chen Ping, Vice Governor of Hubei Province and offered his deepest condolences on the loss of innocent lives while reiterating Pakistan's solemn commitment to bringing to justice the perpetrators who committed this heinous crime. The Minister also paid rich tribute to the Chinese personnel for their invaluable contribution in the development and progress of Pakistan and vowed that the government and people of Pakistan would never let the evil plans against China-Pakistan relations succeed.

WHO chief urges Israel to allow Al-Shifa Hospital access

We urge Israel to urgently facilitate access and a humanitarian corridor so WHO and partners can carry out the lifesaving transfer of patients : Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON : World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged Israel to urgently enable access to Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza and establish a humanitarian corridor. "We urge Israel to urgently facilitate access and a humanitarian corridor so WHO and partners can carry out the lifesaving transfer of patients," Tedros said on He said 21 patients have died since Al-Shifa Hospital came under siege on March 18, with hostilities continuing in its vicinity according to updates from a health worker at the facility. "107 patients are in an inadequate building, within the hospital compound, lacking needed health support, medical care and supplies. Patients have been moved multiple times within the hospital compound since the siege began. "Among the patients are 4 children and 28 critical patients lacking



necessary means of care - no diapers, urine bags, water to clean wounds. Many have infected wounds and are dehydrated," he added. Tedros said that as of yesterday, there is now just one bottle of water available for every 15 people, leading to the rapid spread of contagious diseases because of highly unsanitary conditions and water scarcity. He added that a severe shortage of food poses a critical risk, particularly for diabetic patients whose health is deteriorating. "We repeat: every moment matters. Ceasefire," he said. Mean-

while, Israeli forces admit most Gaza killings are civilians Israeli officers and soldiers have admitted that most of the fatalities classified by the army as "terrorists" during its war on Gaza are actually civilians, a report has said. The Israeli newspaper Haaretz collected testimonies from officers and soldiers who have fought in Gaza during the war, which has been ongoing since October 7, 2023. "The Israeli army says 9,000 terrorists have been killed since the Gaza war began," the report said. Israeli officials and soldiers, however,

told Haaretz that "these are often civilians whose only crime was to cross an invisible line drawn by the Israeli army."

"We were explicitly told that even if a suspect runs into a building with people in it, we should fire at the building and kill the terrorist, even if other people are hurt," one soldier told the newspaper. New Palestinian government sworn in A new Palestinian government that includes both residents of Gaza and four women was sworn in but was already facing scepticism from its own people. The Palestinian Authority led by Mahmoud Abbas is under pressure from Washington to prepare to step into the breach in the aftermath of the Gaza war and undertake reforms. Newly appointed Prime Minister Mohammed Mustafa said his government's "top national priority" was ending the war as he named his new team. He said his cabinet "will work on formulating visions to reunify the institutions, including assuming responsibility for Gaza."

Kremlin dismisses report Russia behind 'Havana Syndrome'

U.S. Congress passed the Havana Act in 2021 authorising the State Department, CIA and other U.S. government agencies to provide payments to staff and their families affected by the ailment during assignment

MOSCOW : The Kremlin on Monday dismissed a report that Russian military intelligence may be behind the mysterious "Havana syndrome" ailment that has afflicted U.S. diplomats and spies globally. Insider, a Russia-focused investigative media group based in Riga, Latvia reported, opens new tab that members of a Russian military intelligence (GRU) unit known as 29155 had been placed at the scene of reported health incidents involving U.S. personnel. The year-long Insider investigation in collaboration with 60 Minutes and Germany's Der Spiegel also reported that senior members of Unit 29155 received awards and promotions for work related to the development of "non-lethal acoustic weapons". "This is not a new topic at all; for many years the topic of the so-called 'Havana Syndrome' has been exaggerated in the press, and from the very beginning it was linked to accusations against the Russian side," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked about the report. "But no one has ever published or expressed any convincing evidence of these unfounded accusations anywhere," Peskov said. "Therefore, all this is nothing more than baseless, unfounded accusations by the media." A U.S. intelligence investigation whose findings were released last year found that it was "very unlikely" a foreign adversary was responsible for the ailment, first reported by U.S. embassy officials in the Cuban capital Havana in 2016. Symptoms of the ailment have included migraines, nausea, memory lapses and dizziness. The Insider report said the first incident of "Havana Syndrome" symptoms may have happened earlier than 2016. It said "there were likely attacks two years earlier in Frankfurt, Germany, when a U.S. government employee stationed at the consulate there was knocked unconscious by something akin to a strong energy beam". U.S. Congress passed the Havana Act in 2021 authorising the State Department, CIA and other U.S. government agencies to provide payments to staff and their families affected by the ailment during assignment.—DNA

