



# Islamabad POST

Saturday, April 06, 2024

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

**Macron slams Moscow's claims of French role in terror attack**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Japan boosts regional security with allies**

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**Danielle Collins wins twice in Charleston**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Directs coop with provinces

# PM for providing Chinese nationals foolproof security

Presiding over a meeting regarding the law and order in Islamabad, the premier ordered to devise a comprehensive action plan for regular audit of security standard operating procedures

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In the wake of terrorist attack in Shangla district last month, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed authorities concerned to provide Chinese nationals foolproof security in Pakistan. The terrorist attack had targeted a vehicle, resulting in killing of a woman and five Chinese nationals, and a Pakistani driver. Work on the hydropower project is halted since the attack on March 26. The victims were killed when an explosive-laden vehicle hit the bus carrying them on the Karakoram Highway in the Bisham area on March 26. Presiding over a meeting regarding the law and order in Islamabad, the premier ordered to devise a comprehensive action plan for regular audit of security standard operating procedures. He said he would personally oversee the meetings about security of Chinese national every month. The meeting was attended by the federal interior minister, heads of security institutes and relevant authorities. PM Shehbaz was briefed about the comprehensive security situation in the country. He vowed to continue waging war against terrorism till its annihilation. He also directed the interior ministry to boost cooperation with the provincial anti-terrorism departments. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Home Department asked relevant authorities to upgrade the security for Dasu Hydropower Project after the March 26 terrorist incident which claimed six lives. Chinese engineers are currently working on a number of

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## CM Maryam Nawaz resolves to restore NAP

Punjab Apex Committee approves VVIP security for Chinese nationals

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Punjab Apex Committee, in its inaugural session on Friday, approved the extension of VVIP security for Chinese nationals engaged in development projects across Punjab to ensure their complete protection. During the session chaired by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, the Apex Committee passed a resolution to enhance security for Chinese nationals involved in development projects across Punjab. Addressing the committee participants, the chief minister underscored the necessity for collective action, affirming that

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ISLAMABAD: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS), General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

## CJCS calls on President

CJCS briefed the President about the security situation of the country

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS), General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The CJCS felicitated the President on assuming the office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The CJCS briefed the President about the security situation of the country as well as the operational preparedness of the Armed Forces. He highlighted that the Armed Forces of the country had the capability to effectively deal with internal and external security challenges. The President lauded the role of Pakistan's Armed Forces in defending the national frontiers as well as their contributions towards the socio-economic development of the country.

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## Economic challenges

# IMF ready to 'engage' with Pak on fresh bailout

The authorities have expressed interest in a successor IMF supported programme with the aim of resolving Pakistan's fiscal and external stability challenges

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: As the government looks for another bailout programme from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the global lender has stated that it is ready to "engage" with Pakistan in the "coming months" to help the country resolve "fiscal and external stability challenges". "The authorities have expressed interest in a successor IMF supported programme with the aim of resolving Pakistan's fiscal and external stability challenges and laying the foundation for inclusive growth. And, of course, we stand ready to engage in programme discussions in the coming months," said IMF's Communications Director Julie Kozack in a press briefing on Tuesday. Kozack spoke about the fresh bailout

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## Pakistan FO denounces Indian network of extra-territorial killings

Indian govt orchestrated assassinations in Pakistan: report

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) on Friday said that the Indian network of extra-judicial and extra-territorial killings was now a "global phenomenon" that required a coordinated

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## Briefs

### Dar, Blinken discuss bilateral ties

Both sides express satisfaction with current positive momentum in relations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Friday telephoned his Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar in a maiden contact where both sides reviewed bilateral ties and discussed regional and international issues. "Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar received a telephone call from US Secretary of State Antony Blinken today (Friday)," said a statement issued by the Foreign Office (FO). The statement said both sides reiterated their dedication to strengthening bilateral co-operation across all spheres of mutual interest.

### UAE cuts diplomatic ties with Israel

UAE ambassador terms current state of affairs as "the darkest day"

DNA

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced to suspend diplomatic coordination with Israel after the death of seven aid workers in Gaza by the occupation forces, reported Israeli media. A Tel Aviv based news channel quoted official sources as saying that the Emirati foreign ministry has 'expressed outrage' with the Israeli ambassador Amir Hayek over the incident.

### Holiday Notice

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

## PTI alleges

# Govt behind 'poisonous' letters to judges

PTI seeks thorough probe into toxic letters to bring culprits to book

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) demanded an immediate and thorough investigation into the threatening letters laced with toxic chemical sent to judges of Supreme Court and high courts in order to bring the elements attacking the judiciary to justice at the earliest. Reacting to the toxic letters delivered to senior most judges of the country, PTI Spokesperson made it clear that the party stood firmly with the judiciary and would not tolerate any attempt to attack the judiciary or pressurize the judges under any circumstances. He said that sending threatening letters to judges was part of the government's plot to intimidate and scare the judges so as they could not give decisions based on justice and law. He said that since the SC initiated the proceedings on its suo moto notice case, an alarming upsurge had been witnessed in the process of sending threatening letters filled with poisonous substance to the judges.

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## LHC: Judges to receive letters after security clearance

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: After several judges from the Supreme Court and high courts received letters containing 'toxic powder', the administration of the Lahore High Court (LHC) has devised new SOPs regarding letters being received in the name of jurists. "New SOPs have been adopted for handling the letters being posted to the jurists," the LHC's administration said in a statement on Friday. All courier companies and postmen have been restricted to mandatory clear all genre of letters and posts from the security room. A deputy superintendent police (DSP) ranked

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## PM to leave for Saudi Arabia today

He will renew invitation to Saudi crown prince to visit Pakistan

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: In his first foreign visit since election, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is set to leave for Saudi Arabia for a three-day trip tomorrow, confirmed the Foreign Office on Friday. "Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 6 to 8 April 2024, during

Continued on Page 06

# UN rights council demands halt of arms sales to Israel

UN rights body demands Israel be held accountable for possible war crimes

NEWS DESK

GENEVA: The United Nations Human Rights Council on Friday adopted a resolution calling for Israel to be held accountable for possible war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip, although Israel dismissed it as a "distorted text." Twenty-eight countries voted in favor, 13 abstained and six opposed the resolution, including the United States and Germany. The adoption prompted several representatives to the Council to cheer and clap. The resolution stressed "the need to ensure accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in order to end impunity." It also expressed "grave concern at reports of serious human rights violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian law, including of possible war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory." The council also demanded a halt to all arms sales to Israel, highlighting warnings of "genocide" in its war in Gaza, which has killed more than 33,000 people.

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## Quds Day

# PM reiterates Pakistan support to Palestinians

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday reiterated that Pakistan would continue its moral and diplomatic support to the people of Palestine until their liberation from the Zionist occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestine state as per pre-1967 borders. The prime minister, in his message on Quds Day, annually observed on the last Friday of Holy Ramazan (Jumuat-ul-Wida), said the entire Pakistani nation condemned the Zionist oppression and expressed solidarity with the suffering Palestinian people. He said for the past seven

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## KP to be the first province to approve drug policy

PESHAWAR : Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah announced on Friday that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be the first province to approve a drug policy. He made this statement during a meeting of the Health Department. The minister emphasized the importance of pharmacist appointments in hospitals and highlighted that under the policy, pharmacy services would be integrated with health centers. He further stated that doctors would prescribe medications based on formulas rather than brands for patients, aiming to eliminate price manipulation and supply constraints from the drug market. The implementation of the policy is expected to reduce medication expenses for patients. Hospital pharmacist appointments under the policy will ensure the availability of standard medications at lower rates for the public. Additionally, assistance will be provided to reduce the harmful effects of medications through pharmaceutical vigilance and antimicrobial resistance in hospitals. A Drug Information and Poison Control Center will be established in the province to provide guidance on poisoning and medication overdoses through online or phone consultations as an emergency measure. The establishment of a drug testing laboratory at the divisional level was also proposed in the policy, along with the recommendation for the appointment of a drug inspector at the district level.—APP

## Dr. Saqib highlights BISP employees' crucial role

ISLAMABAD : Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib has emphasized the pivotal role of BISP employees in the program's success. Addressing BISP employees at Masjid Ibrahim, Kanal Colony Zonal Office Irrigation in Bahawalpur, Dr. Amjad Saqib highlighted that BISP's success in disbursing 471 billion rupees to deserving sisters, daughters, and mothers across the country is owed to the dedication and hard work of the employees. Highlighting the importance of transparency, Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib directed the employees to ensure that assistance amounts are disbursed with utmost honesty and integrity, particularly emphasizing the need for transparency in payments to innocent women. He stressed the importance of providing all necessary facilities to needy women during surveys and disbursements, ensuring their comfort and dignity throughout the process. Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib urged the employees to liaise with bank officials to ensure transparent and efficient delivery of funds to deserving women. Emphasizing the significance of cleanliness and respectful treatment, he encouraged employees to uphold the values of compassion and empathy while serving the underprivileged.—APP

## Eid shopping gains momentum in Karachi

KARACHI : As the Eid festival is approaching closer, the shopping centres, malls and the markets in Pakistan's mega city, were flooded with thousands of people for Eid shopping. With the commencement of the last 10 days of the fasting month, city markets witnessed a huge rush and the shopping markets remained open till dawn across the city of more than 20 million people. Thousands of citizens thronged to the shopping malls, plazas and markets for Eid shopping while tailoring shops also remained open day and night to complete booked orders of sewing of unstitched clothes. A large number of people buy clothes, shoes, children's garments, jewelry and other items ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr celebration. According to Business community representatives, more than 100 billion rupees in businesses were expected to be done during Ramadan as goods are being transported to other parts of the country.—DNA

# Eid shopping Festival commences in capital city

President ICCI said that the purpose of the shopping festival is to facilitate inflation-stricken people to experience Eid shopping at discounted prices

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD : ICCI Eid shopping festival kicked off in Sector I-8 to provide an affordable shopping experience to the residents of the twin cities. The festival will last till Chand Raat. The festival has been organised by the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in collaboration with ICT Administration, MCI and the concerned market association. Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon along with Assistant Commissioner Ms. Farwa Batoool and President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari inaugurated the Festival. Speaking at the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon lauded ICCI and other partners for organising the Eid shopping festival. He highlighted the pivotal role of traders in the economy and expressed ICT Administration's willingness to collaborate in organising activities aimed at promoting trade, indicating a proactive approach towards supporting trade endeavours. President ICCI said that the



purpose of the shopping festival is to facilitate inflation-stricken people to experience Eid shopping at discounted prices. He highlighted that the festival would offer shoppers a variety of entertainment options, including a traditional food area, an art and crafts corner, mehndi stalls,

a dedicated kids' area, corporate stalls, a live music stage, exciting lucky draws, engaging quizzes, captivating laser lights, and stunning lighting displays. It is pertinent to mention here that similar Eid Festivals have also been kicked off at Abpara market, Blue Area, F-7, and F-10 Marakiz.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari also called upon DIG Police, SSP Traffic and those at the CDA helm of affairs for providing elaborate security, ensuring smooth flow of traffic and ensuring neat and clean atmosphere around all the business centres. On this

occasion Jan Mohammad, CEO Redson Blue, Khalid Chaudhry, former SVP, Ameer Hamza, Executive member, Faizan Shahzad, Executive member, Raja Fayyaz Gul, President I-8 Markaz and Zahid Qiureshi, General Secretary were also present.

