



# Islamabad POST

Thursday, April 04, 2024

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

**NATO set to announce \$100 bln military aid package for Ukraine**

Detailed News On Page-07

**EU denounces Israel's killing of aid workers**

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**Shadab responds to Gul's WC injury remarks**

Detailed News On Page-06



## CJP Isa warns

# Won't tolerate any interference in judicial affairs

The chief justice said he cannot exercise the contempt power of any other court. "The court which is in contempt will exercise this power itself"

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa Wednesday that the Supreme Court will not tolerate any interference in judicial affairs and is taking the letter by Islamabad High Court judges "very seriously". The chief justice further remarked that the letter mentions the Supreme Judicial Council, indicating that it does not address the Supreme Court. CJP Isa's remark came during the hearing of SC's suo motu notice taken on the letter written by Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges that cites complaints of interference in judicial affairs by intelligence agencies. The hearing is being conducted by a seven-member SC bench headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa and comprising six other judges – Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Musarrat Hilali and Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan. The SC is conducting live proceedings of the hearing. "Judges must be sure that they are not in danger," CJP Isa said during the hearing. The chief justice said he cannot exercise the contempt power of any other court. "The court which is in contempt will exercise this power itself." "There is zero tolerance on the independence of judiciary," said the chief justice. However, the judge questioned lawyers, who demanded a suo motu notice in the aforementioned matter, where they were when not a single meeting of the full court was conducted in four years. "Full court performs the administrative function, not judicial function," he said. The chief justice said: "My colleagues and I will stand before any attack on the independence of judiciary." However, he maintained that the court does "not like interference in the work of the judiciary."

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## CJP, SC judges too get 'threatening letters'

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: After Islamabad High Court (IHC) jurists, letters containing suspicious powdery substance and threatening messages have been posted to the Supreme Court (SC) judges, including Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Operations confirmed before IHC's top judge on Wednesday. "Four Supreme Court judges have also received such letters," DIG Operation apprised the IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq who was conducting the hearing of cipher case today. The police officer was summoned to the rostrum by the IHC's top jurist during the hearing and questioned about the yesterday's (Tuesday) event of letters to the judges which supposedly contain anthrax powder. It emerged that the judges who received such posts on April 1 include CJP Isa, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, and Justice Aminuddin Khan, sources told Geo News. The letters have been handed over to the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD). Additionally, a letter was also received by the top court's senior most Justice Mansoor Ali Shah which was posted by a

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of France Amb. Nicolas Galey calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

## Istanbul fire Pak extends condolences to Turkiye

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan sends its deepest condolences and heartfelt grief over the loss of precious lives in a deadly fire in central Istanbul, Turkiye yesterday. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their bereaved families. The people and government of Pakistan stand with their Turkish brothers and sisters in this hour of grief.

## PSX blasts off to new record high

Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 index ended at 67,756.03 after jumping by a massive 869.77 points

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan's stock market blasted off to yet another all-time high on Wednesday betting on upbeat economic indicators as a downtick in inflation stoked hopes of monetary loosening – a major stimulus to commercial activity, which is directly proportional to corporate profits. Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 index ended at 67,756.03 after jumping by a massive 869.77 points or 1.30%. The cyclic sector stole the show on Wednesday as investors parked a lot of money in the cement and steel companies, mainly after reports of a rise in local and international cement dispatches for March. However sectors like transport, technology and

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## French ambassador calls on PM for enhancing Pakistan-France economic coop

The ambassador handed over a congratulatory letter from French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, addressed to PM Shehbaz on his re-election

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday stressed the need for working together to enhance cooperation between Pakistan and France, particularly in the areas of trade and investment. The prime minister, in a meeting with Ambassador of France in Islamabad Nicolas Galey who paid a courtesy call on him, invited the French companies to invest in Pakistan. He welcomed the initiative of the French side to bring corporate leaders from top French companies on a visit to Pakistan soon. The prime minister, who was accompanied by Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, and SAPM Tariq Fatemi, also shared that stabilization of the economy was on top of the government's agenda. The ambassador handed over a congratulatory letter from French Prime Minister

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## KSA likely to invest \$1 bln in Reko Diq

The prime minister will constitute a committee with regard to Saudi investment in Reko Diq project, finance ministry's sources said

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia will invest one billion US dollars in Reko Diq gold and copper project, citing sources a private news channel reported. Sources at finance ministry said that the OGDC and the PPL's shares will be sold to Saudi Arabia. "There are preparations for Saudi investment next month,"

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## Briefs

**Gohar rules out alliance with PML-N, PPP**

'PML-N, PPP, MQM-P snatched our Senate seats'

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Wednesday ruled out alliance with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party, and Muttahida Qami Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P). Speaking to media in Islamabad, Khan said: "The PML-N, PPP, and MQM-P had snatched our Senate seats. These people had only won three out of 22 Senate seats." "15 of the Senate seats were snatched by the MQM-P, while four were snatched by the PPP," he added.

**Sentences given to Imran won't 'sustain'**

Cases in which Imran was sentenced damaged us: Rana

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: PML-N leader Rana Sanaulah has said that sentences awarded to PTI founder Imran Khan to damage PML-N's election campaign and would not "sustain" if heard by an honest judge. "The cases in which the PTI founder was sentenced [before the February 8 polls] significantly damaged us [PML-N] in the elections due to the victim card used by the PTI. The manner in which the case proceedings were held and the sentences were awarded they would not sustain before a judge who upholds principles of justice," Sanaulah said while speaking to a private news channel.

## COAS meets President

# Zardari lauds army's role in safeguarding national sovereignty

COAS apprised the president regarding ongoing operations of army against terrorism and highlighted the operational preparedness against conventional threats



STAFF REPORT

Islamabad: In a meeting with Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Asim Munir on Wednesday, President Asif Ali Zardari noted with concern "baseless and unsubstantiated allegations levelled by a specific political party

and its few individuals" against the army for their political interests. The development came as COAS Munir met the Zardari at the Presidency, according to an official handout. According to the statement, the army chief extended felicitations to

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# Formation of speedy trial courts approved in Punjab

A bill is set to be presented aiming to issue decree in 90 days and complete trial within 180 days in defamation cases

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Punjab cabinet has approved the establishment of special speedy trial courts across the province. The Punjab Cabinet, under the presidency of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, convened its 5th provincial session, with attendance from provincial ministers, the chief secretary, IG Punjab, secretaries of various departments, and other officials. During the session, the provincial cabinet granted approval for the establishment of special speedy trial courts across Punjab. These courts aimed to expedite cases related to rape, violence, and assault against children. The cabinet was briefed on amendments to defamation laws and the establishment of special courts. A bill is set to be presented in the Punjab Assembly aiming to issue decree in 90 days and complete trial within 180 days in defamation cases. CM Maryam Nawaz emphasized the need to eradicate the culture of lies, propaganda, and baseless accusations. She announced that defamation notices will be disseminated through newspapers, social media, and courier services following the passage of the bill.

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## Extraordinary security arrangements at Adiala for Imran

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The advocate general for Punjab (AGP) informed the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday that extraordinary measures have been taken at Adiala jail to ensure incarcerated former premier Imran Khan's security. LHC Chief Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan heard a plea seeking security protocols for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder. In compliance with the court's previous order regarding informing it of the measures taken for Imran's security, AGP Khalid Ishaq shared that the ex-premier has been allocated seven cells, and 14 security personnel, as opposed to one security official per 10 prisoners.

Continued on Page 06

**TURKISH AIRLINES**

BEST PART OF THE JOURNEY

Stopover IN ISTANBUL

EASY VISA

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

Economy FREE ACCOMMODATION Business

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## LDA seals, demolishes illegal properties

LAHORE :The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) teams conducted an operation against illegal constructions and commercialisation in Johar Town, Pine Avenue, OPF and Abdaleen Society, here on Wednesday. Team of LDA Town Planning Zone Four took action and demolished seven illegal properties while sealing more than a dozen properties. LDA teams demolished Plot No. 185 A 2, 153 E 1, 12 F 2 in Johar Town during the operation. Illegal construction in Johar Town, Plot No. 970 L, 272 R 2, in Lahore Avenue Society Pine Avenue Plot No. 16 and Plot No. 243 COPF Society were demolished. During the operation, LDA teams sealed Plot No. 24 C, Abdalian Society, and Plot No. 3 B 2, 386 N, 167 G 3 in Johar Town. In Johar Town, Plot No. 104 F, 32 R, 190 F, 12 A, Block K, 35 H 3, 136 B, 8 R 1, 584, 955 Q and 728 R1 have been sealed. Several prior notices were issued to the properties sealed or demolished.

The operation was conducted by Director Town Planning Four under the supervision of Chief Town Planner II Azhar Ali. LDA enforcement wing, heavy machinery and police took part in the operation. On the instructions of DG LDA Tahir Farooq, indiscriminate operations against illegal constructions and illegal Commercialisation are going on in the provincial capital.—APP

## DC Kohat holds meeting for peaceful by-election

KOHAT : A meeting regarding the peaceful conduct of by-elections in constituency PK 91 under the Chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Kohat here on Wednesday. A special meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Kohat Dr. Azmatullah Wazir regarding the conduct of fair, transparent, and peaceful by-elections in Kohat constituency PK 91 in which district administration, Kohat Police, Health, Education, Local Government, Municipalities, and Officials from other concerned departments participated. In the meeting, various issues related to the security of the by-elections held in the said constituency, installation of CCTV cameras in sensitive polling stations, and other arrangements were reviewed in detail and several important decisions were taken in this regard. The Deputy Commissioner directed all the concerned departments to discharge their responsibilities with full honesty and diligence regarding the fair, transparent, and peaceful conduct of the by-elections and in this regard, all the concerned departments and institutions should show co-operation.—APP

## Call for preventive steps to avoid eye allergies

RAWALPINDI :Leading ophthalmologist Dr Tayyab Afghani has said that pollen allergy effects could be avoided through preventive measures. Talking to the media, he said 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 Afghani said 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 mild 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.—APP

# Navy, anti-narcotics force conduct operation

Third consecutive successful anti-narcotics operation conducted by Pak Navy and ANF in less than a month reaffirm resolve to prevent the use of national maritime zones for any illegal activities

## DNA

KARACHI: Pak Navy and Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) apprehended a huge cache of narcotics in a successful joint intelligence-based operation. Joint operation was conducted at Shinkani Dar area near the coastline of Gwadar. The seized narcotics is comprising of 150 kg of Methamphetamine (ICE). The cache of narco was dumped in a house near coast and planned to be transported to the international market via sea. The value of the confiscated narco in the international market is estimated to be around US \$47.83 million (PKR 13.29 billion). Third consecutive successful anti-narcotics operation conducted by Pak Navy and ANF in less than a month reaffirm resolve to prevent the use of national maritime zones for any illegal activities. Pak Navy in coordination with other relevant law enforcement agencies will continue to shoulder its national obligation towards the establishment of lawful order on land and at sea.