Mali political parties demand elections amid junta's backtrack

BAMAKO: Political parties in Mali have requested a time frame for presidential elections after the ruling junta failed to organise polls within a promised 24-month transition back to democracy. Mali has been under military rule since August 2020, the first of eight coups in West and Central Africa over four years, including in its neighbours Burkina Faso and Niger. Regional blocs have been trying to negotiate transitions but the interim governments are dragging their feet. Mali's current junta seized power in a second 2021 coup and later promised to take 24 months from March 2022 to restore civilian rule, with a start date of March 26, 2024 and elections in February. It passed a new electoral law in June 2022, but said in September last year that it would postpone February elections for technical reasons, sparking outrage among political groups. Many reacted again after last month's transition deadline lapsed without a vote. In a joint statement late on Sunday, some of Mali's main political parties and civil society groups called on authorities to set up an institutional framework for polls as soon as possible. "We will use all legal and legitimate avenues for the return of normal constitutional order in our country," they said in the statement, which has over 20 signatories, including a major opposition coalition and the toppled expresident's party. Mali's military rulers already failed on a first promise to hold elections in February 2022, prompting stiff sanctions from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).



ISLAMABAD: People brake their fasting during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan at the Faisal Mosque in the Federal Capital.—ONLINE

Yoon urges doctors to end impasse over trainees

South Korean President apologized for the inconvenience caused by the ongoing strike by trainee doctors

WEB DESK

SEOUL : South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said on Monday his government is open to talks with doctors who oppose his plan to increase medical school admissions, while accusing critics of offering no reasonable alternative to ease a doctor shortage. In a 50-minute address to the country, Yoon signalled his willingness for the first time to seek a compromise on his medical reform proposals after the government called for dialogue with striking doctors. Yoon apologised for the inconvenience caused by the ongoing strike by trainee doctors but accused the medical sector of putting their own interests ahead of public health. "If you come up with a more proper and reasonable solution, we can discuss it as much as you want," he said. "If you present better opinions and rational grounds, government policy can change for the better."

"The number 2,000 is not a random figure we came up with. We have thoroughly reviewed relevant statistics and research and reviewed present and future medical situations," Yoon said, adding that the government's reforms aimed to create "a medical environment where all people can receive treatment with a peace of mind". Yoon said doctors opposed to the plans should stop "making threats" and present a "unified blueprint with clear scientific reasoning". "If a more valid and reasonable plan is brought forward, we can discuss as much as they want," he said. Some 12,000 junior doctors in South Korea have been on strike since early February over the proposals, forcing hospitals to cancel treatments and surgeries. South Korea's government has argued that the reforms are necessary to alleviate staff shortages and manage the country's rapid transition to an aged society. South Korea had 2.6 doctors per 1,000 people in 2022, according to the Organisation



for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), well below the average among developed nations. Previous governments have devised measures to tackle deepening shortages of doctors in essential services including paediatrics and emergency units, as well as clinics outside the greater Seoul area, but their efforts fell apart amid strong opposition from the medical sector. Some medical professionals have said the Yoon ad-

ministration had failed to consult in advance, and its plan would do little to fix the current situation including low pay for trainee doctors. Trainee doctors argue that the medical system is not equipped to handle such a steep increase in new recruits and that medical services will suffer as a result. Doctors participating in the walkout face the risk of losing their medical licences after the government last month began taking steps to suspend them. Yoon urged the doctors to return to work before the process to suspend their licences was complete, saying collective action should only be considered "when I do not keep my promises". Yoon also expressed regret at the inconvenience caused to the public, saying he was sorry he had been unable to "quickly resolve the inconveniences of the people". Public approval of Yoon has declined as the strike has dragged on, with just over 36 percent of South Koreans expressing a positive view of the president in a RealMeter poll