## 250 years old water well to be restored in Peshawar

PESHAWAR : The district government of Peshawar has decided to restore a 250 years old ancient water well in interior Peshawar with the objective of appraising people, especially new generation, about the rich history of the city enjoying distinction of being the oldest living city in South Asia. The decision has been taken by Mayor of Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali during his visit to interior city at Chah Kala area. Accompanied by Chairman Imran Naveed, Mayor Zubair Ali was briefed about the history of the well constructed around 250 years earlier for supply of water to the inhabitants of the city. Mayor Peshawar was apprised that according to some folklores about name of the well which among locals is called as 'Kaley de Kohi' (Well of a black man), there was a Bhishti (a person who supplied water in leather bags) with a very black complexion and he used to supply water at homes. Due to black complexion of Bhishti, local people started attaching name of the well towards his natural appearance by saying 'Kaley de Kohi'. The well became dry with passage of the time and is not in use for the last several decades.—APP

## Shortage of car parking irksome for Eid shoppers

PESHAWAR : Like other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, eid shopping activities have also reached to its peak in Peshawar especially after iftar where people along with families and children are being seen in large number to buy appropriate goods ranging from clothes, readymade suites to footwear to celebrate the festival in most befitting manner. Eid shoppers, who are coming in droves from adjoining districts, are facing great problems due to lack of vehicles parking facilities in most of the shopping centres and arcades besides traffic jams ahead of iftar. As few days left in Eidul Fitr celebrations, people started thronged to markets and shopping centres soon after Iftar at Peshawar's main shopping arcades where great rush of buyers including children and girls were being seen in stalls at cantonment, Tehkal, University Road, Jehingirabad and Qissa Khwani till late night. Most shoppers are seen parking their vehicles on main roads due to lack of car parking facilities

in shopping centres and arcades, resulting in massive traffic jams in Peshawar ahead of iftar. The problem of parking is one of the great challenges for police and district administration to counter as the number of vehicles started increasing in Peshawar during last days of Ramadan and enlarged further on Chand Raat. "Traffic jams are a big issue these days in Peshawar. I came along with my family from Nowshera to Peshawar on Friday afternoon for shopping and spent about two hours at University Road due to traffic mess," said Qaiser Khan, a retired Wapda employee while talking to APP. He said disorderly parking has not only paralysed transportation systems but has also resulted in heightened mental stress among pedestrians and motorists besides patients. He said the BRT corridor, which was constructed in haste, has further aggravated the traffic situation. The absence of proper parking places near shopping centres forces people to park

their vehicles on the roadside, footpaths and resultantly people spend hours on roads due to massive traffic jams before reaching their destinations and many break Iftar inside their vehicles. Qaiser said the absence of traffic wardens during iftar times has further exacerbated the traffic woes, contributing to an escalating problem. He said shoppers frequently get caught up in traffic snarl-ups, particularly in front of shopping centres such as Deans Trade Centre, CT Tower, Qissa Khwani and University Road due to lack of car parking. "Most of contractors of private car parking contractors are currently charging Rs50 to Rs100 per vehicle that cannot be afforded by middle class and low income groups," he said. Qaiser said that it was the responsibility of district administration, Peshawar Development Authority and police to ensure car parking facilities in all major plazas and arcades for facilitation of people and strict action should be taken against price hikers.—APP

## DC chairs meeting to review Eid arrangements

HYDERABAD : A meeting was held at Shahbaz building to review law and order situation and other necessary arrangements on the occasion of Eid ul Fitr under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Hyderabad Tariq Qureshi on Friday. During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner directed the HMC officials to ensure cleanliness and cover open manholes before Eid. He also directed the police authorities to put in place an effective security plan to avoid any untoward incident. DC directed to improve the traffic arrangements to save the public from any kind of trouble. He directed the Secretary Regional Transport Authority (RTA) to take action against the transporters charging extra fare to passengers on the occasion of Eid and ensure implementation of fixed fares. The Deputy Commissioner also instructed the concerned officers to ensure the safety of the lives and property of the citizens visiting Al-Manzar, a recreational spot on the Indus River during Eid holidays.—APP

## Chairman PRCS meets DG Rangers Sindh to discuss humanitarian efforts

Chairman Laghari underscored PRCS's steadfastness and commitment, especially during challenging circumstances like the devastating 2022 flood

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI : Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, the Chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), convened a significant meeting for discussion with Major General Azhar Waqas, the Director General (DG) of Rangers Sindh, at the Pakistan Rangers Sindh Headquarters on Friday. The meeting centered on ongoing humanitarian initiatives in Sindh province. During the dialogue, Chairman Laghari underscored PRCS's steadfastness and commitment, especially during challenging circumstances like the devastating 2022 flood. Through partnerships with esteemed organizations such as the IFRC, ICRC, and Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, PRCS promptly initiated relief efforts, benefiting

over 2.8 million individuals across 55 districts, with a focus on underserved areas. PRCS collaborated with the government and Armed Forces, complementing their relief endeavors to alleviate the plight of flood-affected communities. Chairman Laghari elaborated on PRCS's emergency flood response in Sindh, detailing activities such as distributing essential supplies, providing shelter, installing water treatment facilities, and offering cash assistance to affected families. Additionally, he outlined ongoing recovery initiatives aimed at providing shelter, livelihood support, water and sanitation facilities, hygiene promotion, and food distribution. Moreover, Chairman Laghari highlighted PRCS's assistance to Sindh provincial and district branches in capacity building and various programs, including supplying ambulances

to enhance emergency care services during flood operations and beyond. DG Rangers Sindh, Major General Azhar Waqas, lauded PRCS's significant contributions, emphasizing its pivotal role in natural disasters. He praised the National Society's dedication under the leadership of Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, which transcends ethnic or cultural boundaries, contributing significantly to humanitarian endeavors. DG Rangers Sindh pledged full support from the Rangers Sindh to PRCS in humanitarian endeavors and expressed readiness for collaborative actions to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable communities. At the conclusion of the meeting, Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari and DG Rangers Sindh Major General Azhar Waqas exchanged commemorative shields.



ISLAMABAD : A large number of faithful offering Namaz-e-Juma-tul-Wida (Friday prayer) at Faisal Masjid during holy month of Ramzan.—Photo by Mudassar Raja.

## IGP meets promoted inspectors, their families

The prayer leader of the mosque alleged that the suspect had threatened him with consequences for alerting the police

ABID RAZA

LAHORE :Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar met 31 officers of Lahore and Sheikhpura at central police office here on Thursday, who were recently promoted to the rank of inspector. The families of the promoted officers were also present in the ceremony. The IGP Punjab congratulated the families and showed compassion to the children. Dr. Usman Anwar approved the departmental promotion of 172 sub-inspectors to the rank of inspector. Rank pinning ceremonies were held for other promoted inspectors in their districts of

posting. Addl. IGP Punjab, Sultan Ahmad Chaudhry assigned the rank badges of inspectors to the promoted officers. He said that the benefits of departmental promotion should be transferred to the citizens in the form of better performance than before and prompt delivery of justice. The IG Punjab directed the officers to become the hands and arms of the suffering citizens, serve them wholeheartedly. He said that promotions are going on according to merit and seniority, this process will complete for all ranks before Eid. He said that safe city cameras are being installed in all cities of Punjab on the instructions of Chief

Minister Punjab. IG Punjab and senior officers met the children of inspectors, took pictures. Additional IG Punjab Sultan Ahmad Chaudhry, DIG Headquarters Humayun Bashir Tarar, DIG Establishment One Dr. Suleman Sultan Rana, DIG Establishment Two, Captain (Rtd) Liaquat Malik and AIG Discipline Asif Amin Awan pinned the ranks of inspector to all the officers. Meanwhile, Following Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's directive, the police arrested a suspect on Thursday in connection with the rape of a 13-year-old boy in a mosque in Bukhi Chowk of Sanawan town on Wednesday. After media reports

and the chief minister's order, District Police Officer Hasnain Haider instructed the Sanawan station house officer to arrest the suspect. The assault on the boy occurred during Aitkaf in the mosque, leading to the Sanawan police registering a case against the suspect (name withheld) on Wednesday. The incident took place in the Sanawan Bukhi Chowk mosque, where both the boy and the suspect were observing Aitkaf. The prayer leader of the mosque alleged that the suspect had threatened him with consequences for alerting the police. The survivor, a student learning the Quran, was taken to the hospital for a medical examination.



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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### April

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

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# Foreign Office women association expresses solidarity with Palestine

## Ambassador of Palestine thanks PFOWA delegation for their support

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mrs. Shaza syrus, President of Pakistan Foreign Office Women's Association PFOWA, and the Executive Committee members of the association on their second visit in solidarity with the Palestinian people, met with the Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei and his wife, at the Palestine embassy. The visiting delegation received a briefing on the ongoing Israeli occupation aggression and genocide against our people. The PFOWA President and members expressed sympathy, sadness, and solidarity with the Palestinian people, and reiterated their material and moral solidarity, and diplomatic support for the Palestinian people at this difficult time and in light of this appalling suffering. The ambassador thanked them and the people of Pakistan for their unwavering support for our cause and for standing with our people.