## Punjab cabinet fixes wheat support price at Rs 3,900 per 40kg

Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz Announces Interest-Free Loans for Small Farmers Under Historic Farmer Cards

## ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired the fifth meeting of the provincial cabinet at CM's office, here on Wednesday. The minimum support price of wheat for the year 2023-2024 was fixed by the cabinet at Rs 3,900 per 40 kg. Wheat Procurement Policy 2024-25 was also approved. The CM said: "It is my commitment to ensure that the interests of small farmers are protected

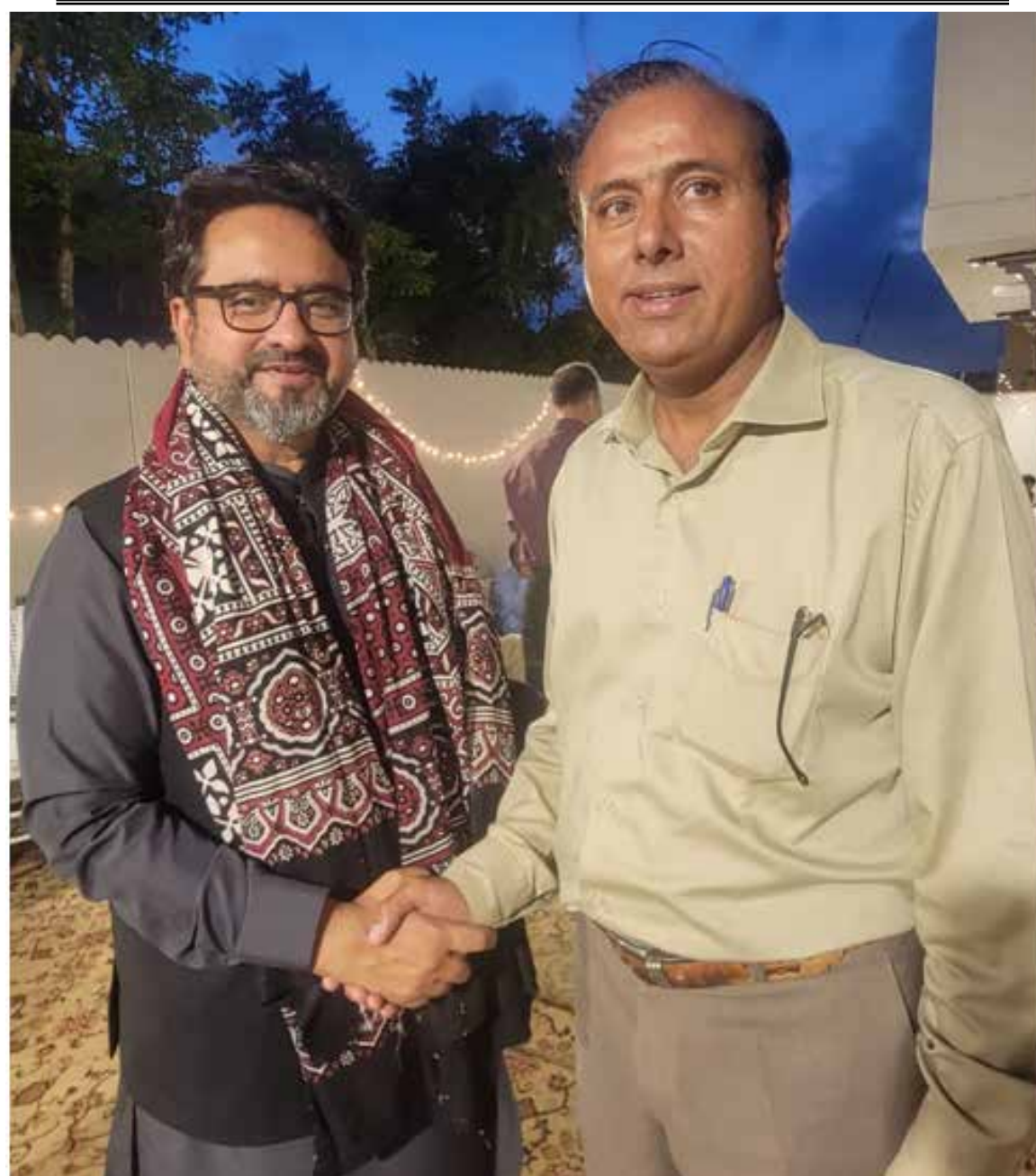
at all costs." She said Rs 1.5 lakh interest-free loan would be given to small farmers for buying farm inputs like seeds, fertiliser and pesticides, under the best and most historic farmer cards in the history of Pakistan. The cabinet also gave approval to establish Special Speedy Trial Courts in Punjab for the logical conclusion of criminal cases related to rape, child abuse, domestic violence, electricity theft and others through speedy trials. Advocate General Punjab briefed the cabinet about

the proposed amendment in the defamation law and the establishment of special trial courts. He said that in a defamation case, the degree must be completed within 90 days and the trial within 180 days. He added defamation notices would be given simultaneously through major newspapers, social media, courier service and registered post to avoid complaints of non-receipt and delay. AGP apprised the cabinet that this amendment would be presented soon in the Punjab Assembly for seeking approval.

The chief minister appreciated the move and said the culture of lying and false accusations must end. The cabinet also gave approval of formation of Cabinet Standing Committee on Legal Affairs, and amendments to the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act, 2019. Approval to remove Chairman Drug Court Gujranwala on complaints of misconduct was also given by the Cabinet. Provincial ministers, Chief Secretary, IG and other relevant officers attended the meeting.

## IGP orders providing relief to cops on merit

LAHORE: IG Punjab Dr Usman Anwar met the police employees and their families at the Central Police Office on Tuesday and issued relief orders after listening to their problems. IG said that the best welfare of police employees is first priority and all possible relief should be provided to them according to merit. IGP forwarded application of Constable Arslan Anwar to DIG Establishment II regarding cancellation of transfer order for necessary action. He issued orders to provide relief according to merit on the application of the wife of late constable M Qasim Umar to set aside his punishments as appeal is pending with DIG Est-II. He directed DIG Establishment I to provide relief on promotion fixation request of three sub-inspectors of Sahiwal region. He directed the DIG Welfare to take action on the request of late ASI Amjad Ali Khan's wife for provision of maintenance allowance. Dr Usman instructed the welfare branch to provide relief on the request of ASI Mumtaz Khan to provide scholarship for medical education of his son. Rs850,000 released for cops' health welfare Inspector General Police (IGP), Punjab, Dr Usman Anwar Tuesday released Rs850,000 for the health welfare of police employees. The compensation award committee meeting held at welfare branch announced the cash. The committee also reviewed cases forwarded from various districts for employees for medical treatment. According to detail, Additional IG Welfare Riaz Nazir Gara approved Rs300,000 for injured Ghazi constable Abdul Rehman from Lahore police, Rs250,000 for medical treatment of PHP Gujranwala sub-inspector Faisal Imran, Rs200,000 for injured Ghazi Constable Muhammad Ilyas of Lahore Police.—DNA



KARACHI: Newly elect Senator former MNA Syed Kazim Ali Shah Lakyari greeted over his victory and good gestures, with Daily "Islamabad Post and Centerline", Karachi Bureau Chief Nazir Siyal here after Sindh Senate Seats elections held here at Sindh Assembly on Tuesday. —DNA

## Speakers advocate higher FED for health hazards

CEO Human Development Foundation said that 31.9 million adults, roughly 19.7% of the adult population, currently using tobacco, the nation faces a significant health crisis

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a seminar highlighted the impact of increase on tobacco taxation and its effect on health cost, economic and social factors and demanded increase the Federal Excise Duty (FED) on tobacco products in 2024 to mitigate the pervasive health hazards associated with tobacco. Speaking on this occasion, Mehboob Ul Haq, CEO Human Development Foundation (HDF) said that tobacco consumption remains a formidable challenge for Pakistan, imposing a grave toll on both public health and the economy. With 31.9 million adults, roughly 19.7% of the adult population, currently using tobacco, the nation faces a significant health crisis. In tandem with efforts to address tobacco consumption, recommendations from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) underscore the importance of rationalizing excise duties in Pakistan. Streamlining the excise structure and focusing on goods with significant

negative externalities could enhance both public health outcomes and revenue generation. Aligning taxation policies with the quantified level of externalities and prioritising luxury goods for excise duty increases are key aspects emphasized by the IMF. Moreover, the IMF highlights the necessity of taxing e-cigarettes and novel products, similarly to tobacco products, given their equivalent impact on public health. Zahid Shafiq (Programme Manager -HDF) stated that the previous hike in FED, observed after a three-year hiatus, yielded tangible benefits. By 2022-23, the FED share in retail prices reached 48% and 68% for low and high-tier cigarettes, respectively. However, momentum slowed in 2023-24, underlining the urgent need for sustained efforts in tobacco taxation to safeguard public health and fiscal prosperity.

Crucially, the proposed 26.6% FED increase in 2024 presents a triple-win scenario. It is projected to deter approximately 517,000 individuals from smoking, thereby reducing cigarette consumption by 5.8% and adult smoking prevalence by 0.31%. Moreover, this measure is anticipated to save 181,000 adult lives, underscoring its life-saving potential. Malik Imran, country director (CTFK) call attention to that economically, the tax hike is poised to generate an additional revenue of Rs17 billion, comprising Rs15.4 billion in FED and Rs1.6 billion in GST, marking a 12.1% increase. Such revenue augmentation is critical for funding essential public services and healthcare initiatives. Additionally, gradual implementation of a uniform FED rate across all cigarette brands fosters fair competition and prevents market distortions.—APP

## MILITARY ENGINEERING SERVICES NOTICE OF TENDER

GE (Air) Asghar Khan Raisalpur Letter No. 6000-Advt 132 E-6 date 02 Apr 2024							
1	The office of GE (Air) Asghar Khan invites sealed tenders for the following works in the light of I PPR Rule 13 (1) of 2004.						
2	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	R.s 4.000 (M)				
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	R.s 4.000 (M)				
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	R.s 4.000 (M)				
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	R.s 4.350 (M)				
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	R.s 3.000 (M)				
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	R.s 3.000 (M)				
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	R.s 3.000 (M)				
3	The contractors are required to submit their applications for issuance of tender documents alongwith their complete credentials as shown at (serial 9). The applications shall be scrutinized and the tender documents will only be issued to the firms who have sufficient experience in the relevant field and satisfy other special conditions required for the job and area. Tender will be issued to the scrutinized contractors. The tender must be received in the accepting office by 1130 Hrs on 22 Apr 2024 and will be opened at 1200 Hrs on the same date.						
<b>NOTE:-</b> Contractors shall provide certificate that they are not involved in any type of litigation with Government Department in the Court of Law and that no special report of Directorate of Inspection and Evaluation (E-in-C's Branch GHQ) is outstanding against them.							
4.All contractors will certify in writing that they are registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), and will submit a copy of their registration. Contractors not registered with PEC are ineligible to apply.							
5. Contractor born on approved list of MES in category A B C D & E and also having experience of this type of work may only apply.							
6. Contractors who desire may present at the time of opening of tenders.							
7. The accepting officers reserve the right to accept or reject the tender. Rejected tenders will be dealt with as per Para 33 (i) of PPR Rules.							
8. The interested parties can contact GE (Air) Asghar Khan / CMES (PAF) Peshawar for further details from 0730 to 1420 hours on all working days.							