released on Monday. South Korea will hold parliamentary elections next week that will be crucial to Yoon's chances of avoiding lame-duck status in the remaining three years of his five-year term. South Korean president heads to Netherlands to boost semiconductor cooperation Some medical professionals have said the Yoon administration had failed to consult in advance, and its plan would do little to fix the current situation including low pay for trainee doctors. Yoon refuted several claims by doctors' groups and highlighted why medical reform is imperative. "After keeping a deafening silence over the government's request to provide specific numbers for medical school quotas, the medical community is now throwing numbers like 350, 500 and 1,000 without any grounds," he said. "If they want to argue that the scale of the increase should be reduced, they should propose a unified idea with solid scientific evidence, rather than taking collective action."

Germany gives controversial green light to cannabis

BERLIN : Germany on Monday became the biggest EU country to legalise recreational cannabis, despite fierce objections from opposition politicians and medical associations. Under the first step in the much-debated new law, adults over 18 are now allowed to carry 25 grams of dried cannabis and cultivate up to three marijuana plants at home. The changes leave Germany with some of the most liberal cannabis laws in Europe, alongside Malta and Luxembourg, which legalised recreational use in 2021 and 2023, respectively. The Netherlands, known for its permissive attitude to the drug, has in recent years taken a stricter approach to counter cannabis tourism. As the law took effect at midnight, hundreds of people cheered by Berlin's iconic Brandenburg Gate, many of them by lighting up joints in what one participant, a very happy 25-year-old Niyazi, called "a bit of extra freedom". As the next step in the legal reform, from July 1 it will be possible to legally obtain weed through "cannabis clubs" in the country. These regulated associations will be allowed to have up to 500 members each, and will be able to distribute up to 50 grams of cannabis per person per month.

Until then, "consumers must not tell the police where they bought their cannabis" in the event of a street check, Georg Wurth, director of the German Cannabis Association, told AFP. Initial plans for cannabis to be sold via licensed shops have been ditched due to EU opposition, though a second law is in the pipeline to trial the sale of the drug in shops in pilot regions. The German government, a three-way coalition led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats, argues that legalisation will help contain the growing black market for the popular substance.

But health groups have raised concerns that legalisation could lead to an increase in use among young people, who face the highest health risks.

Cannabis use among young people can affect the development of the central nervous system, leading to an increased risk of developing psychosis and schizophrenia, experts have warned. "From our point of view, the law as it is written is a disaster," Katja Seidel, a therapist at a cannabis addiction centre for young people in Berlin, told media.—APP

Northern Irish DUP leader resigns amid charges

BELFAST: Jeffrey Donaldson, the leader of Northern Ireland's largest unionist party, stepped down on Friday, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) said, after he was charged over historical sex offences.

Donaldson, 61, is one of the British region's best-known politicians and is Northern Ireland's longest-serving lawmaker in the British parliament, to which he was first elected in 1997. He is also a former member of the Northern Irish Assembly. "The Party Chairman has received a letter from Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP confirming that he has been charged with "allegations of an historical nature" and indicating that he is stepping down as leader of the Democratic Unionist Party with immediate effect," the DUP said in a statement. "In accordance with the party rules, the party officers have suspended Mr Donaldson from membership, pending the outcome of a judicial process." The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) said earlier on Friday that detectives had arrested and charged a 61-year-old man for "non-recent sexual offences".

A 57-year-old woman was also arrested and charged at the time "for aiding and abetting additional offences". Both are due to appear in court on April 24, police said. "It's been a devastating revelation and has caused tremendous shock not just for myself personally or my colleagues within the DUP, but for the community right across Northern Ireland," Robinson told Sky News in an interview.—Agencies

Briefs

Delhi CM Kejriwal gets further detention

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI: An Indian court renewed detention on Monday for key opposition leader Arvind Kejriwal until April 15 in a graft case, his lawyers said, less than three weeks before voting begins in general elections. In a move that sparked protests last month, India's financial crime-fighting agency arrested Kejriwal, the chief minister of Delhi, over graft accusations related to the city's liquor policy and remanded him to custody until April 1. Opposition parties say the arrest, along with government action against other opposition groups and their leaders, shows the government is denying them a level playing field in the elections, charges it denies. Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) says he has been falsely arrested in a fabricated case, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) denies political interference. Lawyers for the agency, the Enforcement Directorate, said on Monday that Kejriwal had been non-cooperative and gave evasive replies, asking the court to hold him in custody for 15 days longer, the website Live Law said.