## Foolproof security for 'Juma-tul-Wida' by Rawalpindi Police

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district police conducted foolproof security arrangements for 'Youm-ul-Quds' and 'Juma-tul-Wida' while over 2000 cops were deployed to ensure security, said a Police spokesman here on Friday. He informed that Police on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi, Syed Khalid Hamdani performed strict security arrangements for 'Youm-ul-Quds' and 'Juma-tul-Wida'. As many as 1600 well-equipped cops along with police officers were on duty to guard the devotees in the mosques, Imam-bargahs and other worship places, he said. He informed that the mosques and Imam-bargah committee members along with police were conducting thorough body search of the devotees before entering the mosques and Imam-bargah places. The cops were assisted by Elite Force Commandoes, Muhafiz Squads, National Volunteers, ladies police and Special Branch officials during the security duty. Foolproof security was ensured on the day of 'Youm-ul-Quds,' he said adding, all the SDPOs and SHO's were patrolling in their respective areas during prayer of Juma-tul-Wida to tackle any threat and maintain law and order situation. Similarly, the rallies being taken out in connection with 'Youm-ul-Quds' were also being guarded by police, he said. — APP

## Two-week training course on 'Disaster Resilient Structures'

ISLAMABAD: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTEC) has planned to organize a two-week training course on "Disaster Resilient Structures" from April 22 to May 03. The training course will be hosted by the COMSTEC, the Russian Association of Earthquake Engineering and Protection from Natural and Man-made Hazards (RAEE) in collaboration with the NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi, Pakistan. According to an official of COMSTEC, this joint initiative aims to bolster capabilities in disaster resilience and sustainable engineering practices. The training course will comprehensively address a range of hazards, including earthquakes, floods, fires, and tsunamis, with a primary focus on cultivating a deeper understanding of risks to infrastructure, communities, and societies. Leading experts in these areas from Russia and Pakistan will share their knowledge and experiences with the participants. The course will explore mitigation strategies and promote sustainable development principles. The content and methodology of the course are designed to develop a deeper understanding of the risks posed by these hazards to infrastructure, communities and societies and the disaster resilient and sustainable engineering strategies to deal with hazards. Those having Bachelors Degree in Civil Engineering are eligible to apply for the course. The target audience for this course includes teaching staff from Pakistan, Russia, and other OIC member states. Around 30 to 40 participants are expected to be benefited from this valuable training opportunity. The NED University of Engineering and Technology will generously provide airport pick-up and drop-off services, accommodation, and meals during the duration of the training course in Karachi. The intended participants can apply through submitting application using the prescribed form via email till March 31. For any queries, Prof. Masood Rafi (rafi-m@neduet.edu.pk) or Mr. Muhammad Ameen Kalroo (ameen@comstech.org) can be contacted. —DNA

## KBM Care distributes Ramadan Relief Package

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to alleviate the financial burdens faced by the underprivileged during the holy month of Ramadan, KBM Care has distributed Ramadan Relief Package aims to provide relief to deserving families, ensuring they can observe Ramadan with dignity and ease. Speaking on the occasion, KBM Care Foundation Chairman Azmat Hanif said that the initiatives from the platform of KBM Care will benefit the people and we are making efforts to teach those who need the most. He said that KBM Care will extend its Ramadan Ration Drive to other parts of the country to mitigate the suffering of the people. He said that KBM Care is also providing cash assistance to the poor families and with the support of donors the cash assistance programme will be extended to other parts of the country. He thanked the donors for their generous support and their commitment to this noble cause. Abdul Mateen Abbasi the Head of Operations speaking on the occasion said KBM Care stands as a beacon of hope for the underprivileged during Ramadan. Through this initiative, vulnerable families receive the support they need to observe the holy month with dignity and peace of mind. As we reflect on the spirit of generosity and compassion that defines Ramadan, let us commend such efforts aimed at uplifting those in need. Abbasi said that in future our organization will start new initiatives to help the people and strengthen the communities affected by natural or man-made disasters. He said that the relief package consists of fine flour, rice, sugar, dates, ghee, masala, daal chana, vernicles, salt, match box, Tang drink and dates.



## easypaisa Launches QR Sound Box

DNA

ISLAMABAD: easypaisa, Pakistan's leading digital financial services platform, has launched the QR SoundBox, a portable device for payment alerts and notifications, to revolutionize digital financial services in Pakistan. The QR SoundBox offers a seamless and efficient solution for merchants and customers alike. The portable device is equipped with a speaker for payment alerts and instant payment notifications.

The device operates with a SIM for connectivity, enabling real-time communication between merchants and customers. When a customer initiates a payment to the merchant through their easypaisa app by scanning a QR code, the device instantly notifies both parties of the successful transaction with a loud sound alert, this ensures an efficient transaction experience for the merchant while saving time by receiving instant payment notifications. This audio voice broadcast confirms the payment status, ensuring transparency and security in every transaction. Additionally, the transaction amount is displayed on an LCD segment of the device facing the merchant, providing further convenience and clarity.

## Police arrest seven gamblers

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district police arrested seven gamblers and recovered Rs 18,700 stake money, nine mobile phones, and other items from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Friday. He informed that Pirwadhai police conducted a raid and arrested seven gamblers namely Zaheer, Naseer, Ismail, Usman, Saveed, Aqil Mir and Yousaf, who were allegedly involved in betting while playing cards. Police recovered Rs 18,700, nine mobile phones and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Rawalpindi Faisal Saleem said that gambling is the root cause of other evils and those involved in such crimes do not deserve any concession.—APP

## Police bust car lifter gang; arrest two

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police have busted a car lifting gang and arrested its two members, said a police spokesman here on Friday. He informed that Rawat police netted two accused namely Bilal Latif and Zahid Mehmood, allegedly involved in car snatching cases. Police also recovered a snatched Mehran car, and other items from their possession. The arrested accused are record holders in car lifting cases, the spokesman said. Superintendent of Police Saddar, Muhammad Nabeel Khokhar appreciated the police team and directed to accelerate ongoing operation against bike and car lifters.—APP

## Social worker calls for unity among political forces

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Renowned social worker, economic expert, and political figure from Pakistan, Mr. Malik Rafay, has stated that in order to steer Pakistan out of its current political and economic crises, all stakeholders including political parties and economic experts must come together on one page. He emphasized that as 75% of Pakistan's dependency lies on agricultural production, providing farmers with maximum facilities holds the key to a better future. He stressed that only with peace and security can investment flourish and the country progress. These thoughts were shared by him in his exclusive interview given last day. He mentioned that for Paki

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## Briefs

## Success lies in the teachings of Quran, VC AIOU

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor, of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood on Friday said that the success lies in truly following the teachings of the Holy Quran. While addressing the Khatam al-Qur'an ceremony on the 25th night of Ramadan at the University's Colony Mosque, he said that all the good things and achievements of this world and the hereafter have been mentioned by Allah in the Quran. The Quran is not just a book to be read and understood, but it is necessary to live our lives according to its teachings. Dr. Nasir announced the construction of a separate hall for women on the upper floor of the mosque at the request of the mosque administration. The event began with Naat Khawani, with Muhammad Abu Bakr Jamsheed, Muhammad Hasan, and Rayan Wazir reciting Naats. Qari Wasal Ahmad completed the recitation of the Holy Quran in the Taraweeh prayer. Special prayers were offered for the security of the country, the development of the University, and the oppressed Palestinians on this occasion. Moreover, Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood addressed the audience at the launch ceremony of the statistical report on non-formal education for the year 2020-21.—APP

## Multinational Tobacco Company Violate Tax Laws

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Research and Dialogue (CRD) has asked the finance minister for action against violation of the country's tax laws by multinational cigarette companies. The CRD pointed out blatant violations through a letter. The development comes at a time when the Ministry of Finance is struggling to broaden the tax net and plug the loopholes in the tax machinery. The letter urged prompt action against the violations of the Federal Excise Act 2005 after the multinational cigarette companies introduced new variants of the same brand family at significantly lower prices. According to the rules, no manufacturer or importer of cigarettes can introduce or sell a new variant of a cigarette brand at a price lower than the lowest actual price within the same brand family. Despite this regulation, PTC has launched a new brand, Capstan International, priced at Rs 164, substantially lower than its existing family brand, Capstan by Pall Mall, which is priced at Rs 212. Amjad Qamar, Director of CRD, highlighted the implications of this violation, emphasizing that it not only breaches tax regulations but also contributes to making cigarettes more affordable, which is detrimental to public health and reportedly 337500 people lost their lives due to tobacco related diseases annually in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov met with Ahad Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs of Pakistan. Further strengthening of ties and exploring new avenues for economic cooperation between the two countries were at the forefront of the agenda.—DNA

## Development projects pose serious threat to Snow leopards

The study recommended that there is need to strike a balance between boosting infrastructure development with conservation of threatened wildlife such as Snow leopards in the region

ISLAMABAD: Rapid infrastructure development, primarily roads, potentially degrades the Snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) habitat resulting in disrupting the big cats' movement and increasing human-wildlife conflict in the Gilgit-Baltistan region. The prey species of the Snow leopard such as Himalayan ibex and domestic livestock are also killed due to heavy traffic on the highways. This has been revealed in WWF-Pakistan's baseline research study undertaken through the project titled "Building Ecological and Sustainable Transport and Linear Infrastructure for Snow Leopards in the Hindu Kush Karakoram Himalaya Landscape in Pakistan (BEAST)". The project was supported by the "With Snow Leopards Small Grant" (SLSG) initiated by TenCent Foundation and Shan Shui Conservation Center with sup-

port from Huatai Foundation, Amity Foundation, and Pecking University Center for Nature and Society. The study recommended that there is need to strike a balance between boosting infrastructure development with conservation of threatened wildlife such as Snow leopards in the region. The report stated that the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region is home to diverse wildlife including vulnerable Snow leopards. It pointed out that the linear infrastructure development, which cuts through the landscape such as roads, has fragmented the Snow leopard habitat. The report found that although linear infrastructure improves national and regional economies, it restricts wildlife movement and poses threat to the Snow leopards and their prey species such as ungulates. Focusing on the broader road ecology theme, the study gathered evidence on infra-

structure-related threats to Snow leopards and their habitat in the GB region. It collected data on wildlife-vehicle collisions, investigated the impact of increasing infrastructure on human-wildlife interaction and analysed land use changes in known Snow leopard hotspots over the past twenty years. It covered two major roads namely Karakoram Highway (KKH) and Gilgit-Shandur Road which bisect Snow leopard habitat. In the backdrop of the surging infrastructure growth in GB region, WWF-Pakistan launched the Sustainable Infrastructure Initiative in 2019 which aimed to build the capacities of relevant stakeholders, raise awareness, and advocate for sustainable and green infrastructure planning and development in the Hindukush-Karakoram-Himalaya (HKH) region. Commenting on the study, Director General WWF-Pa-

kistan, Hammad Naqi Khan said that infrastructure development project help boost trade and tourism, but they should not overlook the environment and species conservation aspects. He was of the view that detrimental impacts of the development projects could be avoided through meticulous planning, sustainable infrastructure and integrated approach which promotes biodiversity conservation and protection of the natural ecosystem. "It is crucial to build upon this study and undertake further investigations on wildlife movement and migration patterns to assess the impact of infrastructure development on wildlife populations in critical habitats", Khan added. The report indicated that large-scale transport-infrastructure development and burgeoning hospitality projects have posed

a threat to the local biodiversity and pristine landscape in GB. The report proposed that following the current laws regulating wildlife, linear development, and human encroachment should be prohibited in the protected areas. It also recommended that the construction of wildlife corridors and crossings in potential wildlife habitats could help minimize the access of wildlife to high-traffic roads and could reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. It also suggested that the deployment of devoted law enforcement and traffic personnel along wildlife hotspots can help thwart the hunting and poaching of Snow leopards and its prey species. The report also suggested that infrastructure-related development projects should take proactive mitigation steps to safeguard the native ecology and wild species.—Agencies