Sl No	Name of the work Executed during the Last 2 Year and in Hand	Agency	Amount of Work	Time allowed (Months)	Date of Commencement	Date of Completion	Percentage Progress of work in hand	Department Performance Report on Each work by The Engineer-In-charge

PID(P)097/2024

## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### April

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

### Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



### Emergency

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



### Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115  
PIA Flight Info.....114  
PIA Cargo.....9280979  
Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489  
CAA.....9281092



### Hospitals

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



### Departments

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Malaysian HC donates food items at Faizul Islam orphanage

The Malaysian delegation, led by Ambassador Azhar Mazlan, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, was warmly received by the orphanage President, Prof. Dr. Riaz Ahmad, along with the centre's administration team and over 300 orphanage residents. The High Commissioner also inspected the centre's Boy Scouts guard of honour during his arrival

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: DHigh Commission of Malaysia in Islamabad under its club - Kelab Suruhanjaya Tinggi Malaysia Islamabad, in collaboration with the Ladies Association of the High Commission (PERWAKILAN Islamabad), handed over alms collection and food distribution to the Anjuman Faizul Islam Orphanage in Rawalpindi. The Malaysian delegation, led by Ambassador Azhar Mazlan, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, was warmly received by the orphanage President, Prof. Dr. Riaz Ahmad, along with the centre's administration team and over 300 orphanage residents. The High Commissioner also inspected the centre's Boy Scouts guard of honour during his arrival. At the handing over ceremony, President Dr. Riaz expressed heartfelt appreciation to the Malaysian High Commission for their generous contributions during the holy month of Ramadan. He highlighted the institution's history, established in 1943 and sustained solely through public donations, providing a home and education to tens of thousands of orphans aged 3 to 16. Dr. Riaz



emphasized the orphanage's commitment to offering formal education and technical skills training in the fields of electrical, mechanical, tailoring, and woodworking, among others. In his address, Ambassador Azhar commended the orphanage administration for nurturing its residents into successful adults despite their challenging backgrounds. He encouraged the orphans to remain resilient and diligent in pursuing

their bright futures, underscoring that although they may not have their parents and come from humble beginnings, their potential remains limitless. Madam Amelia Amani Lee Abdullah, Chairperson of PERWAKILAN Islamabad, echoed similar sentiments, expressing admiration for the orphanage's discipline and pledging continued support. She noted that the modest donation to the 300 orphanages was aimed to assist



the administration in any way possible. Following the formal proceedings, the High Commission delegation toured the orphanage's facilities, including dormitories, kitchens, classrooms, and technical education centres. Concluding the visit, the High Commissioner reiterated Malaysia's commitment to continue supporting the orphanage and to explore providing vocational assistance to them as well as connecting

the orphanage technical centre with Malaysian Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. On the same day, as part of its annual Ramadan tradition, the High Commission also distributed more than 350 packs of Malaysia's traditional porridge the 'Bubur Lambuk' to the needy community at Bari Imam town and the security personnel at the Diplomatic Enclave.

# NLC transports Pakistan's potato export consignment to Tajikistan

ISLAMABAD, The National Logistics Corporation (NLC) has achieved another major milestone in boosting the country's regional trade with Central Asian state of Tajikistan by successfully transporting Pakistani potato export consignment to Dushanbe. The NLC effectively gained access to increase trade with another important Central Asian country as the convoy of NLC trucks reached the Tajik capital of Dushanbe after covering more than 1,400 kilometers (km), an official source told APP. The trucks of National Logistics Cell completed the journey from Okara and Rahim Yar Khan to Dushanbe in just seven days. However, a special ceremony was held at Dushanbe Customs Terminal One on the arrival of the inaugural convoy under International Road Transport. The inauguration ceremony was attended by notable personalities including Tajik Minister of Transport Azim Ibrahim, Director General of NLC Farrukh Shehzad Rao, Pakistani Ambassador Muhammad Saeed Sarwar, Customs Department officials and prominent Tajik businessmen. Addressing the ceremony, the Tajikistan's Minister of Transport appreciated the official launch of ground transportation by Pakistan's leading logistics organization. The Minister of Transport of Tajikistan said, "This initiative marks an important milestone in bilateral trade relations between the two countries." The Tajik minister expressed confidence while appreciating Pakistan's role as an important trade partner in the region. The Transport Minister assured unwavering support to further facilitate smooth movement of Pakistani trucks to Tajikistan. The Director General of NLC emphasized the importance of Tajikistan in trade through NLC. He thanked the Tajik Government for its support in facilitating the movement of the NLC convoy. Farrukh Shahzad Rao emphasized on the promotion of mutual trade and said, "Trade through NLC under the TIR (International Road Transport) system will facilitate timely and efficient import and export of both countries." Major General Farrukh Shahzad Rao highlighted the important role of NLC in establishing regional linkages while referring to the extensive operations of NLC spread across 10 countries in the region.— Agencies



ISLAMABAD: There are huge piles of rubbish at auto workshop market of G-8 adjacent to Iqbal plaza. The residents of the flats throw their garbage adding to polluting and corroding the enviro. The CDA authorities have been asked time and again to address this issue but to no use. —DNA

# NPO to organize workshop

The webinar is designed for business professionals, finance and accounting professionals, data analysts, research and academic students

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a workshop on "Advance Excel" on April 04 (Thursday) tomorrow. Excel is a spreadsheet program from Microsoft and a component of its Office product group for

business applications. Microsoft Excel enables users to format, organize and calculate data in a spreadsheet, said an NPO document shared here on Wednesday. Advanced Excel skill includes the ability to produce graphs and tables, use spread-

sheets efficiently, and perform calculations and automation to process large volumes of data. The workshop aimed at providing skills and knowledge which will allow the participants to learn MS Excel tools and techniques, create lookup functions,

set Excel working options, enhance charts, protect worksheet data, and perform advanced data operations using summarizing. The webinar is designed for business professionals, finance and accounting professionals, data analysts, research and academic students.

# 10million devices worldwide were compromised

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nearly 10 million devices fell victim to data-stealing malware in 2023, Kaspersky Digital Footprint Intelligence has revealed, drawing from insights gathered from infostealer malware log files traded on underground markets. According to Kaspersky's data, 443,000 websites worldwide have experienced compromised credentials in the past 5

years. The .com domain leads to compromised accounts with nearly 326 million logins and passwords for websites on this domain were compromised by infostealers in 2023. While the compromised accounts of .pk domain in Pakistan reached 2.4 million. Latest reports on data stealing shows a 643% increase over the past three years. The actual number of infections is likely to be even higher than 10 million. According to

Kaspersky's assessment of infostealer log-file dynamics, the number of infections that occurred in 2023 is projected to reach roughly 16,000,000. With cybercriminals pilfering an average of 50.9 login credentials per infected device, the threat posed by data-stealers is growing for both consumers and businesses. In light of this growing threat, Kaspersky has launched a dedicated web page to raise awareness of the issue and pro-

vide strategies for mitigating associated risks.

Threat actors either utilize these credentials for their own malicious purposes, including perpetrating cyberattacks, or sell or distribute them freely on dark web forums and shadow Telegram channels. These credentials may encompass logins for social media, online banking services, crypto wallets, and various corporate online services, such as email and internal systems.

# Business community demands boosting security

He said that traffic police had also deputed wardens in all city shopping centers for smooth traffic flow

RAWALPINDI: The business community of the city has demanded that the Rawalpindi district administration boost safety measures around all marketplace areas as Eid shopping was gaining momentum with each passing day. Expressing discontent over the security arrangements made for shopping areas, they said the deployment of police personnel was insufficient compared to the great hustle and bustle of visitors there. Markazi Anjuman-e-Tajran General Secretary Tahir Taj Bhatti said there should be police officers in plain clothes present in susceptible areas and ready to converge on a single whistle in an emergency. Besides, he said, many beggars seek alms but were also involved in criminal activities like pick-pocketing and snatching different items from the people visiting the markets. President of Moti Bazar Chaudhry Iqbal also asked the quarters concerned to beef up the security of city markets, especially during nighttime. City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani assured that foolproof security arrangements had been made to provide a special cover to shopping areas so that customers and traders could feel a sense of security. He said that traffic police had also deputed wardens in all city shopping centers for smooth traffic flow.—DNA

# IRSA releases 74,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 74,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 110,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1420.68 feet and was 22.68 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 26,100 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1092.80 feet, which was 42.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 39,800 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 36,200, 32,700, 29,900 and 7,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 28,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 11,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

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## Briefs

NEPRA grants  
1,596 net-metering  
licenses in  
FY-2023/24

ISLAMABAD: National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) issued a total of 1,596 Net-Metering licenses having a cumulative capacity of 221.05 megawatts (MW) during the last fiscal year 2022-23 across the country. According to official data, out of the total, the authority issued 136 net-metering licenses to the consumers of Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO), 331 Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO), 44 Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO), 116 Gujranwala Electric Power Company (GEPCO) and 183 Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO). Similarly, some 458 net metering licenses were granted to the consumers of K-Electric, 292 Multan Electric Power Supply Company (MEPCO), 25 Hyderabad Electric Supply Company, 6 Sukkur Electric Supply Company (SEPCO), and 3 Quetta Electric Supply Company (QESCO) during the said period. Meanwhile, the Authority revoked four generation licenses on request from the licensees which included Ramazan Sugar Mills Limited, Al-Arabi Sugar Mills Limited, Digi-Gen Limited and Shams Power (Pvt.) Limited.—APP

ANF seizes  
133 kg  
drugs in six  
operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 133 kg of drugs and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed, that in two operations at Islamabad Airport, 1 kg heroin was recovered from the possession of two passengers going to Sharjah and Jeddah. 236 grams of weed was recovered from two parcels sent from the UK at a courier office in Rawalpindi. 125 kg Ice was seized in Gwadar while 2 kg opium and 5 kg hashish were recovered from an accused arrested in Tandojam, Hyderabad. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.—APP

Modi  
regime's  
denounced

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has said that the Narendra Modi-led Indian regime is systematically exploiting the natural resources of occupied Jammu and Kashmir, aiming to perpetuate the economic marginalization of the Kashmiri people. According to Kashmir Media Service, in a statement issued in Srinagar, APHC spokesman Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas maintained that the Modi government is implementing a multifaceted strategy to disempower Kashmiris politically, constitutionally, culturally, and economically. He noted that since the revocation of the territory's special status on August 5, 2019, this process has intensified. "India has been exploiting IIOJK's water, mineral, forest.—APP

## COMSTECH pledges five thousand more fellowships for Palestine

The Ambassador of the State of Palestine, H. E. Mr. Ahmed Jawad Rabei said that on behalf of the Palestinian people, I am pleased and honored to join this launch ceremony of the COMSTECH program, in cooperation with private universities in Pakistan, which is providing 5,000 scholarships for Palestinian students

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH launches the second phase of COMSTECH-Palestine scholarships and fellowships program in collaboration with APSUP and member universities of COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence, on Tuesday at COMSTECH secretariat. The federal minister for science and technology, H. E. Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui honored the launching ceremony as chief guest. Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary informed that in the first phase of COMSTECH-Palestine program 500 fully covered fellowships were announced in various fields of STEM, health and agriculture. He said that in the second phase, APSUP and CCoE universities have generously pledged 5,000 fellowships. He informed that this mega program will also be announced by the OIC Secretary General in Jeddah soon. Prof. Choudhary said that the unparalleled sufferings of Palestinian people since last seven decades and recent genocide represent the demise of human values and global norms. He said that the world has miserably failed to stop atrocities of unprecedented magnitude in Palestine.