IHC orders meeting Imran Khan, Bushra on Eid

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday ordered authorities to allow a meeting between the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and his wife Bushra Bibi on the occasion of Eidul Fitr. Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb gave the order during the hearing of applications to transfer Bushra Bibi from Bani Gala to Adiala Jail and her meeting with the PTI founder. The IHC also ordered to allow them a meeting once in a week. During the proceedings, the court asked how the government can declare one's private property as a sub-jail. The state counsel submitted that on the order of the court, director law has visited Bani Gala sub-jail and issued a report. The court directed him to provide a copy of the report to the petitioner and asked him whether the visiting officer was satisfied with the facilities provided in Bani Gala. Justice Aurangzeb expressed indignation at the report of the Adiala Jail administration and chief commissioner for not transferring Bushra Bibi to Adiala Jail and not allowing her meeting terming it politics.

Sindh sets up first archive lab

DNA

KARACHI: In a significant milestone for cultural preservation and historical conservation, Sindh has inaugurated its first-ever state-of-the-art 'Scientific Conservation Laboratory'. Situated strategically next to Romi Graveyard on the Northern Bypass, this facility marks a watershed moment in the region's efforts to safeguard its rich cultural heritage. The laboratory's swift establishment, accomplished within a mere seven months during the tenure of the interim government, underscores the dedication and commitment of authorities to cultural preservation. Dr Syed Junaid Ali Shah, the interim Sindh minister for culture, sports, labor, and human resources, played a pivotal role in spearheading this initiative. The laboratory boasts cutting-edge equipment and facilities essential for the meticulous conservation of artifacts. It houses a team of highly trained archaeologists, draftsmen, architects, field officers, technicians, and other specialists, ensuring comprehensive care and preservation of historical treasures.

France seeking 'clear message' from China over Ukraine

While China says it is a neutral party in the Ukraine conflict, it has been criticized for refusing to condemn Moscow for its offensive

BEIJING: France's top diplomat said Monday that Paris expects China to send "clear messages" to its close partner Russia over its war in Ukraine, after meetings with his counterpart in Beijing. France and China have sought to strengthen ties in recent years and, during meetings in Paris in February, Foreign Minister Wang Yi told President Emmanuel Macron that Beijing appreciated his country's "independent" stance. But Paris has also sought to press Beijing on its close ties with Moscow, which have only grown closer since the invasion of Ukraine. While China says it is a neutral party in the Ukraine conflict, it has been criticized for refusing to condemn Moscow for its offensive. Paris has, in contrast, become one of Kyiv's firmest backers, with Macron in February even refusing to rule out putting troops on the ground in Ukraine. And Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne said Monday it wanted "China to send very clear messages to Russia" over its war in Ukraine. "We are convinced that there will be no lasting peace if it is not negotiated with the Ukrainians," he told a press conference in Beijing, speaking alongside his Chinese counterpart Wang. "There will be no security for Europeans if there is no peace in accordance with international law," he continued. "It is an essential issue for us, which is why France is determined to maintain a close dialogue with China," he said. And Beijing, he said, could

Russia demands extradition of Ukraine security chief

FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW: Russia has demanded that Ukraine extradite a number of people, including the head of the country's SBU security service, over claims they are connected with "terrorist" acts. The SBU immediately dismissed the Russian demand as "pointless" and said the Russian foreign ministry had "forgotten" that Vladimir Putin was the subject of an international arrest warrant. A Russian foreign ministry statement listed violent incidents that have occurred in Russia since the full invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, including bombings that killed the daughter of a prominent nationalist and a war blogger, and an incident in which a writer was seriously hurt. The ministry said investigation of these incidents showed that "the traces of these crimes lead to Ukraine". "Russia has turned over to Ukrainian authorities its demands ... for the immediate arrest and extradition of all those connected to the terrorist acts play a "key role" in ensuring respect for international law is maintained. Sejourne's visit is the second to China by a French for-