## Gwadar Port gets equipment of early warning system

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In the wake of China's unflinching commitment to help Pakistan mitigate detrimental impacts of natural disaster like catastrophic flood, torrential rain as well as meteorological hazards, Gwadar Port has received equipment of early warning system, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. After equipment's installation and functioning at Gwadar Port, next beneficiary areas are Jiwani and Turbat in Balochistan. China Metrological Administration (CMA) has doled out the equipment to Pakistan Metrological Department (PMD). The equipment includes the establishment of one mobile vertical observation system, one Beidou Navigation sounding station and three automatic weather stations (AWS) including two backup Aws and large screen. Talking to Gwadar Pro PMD official said that CMA-PMD collaboration is a part of boosting CPEC capacity for emergency management of major meteorological disasters under the Belt and Road Initiative. He revealed that CMA is also assisting PMD for enhancing its institutional capabilities to meet the emerging hydro-meteorological challenges. "CMA will help PMD strengthen meteorological observation network along the CPEC route in Pakistan," he added.—APP

## IRSA releases 85,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 85,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 91,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1421.23 feet and was 23.21 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 20,800 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1098.10 feet, which was 48.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 33,200 cusecs and 18,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 29,100, 32,700, 30,000 and 7,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 23,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 9,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

## Shanghai Electric eyes expansion in Pak mining sector

These investments aim to increase capacity, improve cabling infrastructure, and address bill defaulters

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Chinese State-owned company, Shanghai Electric, Meng Donghai, along with his team, visited here the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) Office. The team expressed interest in Pakistan's mining sector. Shanghai Electric has invested in the Thar Coal project in Sindh. According to a Gwadar Pro's report on Friday, they showed keen interest in the mining sector of Pakistan, said Jamil Qureshi Secretary SIFC in a statement. He said Shanghai Electric's investment in the Thar Coal project in Sindh demonstrates their enthusiasm for the coun-

try's mining sector. This strategic move could have significant implications for energy production and economic development in the region. Pakistan boasts vital minerals, crucial for the global energy transition and attracting investments across the complete mining cycle. Enhanced exploration, potential promises, and lucrative returns can make the sector a prime investment opportunity. The Chinese multinational power generation and electrical equipment manufacturing company in the past has made significant investments in Pakistan, particularly in the energy sector. It completed Pakistan's largest thermal power project in Thar Block-1. The project, developed under the Build-Own-Operate (BOO)

model, involved an impressive investment of nearly \$3 billion. The project officially entered commercial operation on February 5, 2023, after both units successfully passed a 168-hour full-load reliability run test. The Thar Project not only addressed the local power shortage but also contributed to the social and economic development of the community. It generated over 15,000 jobs, paid more than \$120 million in taxes, and even established a Chinese language school for cultural exchanges. In a presentation to Pakistani authorities, Shanghai Electric has previously expressed its commitment to invest an average of \$700 million per year until 2030. These investments aim to increase capacity, improve cabling infrastructure, and address bill defaulters.

## Gwadar Port gets equipment of early warning system

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## E-licensing portal launched

ISLAMABAD: The Department of Tourist Services, Islamabad (DTS, Islamabad) launched E-licensing portal to provide online services to its users of travel and hospitality trade in ICT and GB. The portal has been developed with the technical support of National Information Technology Board (NITB). Presently the DTS, Islamabad has been working under IPC Ministry. Secretary IPC appreciated the joint efforts of DTS and NITB in reaching this milestone. The Secretary said that Government is committed to provide quality services to consumers and this development will go a long way in standardizing government services. Now the travel, hotel and restaurant management can avail online E-services which are efficient, cost effective and environment friendly.—DNA

## China's KATOP delegation visits NUST

DNA

ISLAMABAD: To explore collaboration opportunities, a delegation from KATOP, a Chinese company specializing in solutions for lithium-ion batteries visited the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) and had detailed discussions with University officials. The delegation included the Vice President Zhou Yan, PMO Manager Aqeel Khan, Project Delivery Manager Wasif Noor, and Muhammad Javed Iqbal, an alumnus of SEECs 2012 and Representative of KATOP in Pakistan. According to Gwadar Pro, they held a meeting with NUST Leadership, including Pro-Rector RIC Dr. Rizwan Riaz and DG Projects Dr. Saeed Ur Rehman Sarwar and discussed potential areas of partnership. During their visit, the delegation toured various laboratories at US-PCASE where research on Energy Storage devices is currently underway. They also visited selected labs at SINES, observing the working between industry and ac-



ademia at NUST. Later, they had also a visit to National Science and Technology park (NSTP), where they gained insights into the entrepreneurial ecosystem fostered at NUST. The KATOP delegation has visited Pakistan at a crucial

time when the country needs large amounts of green energy to reduce its reliance on fossil fuel-generated electricity. Lithium-ion batteries are particularly needed, as they are used in hybrid solar systems, electric vehicles, and other ener-

gy storage applications. Pakistan urgently requires lithium battery production, especially in the special economic zones (SEZs) that will be established under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) the report added.



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## ASEAN, China ties

**A** WAVE of visits to China can be witnessed among ASEAN countries. Indonesia's president-elect Prabowo Subianto made his first overseas visit to China after he secured a victory in the presidential election, and both sides agreed to promote the comprehensive and high-quality development of bilateral relations. This is followed by the separate visits to China by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Laos Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam Bui Thanh Son, and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste Bendito dos Santos Freitas from Tuesday to Friday. This is not only a true reflection of China-ASEAN relations getting closer, but also a vivid practice of regional countries yearning for peace and seeking development. Seventy years ago, China and Southeast Asian countries held high the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, laying a solid foundation for regional peace, stability and economic prosperity. Over the past 70 years, guided by the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, China has been continuously deepening political exchanges, economic and trade cooperation, humanistic exchanges with these countries, and striving to jointly build the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and a community of shared future. It has been actively promoting its relations with ASEAN to reach new heights one after another. From a broader perspective, China and ASEAN have become an important force in maintaining regional peace and stability as well as international justice, as their bilateral and multilateral communication mechanisms have been increasingly enhanced and the two sides have reached more and more consensus on regional and international hotspot issues. This has not only consolidated the foundation of mutual trust in the relations between the two sides, but also provided a strong guarantee for building a China-ASEAN community with a shared future. Economically, China and ASEAN stand as each other's largest trading partner. In 2023, bilateral trade continued to grow, reaching 6.41 trillion yuan (\$0.89 trillion). ASEAN has been China's largest trading partner for four consecutive years, while China has also been ASEAN's largest trading partner for several years. By July 2023, the two-way cumulative investment surpassed \$380 billion, and China has established more than 6,500 direct investment enterprises in ASEAN countries. Major infrastructure projects such as the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway and the China-Laos Railway have become the "gilded signboard" of China-ASEAN cooperation and have benefited people along the route. Against the backdrop of "fierce competition with China" pushed by the US, some Western countries have aired a twisted view of "de-Sinicizing" the production and supply chain, but the cooperation between China and ASEAN countries in this area hasn't seen "decoupling," on the contrary, the two sides are deeply embedded in each other, embarking on a new path of integrated development. In 2023, China's imports and exports of intermediate goods with ASEAN reached 4.13 trillion yuan (\$570 billion). ASEAN has remained China's largest trading partner for intermediate goods for many consecutive years. The two sides have deepened cooperation in energy, electronics, agricultural products and other industries.

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 Member APNS / ABC Certified  
 Vol: 05 Issue: 140  
 Email: [dailyisbpost@gmail.com](mailto:dailyisbpost@gmail.com)  
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## NATO at 75

**O** NE of the strengths of NATO, which has allowed it to survive to its 75th anniversary on April 4, is its capacity to adapt to changing geopolitical landscapes. That is also why it is no longer the NATO envisaged by the founding nations as a bulwark against the Soviet Union at the end of the World War II, and the start of the Cold War. It is a new NATO. This has brought changes in priorities and outlook, and it is on the cusp of evolving from a regional security alliance - whose main purpose used to be the mutual defense of its member states - to a global presence prepared to roll up its sleeves and charge headlong into conflicts in which its nations have no direct stake, but for which they are ready to restyle themselves as the world's police force. Is this even the job of NATO? One has to recognize that its intervention can often make things worse, not better. The organization's founding statesmen must be spinning in their graves. NATO itself now sees its mission as far removed from the original intent of the North Atlantic Treaty which created it in 1949. As the opening preamble of the treaty itself acknowledged, the alliance grew from the determination of member nations "to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law." Crucially, it added: "They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area." It was believed that collective defense and mutual security were key to achieving these goals. Hence, Article 5 of the treaty declares that any attack on one ally can be considered an attack upon all, and that all can be called upon to come to its defense. This principle made NATO seem so strong in its youth, but now makes it so dangerous in maturity. Contrast this with NATO's own understanding of its role in the world in 2024: "Essentially, NATO not only helps to defend the territory of its members, but also engages - where possible and when necessary - to project its values further afield, prevent and manage crises, stabilize post-conflict situations and support reconstruction." This changes its purpose from a straightforward security alliance into one which is intent on projecting its own worldview far beyond its borders, a political objective, not a military one. It is also extending the organization's geographical reach just as far as it or its members feel like. The Euro-Atlantic grouping has morphed into global NATO, with ambitions to become imperial NATO. The association eagerly talks about engaging outside of its borders in order to ensure "stability at home." It seems a pretty dodgy doctrine - in the sense that sometimes it might work, and sometimes it might blow up in NATO's face. Look what happened when terrorists attacked the US on September 11, 2001 and Article 5 was invoked for the first - and, so far, the only - time in its history. The 18 other treaty signatories all pledged to support the American response, which was to invade one of the world's poorest countries, and wage war there for 20 years before pulling out and returning the now even poorer country to the Taliban, the very people the invasion was designed to eject from power. The consequences of this action are still being felt around the world, and will continue to be felt for generations. NATO made the world a more dangerous place, an ironic achievement as one of its key functions on the world stage is "crisis management."