The federal minister for science and technology, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, said that as the Federal Minister for Science & Technology and Federal Education and Professional Education, I am extremely pleased to launch this timely and most important initiative, a gift of Pakistan to our brethren in Palestine. He appreciated this large scholarships program of COMSTECH with partner universities in Pakistan and other OIC countries. Dr. Siddiqui said that this initiative is a reflection of inseparable relationship between Palestine and Pakistan at all levels, as per the vision of our founding Father Quid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He congratulated OIC- COMSTECH, Palestinian Diplomatic Mission, Palestinian International



Cooperation Agency (PICA), Association of Private Sector Universities of Pakistan (APSUP), OIC General secretary and Vice chancellors of the COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence universities for their collaborative effort for collective mission. Dr. Siddiqui said that the Ministry of S&T greatly values the central role that COMSTECH is playing not only in the capacity building of OIC countries through bilateral and multilateral linkages and exchanges, but also its pivotal role in presenting the best of Pakistan's S&T capabilities for the promotion of exports. He said that we

greatly appreciate large number of initiatives and programs, which have been launched under the leadership of Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary. H.E. Husein Brahim Taha, Secretary General, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, said that this collaboration between COMSTECH and leading member universities of the Association of Private Sector Universities of Pakistan and the esteemed Embassy of the State of Palestine in Islamabad, constitutes an important step in our commitment to support Palestinian universities and researchers. He said that this program represents a beacon

of hope amid the challenges being faced by the Palestinian people and we commend COMSTECH for its unwavering dedication to this cause. He appreciated the leadership of Prof. Choudhary for launching numerous scientific programs for capacity building and development socio-economic development. He invited institutions from other OIC member states to join COMSTECH in expanding the program thereby encouraging a spirit of fraternal cooperation and assistance to the Palestinians. He assured strong support for this program. The Ambassador of the State of Palestine,

H. E. Mr. Ahmed Jawad Rabei said that on behalf of the Palestinian people, I am pleased and honored to join this launch ceremony of the COMSTECH program, in cooperation with private universities in Pakistan, which is providing 5,000 scholarships for Palestinian students. He said that the Palestinian issue remains the most important issue in the conscience of the free people of the world, especially in our Islamic world, as the Palestinian blood continues to be shed on our blessed land, Palestine, as a result of the barbaric, fascist, terrorist attack carried out by the Israeli occupation forces, supported by countries that falsely claim democracy, human rights, child and women's rights against our country and steadfast people in attempt to annihilate our people, displace them, abolish their national identity, take our land, and attempt to Judaize the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. He informed that under the guidance of President Mahmoud Abbas, we seek to have an advanced and effective system for education, learning, and vocational and technical training. He said that the Palestinians need support from their Muslim brothers, as the children and students of Palestine, who are being killed by the occupiers, need someone to support and sponsor their narratives. He extended his gratitude and appreciation to Pakistan for the continuous unwavering support. The ceremony was also addressed by Dr. Awais Raof, Chairman board of governors, university of Lahore and Justice Dr. Syed Muhammad Anwer. Both the speakers talked about the historical context of the land of Palestine, its culture and occupation history. The launching ceremony was attended by the Ambassadors and diplomats of Algeria, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Maldives, Morocco, Oman, Russia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, TRNC, Yemen, and Vice Chancellors of the CCoE member institutions, foreign fellows of COMSTECH programs, Palestine students enrolled in Pakistan.

## Pak wants to further strengthen trade ties with UAE: Tarar

The ambassador strongly condemned the recent terrorist incident in Bisham. Attaullah Tarar appreciated the vision and efforts of the UAE leadership for the development and transformation of the country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Wednesday that under the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan wanted to further strengthen trade and business ties with brotherly country United Arab Emirates (UAE). During a meeting with the UAE Ambassador to Pakistan Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi here, he said that there was a

need to create a common road map for the improvement of the economy. During the meeting discussion was held on issues of mutual interest including bilateral relations, promotion of cooperation in various sectors. The minister said that Pakistan and the UAE enjoyed strong ties based on common heritage and multilateral cooperation. People of Pakistan consider UAE as their second home, the minister said adding the first flight of Emirates Airline was flown by a pilot of PIA, which was

a great example of cooperation between the two countries. He said that late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan had very close relationship with the leadership and people of Pakistan. The minister briefed the UAE ambassador about the economic initiatives of the present government. He said that tax reforms were being brought in Federal Bureau of Revenue and efforts were being done for digitalization of the economic sector. Ambassador Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi

said that according to the vision of the leadership of both countries, the UAE believed in the further development of bilateral relations. The UAE has always helped Pakistan in difficult times, stands by Pakistan's economic development, he remarked. The ambassador strongly condemned the recent terrorist incident in Bisham. Attaullah Tarar appreciated the vision and efforts of the UAE leadership for the development and transformation of the country.

## HEC announces Master, PhD scholarships for Romania

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has invited applications from Pakistani/AJ&K nationals for the scholarship offer of the University of Politehnica for the academic year (2024-25), launched by the Romanian Government for Master's and PhD studies in the fields of Engineering and Information Technology. According to the official sources, Master's studies are offered by the University of Politehnica Bucharest, Romania in programmes including Chemical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Energy Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Telecommunication and Information Technology, Aerospace Engineering, Transportation Engineering, Computer & Information Technology, System Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Applied Engineering Science, Engineering and Management. As per eligibility criteria, applicants with incomplete degrees on the closing date of application are not allowed to apply. Applicants for Masters program must have a Bachelors degree (16 years) and be under the age of 35 at the time of application. Similarly, applicants for PhD/Doctoral program must have a Masters degree MS/MPhil (17/18 years) and be under the age of 40 years at the time of application. However, all applicants are required to provide a valid HAT test score. HEC reserves the right to change or modify the nomination criteria. The students are encouraged to apply online at: <https://scholarship.hec.gov.pk/> and after registering and filling out your profile, please select "University of Politehnica Scholarship". Submit online application at the National University of Science and Technology Politehnica Bucharest web portal at <https://apply.upb.ro/>. The deadline to submit the online application on the HEC portal is 3rd May 2024.—DNA

## Pakistan's cotton yarn exports to China crosses \$100 million

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's cotton yarn exports to China have surpassed the \$100 million mark in the first two months of 2024. Experts believe Pakistan's cotton yarn export to the world will further enhance this year due to good yield. According to data released by the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC), China imported more than \$100.98 million worth of cotton yarn from Pakistan in the first two months of 2024, which increased by around 98% as compared to the last year in the same period. Uncombed single cotton yarn crossed \$57.77 million in January - February of 2024. Pakistan is the second largest exporter after Vietnam in this item of cotton yarn this year. Data further showed that uncombed single cotton yarn crossed \$41.95 million in the first two months of 2024, while last year in the same period it was \$14.54 million. China Economic Net (CEN) reported. Sajid Mahmood, Head of the Transfer of Technology Department, Central Cotton Research Institute Multan told China Economic Net that the Pakistan-China yarn business underscores a pivotal opportunity for Pakistan to diversify its exports beyond predominantly Siro Yarns into other high-quality variants like cotton, carded, and combed yarns, with enhanced competitiveness in the Chinese market. Despite benefiting from a Free Trade Agreement with China, Pakistan faces stiff competition from India, especially in non-Siro yarns, despite a 3.5% higher duty for India. Additionally, Vietnam poses a challenge with similar duty-free privileges, although its reliance on imported cotton exposes vulnerability, he said.—DNA

## UBG expresses concern over widening trade gap with regional partners

UBG leaders emphasize the importance of exploring avenues to boost exports and reduce dependency on imports, fostering a more balanced and sustainable trade relationship with regional countries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: United Business Group (UBG) leaders Zubair Tufail, President, Khalid Tawab Regional chairman and Hanif Gohar Secretary General voice deep concern over the significant widening of Pakistan's trade deficit with its regional counterparts. According to recent data from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Pakistan's trade deficit with nine regional countries surged by 10.98 percent, reaching US \$5.415 billion in the first eight months of the current

fiscal year, compared to US \$4.879 billion during the same period last year, the leaders added. The increase in the trade deficit is primarily attributed to a surge in imports from China and India. The SBP report highlights that Pakistan's exports to China experienced a notable increase of 42 percent, reaching US \$1.895 billion from July to February 2024, compared to US \$1.334 billion during the corresponding period in the previous year. However, Pakistan's exports to China witnessed a decline of 27.3 percent in

2023, dropping from US \$2.78 billion to US \$2.02 billion. Similarly, imports from China also saw a significant rise of 14.72 percent, totaling US \$8.105 billion in the first eight months of the current fiscal year, compared to US \$7.065 billion during the same period last year. Import from India surged by 10.47 percent to US \$238.72 million in 8MFY24, whereas exports to India remained stagnant at US \$0.23 million, compared to US \$0.161 million during the corresponding period last year. Exports to Afghanistan experienced a decline of

7.68 percent, amounting to US \$319.88 million in 8MFY24, while exports to Bangladesh fell from US \$525.02 million to US \$421.94 million. The UBG leaders said that widening trade deficit with regional partners poses a significant economic challenge, necessitating immediate attention and strategic measures to rectify the imbalance. UBG leaders emphasize the importance of exploring avenues to boost exports and reduce dependency on imports, fostering a more balanced and sustainable trade relationship with regional countries.



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## Sino-French partnership sets stage for EU coord

RENCH Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne's visit to Beijing heralds closer exchanges and stronger cooperation between Paris and Beijing. As indicated by the topics covered in his meetings with Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, ranging from the economy and trade to the Ukraine crisis, there are many issues on which the two countries share a desire for coordination. Sejourne's visit is his first trip to China since he took office in January, but the second by a French foreign minister in less than six months, as his predecessor Catherine Colonna visited China in November. Premier Li visited France in June last year and Foreign Minister Wang paid a visit in February this year. The frequent interactions between the two sides demonstrate the importance they attach to bilateral ties, as well as their common interest in strengthening their cooperation. Despite the strategic mutual trust between Paris and Beijing, France's top diplomat and his Chinese hosts have gone to great lengths to reassure each other of their positions on sensitive issues – that France is not pursuing economic “decoupling” and China's stance on the Ukraine crisis, as set out in its position paper, is clear and has not changed. That they felt the need to do so only serves to show the extent to which the two Washington-orchestrated issues have exacted a toll on international relations. The interests of France and China align with each other due to their economic complementarity and shared belief in free trade, globalization, multilateralism and the UN-centered international system. That should apply to the European Union as well. That being said, it's encouraging to hear Sejourne reaffirming that Europe is not becoming protectionist and, instead, remains open to investment. It is to be hoped, as both Premier Li and Foreign Minister Wang stressed, that the EU side can provide a transparent, nondiscriminatory and fair business environment for Chinese enterprises and investment. Wang also told Sejourne that China is willing to import more “high-quality French products and services” and it is working to resolve the concerns raised by European companies, including restrictions on the transfer of data overseas. That China and the EU should have differences from time to time is natural, but any disputes that arise can be resolved and they should never be allowed to hijack the overall Sino-EU economic ties. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France, and the 21st anniversary of the founding of comprehensive strategic partnership between China and the EU. China and the EU have great potential to tap in such fields as green energy, scientific and technological innovation, advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence and the digital economy while deepening traditional cooperation to better achieve mutual benefit and win-win results. China supports a political solution to the Ukraine crisis at an early date and is taking full advantage of its neutrality on the issue to actively work together with all like-minded countries to help broker talks between the conflicting parties, as shown by the latest shuttle diplomacy of China's envoy that concluded at the end of last month.