ign minister in less than six months, following a trip by his predecessor, Catherine Colonna, in November. Macron also visited last April, receiving a rock star welcome at a university in southern China from hundreds of screaming students and fans. But he faced accusations of cosying up to Beijing and sparked controversy by saying Europe shouldn't be a "follower" of the United States in the event of conflict with China over Taiwan. The top diplomat's visit this week comes as part of events marking the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between France and China. He will later in the day take part in the launch of the "Versailles and the Forbidden City" exhibition, where around sixty works of art and valuables from the palace will be open to the public until the end of June. And France's efforts to improve ties with Beijing come as the EU seeks to shield itself from excessive reliance on China. That "derisking" has emerged in recent months as a core pillar of the European bloc's economic policy toward China, becoming necessary after the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The term contrasts with the more drastic approach known as "decoupling" - pursued by some policymakers in the United States who aim to isolate China or cut all commercial ties with the country. But the EU increasingly views China as a "partner" but also as "an economic competitor and systemic rival," a report by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China said last month. And in Beijing on Monday, Sejourne said decoupling was not on the cards. -Agencies

in question," the statement said. Among those listed in the statement to be handed over were the SBU head, Vasyli Maluk, who has acknowledged that his service was behind attacks on the bridge linking Crimea to the Russian mainland. Russia seized control of Crimea in 2014 and the bridge was built after the region was annexed. "The Russian side demands that the Kyiv regime immediately cease all support for terrorist activity, extradite guilty parties and compensate the victims for damages," the ministry statement said. "Ukraine's violation of its obligations under anti-terrorist conventions will result in it being held to account in international legal terms." The SBU said the Russian demands "sound particularly cynical coming from the terrorist state itself ... Any words from the Russian foreign ministry are pointless." It referred to the arrest warrant against Putin issued by the international criminal court in connection with the transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia and said: "The tribunal in The Hague is waiting for him."

Sh. Rashid predicted Shehabz will prevail

Says, innocent people should be released

ADIL SHAHEEN

RAWALPINDI: A wami Muslim League chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said on Monday he had already predicted Shehabz Sharif would prevail over Nawaz in politics. Speaking to media outside the anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi, Rashid said copies of three cases relating to May 9 incident had been provided to him. He said 17 cases about May 9 were pending against him in courts. Out of these cases, 11 cases were under adjudication in the anti-terrorism courts. He said he would appear before the court on the next hearing date. He said he had predicted long ago that Shehabz's politics would prevail. The former federal minister said those who had to run the government should run it but the innocent people should be released. "The jails are full. Our silence will bear fruit. We will defend ourselves in court. We are not begging for our release orders," said the senior politician. The former minister said, "We want stove of the poor to keep burning. Pakistan should move forward because the poor people's woes are on the rise and their condition is miserable. On 27th of Ramazan, the powers that be should announce pardon for the poor."

Court cancels Gandapur's arrest warrants

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A local court on Monday cancelled the arrest warrants of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in a case about protests and vandalising the public property. Judicial Magistrate Naveed Khan issued the order and adjourned the hearing of the case against Gandapur till May 20. Earlier, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur approached the District and Sessions Court of Islamabad to cancel the non-bailable arrest warrant in the long march and vandalism case. The petition has stated that Ali Amin Gandapur never deliberately avoided appearance in the court.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, and Ambassador WADA Mitsuhiro holding a meeting to discuss ways to strengthen trade relations and mutual trust between Japan and Pakistan. - DNA

Reserved seats verdict KP Assembly speaker files review petition

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: On the eve of the Senate elections, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati on Monday filed a review plea in the Peshawar High Court (PHC) over the direction issued by the court to administer the oath to the lawmakers elected on reserved seats. The writ petition, submitted by Speaker Swati through Advocate Ali Azim Afridi, stresses that no requisition was received by him regarding the summoning of the session. "The elected person has to be administered oath before the provincial assembly within the meaning of Article 65 of the Constitution, which is only possible when an assembly session is summoned or requisitioned," the plea argues citing the court's judgement in the Baldiv Kumar's case. Meanwhile, expressing his views on the issue, KP Assembly Speaker Swati said that he was advised by his legal team and law department that the governor does not have the authority to summon a session - as he did so earlier this month on the opposition's request. "We believe in the rule of law," he said while speaking to the media in Peshawar. On the upcoming Senate polls, slated for April 2 (tomorrow), Swati said that the assembly secretariat has finalised the preparations for Tuesday's elections wherein the assembly hall has been declared as the polling station. The development comes as last week a two-member PHC bench comprising Justice Atique Shah and Justice Shakeel Ahmad - in response to the petition filed by opposition parties in the provincial assembly - ordered swearing-in of members elected on reserved seats.