# Iran and Israel: Is the denial game over?

Amir Taheri

The official news agency IRNA echoed that sentiment with the headline "The Whole Nation Demands Revenge". In an editorial on Tuesday IRNA suggested that "embassies and consulates of the Zionist enemy in several countries are ready targets for revenge." Ominously, it added: "the balance of terror must be restored". The official TV's chief strategic analyst Mahdi Kharratian surprised viewers by saying "If we do nothing this time, we ought to be prepared for the assassination of the highest officials in Tehran." The "enough is enough" message is echoed in sermons by some of the most radical mullahs. Ayatollah Hashem Hussein says "As the center of resistance, the Islamic Republic cannot show weakness especially now that Palestinian resistance...

**W**ILL this time be different?" This is the question that haunts Tehran political circles as more body bags are flown in from Damascus. The body bags contain the mortal remains of 13 Iranian diplomatic and military officers including two senior commanders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Gen. Muhammad-Reza Zahedi (alias Abu Mahdi) and Gen. Muhammad-Hadi Haj-Rahimi killed in an Israeli air raid on what was presented as a consular building in the Syrian capital. To be sure this is not the first time that Israelis take out IRGC officers and Lebanese, Iraqi, Syrian, Pakistan, and Afghan mercenaries in Syria. The take-out operation started in 2015 and reached a peak in 2020. The last time an Islamic Republic official organ provided figures was in 2018 when the Foundation for Martyrs and Self-Sacrificers put Iran's losses at around 5,000. The figures didn't show how many were Iranian officers or mercenaries. In the first three years of this deadly cycle, Tehran used the transfer of body bags from Damascus as a propaganda ploy and organized mass rallies on the burial day of its "heroes of Islam." Later, when Tehran's losses grew the propaganda aspect was forgotten, and "heroes of Islam" were quietly buried in their native hometowns and villages. Over time, partly thanks to the influence of late Gen. Qassem Soleimani Tehran decided to swallow the bitter pill and brag about "taking revenge" but not retaliate. Soleimani would do everything to avoid a direct clash with either Israel or the US forces in the region. In fact, he may have established a channel of communication with the Israelis through his correspondence with Gen. David Petraeus, then the top US commander in the region. In line with that tacit agreement Israel never officially admitted its more than 40 attacks spread over six years. Tehran reciprocated by not directly blaming Israel, using the euphemism "enemies of Islamic Revolution" instead. Even when Israelis killed Gen. Hussein Hamadani, one of "Supreme Guide" Ayatollah Khamenei's favorite commanders, Tehran decided not to implement its threat of "taking hard revenge." Similarly, the assassination of six top IRGC scientists in Iran itself

went unpunished. Soleimani's strategy was to fight Israel and the US through proxies while dangling the promise of reining them in as a card in his deadly poker game with the "Great Satan" and the "Zionist entity." Has that fragile balance of terror come to its end? Vibes from Tehran suggest that it has. One reason is that there is no personality with Soleimani's charisma and access to huge financial resources to continue marketing his idea of "kill the enemy with a thousand cuts" and the use of mercenaries as human shields. Another reason is that this time around Israel has bombastically admitted having carried out a punitive attack against the Islamic Republic. More importantly, perhaps, this is the first time that Israel has attacked a building flying the Islamic Republic's official flag. All previous attacks were on bases and buildings where Iranian officers and mercenaries were located as "advisers" to the official Syrian army. Tehran could pretend that those attacks were against the Syrian Republic which had the responsibility to respond. This time the attack was against the Iranian consulate and the adjacent residence of the ambassador, both flying the Islamic Republic flag. In international law and diplomatic norms, an attack on an embassy or consulate is a casus belli (a cause for war). Another factor that might force Khamenei to respond differently this time is genuine anger among his followers, already uneasy about his refusal to back Hamas in the Gaza war. "How much longer should we wait for the promised hard revenge to happen?" demands Ibrahim Azizi vice-chair of the National Security Committee in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis). Announcing the sending of a special mission to Damascus to "see what happened" Majlis spokesman Nizameddin Mussawi says "taking revenge is a national demand that cannot be ignored." The official news agency IRNA echoed that sentiment with the headline "The Whole Nation Demands Revenge". In an editorial on Tuesday IRNA suggested that "embassies and consulates of the Zionist enemy in several countries are ready targets for revenge." Ominously, it added: "the balance of terror must be restored". The official TV's chief strategic analyst Mahdi

Kharratian surprised viewers by saying "If we do nothing this time, we ought to be prepared for the assassination of the highest officials in Tehran." The "enough is enough" message is echoed in sermons by some of the most radical mullahs. Ayatollah Hashem Hussein says "As the center of resistance, the Islamic Republic cannot show weakness especially now that Palestinian resistance is rubbing the Zionist nose in the dust." Ayatollah Pour-Khaqani says Israel attacked the Islamic diplomatic mission in Damascus to hide its humiliation by Palestinians. IRNA echoes that theme by claiming that "Netanyahu has failed in his three objectives: Freeing Israeli captives, killing Yahya Sinwar and Muhammad Dhif, and destroying the Gaza tunnels." Kamal Sajjadi, spokesman for The Followers of the Imam Movement suggests that the forthcoming Quds (Jerusalem) Day could be a proper time for revenge. Newly elected Majlis member Hojat al-Islam Ali-Reza Panahyan says the Islamic Republic must maintain its military presence in Syria and this requires assuring the safety of "our Islamic heroes". The fact that Ayatollah Khamenei ordered a full session of the High Council of National Security, the first in more than two years, shows his concern about dissent in his core constituency and the perception that his "strategic patience" is a pretense for lack of resolve. Seen from his angle there is a growing danger that the radical elements in his camp will see him as an indecisive leader, and blame him for Israeli "audacity." Interior Minister Gen. Ahmad Wahidi says "Israel should expect a suitable answer" but adds that "the decision must come from the Leader of the Revolution" i.e. Khamenei. Islamic President Ayatollah Dr. Ibrahim Raisi, too, has promised "crushing revenge" but insists that the decision must come from Khamenei. The "Supreme Leader" is in a delicate situation. Israel has broken the tacit agreement that allowed both sides to cite plausible deniability about attacks against each other. If he does nothing he could anger his core supporters. If he orders attacks on Israeli and/or Jewish targets he won't be able to cite plausible deniability. And that, as the Islamic TV analyst suggests, could give Israel an excuse for attacks on big targets in Tehran itself.

# UNSC ceasefire resolution is in place- where is its implementation

Hamzah Rifaat

None of the three conditions have been met by "Israel". Bombardments and massacres continue in the holy month of Ramadan, while aid workers are targeted and a hostage deal remains elusive due to hubris from the Netanyahu regime. While it is true that the resolution was passed due to the United States abstaining, and it is considered binding despite American claims to the contrary, it has not resulted in "Israel" mitigating violence or creating the necessary conditions for a ceasefire to take place

**D**ESPITE the passage of UNSC Resolution 2728 calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, "Israel's" fascist war machinery continues to wreak havoc on Palestinians through the weaponization of starvation, bombardment of hospitals, killing of aid workers, and arresting worshippers in the holy month of Ramadan at the Al Aqsa Mosque. The far-right, irredentist Netanyahu regime is adamant that ethnic cleansing of Palestinians should continue unabated which explains "Israel" brazenly ignoring the resolution and its central tenets. The question then, arises-how impactful would Resolution 2728 be in terms of yielding tangible results? Can such measures hold a genocidal regime to account? There is reason for pessimism. Whether it is the International Court of Justice ruling or international pressure on Netanyahu to rescind his regime's senseless killing spree, "Israel" has conveniently rebuffed any prospect of an end to hostilities that is solely perpetrated by its occupation forces against a battered population. It is hence, worthwhile to examine whether the implications of resolution 2728 would be any different and whether its violation could result in action. The resolution makes three demands- One, an immediate ceasefire in the month of Ramadan respected by all parties leading to a lasting, sustainable ceasefire. Two- the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages; Three- urgently expanding the flow of humanitarian assistance to reinforce the protection of the civilians in the Gaza strip. Tabled by ten non-permanent members of the UNSC and passed unanimously by 140 with the United States abstaining, its impact so far has been limited. None of the three conditions have been met by "Is-

rael". Bombardments and massacres continue in the holy month of Ramadan, while aid workers are targeted and a hostage deal remains elusive due to hubris from the Netanyahu regime. While it is true that the resolution was passed due to the United States abstaining, and it is considered binding despite American claims to the contrary, it has not resulted in "Israel" mitigating violence or creating the necessary conditions for a ceasefire to take place. For example, Netanyahu has been categorical in stating that the calls for a ceasefire are not contingent on the release of hostages, despite the resolution stating the contrary. Further rebuttals came from US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller, who referred to it as 'non-binding' and clarified that it does not impose obligatory sanctions and actual requirements on people. The American and Israeli claims lack credibility but also point at how the resolution may not alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians. According to the President of the Center for International Policy in the United States, Nancy Okail, the resolution is more symbolic rather than substantial in its ability to end the war. Okail's claims come despite the fact that the UNSC resolutions are considered binding as previously emphasized by Chinese Ambassador to the UN, Zhang Jun, and Deputy UN Spokesperson Farhan Haq. Such academic and scholarly skepticism of the resolution's potential impact however exists despite the fact that Israeli violations can result in a follow-up resolution from the council which addresses the breach and calls for punitive action in the form of sanctions and the authorization of international intervention. Here lies the catch, however. A punitive resolution

imposing sanctions on "Israel" will not be supported by the Biden administration, rendering the prospect of accountability for genocide elusive. Realpolitik sets in, despite institutions seeking to abide by norms, customs and values enshrined in international law. Such realpolitik allows "Israel" to continue with the status quo given American support which has remained unwavering and ironclad despite recently abstaining from the UNSC vote. "Israel" has also previously gotten away with flouting UN resolutions in the past which includes the UNSC calling Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands illegal, (which was passed with 14 votes and the United States abstaining) and in 2023, when the UNGA passed a non-binding resolution calling for a humanitarian ceasefire which "Israel" also ignored. What UN resolutions need to address is the genesis of the issue which is the nature of the Israeli state and its expansionist agenda. There is no letup in settlements on occupied land for example with new plans afoot in the West Bank. There are also calls and actions aimed at eliminationism by far-right demagogues ranging from Bezalel Smotrich to Itamar Ben Gvir. There is also no let up in arms supplies from the United States to "Israel" which is providing ammunition to the genocidal regime amid resisting calls of international accountability. All this comes with a failure to address forced displacement, sexual assault, apartheid and evictions that Palestinians face on a daily basis. While the UNSC resolution 2728 is a promising development, its implementation will be stymied by Israeli adamancy in maintaining the status quo, unwavering American support, and the genocidal nature of the Netanyahu regime.