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## US steels itself to be more protectionist

IF there is anyone out there who is still doubtful about which country poses the biggest threat to economic globalization by chipping away at the free market, the proposed merger between Japan's Nippon Steel and US Steel should serve to settle the issue. Nippon Steel announced in December that it planned to buy the Pittsburgh-based steel producer for \$14.1 billion in a deal that many in the business community believe would benefit union workers and the US steel industry. Moreover, Nippon Steel, the world's fourth-largest steelmaker, has even tried to gild the lily for Washington by describing it as a useful means to counter the leading role that China plays in steelmaking globally. “Nippon Steel will advance American priorities by driving greater quality and competitiveness for customers in the critical industries that rely on American steel while strengthening American supply chains and economic defenses against China,” it said in a statement. Akira Amari, a senior Japanese ruling party lawmaker, called the proposed deal “a symbol of Japan-US cooperation as allies ... to confront China's rising technological capability”. To increase the chance of securing the transaction, the Japanese steelmaker, which already employs about 4,000 US workers, has also pledged to move its US headquarters to Pittsburgh. In addition, Nippon Steel said it is engaging with the United Steelworkers labor union which opposes the deal, and has offered a number of specific commitments on job security, investments and other matters. Yet despite all these gestures that Nippon Steel has made, as well as the fact that it is shelling out around twice what a US bidder is ready to pay, politicians in Washington, from both the Democratic and Republican camps who are embracing an increasingly strident nationalist and protectionist economic vision, have joined with the USW to oppose the proposed merger. Ironically, they have cited Nippon Steel's exposure to China as reasons for concern, despite the Japanese steelmaker saying its operations in China are very limited – representing less than 5 percent of the company's global production capacity. The upcoming US presidential election in November has only served to heighten the jingoism and make the proposed deal a flag-bearer for the two parties' self-proclaimed championing of US workers as they vie for votes. A week after President Joe Biden announced on March 14 that “US Steel has been an iconic American steel company for more than a century, and it is vital for it to remain an American steel company that is domestically owned and operated”, he won the endorsement of the USW. His Republican opponent Donald Trump had already said earlier he would block the merger if he returned to the White House, calling it “a horrible thing”. All these serve as unmistakable signs that the US is drifting away from its long-held policy of openness to foreign trade and investment, and minimal government interference in the markets. Further evidence could be found in Biden's 2024 State of the Union address last month that was littered with protectionist promises that the government would “buy American”.

# Threatening letters: The perilous path of Pakistan's judges

Qamar Bashir



One judge made a striking statement, acknowledging the intimidation, coercion, and blackmail faced by the judiciary to sway decisions according to certain interests. This candid admission highlighted the need to confront the reality of these challenges rather than turning a blind eye. Although the attorney general reflected the full cooperation of the government to proceed with the impugned case, it was evident that the jurisdiction of the civil government is severely limited when it comes to holding intelligence agencies accountable

IN a pivotal moment in Pakistan's history, the seven-member Supreme Court bench commenced hearings on the serious allegations raised by six judges regarding attempts to intimidate them into favorable rulings. At the outset, the Chief Justice and the government exchanged mutual praise for addressing the matter seriously, with the constitution of a one-man commission. Expressing regret over conspiratorial statements against Syed Tassadaq Jilani, who felt intimidated, recused himself from this significant responsibility. The initial two hours of the session were dedicated to providing a thorough explanation, aimed at dispelling any perception that the Supreme Court was avoiding its responsibility. Despite this, the Chief Justice unequivocally affirmed the independence of the judiciary and vowed to defend it vigorously. The discussion also addressed long standing issues that have been overlooked, including instances where the Supreme Court's orders have been obstructed. Specifically, recent bail orders issued by the Supreme Court were frustrated by frivolous and illogical Magistrate's Preventive Orders (MPOs) issued by deputy commissioners. One judge made a striking statement, acknowledging the intimidation, coercion, and blackmail faced by the judiciary to sway decisions according to certain interests. This candid admission highlighted the need to confront the reality of these challenges rather than turning a blind eye. Although the attorney general reflected the full cooperation of the government to proceed with the impugned case, it was evident that the jurisdiction of the civil government is severely limited when it comes to holding intelligence agencies accountable. While the Chief Justice attempted to navigate the complexity of the situation at hand, other judges were resolute in their stance, emphasizing that this presents a rare opportunity to emancipate the judiciary. They urged the court to seize this moment without getting bogged down in legal technicalities as a pretext to evade responsibility. Despite the Chief Justice's view that the matter pertained to the High Court and therefore fell outside the Supreme Court's jurisdiction according to the constitution, a fellow judge intervened. He pointed out that the aggrieved judges had brought the issue to the attention of the Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court, but no remedial action had been taken. Consequently, the judges sought guidance from the Supreme Judicial

Council on how to proceed if the High Court proved incapable of addressing the matter, highlighting the urgency and gravity of the situation. The supreme court took up the matter after receiving a letter from six judges who alleged that they have been facing blatant and open unconstitutional intimidation, coercion, and arm-twisting from certain unscrupulous elements within the country's all powerful intelligence agency. Their bravery, however, was met with a chilling response. Anonymous letters filled with threatening poisonous powder arrived, targeting all judges of the Islamabad High Court and today two judges of the Lahore High Court also received the same threatening letters, adding to the atmosphere of fear and intimidation. This disturbing development coincided with a suo moto action taken by the Supreme Court and an appeal being heard by the Islamabad High Court on the Cipher case against the Founder of PTI, Mr. Imran Khan. Mr. Shah Mahmood Qureshi, another stalwart of PTI, sent a clear message: submit or face dire consequences. However, conveniently, during the hearing of the suo moto case, the Supreme Court did not make even a passing reference to this stunning development. It is evident that such serious threats are not only targeting the judges of the High Court but also the judges of the Supreme Court who are currently hearing the impugned case. It serves as a brazen warning that any attempt by the Supreme Court to challenge or investigate alleged interference from powerful entities will be met with intimidation and threats. This act seeks to undermine the authority and independence of the judiciary, signaling that even the highest echelons of the legal system are not immune to coercion and intimidation tactics. Additionally, it reflects a broader assault on the rule of law and the principles of democracy, as it seeks to silence judicial scrutiny and accountability. The message is clear: any attempt to uphold justice and transparency will be met with severe consequences, creating a climate of fear and intimidation within the judicial system. My sympathies also go to the CJSC who finds itself in an extraordinarily challenging position, torn between the imperative to safeguard the judiciary's independence and credibility and the immense pressure exerted by various political interests seeking to exploit the situation for their own gains. With the integrity of the judi-

ciary hanging in the balance and the hopes of 250 million citizens relying on the court's ability to deliver justice, the Chief Justice bears the weighty responsibility of liberating the judiciary from the grip of intimidation and restoring its capacity to administer impartial justice. However, he is keenly aware of the delicate equilibrium necessary to maintain positive relations with the establishment, crucial for ensuring the safety of judges and their families. Yet, the Chief Justice faces an unparalleled dilemma: how to address the presence of unscrupulous elements within the intelligence agencies when no individual, entity, or institution possesses the authority to compel these operatives to adhere to the constitution and the law of the land. Before delving further into the complexities of the situation, it's crucial to provide clarity on the term “Establishment.” When the judiciary refers to alleged interference from intelligence agencies in its core functions of dispensing justice fairly, transparently, and without bias or fear, it pertains to a small faction within these agencies. These individuals may disregard the constitution, the rule of law, and the welfare of the Pakistani people. Their actions aim to manipulate the judiciary for what they perceive as the greater good and in the greater national interest, but they overlook that true progress and prosperity of any country can only be achieved through a judiciary that operates freely, fairly, and transparently and without facing any undue influence. The six judges who bravely stepped forward as whistleblowers have rendered invaluable service to both the judiciary and the nation. Their decision to speak out, despite the grave risks to their own lives and those of their loved ones, underscores the immense pressure they must have endured in carrying out their duties. Ultimately, they reached a point where they could no longer bear the burden alone and turned to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court for assistance. It's essential to recognize that the Chief Justice, like any human being, is vulnerable to the same dangers faced by those who spoke out. Moreover, while the constitution of Pakistan ostensibly extends its protections nationwide, analysts suggest there are areas where its authority is challenged, posing additional complexities and risks.

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

# Heightened Iran-Israel tensions threaten regional war

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

From Israel's perspective, the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas is seen as yet another manifestation of Iran's long-standing support for the group. Israel has long accused Iran of providing financial and military assistance to Hamas, enabling it to carry out attacks against Israeli targets. Seen through Israel's prism, this is a stark reminder of Iran's role in fueling regional instability and perpetuating violence. The close relationship between Iran and Hamas has long been a source of concern for Tel Aviv, as the Israeli leaders believe...

THE assault on the Iranian consulate in Damascus that occurred on Monday represented a potentially perilous escalation that was outside the scope of the ongoing conflict in Gaza. It was a significant development in the broader dynamics of the Middle East. Syria and Iran have pointed the finger at Israel for the airstrike that demolished a consular building, resulting in the deaths of top Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander Mohammed Reza Zahedi and several other high-ranking officials, including Mohammed Hadi Haji Rahimi. The Israeli authorities have refrained from issuing any statements regarding the incident, leaving speculation to swirl about the country's potential involvement in the attack. This incident was the latest occurrence in a recent series of apparent Israeli airstrikes in Syria specifically targeting the IRGC and Hezbollah, the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group. Despite the frequency of these attacks, there has been no significant retaliation beyond sporadic skirmishes along Israel's border with Lebanon, in spite of the repeated threats issued by Iran and Hezbollah's leadership that they would respond to Israeli strikes in a reciprocal manner. Monday's strike was a significant departure from previous attacks, potentially marking a critical turning point in the dynamics of the region. The assault on Iran's consulate in Damascus carries unique gravity due to the fact that consular buildings are generally – if not technically – considered to be the sovereign territory of the respective countries, rendering this strike one of the most provocative attacks on Iranian soil in recent memory. In spite of Iran's restrained response to previous provocations, the brazen nature of this attack poses a formidable challenge, particularly for Iran's elite IRGC and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. As tensions escalate and pressure for a response mounts, Iran finds itself performing a precarious balancing act. Tehran's reluctance to retaliate thus far could be perceived as a sign of weakness and humiliation, undermining its

perceived strength and resolve on the global stage. As tensions escalate and pressure for a response mounts, Iran finds itself performing a precarious balancing act, torn between the imperative to retaliate and the potential consequences of further escalation. From Israel's perspective, the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas is seen as yet another manifestation of Iran's long-standing support for the group. Israel has long accused Iran of providing financial and military assistance to Hamas, enabling it to carry out attacks against Israeli targets. Seen through Israel's prism, this is a stark reminder of Iran's role in fueling regional instability and perpetuating violence. The close relationship between Iran and Hamas has long been a source of concern for Tel Aviv, as the Israeli leaders believe their ties pose a direct threat to its security. Israel views Iran's support for Hamas as part of a broader strategy to exert influence and project power across the Middle East, heightening tensions and complicating efforts to resolve long-standing conflicts. In situations where Iran perceives itself to be under threat or seeks to respond to provocations, the Islamic Republic often resorts to utilizing its network of proxies, such as Hezbollah, to retaliate. This tactic of asymmetric warfare has been a hallmark of Iran's strategic approach for more than four decades. By leveraging its proxy forces, Tehran is able to wage indirect conflicts and destabilize adversaries, while maintaining a degree of plausible deniability. Hezbollah, in particular, has long served as a potent tool in Iran's arsenal, with the group carrying out attacks and operations on behalf of Iranian interests across the Middle East. From Lebanon to Syria and beyond, Iran's proxies have played a pivotal role in advancing its geopolitical objectives and challenging regional adversaries. As tensions persist and confrontations escalate, the specter of Iranian-backed retaliation through proxy forces remains a looming threat, complicating efforts aimed at ensuring peace and stability