Erdogan concedes defeat in Turkiye local elections

WEB DESK

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan conceded defeat on Sunday in the country's local elections, saying the vote was a "turning point" for his party after two decades in power. Partial results from across the nation of 85 million people showed major advances for the Republican People's Party (CHP) at the expense of Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP). Istanbul's mayor, the opposition's Ekrem Imamoglu, claimed re-election with nearly all ballot boxes opened, telling an euphoric crowd of supporters: "Tomorrow is a new spring day for our country." Final results are expected to be released on Monday (today) by the country's electoral commission. Erdogan, 70, had launched an all-out personal campaign to win back Istanbul, the economic powerhouse where he was once mayor. Rampant inflation and an economic crisis have, however, hit confidence in the ruling party. Large crowds filled the square outside the opposition party's Istanbul city headquarters waving Turkish flags and lighting torches to celebrate the result.

After casting his vote, Imamoglu emerged to applause and chants of "Everything will be fine", the slogan he used when he first took the city hall from the AKP in 2019. The 52-year-old is increasingly seen as the biggest rival to Erdogan's AKP ahead of the next presidential election in 2028. In Ankara, mayor Mansur Yavas - also of the CHP - claimed victory in front of large crowds of supporters, declaring "the elections are over, we will continue to serve Ankara". "Those who have been ignored have sent a clear message to those who rule this country," he added. Yavas led with 58.6 per cent of the vote to 33.5pc for his AKP opponent, with 46.4pc of ballot boxes opened. Opposition supporters celebrated victory in Izmir, Turkiye's third-largest city, as well as in the southern city of Antalya. Some AKP stronghold towns were at risk of being lost, results indicated. "Voters have chosen to change the face of Turkiye," said CHP chairman Ozgur Ozel as the results emerged. "They want to open the door to a new political climate in our country." Erdogan acknowledged the electoral setback in a speech to supporters at the headquarters of his party. "Unfortunately, we have not obtained the results that we wanted," he told a subdued crowd.

Maryam Nawaz announces to establish model agri centres

It was decided to ensure coordination of the sub-institutions of Agriculture Department for research, better performance and good governance

FOREIGN DESK

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif co-chaired a meeting to review challenges of agriculture in Punjab. Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif said, "The lack of quality seeds even after the lapse of four decades is a matter of grave concern." He added, "Effective steps should be taken to plug the wastage of 37 MAF water from wastage in Punjab." He emphasised on the need to use modern methods of irrigation for this purpose. The Secretary Agriculture in his briefing on various projects for the development of agriculture in Punjab apprised that 1.7 MAF of water can be saved by paving 7300 water courses (Khalas) in Punjab. A proposal to return rainwater to the ground by reverse pumping to improve groundwater levels was also reviewed in the meeting. Moreover, necessary measures to increase the rate of farm mechanization from 35 to 60 percent in Punjab were also discussed. It was decided in the meeting that Rs 150-billion loan will be given to farmers for Rabi and Kharif crops. Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif directed to formulate a simple eligi-



bility criteria for the farmers to avail loans. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said, "When a farmer applies for a loan, it should be ensured that the loan is issued as soon as possible." She added, "The Department of Agriculture should devise a fool-proof system of monitoring and feedback of the loan scheme." Madam Chief Minister also gave in-principle approval of a pilot project for the recruitment of Agriculture Officers and Field Assistants against their vacant posts. She directed to ensure adherence to merit in the recruitment process. Madam Chief Minister also gave approval to establish research endowment fund worth Rs 500 million for Ayub Research Center. Moreover, it was decided to ensure coordination of the sub-institutions of Agriculture Department for research, better performance and good governance. It was also decided in the meeting to amend the Fertilizer and Pesticide Act. Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Information Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari, Agriculture Minister Ashiq Hussain Kirmani, Senator Pervaiz Rashid, MPA Sania Ashiq, Secretaries Agriculture, Finance, President Bank of Punjab and other relevant officers attended the meeting.

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