## Briefs

## PM for providing...

FROM PAGE 01  
projects in Pakistan with Beijing investing over \$65 billion in infrastructure works as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under Beijing's wider Belt and Road initiative. In a letter, the KP Home Department asked the inspector general of police, Upper Kohistan deputy commissioner, project director and other relevant authorities to provide security so that work could be resumed on the dam project. The News had on March 29 reported that civil work at the sites of the Dasu and Diamer-Bhasha Dams had been temporarily suspended by the Chinese companies overseeing operations due to security concerns, a day after work was also suspended at the Tarbela 5th Extension Hydropower Project.

## CM Maryam resolves...

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every conceivable measure would be undertaken to combat terrorism. Maryam emphasised the imperative to reactivate the National Action Plan (NAP) and commended its implementation, which was initiated after the APS tragedy. The chief minister also reflected on her visit to the residence of a martyred captain in Chakwal and noted the family's stoicism. CM Maryam underscored the need to acknowledge the efficacy of institutions tasked with combating terrorism, and stressed the importance of adhering to the principles of the NAP.

## UN rights council...

FROM PAGE 01  
Meirav Eilon Shahar, Israel's permanent representative to the United Nations in Geneva, accused the Council of having "long abandoned the Israeli people and long defended Hamas." "According to the resolution before you today, Israel has no right to protect its people, while Hamas has every right to murder and torture innocent Israelis," she said ahead of the vote. "A vote 'Yes' is a vote for Hamas." The United States had pledged to vote against the resolution because it did not contain a specific condemnation of Hamas for the Oct. 7 attacks, nor "any reference to the terrorist nature of those actions."

## PM reiterates Pakistan...

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decades, Israel had illegally occupied Palestine and Jerusalem and continuously violated international laws and human rights to maintain its occupation, while the international community acted as a silent spectator. The prime minister said that the Israeli occupation and atrocities spanned over the last seven decades but its intensity increased manifold since October last year. "So far, 32,000 Palestinians, including 17,000 children, have been killed and 70,000 injured in Gaza. Hospitals, refugee camps and schools have been deliberately targeted."

## Govt behind 'poisonous'..

FROM PAGE 01  
PTI Spokesperson stated that the suspicious chemical-laced letters were sent to judges under a well-thought-out plan to create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in the courts. He asserted that after the judges raised their voices against the unconstitutional pressure and meddling into the affairs of judiciary, it was inevitable to bring to the fore the elements pressurizing the justice system to get decisions of their choice.

## CJCSC calls on President

FROM PAGE 01  
He said that he had complete confidence in the security forces of the country to successfully overcome the internal and external security challenges. The meeting expressed the resolve to stamp out the scourge of terrorism with the support of the nation.

## Brunei high commissioner hosts Ifar for Rising Stars Hockey Club

The players expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the High Commissioner for his generous hospitality, further strengthening the bond between the diplomatic community and local sports enthusiasts

SPORTS DESK / DNA

ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner Col (r) Kamal Ahmed of Brunei extended a gracious gesture by hosting an iftar dinner for the players of the Rising Stars Hockey Club at his residence. It's noteworthy that Ambassador Kamal himself is an active member of the Rising Stars Hockey Club. With warmth and hospitality, the esteemed diplomat welcomed the hockey players, affirming his commitment to continue organizing such events in the future. His dedication to fostering camaraderie and support within the hockey community is commendable. In response, the players expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the High Commissioner for his generous hospitality, further strengthening the bond between the diplomatic community and local sports enthusiasts. Such initiatives not only promote goodwill but also highlight the importance of sports in fostering unity and friendship.



## Finn Allen eyes series win for NZ against Pakistan

Allen expressed excitement for the opportunity presented to younger players like Tim Robinson, who had impressed during the Super Smash tournament in New Zealand

ISLAMABAD: Finn Allen discussed the upcoming five-match T20I series against Pakistan, acknowledging the absence of several key players due to their commitments in the Indian Premier League. Trent Boult, Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Mitch Santner, and Kane Williamson were all unable to participate due to their commitments in the ongoing Indian Premier League. Allen expressed excitement for the opportunity this presented to younger players like Tim Robinson, who had impressed during the Super Smash tournament in New Zealand. "It is an awesome opportunity with players being away at the IPL, for young guys such as Tim Robinson, who have shown their talent and had a good Super Smash tournament here in New Zealand during the summer," Allen told Press Trust of India (PTI). "It is rewarding for those guys and allows them to get an opportunity at the top level to see where they stand against a formidable Pakistan side," he said. Reflecting on his own performance in a previous T20I against Pakistan earlier this year, where he scored a remarkable 137 off 62 balls, Allen recognized the challenge of facing Pakistan on their home turf but remained optimistic about the series. "I guess with the upcoming series, we batted out with them at home not too long ago, but it is on their turf now, and we know from tours in the past that they are pretty tough to beat at home," Allen said. - Agencies

## Misbah reacts to shift in Pakistan's T20I captaincy

Misbah criticized the handling of both Azam and Afridi's captaincy changes, describing the process as unsettling for the players and the team

DNA

LAHORE: Former Pakistan captain Misbah-ul-Haq opened up about the change in leadership of the national side on Thursday. Misbah said that the correct approach was not adopted while removing Babar Azam as well as Shaheen Afridi from captaincy in the recent past. "The process of changing captain in Pakistan is extremely unpleasant and this affects the players," Misbah said while talking to media in Lahore. "Babar was removed from captaincy in the wrong manner and so was Shaheen Afridi. "Both Babar and Shaheen are our star players and my best wishes are with the team and I hope they perform well." It must be noted that the Pakistan Cricket Board last



month named Azam as the new white-ball skipper of the national side. The PCB said that the change was "a strategic move aimed at ensuring

player well-being and peak performance". "While Shaheen Afridi has undeniably proven himself as a star fast bowler, leading Pakistan's pace attack over the years,

the board recognises the importance of rotation and rest to maintain his peak performance. This decision aligns with board's commitment to safeguarding the longevity of the players, especially fast bowlers given their injury timelines in the past two years," the PCB added. "Keeping in mind workload management, this decision is to ensure Pakistan main bowlers remain at the top of their game. The board does not want the national men's team to run into injury crisis concerning the bowling resources as seen before the ICC T20 World Cup 2022, where Shaheen had to be closely looked after and ICC ODI Cricket World Cup 2023, where the team didn't have the services of Naseem Shah." Shaheen replaced Azam as skipper in T20I cricket and Shan Masood in Tests last year.

## LHC: Judges...

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officers would undergo security checkup of the letters before they would be handed over to the relevant judges' staff officer. A postman namely Atif - who delivered the letters containing suspicious powdery substance to the judges' offices - told Geo News that it was his routine work to deliver letters and he did not know what was inside the envelopes. After the suspected power-laced letters, the Pakistan Post also took special measures for security of staffers and thorough inspection of postal letters, and other mails. It has been directed to provide masks and gloves to the staffers for their safety and security.

## IMF ready to 'engage'...

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programme in response to a question asked about the Standby Arrangement (SBA) and whether Pakistan was out of the woods economically. The IMF communications director shared that the Executive Board meeting of the lender will take place at the end of this month to approve the disbursement of the remaining \$1.1 billion of the SBA following the staff level agreement between Pakistan and IMF.

## Pakistan FO denounces...

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international response. The statement was issued after a British newspaper, in a report published on Thursday, said that the Indian government assassinated individuals in Pakistan as part of a wider strategy to eliminate terrorists living on foreign soil. The report cited intelligence officials from both countries, as well as documents shared by Pakistani investigators, saying they "shed new light on how India's foreign intelligence agency allegedly began to carry out assassinations abroad as part of an emboldened approach to national security after 2019".

## PM to leave for Saudi...

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the last days of Ramadan. This would be the Prime Minister's first foreign visit since his election," said the FO in a statement. PM Shehbaz will be accompanied by Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Defence, Finance, Information and Economic Affairs. He will also perform Umrah and offer prayers at the Masjid Nabwi in Madina. During the visit, it is expected that PM Shehbaz may meet Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz and discuss issues of mutual interest. The leaders will also exchange views on regional and global developments.