in the region. The tactic of asymmetric warfare has been a hallmark of Iran's strategic approach for more than four decades. The Iranian government is unlikely to engage in a direct military conflict with Israel for several compelling reasons. First of all, Iran's military capabilities are widely perceived to be inferior to those of Israel, which boasts a formidable military force and is reportedly in possession of a nuclear arsenal. Any direct confrontation with Israel would likely result in significant military losses for Iran, weakening its position on the global stage. Additionally, such a conflict could escalate tensions in the region and potentially draw the US into the fray. Given the strong alliance between Tel Aviv and Washington, any Iranian aggression against Israel could prompt American intervention, which would be politically disastrous for Iran. Aware of these risks, Tehran is more inclined to pursue alternative strategies, such as supporting its proxy forces and engaging in asymmetric warfare, to challenge Israeli interests and further its own geopolitical objectives. Nevertheless, the heightened tensions between Iran and Israel pose a significant risk of spiraling out of control and potentially erupting into a full-fledged war, with dire consequences for the entire region. Despite efforts to avoid direct confrontation, the complex web of geopolitical rivalries and proxy conflicts in the Middle East increases the likelihood of miscalculations or unintended actions that could rapidly escalate hostilities. A conflict between Iran and Israel would not only destabilize the region but also have far-reaching implications for global security and stability. The potential for escalation is compounded by the presence of other regional actors, such as Hezbollah and various militant groups, which could be drawn into the conflict, further exacerbating tensions. Moreover, the volatile nature of the situation means that provocations could trigger a chain reaction of violence with devastating consequences.

– Sourced by Arab news

Briefs

Won't tolerate any interference in judicial...

FROM PAGE 01 He further remarked: "If anyone has an agenda...they should become the chief justice. We will not take the pressure; we are working administratively."

CJP, SC judges too get...

FROM PAGE 01 woman namely Gul Shad, the sources added. During the hearing, the DIG Operations told the high court that all envelopes containing letters and powdery substance have been sent for analysis to the lab.

Zardari lauds army's role in...

FROM PAGE 01 Zardari on his appointment as president. He also conveyed his sincere wishes to the president for a successful tenure.

PSX blasts off to new record high

FROM PAGE 01 communication and commercial banking, also remained on investors' radar. Moreover, the government's privatisation plans especially its initiative to sell off some State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) fed the market with optimism as the consensus is that these companies would turn around in terms of profitability and efficiency under private ownership.

Army chief to host Iftar for Pakistan cricket team

The national side is currently taking part in a fitness camp in Kakul

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir will host an iftar for the Pakistan cricket team on April 7 in Rawalpindi. The national side is currently taking part in a fitness camp in Kakul, Abbottabad.



Shadab Khan, Imad Wasim, Usama Mir, Mohammad Nawaz, Mehran Mumtaz, Abrar Ahmed, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Hasan Ali, Mohammad Ali, Zaman Khan,

will play three T20Is at the Pindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi on 18, 20 and 21 April. Following that, both sides will move to Lahore, where they will play the remaining two T20Is of the series on 25 and 27 April, respectively.

SL beat BD by 192 runs to sweep Test series 2-0

Bangladesh's batting faltered as they lost both Tests by big margins against their regional rivals



CHITTAGONG: Lahiru Kumara finished with 450 to help Sri Lanka thump Bangladesh by 192 runs in the second Test and sweep the two-match series 2-0 on Wednesday. The fast bowler dismissed the last man Khaled Ahmed to wrap up a one-sided contest before lunch on the fifth day.

hundred in both innings of the first Test. "The bowlers did their basics on this wicket and the batters did their job as well," Sri Lankan captain Dhananjaya de Silva said.

hundred in both innings of the first Test. "The bowlers did their basics on this wicket and the batters did their job as well," Sri Lankan captain Dhananjaya de Silva said.

Shadab responds to Umar Gul's WC injury remark

"It takes a brave man to accept his mistake. Respect you Gulli bhai. Always stay happy," Shadab quoted on Cricket Pak's post

ISLAMABAD: Shadab Khan has reacted after former pacer Umar Gul apologized for his remarks made about the all-rounder during the 2023 ODI World Cup match against South Africa.

Junaid disappointed over NZ top players missing Pak tour

ISLAMABAD: Former pace bowler Junaid Khan has expressed disappointment over the absence of top New Zealand players in the squad for the tour of Pakistan.

Guardiola backs Haaland after Keane criticism

LONDON: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said Erling Haaland is the best striker in the world and defended the Norwegian's performances following criticism from former Manchester United captain Roy Keane.

Pak vs NZ: Blackcaps announce depleted squad due to IPL

AUCKLAND: Michael Bracewell will lead New Zealand during their tour of Pakistan for a five-match T20I series later this month.

Timber Wolves Win All Pak Ramadan Cup Basketball

Ali Hamza Kazmi scored 14 points and Sher Shehzad scored four points for winning side

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Timber Wolves Islamabad defeated YMCA Lahore in a decisive battle to win the club category final of All Pakistan 3x3 Ramadan Cup Basketball Tournament here at Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad.



Mansoor who was the chief guest of the closing ceremony appreciated the efforts of tournament organizing secretary Ouj E Zahoor and all other members for providing the best arrangements for this tournament and said that Pakistan Basketball Federation will continue their efforts to promote basketball in the country specially to organize such events in the future as well so that the youth get an opportunity to show the essence of their abilities.

Formation of speedy trial courts...

FROM PAGE 01 Further decisions made during the session included the validation of the establishment of a cabinet standing committee for legal matters and approval of amendments to the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act 2019.

Extraordinary security...

FROM PAGE 01 Two officers are deployed around the clock. He further stated that the cells have been sealed for anyone's movement, and special CCTV cameras have also been installed for 24-hour surveillance.

PM for enhancing...

FROM PAGE 01 Gabriel Attal, addressed to Prime Minister Shehbaz on his re-election. The prime minister thanked the French leadership for the message of greetings.

KSA likely to invest...

FROM PAGE 01 sources said. The prime minister will constitute a committee with regard to Saudi investment in Reko Diq project, finance ministry's sources said.

Court Notice section containing legal text in Urdu regarding a court case.

## Briefs

## Faye sworn in as Senegal's youngest president

DAKAR : Senegal has inaugurated Africa's youngest elected leader as president, as the 44-year-old and previously little-known Bassirou Diomaye Faye completed a dramatic ascent from prison to presidency within weeks. Hours later, Ousmane Sonko, the popular opposition figure who helped catapult him to victory, was named as the country's new prime minister on Tuesday. "I am aware that the results of the elections express a profound desire for systemic change," he said. "Through my election, the Senegalese people have committed to building a sovereign, just and prosperous Senegal in a progressing Africa." Faye took the presidential oath in front of hundreds of officials and several African heads of state at an exhibition centre in the new town of Diamniadio, near Dakar. He then returned to the capital, with his motorcade greeted by hundreds of jubilant residents who lined the roads leading to the presidential palace. This is the first elected office for Faye, a former tax inspector.—APP

## Japan resumes UNRWA funding, sends \$35M to Gaza

TOKYO : Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa announced on Tuesday the resumption of funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), with \$35 million to be released. Kamikawa cited the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza as the reason for Japan's decision, emphasizing Japan's responsibility as a member of the U.N. Security Council to address the crisis. Earlier this year, Japan joined several of its Western allies, including the U.S. and the U.K., in halting funding to the U.N. agency following allegations by Tel Aviv against UNRWA. However, several countries, including Australia, Canada, Sweden and Iceland, have since resumed funding. In February, Japan also announced an additional emergency aid of \$32 million for Palestinians, to be provided through the U.N. World Food Programme, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and other international organizations. Meanwhile, New Zealand announced \$6 million in humanitarian assistance for those affected by the conflict in Gaza and Sudan.—APP

## Zimbabwe declares drought disaster, Hunger grips region

HARARE : President Emmerson Mnangagwa on Wednesday declared Zimbabwe's drought a national disaster and said the country needed more than \$2 billion in aid to feed millions facing hunger. Mnangagwa's statement follows similar announcements by Zambia in late February and Malawi in March, as drought induced by the El Nino global weather pattern triggers a humanitarian crisis in southern Africa. More than 2.7 million people in Zimbabwe will go hungry this year, Mnangagwa told journalists at the state house in Harare, adding that 80% of the country had received poor rains. "Preliminary assessments show that Zimbabwe requires in excess of \$2 billion towards various interventions we envisage in our national response," Mnangagwa said. He said the government would prioritise winter cropping to boost reserves, and work with the private sector to import grains. El Nino is a naturally occurring weather phenomenon associated with a disruption of wind patterns that means warmer ocean surface temperatures in the eastern and central Pacific. Most provinces in Zimbabwe have experienced crop failure since November, with hotter areas declaring drought since August. The choice was intended to underline stable relations with China amid escalating

## Ambassador Hashmi presents credentials to Mongolian President

Pakistan and Mongolia enjoy warm relations spanning over six decades, characterized by mutual respect, cultural similarities and robust cooperation at multilateral fora

DNA

ULAANBAATAR : Ambassador Khalil Hashmi presented his credentials to President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh of Mongolia on 02 April 2024 in an elegant and impressive ceremony held at the State House in Ulaanbaatar, capital city of Mongolia. During his ongoing visit, Ambassador Hashmi is also meeting with various ministerial and deputy ministerial level officials, academia and business. Notably, he had productive interactions with the Ms. Battsetseg Batmunkh, Foreign Minister and other senior of-



officials of Mongolia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), in which both sides emphasized the need to build on their ancient civilizational linkages to foster goodwill among the younger generation of both countries.

Pakistan and Mongolia enjoy warm relations spanning over six decades, characterized by mutual respect, cultural similarities and robust cooperation at multilateral fora. Recently, there has been enhanced bilateral interactions as well. Ambassador of Pakistan to China is also concurrently accredited as Pakistan's non-resident Ambassador to Mongolia.

## NATO must ensure long-term, reliable arms for Ukraine : chief

NATO foreign ministers to hold preliminary talks as they seek to agree on a five-year support package for Ukraine

WEB DESK

KYIV : NATO foreign ministers are set to discuss how to put military support for Ukraine on a long-term footing. At a two-day meeting beginning on Wednesday, ministers are expected to discuss a proposal by NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg for a 100 billion euro (\$108bn) five-year fund for Ukraine, officials said. Under the plan, NATO would take over some coordination work from a United States-led coalition known as the Ramstein group. The step is designed in part to guard against any cut in US support if Donald Trump returns to the White House, diplomats said, according to the Reuters news agency. "Foreign ministers will discuss the best way to organise NATO's support for Ukraine, to make it more powerful, predictable and enduring," a NATO official said. "No final decisions are to be taken at the April ministerial meetings, and discussions will continue as we approach the Washington summit in July." The proposal is expected to be discussed at the meeting in Brussels on Wednesday and Thursday, with the aim of finalising a package in time for a NATO summit in Washington in July. Until now, NATO as an organisation has restricted itself to non-lethal aid for Ukraine out of fears that a more direct role could trigger an escalation of tensions with Russia. Most of its members provide weapons to Ukraine on a bilateral basis. But diplomats said there was a growing view within NATO that the time had come to put military aid to Ukraine on a more sustainable, long-term footing and the transatlantic alliance was best placed to take on much of that role. Some also said that threats by Russian President Vladimir Putin that he would regard various steps taken by NATO allies as escalatory had not led to



retaliatory action against them. As part of the plan, NATO would create a NATO Mission for Ukraine, although it was as yet unclear whether the mission would operate inside the country, diplomats said. Some countries were cautious about even naming the operation as a mission. Stoltenberg, NATO's secretary general, has said the plan is partly "to shield against winds of political change" in any NATO member but Trump is uppermost in the minds of many, a senior NATO diplomat said. "No final decisions are to be taken at the April ministerial meetings, and discussions will continue as we approach the Washington summit in July," the official said, declining to be named. Diplomats cautioned that discussions on the proposal were at an early stage and it was unclear whether the 100 billion euro total would be accepted or how it would be financed. All NATO decisions require consensus among the alliance's 32 members. "It goes some way to protecting in case of Trump. But it is impossible to create something Trump-proof," said another diplomat. "A fund of 100 billion looks very optimistic, knowing how difficult it was to agree on a smaller amount at

EU level," the diplomat added. NATO foreign ministers are also expected to discuss the race to replace Stoltenberg after Romanian President Klaus Iohannis launched a surprise challenge against the frontrunner, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte. Diplomats said Rutte now has the support of some 90 percent of NATO countries, but Hungary and Turkey remain holdouts blocking a swift nomination ahead of the summit. Meanwhile, Ukraine lowers its conscription age to 25 to plug a shortfall in troop numbers fighting Russia. Ukraine lowered the military conscription age from 27 to 25 in an effort to replenish its depleted ranks after more than two years of war following Russia's full-scale military campaign. The new mobilisation law came into force a day after Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed it. Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, passed it last year. It was not immediately clear why Zelenskyy took so long to sign the measure into law. He didn't make any public comment about it, and officials did not say how many new soldiers the country expected to gain or for which units. Conscription has been a sensitive matter in Ukraine for many months amid a growing shortage of infantry on top of a severe ammunition shortfall that has handed Russia the battlefield initiative. Russia's own problems with manpower and planning have so far prevented it from taking full advantage of its edge. Ukraine expects power exports to resume on Wednesday, ministry says. Ukraine expects significant electricity exports to rebound, but the volumes are still well below levels prior to Russia's recent missile attacks on the Ukrainian power system, Ukraine's energy ministry said.

## Tsunami threat 'largely passed' after Taiwan quake

Several such landslides occurred on Taiwan's eastern coast near the epicentre of today's quake close to eastern Hualien County, when falling debris hit tunnels and highways, crushing vehicles and causing several deaths

TAIPEI : The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said Wednesday that the tsunami threat from a major earthquake in Taiwan "has now passed", with authorities in Taipei saying no injuries or deaths had been reported so far. The quake hit just before 8:00 am local time (0000 GMT) and had a magnitude of 7.4 according to the US Geological Survey, triggering tsunami warnings in Taiwan, southern Japan and the Philippines. By 10:03 am Taiwan time, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said "the tsunami threat has now largely passed", but that people near coastal areas should stay alert. An emergency message sent out by authorities around 10:14 am Taiwan time said "the tsunami triggered by the earthquake has gradually reached the coast of Taiwan". "People in coastal areas are reminded to be vigilant and take strict precautions and pay attention to the dangers caused by sudden surges in waves." A fire department official in Hualien county - near the epicentre of the earthquake - told AFP that "two buildings had collapsed and some people are believed to be trapped". He provided no additional information. In a televised national briefing, Taiwan's National Fire Agency said 26 buildings were reported "to tilt or collapse", though it gave no details on the location of the structures. It also said no deaths or injuries have been reported so far. The island of Taiwan is prone to earthquakes, with its residents accustomed to frequent tremors. No stranger to powerful quakes Taiwan is located along the so-called "Pacific Ring of Fire", the horseshoe-shaped line of seismic faults encircling the Pacific Ocean where most of the world's earthquakes occur. The area is particularly vulnerable to tremors due to the tension accumulated from the interactions of two tectonic plates, the Philippine Sea Plate and the Eurasian Plate, which may lead to sudden releases in the form of earthquakes. The region's mountainous landscape can magnify the ground shaking, leading to landslides. Several such landslides occurred on Taiwan's eastern coast near the epicentre of today's quake close to eastern Hualien County, when falling debris hit tunnels and highways, crushing vehicles and causing several deaths.—DNA

## Peru gov seeks confidence vote amid scandal

LIMA : Prime Minister Gustavo Adrianzen was appointed only a month ago after his predecessor resigned over a scandal in which he allegedly granted political favors to a much younger love interest. Like any new prime minister, Adrianzen has to go before Congress to receive the green light to proceed in the post. But the scheduled vote of confidence comes in the same week that six ministers resigned after a police raid on President Dina Boluarte's home and offices, making it a key litmus test of support for her fragile government. If lawmakers deny Adrianzen a vote of confidence, he will have to step down. Such an outcome would only deepen the turmoil in Peru, which is on its sixth president in eight years. The 61-year-old Boluarte, who holds rock-bottom approval ratings, is being investigated for suspected illegal enrichment and failing to declare her luxury timepieces - a scandal dubbed Rolexgate by local media. On the eve of the vote, attorney general Juan Villena announced an expansion of the probe into Boluarte's possession of a "\$56,000 Cartier bracelet" and other jewelry valued at more than \$500,000. Bank deposits of about \$250,000 are also being investigated. Congress to decide Boluarte came to power in December 2022 after former president Pedro Castillo tried to dissolve Congress and rule by decree, leading to his arrest and violent protests demanding she step down, and that fresh elections be held.—APP

## TIKA distributes food aid in El Salvador

ANKARA : The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) has distributed food packages to the Muslim community in the Central American country of El Salvador as part of its "Ramadan Program." Food support was provided to 200 families in the capital San Salvador, and a total of a ton of basic food items, including rice, oil, and flour, were delivered for iftar meals of students of a primary school affiliated with the El Salvador Islamic Union, according to a statement by TIKA. The distributions were carried out with the participation of Türkiye's Ambassador to San Salvador, Gul Buyukersen, and Emerson Bukele, the brother of El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele. Turkish aid agency TIKA renovates schools in Pakistan's Karachi. Bukele expressed his gratitude to TIKA and Türkiye in his speech, conveying his satisfaction on behalf of the Muslim community in El Salvador.—APP

## Shell appeals Dutch court's climate ruling

HAGUE : Shell squared off against seven environmental groups in a Dutch appeals court Tuesday, with climate activists accusing the multinational oil giant of failing to implement a landmark 2021 judgement. Judges at The Hague District Court ruled three years ago that Shell must reduce its carbon emissions by 45 percent by 2030, as it was contributing to the "dire" effects of climate change. That ruling was seen as an historic victory for climate change campaigners as it was the first time a company had been made to align its policy with the 2015 Paris climate change accords. Shell, which called litigation "ineffective" to address climate change, is appealing the 2021 ruling, while environmental groups accuse the oil giant of failing to take action. "Justice delayed is justice denied," said Donald Pols, who heads Milieudefensie, the Dutch arm of Friends of the Earth, who originally brought the case. "I hope this case will change the way that Shell does business... as it is currently one of the largest polluters in the world," he added. "We are very confident. We have been working for more than two years towards this moment." Pols told AFP outside the Hague courthouse, where four days of hearings are scheduled.—APP

## Public condemnation after Ghana priest marries child

ACCRA : A traditional Ghana priest has sparked a national outcry after marrying a 13-year-old girl, prompting calls for his arrest. The 63-year-old priest Nuomo Borketey Laweh Tsuru XX III, also known as Gborbu Wolomo, married the girl in a traditional ceremony on Saturday near the capital Accra. The girl and her mother were placed under police protection soon after the marriage as Ghana's attorney general opened an investigation. "The allegations, if proven, constitute a criminal offence for which all persons involved must face prosecution," a statement from the attorney general's office said. Under Ghanaian law, the legal minimum age for marriage is 18. Indian police detain over 2,000 in crackdown on illegal child marriages. Police and officials say the girl is 13, but the traditional authorities involved say she is 16. Defending his actions, the priest's spokesperson insisted the marriage was not about sexual relations. Without giving her age, he said the girl would not be expected to fulfill marital duties until she reaches the legal age of consent, which is 16 in Ghana. "It's not a marriage ceremony. There is nothing sexual attached to it. The priest has three customary wives already. It's a customary role to help the priest with his spiritual duties," spokesperson Manraklo Shwonotalor told AFP news agency by telephone.—APP



Islamabad: Ambassador of Iran H.E. Dr. Raza Amiri Moghaddam calls on Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain.—DNA

## Indonesian Subianto vows to strengthen ties with Japan

President-elect Subianto aims to bolster Indonesia's ties with Japan, a key ally, in navigating Southeast Asia's geopolitical challenges

NEWS DESK

TOKYO : Indonesian President-elect Prabowo Subianto has said he wants to "further strengthen" relations with Japan as he met with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida following a visit to China. Subianto, who is currently Defence Minister, told Kishida that the two countries were long-standing friends who had built a cooperative relationship and that he hoped to strengthen it further. Japan has been seeking closer ties with Southeast Asian countries, especially in maritime security and defence, in the face of China's increasingly assertive military presence. Subianto, who is set to succeed Joko Widodo in October, chose Beijing for his first official foreign visit after his election triumph in February. The choice was intended to underline stable relations with China amid escalating



tensions in the South China Sea, marked by recurrent maritime confrontations between China and the Philippines.

In his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Subianto pledged a continued friendly policy toward China. Indonesia and Japan agree to boost economic ties. China is Indonesia's largest trading partner, with Beijing investing in major infrastructure projects, and Indonesia has maintained a relatively neutral stance amid rising tensions between China and the Philippines over rival territorial claims in the South China Sea. Kishida welcomed Subianto's early visit to Tokyo, telling his future counterpart that the two countries are longtime friends who share basic values and principles and that Japan hoped to further strengthen cooperation in regional and global issues as "comprehensive and strategic partners." Kishida said Japan hopes to contribute to Indonesia's development in infrastructure and energy while stepping up cooperation in security and defence. Diplomatic maneuver-

ing Kishida's meeting with Subianto comes just a week before the Japanese leader will travel to Washington for a summit with US President Joe Biden, and three-way talks that will also include Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., at which the leaders are expected to discuss further reinforcing security ties. Later Wednesday, Subianto held talks with Japanese Defence Minister Minoru Kihara. The two ministers vowed to enhance defence cooperation, the Japanese Defence Ministry said in a statement. Japan and Indonesia are expanding joint exercises in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as capacity building and educational programmes, Kihara told reporters after the talks. "I'm determined to strengthen cooperation between our two maritime nations to achieve a free and open Indo-Pacific based on the rule of law," he said.