## PCB appoints new Director Media ahead of NZ series

Sami-ul-Hasan Burney has replaced Aalia Rasheed

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Friday announced Sami-ul-Hasan Burney as the new Director Media and Communications. Burney replaces Aalia Rasheed, who resigned earlier today, in the role. "Pakistan Cricket Board has appointed Sami Ul Hasan Burney as the new Director - Media and Communications," the PCB said in a brief statement on its official X, formerly Twitter, account. Burney was PCB Director Media previously as well but had stepped down after Zaka Ashraf took charge of the board last year. The national side is currently taking

part in a fitness camp in Kakul, Abbottabad, ahead of the home series against New Zealand later this month. Pakistan players underwent training and gym exercises at the Army School of Physical Training (ASPT). According to sources, the fitness camp, which was set to conclude on April 8, could be wrapped up a day before the date announced earlier since the players will travel to Rawalpindi from Abbottabad on April 7 for an Iftar, hosted by Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir, during the ongoing holy month of Ramadan. After Iftar, players will go back home

ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. Meanwhile, New Zealand will touch down in Pakistan on April 14 for the eagerly-anticipated series. The two teams 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. All five matches of the T20I series will start at 7:00pm (PST). Pakistan squad, which is likely to be announced on April 8, for New Zealand series is likely to assemble in Islamabad on April 14. - DNA

## Pakistan squad announcement for NZ series delayed

LAHORE: Pakistan squad for the upcoming five-match T20I series against New Zealand might not be announced before April 8 since the selectors will hold another meeting on Sunday, according to sources. The squad was set to be announced this week, however it has now been delayed. The selectors have already returned to Lahore after discussing the probabilities for the series with captain Babar Azam in Kakul, where the national squad is currently taking part in a fitness camp under the supervision of Pakistan Army. Earlier it was reported that the players under consideration for the five-match series are Babar, Saim Ayub, Muhammad Rizwan, Sahibzada Farhan, Salman Ali Agha, Iftikhar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Shadab Khan, Usama Mir, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, Imad Wasim, Muhammad Amir, Zaman Khan, Usman Khan, Wasim Jr, Irfan Niaz and Abbas Afridi. Whereas, Fakhar Zaman's hand injury is being reviewed. Fast bowler Haris Rauf, who suffered a shoulder injury during the recently concluded Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9, is not completely fit and would continue the rehab process. - DNA

## Danielle Collins wins twice in Charleston

Collins upset second-seeded Ons Jabeur of Tunisia 6-3, 1-6, 6-3 in a second-round match

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

PARIS: Danielle Collins extended her winning streak to 10 matches, winning twice on to reach the quarterfinals of the Credit One Charleston (S.C.) Open. First, Collins upset second-seeded Ons Jabeur of Tunisia 6-3, 1-6, 6-3 in a second-round match that had been pushed back to Thursday due to rain. Then Collins blitzed Sloane Stephens 6-2, 6-2 in a matchup of unseeded US players. Collins, a 30-year-old Floridian who is retiring at the end of the season, captured the Miami Open championship last week. Next up for Collins will be a match against 11th-seeded Elise Mertens of Belgium, who got past seventh-seeded Elina Svitolina of Ukraine 6-4, 6-1. Earlier Thursday, Mertens defeated France's Varvara Gracheva 6-4, 3-6, 6-2. The United States' Jessica Pegula cruised into the quarterfinals with a 6-2, 6-2 victory over Poland's Magda Linette.

In other third-round action, Belarus' Victoria Azarenka, the 12th seed, rallied past the United States' Taylor Townsend 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-4 to reach the quarters.



Third-seeded Maria Sakkari of Greece downed Australia's Astra Sharma 6-4, 6-1, and fourth-seeded Daria Kasatkina of Russia eliminated 15th-seeded Anhelina Kalinina of Ukraine 6-1, 6-4. Ninth-seeded Veronika Kudermetova of Russia toppled fifth-seeded Beatriz Haddad Maia of Brazil 7-5, 6-1, and Romania's Jaqueline Cristian beat 10th-seeded Emma Navarro of the United States 6-3, 5-7, 6-1. Stephens won her second-round match earlier Thursday, defeating 14th-seeded Leylah Fernandez of Canada 6-4, 6-4. Danielle Collins clinches maiden Masters 1000 to achieve farewell season goal Copal Colson Home-country favorite Camila Osorio, the sixth seed, moved into the quarterfinals at Bogota, Colombia, with a 7-6 (4), 6-4 victory over Romania's Anca Alexia Todoni. Osorio overcame eight double faults in part by winning 45 percent of her return points. Todoni put just 48 percent of her first serves in play. The rest of the scheduled Thursday slate was delayed due to a power failure.



## Briefs

## Ex-Malaysia PM Najib seeks house arrest

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's imprisoned former Prime Minister Najib Razak is seeking to serve the rest of his prison term under house arrest, two months after his sentence in a corruption case was reduced by half. His surprise application filed Wednesday said he had "clear information" that then-king Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah issued an order during the Jan. 29 pardon's board meeting, which cut his 12-year jail sentence by half and sharply reduced a fine, allowing him to finish his sentence under house arrest. Najib asked the court to have the government verify and carry out the order. His application was due to be heard Thursday but was postponed to April 17. Sultan Abdullah hails from Najib's hometown of Pahang. He ended his five-year reign on Jan. 30 under Malaysia's unique rotating monarchy system. A new king took office on Jan. 31. Najib, 70, has served less than two years of his sentence, supposed to end on Aug. 23, 2028, after his sentence was commuted. He was charged and found guilty in a corruption case linked to the multi-billion-dollar looting of state fund 1MDB. In his application, he accused the pardons board, home minister and the attorney-general among seven entities of concealing the sultan's order "in bad faith."—Agencies

## Turkish intelligence eliminates PKK terrorist in Syria

ANKARA : A senior operative of the terrorist group PKK was eliminated by Turkish intelligence, security sources said on Friday. National Intelligence Organization (MIT) eliminated Vahide Atalay, codenamed "Sorhin Çele," in Syria's north. Atalay was in the Ayn al-Arab district of Aleppo, also known as Kobani, when she was targeted in an operation by intelligence, the sources added. Joining the rural ranks of the terrorist organization in 2006, Atalay was engaged in terrorist activities in Iraq between 2006 and 2014. She later moved to Syria and carried out armed activities in the Qamishli, Ayn al-Arab and Ras al-Ayn regions, security sources said. Flanked by armed drones, MIT agents carried out 181 operations in 2022 and eliminated 201 terrorists. They also managed to destroy 45 energy facilities and parts of infrastructure the terrorist group built or operated, along with locations used by the PKK to store weapons and munitions. High-profile names were among the 38 terrorists eliminated by MIT. The organization's operations, which eliminated terrorists who were behind attacks targeting Türkiye, as well as those who supplied weapons, recruits and cash to the terrorist group, curbed the PKK's activities.—APP

## Global food prices rebound: UN agency

WASHINGTON : The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 118.3 points in March, up from a revised 117.0 points the previous month, the agency said on Friday. The February reading was the lowest for the index since February 2021 and marked a seventh consecutive monthly decline. International food prices have fallen sharply from a record peak in March 2022 at the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of fellow crop exporter Ukraine. The FAO's latest monthly reading was 7.7% below the year-earlier level, it said. In March, the agency's vegetable oil price index led gains, jumping 8% month-over-month, with all major oils registering increases. The dairy index gained 2.9% for a sixth straight monthly rise, driven by cheese and butter prices, while the FAO's meat index added 1.7%, reflecting higher poultry, pig and beef prices.—APP

## Japan PM boosts regional security with allies

Japanese PM Prioritizes regional security cooperation with South Korea, Philippines, and US, including engagement with North Korea

## WEB DESK

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said he wanted to cooperate with South Korea and the Philippines, allies shared with the US, and even engage with North Korea to promote regional security. "The current security environment is tough and complex, and we are at a turning point in history," Kishida said in a group interview. "Cooperation between Japan and the United States and like-minded countries is a very important issue," he added. The Japanese leader spoke ahead of a planned summit next week with US President Joe Biden, as the allies look for

ways to counter China's growing influence in Asia and deter it from resorting to military action to resolve its disputes in the region. The state visit to Washington, the first by a Japanese leader in nine years, is meant to showcase their close security and economic ties, with the two leaders expected to discuss cooperation on defence equipment and a possible upgrade in the US military command structure in Japan. That meeting will be followed by a trilateral summit with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. "Close cooperation between Japan, the US, and the Philippines is crucial for a free and open order based on the rule of law and for economic prosperity in the

region," Kishida said. Japan last year delivered four air defence radars to the Philippines and is negotiating a reciprocal access agreement with Manila that would make it easier for Japanese troops to train there. A separate trilateral meeting between Kishida, Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol in the US last year helped Tokyo mend relations with Seoul and bolster security cooperation. Kishida has said he is also willing to meet with North Korean leader Kim "without any preconditions" in a bid to improve strained relations with the nuclear-armed regime. Relations between the countries have been strained over disputes dating back to Japan's occupation in the first

half of the 20th century, and by North Korea's past abduction of Japanese citizens. "Establishing a fruitful relationship will not only benefit Japan and North Korea but will also contribute greatly to peace and stability in the region," Kishida said. Earlier on, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol cast his ballot as two days of early voting for next week's parliamentary elections kicked off on Friday, in which his ruling party seeks to retake a majority in the opposition-controlled assembly. More than 2.2 million people, or about 5.1% of eligible voters, had cast their ballots at some 3,500 polling stations nationwide as of 11 a.m., according to the National Election Commission. It marked the highest turnout for parlia-

mentary elections at this point since the early voting system was adopted in 2013. Yoon cast his ballot alongside several aides at a station in the southern port city of Busan, where he was expected to attend a business event. He has encouraged people to go to the polls for the April 15 elections, saying it is not only citizens' right but also responsibility. Stakes are high for Yoon as his People Power Party (PPP) is aiming to win a majority in the single-chamber, 300-seat assembly, though polls show the elections too close to call. A failure could undercut Yoon's key initiatives to boost the economy, fiscal health and birthrates, as well as to bolster trilateral security cooperation with the United States and Japan.

## Turkiye urges NATO members support against terrorism: FM

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan discusses counterterrorism, the next NATO secretary-general, the war in Ukraine and Palestine's Gaza following the alliance's meeting in Brussels

## NEWS DESK

ANKARA : Türkiye's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan has strongly urged NATO members to support Ankara in its fight against terrorism at a two-day foreign ministers meeting in Brussels, where he also held sideline talks with his counterparts. "We underlined that NATO member countries should fully and unconditionally support Türkiye in the fight against terrorism," Fidan told reporters in Brussels, on Thursday, following the meeting. The foreign minister also warned member countries which have been cooperating with the terrorist organisation to cease such activities, particularly in Syria, as it fell "against the spirit of the NATO alliance". "What is sad for them (European countries) is that the terrorist organisation, which they have been silent about for years, is terrorising their own streets," he said, dis-

cussing the activities of the PKK terrorist organisation in Europe. Fidan stressed that said countries should not only condemn the terrorist group's acts of violence against the Turkish nationals living in Europe, but also take "very serious" measures to combat it. "I see authorities increasingly becoming more sensitive in Europe. This is actually a pleasing issue. I see that tolerance towards PKK is gradually decreasing. This is important," he added. In its nearly 40-year terror campaign against Türkiye, the PKK - listed as a terrorist organisation by Türkiye, the US, and the EU - has been responsible for the deaths of over 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants. The YPG is the PKK's Syrian offshoot. NATO marked its 75th anniversary in Brussels with the foreign ministers meeting on Wednesday and Thursday. Celebrating the occasion, Fidan emphasised that Türkiye has been an important

member of the alliance for 72 years since 1952. "Our armed forces actively participate in NATO missions," he said. Türkiye boasts the second-largest military force in the alliance and will be hosting the informal NATO foreign ministers meeting next year. Next NATO secretary-general The nomination of the next NATO chief was also on the agenda at the foreign ministers meeting, as incumbent Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg's term is scheduled to end on October 1 after ten years. Fidan said he recently met with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who has already garnered support from the United States, United Kingdom, France and Germany as the potential successor. "It is possible that he will visit Türkiye soon. We are working on a date," Fidan said. Recently, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Rutte in a phone call that Ankara would choose a candidate based on its expectations and needs. Erdogan

emphasised the need for the new secretary-general to best serve the security and interests of all members, especially in the fight against terrorism, and bolster the unity of the alliance while upholding NATO's core values and established practices. War in Ukraine, Palestine's Gaza The foreign minister meeting took place against the backdrop of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, now on its 773rd day with a death toll of over 10,500 Ukrainians, and Israel's relentless 182-day-old assault on besieged Gaza which has so far killed at least 33,037 Palestinians. Türkiye reaffirmed that it stands by Ukraine's security and sovereignty, and underlined that alternative ways to peace and cease-fire should be sought to stop the war, Fidan said. The foreign minister also discussed the situation in Gaza with his counterparts on the sidelines of the NATO meeting and voiced concern over the "unbearable" situation in the enclave.