## Briefs

### Omar vows to play role in acquittal of Imran

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Omar Ayub said on Wednesday that his party will play a vital role in the acquittal of the deposed prime minister and former Punjab chief minister Parvez Elahi. Speaking to the media in Islamabad, Ayub said: "We will make all-out efforts to address the problems in the Parliament House. The opposition sitting in National Assembly is strong." "1908 PTI workers had been detained. We will put all-out efforts into their acquittal," he added. He vowed that his party would highlight the matters in line with the ballooning inflation and public issues. Few days back, PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan asserted that the party founder was facing political vendetta. Speaking to the media outside Adiala jail in Islamabad, Khan said: "The efforts are underway to compel the PTI founder to compromise. The PTI founder has made it clear that everything belongs to the country." Khan assailed Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Rana Sanaullah over his statement against the PTI founder. "Those who are giving irresponsible statements should be stopped."

### PHC moved for quashing cases against Sher Afzal

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has been moved for quashing 11 cases against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Sher Afzal Marwat. Justice Ishfaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah will hear the application of Sher Afzal Marwat. The court has directed the PTI leader to appear in person today (Wednesday). It may be noted that 11 cases have been registered against PTI leader Sher Afzal Marwat under various sections. Also Read: Omar Ayub, Seemabia Tahir granted bails in May 9 cases. Earlier on March 25, an anti-terrorism court (ATC) had granted bails to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders Omar Ayub Khan and Seemabia Tahir in May 9 cases. ATC judge Ijaz Asif heard the case and granted them the bails. On March 18, the Lahore Special Anti-Terrorism Court had granted interim bails to Omar Ayub Khan till April 20 in five cases.

### Bushra Bibi facing serious life threats: PTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership expressed alarmed that PTI Founding Chairman Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi was facing serious life threats, who was being slow poisoned solely under the 'Khan Elimination Project'; however they vowed they would not tolerate any laxity relating to her safety and security come what may. They demanded that their serious apprehensions regarding the slow poisoning and threats to her life should be addressed sans any further delay or else they would chalk out a strategy within few days to give a strong reaction to this inhuman and shameful treatment being meted out with Bushra Bibi. Speaking at a press conference along with PTI senior leaders Khalid Khurshid, Shaikat Basra and Kanwal Shauzab, PTI Central Information Secretary said that they were really concerned about the safety and security of Bushra Bibi, as he was given poisonous food that badly damaged her health. He said that despite lapse of five weeks, Bushra Bibi did not recovery rather her health deteriorated further. Raoof reiterated that the current rulers crossed all limits of barbarism and fascism as they are worst of the worst autocracy, which could be judged from their ham-handed approach towards the women. - DNA

# Pakistan-Netherlands agree to explore new trade opportunities

The discussion also touched upon the structural reforms being implemented by the government of Pakistan for promoting economic growth and ensuring fiscal sustainability



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Netherlands here on Wednesday agreed on the signifi-

cance of enhancing bilateral relations and exploring new opportunities for partnership in areas of mutual interest. According to press statement issued by finance ministry, Ambassador of the Kingdom of

the Netherlands to Pakistan, Mrs. Henny de Vries called on Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb, to discuss matters of mutual interest and strengthen the existing ties between Paki-

stand and the Netherlands.

The minister warmly welcomed the Ambassador and expressed appreciation for the longstanding friendship and cooperation between the two countries. He highlighted the importance of the bilateral relationship, rooted in shared values and a history of collaboration. The discussion also touched upon the structural reforms being implemented by the government of Pakistan for promoting economic growth and ensuring fiscal sustainability. The minister highlighted that Pakistan was interested in technology transfer and leveraging the expertise of Netherlands in agriculture, dairy, and farm production that would lead to increased production and exports, contributing significantly to Pakistan's economy. Ambassador de Vries reciprocated the sentiments, emphasizing the Netherlands' commitment to furthering cooperation with Pakistan across various sectors. She also appreciated the government's efforts being taken towards reforms in major economic and financial sectors of the economy. The Ambassador also informed about the pilot projects being run by the Netherlands in Pakistan, including fish production, ensuring labor safety and environmental standards in textile industries, and projects on water management in agriculture. She expressed the Netherlands' commitment to furthering these initiatives and expanding cooperation in other areas of mutual interest.

## X closure in Pakistan

# National security under threat due to content, IHC told

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday summoned the interior secretary on April 17 to give detailed reasons for the shutdown of social media platform X - which has been inaccessible since February. The directives came as the court heard a petition challenging the "ban" on X. Access to X has been disrupted in Pakistan since February 17, when former Rawalpindi commissioner Liaquat Chahtha accused the chief election commissioner and chief justice of Pakistan of being involved in rigging the February 8 general elections. Rights bodies and journalists' organisations have condemned the muzzling of social media, while internet service providers have also lamented losses due to disruptions. The United States had also called on Pakistan last month to lift restrictions on social media platforms. On March 20, the interior ministry informed the Sindh High Court (SHC) that the social media platform was blocked in February pending further orders on the reports of intelligence agencies. The interior ministry's admission came days after Information Minister Attaullah Tarar acknowledged that X was "already banned" when the new government took over the reins from the caretaker set-up, saying there was no official notification for the clampdown. At the previous hearing, the IHC had sought a detailed re-

port from the interior ministry regarding the outage of the social media platform. During today's hearing, the Interior Ministry joint secretary appeared before the court and presented a report on the outage of the social platform. However, IHC CJ Aamer Farooq, who presided over the hearing, expressed his dissatisfaction at the report. During the hearing, the secretary stated that X was disrupted on the basis of reports by intelligence agencies. At this, the IHC CJ asked the official to produce documentation, adding that he had been summoned to provide details. "What manner is this, what is this attitude?" CJ Farooq asked. "Assist the court, what is this? You have not brought any files or anything [...] everything was done deliberately, everything has been shut. Shall I summon the secretary?" he asked. He then told the secretary to provide documents and concrete evidence, rather than "make verbal statements in court". The secretary then went on to say that content uploaded online was a "threat to national security". "I have told you not to make speeches, give me reasons," the IHC CJ replied. He also expressed his dissatisfaction at the report submitted in court today, saying: "My secretary can draft a better report than this." He questioned whether the secretary was appearing in court for the first time. "The report says that content which is against national security is uploaded to social media which is why it was shut down."



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Italy, Marilina Armellini calls on Minister for Defence and Defence Production Khawaja Muhammad Asif. - DNA

# Israeli war crimes continue in Gaza amid int'l condemnations

Israeli occupation forces (IOF) raided Al-Far'a refugee camp, south of Tubas city in the West Bank, at dawn Wednesday escorted by military vehicles bulldozing the streets

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 180 on Wednesday, aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and target different areas, and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. A reporter for the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza, killing and injuring scores of citizens, despite the recent UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire for the holy month of Ramadan. According to media sources, casualties were reported near the Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis after the Israeli army bombed a group of citizens. Four wounded citizens, including a child with a serious injury, were evacuated to the European Gaza Hospital after an Israeli army quadcopter opened fire at tents sheltering displaced families in al-Mawasi area, west of Khan Yunis. In central Gaza, three civilians were martyred and others were injured when an Israeli artillery attack targeted them in the southeast of Deir al-Balah. Other casualties were reported in different areas of Gaza following Israeli aerial, artillery and shooting attacks last night and today. Meanwhile, Israeli occupation forces (IOF) raided Al-Far'a refugee camp, south of Tubas city in the West Bank, at dawn Wednesday escorted by military vehicles bulldozing the streets and vandalizing the camp's infrastructure, leading to the eruption of confrontations between resistance fighters and the IOF.

## EU denounces Israel's killing of aid workers

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: The European Union has condemned as "appalling" Israel's latest killing of seven aid workers who were delivering food to the starving population in the Gaza Strip. In a joint statement released on Wednesday, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and European Commissioner for Crisis Management Jenaz Lenarčič highlighted the high number of humanitarian workers killed in the Israeli regime's ongoing war on besieged Gaza. The Israeli military's "killing ... of seven members of a humanitarian team ... while they were travelling to deliver food to the most vulnerable in Gaza, is appalling," the statement read. "We urge a swift implementation of the announced commitment by the Israeli authorities to conduct a thorough investigation and ensure accountability for those who are responsible." On Monday, Israeli forces conducted a fatal strike on a clearly identified convoy of international aid workers in Gaza with the charity World Central Kitchen (WCK), including three British nationals, an Australian, a Polish national, an American-Canadian dual citizen and a Palestinian.

## Punjab, Centre at loggerheads over IG Islamabad

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad police remain without its head as the federal and Punjab governments locked horns over the appointment of a new Inspector General of Police (IGP). According to sources, the Maryam Nawaz-led Punjab government has refused to relieve Ali Nasir Rizvi from his post as Deputy Inspector General (Operations) Lahore despite the federal government notifying him as IG Islamabad. The crucial position remains vacant as former IG Islamabad Akbar Nasir Khan was removed from the post last week and was asked to report to the Establishment Division. It is pertinent to mention that as many as three DIGs of Islamabad police went on leave after Ali Nasir Rizvi, who is a junior officer of these officials, was appointed as IG Islamabad. DIG Awais Malik, DIG Hassan Raza and DIG Shoaib Janbaz were among the high-ranking officials who went on leave following the change of command in the Islamabad police. The federal government on March 29 appointed Ali Nasir Rizvi, a grad 20 officer, as IG of Islamabad police.

## Muslim leaders turn down Biden's dinner

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden of the United States had to host a subdued dinner to celebrate the Muslim holy month of Ramadan at the White House after a group of Muslim leaders turned down his invitation over the administration's support for Israel's savagery in the besieged Gaza Strip. The White House initially invited a group of Muslim community leaders for iftar - the fast-breaking evening meal of Muslims in Ramadan. But the event was cancelled after many leaders refused to have dinner with Biden and his Vice President Kamala Harris on Tuesday evening. The White House then chose to hold a smaller event with the presence of Harris, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, senior White House aides and fewer than a dozen people who work for the administration. - Agencies

## PHC issues notices to KP speaker, deputy


COURT REPORTER

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) issued on Wednesday notices to the speaker and deputy speaker of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) Assembly during the hearing of a petition seeking contempt charges for not administering the oath to lawmakers on reserved seats. A two-member bench comprising Justice SM Atiq Shah and Justice Syed Arshad Ali heard the contempt petition. The court also sought a response from the respondents at the next hearing. During the hearing, the petitioner took the stance that the oath to elected members on reserved seats was not administered despite a court order. The petitioner added that the speaker and the deputy speaker had violated the court orders and demanded contempt proceedings against them. On Tuesday, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) stopped the Senate elections in K-P, citing delays in the administration of oaths for reserved seats. K-P Election Commissioner Shamshad Khan arrived at the assembly premises and requested a list of sworn-in MPAs from the assembly staff. Simultaneously, the opposition lodged a petition with the ECP, urging the postponement of Senate elections in the province. Despite the stage being set and the election staff prepared, the K-P Senate polls failed to kick off at the promised hour of 9 am. Subsequently, the ECP issued a notification announcing the postponement of polls, citing its earlier order from March and the upheld decision of the Peshawar High Court (PHC). The notification highlighted the failure to administer oaths, as required under Article 218(3) of the Constitution, resulting in an incomplete electoral college.

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