## Japan to extend \$1 million aid to quake-hit Taiwan

TOKYO : The Japanese government pledged Friday to donate US\$1 million to Taiwan to assist with disaster relief and reconstruction after a magnitude 7.2 earthquake caused significant damage in eastern Taiwan. The donation was announced by Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa at a press conference in Tokyo. "We are deeply saddened by the extensive damage" caused by the strong earthquake that hit off the coast of eastern Taiwan on Wednesday, and "we would like to help in any way we can," she said. According to Kamikawa, the US\$1 million emergency grant will be provided to Taiwan via the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association, through which the Japanese government facilitates various forms of cooperation with Taipei in the absence of formal diplomatic relations. "Japan and Taiwan have always been important friends, supporting each other whenever they faced difficulties," she said, adding that "[Tokyo] will actively provide the support necessary to meet the needs of Taiwan" in its disaster relief and recovery efforts. Kamikawa also offered her condolences to those who had lost their loved ones during the disaster and said she prayed for the speedy recovery of those who were injured and for the speedy rescue of those who remained unaccounted for. In response, the Presidential Office and Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Taiwan thanked Japan for its generosity in separate press releases Friday afternoon. Taiwan and Japan "have overcome many challenges hand in hand in the past" given that both are prone to earthquakes, Lin said, adding that such mutual help had made the two "solid partners." Meanwhile, Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said in its statement that the donation from Japan would be put toward the reconstruction of disaster-stricken areas. As of 3 p.m. Friday, the earthquake - the most powerful in Taiwan in a quarter of a century - had resulted in at least 10 deaths, all of which were reported in Hualien County, and more than 1,000 injuries, according to data from Taiwan's Central Emergency Operation Center.—DNA

## Myanmar violence intensifies crisis, UN reports

UNITED NATIONS: Myanmar's escalating conflict and worst violence since the military takeover in 2021 are having a devastating impact on human rights, fundamental freedoms and basic needs of millions of people - as well as "alarming spillover effects" in the region, UN officials said Thursday. Assistant Secretary-General for political affairs Khaled Khiri told the UN Security Council that "the civilian toll keeps rising" amid reports of indiscriminate bombing by Myanmar's armed forces and artillery shelling by various parties. The nationwide armed conflict in Myanmar began after the army ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021 and suppressed widespread nonviolent protests that sought a return to democratic rule. Thousands of young people fled to jungles and mountains in remote border areas as a result of the military's suppression and made common cause with ethnic guerrilla forces battle-hardened by decades of combat with the army in pursuit of autonomy. Despite its great advantage in armaments and manpower, the military has been unable to quell the resistance movement. Over the past five months, the army has been routed in northern Shan state, is conceding swaths of territory in Rakhine state in the west, and is under growing attack elsewhere.—APP

## Heavy rain triggers flood warnings in Australia

SYDNEY : South-eastern Australia has been experiencing heavy rain since Thursday night, which will continue until Saturday morning local time. New South Wales will be particularly badly affected, with cumulative rainfall totals of 150-200mm along coastal stretches. Hourly totals are expected to reach 10-20mm at times, with the worst-affected areas potentially receiving 50mm within three hours. Strong winds are expected to accompany the heaviest downpours, with gusts of about 45mph (72km/h) at times. Sydney is expected to be hit hard, and authorities have warned of life-threatening floods, notably along the Hawkesbury-Nepean River to the north-west of the city. These conditions come as a result of cooler polar air moving in from the south meeting warmer tropical air to the north and forming a frontal boundary. This pattern repeated many times in 2022, Sydney's wettest year on record. After the main rain band has formed, an area of low pressure looks likely to develop around the Sydney region, further intensifying rainfall and increasing the risk of flooding. This low pressure will push southwards through the weekend, introducing rain and possibly thunderstorms to eastern Victoria, and potentially affecting the capital, Canberra.

## Somalia abandons power-sharing, fears violence increase

MOGADISHU : An overhaul of Somalia's constitution, scrapping its power-sharing system and handing the president increased control, is threatening to destabilise the fragile country, as its wealthiest and most stable state refuses to recognise the changes. The amendments risk worsening violence, the information minister from the semi-autonomous state of Puntland has warned. Mohamud Aidid Dirir told the Guardian that "almost a totally new constitution" had been introduced without input from the state's leaders. He accused the Somali president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, of using parliament to "gather authority into his hands". Somali lawmakers voted overwhelmingly last weekend to adopt a slew of amendments to the constitution, which will reshape the political and electoral system and hand more power to the president. The parliamentary speaker, Adan Mohamed Nuur Madobe, called the move "historic".—APP

## France, allies could have prevented Rwandan Genocide

French president will say in video to be released Sunday that France and its allies could have stopped the genocide 'but did not have the will'

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron said France and its allies could have stopped the Rwandan genocide but lacked the will to do so. In a video message set to be released on Sunday to mark the 30th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, Macron stressed that "when the phase of total extermination against the Tutsis began, the international community had the means to know and act," local media reported Thursday. He said his country, "which could have stopped the genocide with its Western and African allies, did not have the will" to do so. Macron also said that France stands by the Rwandan people in memory of the 1 million men, women and children who were tortured because they were born Tutsi. During his visit to Rwanda in 2021, he recognized France's "responsibilities" in the genocide. He will not accept an invitation from Rwandan President Paul Kagame to visit the country to take part in commemorative events on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the genocide. Instead, French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne and Junior Maritime Affairs Minister Herve Berville, who was born in Rwanda, will attend the events. Hutu extremists targeted the minority Tutsi ethnic group after the death of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and his Burundian counterpart Cyprien Ntaryamira in a plane crash on April 6, 1994. An estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed during the bloodshed, which lasted 100 days.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif presenting a souvenir to Wada Mitsuhiro, Ambassador of Japan.—DNA

## Russia downs drones, Kremlin warns NATO over Ukraine

Kremlin says Russia, NATO relations have slipped to the level of 'direct confrontation' over the war in Ukraine

## FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW : Russia has downed 53 Ukrainian drones, the majority of which targeted the southern Rostov region, the Ministry of Defence said, as the Kremlin warned that Russia and NATO are now in "direct confrontation" over Ukraine. The ministry said that "terrorist attacks with aerial drones" overnight and on Friday morning were foiled, adding that 44 of them were downed or intercepted in Rostov, where Russia's Ukraine campaign headquarters is located. Vasily Golubev, the governor of Rostov, confirmed early on Friday that air defence units

had destroyed more than 40 airborne targets, though an electricity substation was damaged. Writing on the Telegram messaging app, he said the drone attacks had focused on the Morozovsk district, northeast of Rostov, which lies on Ukraine's eastern border. Golubev said work was under way to restore power supplies in the affected areas. Russian state news agency RIA reported that one drone was downed in the Saratov region, where an airbase for Russian strategic bombers is located. Other drones were downed over the Kursk, Belgorod and Krasnodar regions, RIA reported, citing the Defence Ministry. There were no reports of casualties. Ukraine

has for months launched drone attacks on several border regions as it tries to push back Russia's advancing forces. Russia also deployed several unmanned aerial vehicles targeting Ukrainian cities and towns overnight. In a message on Telegram early on Friday, Olexandr Prokudin, the governor of Ukraine's Kherson, said at least 10 people were "poisoned" by fumes after a gas pipeline was damaged by Russian shelling. The extent of the damage was not immediately clear. Several residential buildings were affected, but there were no immediate reports of casualties, he said. Ukraine's military said on Telegram that it repelled "several waves of attack drones" flying

over the southern regions of Zaporizhia, Odesa and Dnipropetrovsk. The military said the Shahed-type drones entered its territory from occupied Crimea, damaging private homes and some commercial buildings. As the warring nations continue to exchange fire, United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken said more aid is urgently needed for Ukraine. Speaking to reporters at the sidelines of NATO's 75th anniversary celebrations in Brussels on Thursday, Blinken said support for Ukraine is especially important as countries such as China, North Korea and Iran are helping Russia build its defence industrial base. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg says "allies

understand the urgency" of the situation in Ukraine and the need for new additional air defences. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned that relations between Russia and NATO "have now slipped to the level of direct confrontation". NATO was "already involved in the conflict surrounding Ukraine [and] continues to move towards our borders and expand its military infrastructure towards our borders", he said. The military alliance has expanded with the entry of Finland last year and Sweden in March ending decades of neutrality amid soaring concerns about Russia's aggression in Europe following its invasion of Ukraine.



## Briefs

### JI to hold Gaza March on Eid-ul-Fitr

DNA

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) announced to carry out 'Gaza March' in Islamabad on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr to express solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine, ARY News reported.

In a statement, the JI spokesperson requested the masses to join the march. He asked the people of to perform the Eid-ul-Fitr prayer at Faisal Mosque with the Palestinian flag.

"After the Eid prayer in Faisal Mosque, solidarity will be expressed with the people of Palestine and a protest against Israel," the JI spokesman said.

Earlier on March 10, the JI announced to carry out a million march 10 toward the United States embassy on the 27th of Ramadan to express solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine.

Addressing a Gaza Solidarity March in Islamabad, JI then Ameer Sirajul Haq said that the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has also failed to play its due role for Palestinians and just is restricted to statements only. "Our parliament also passed ineffective resolutions and now the lawmakers don't even talk about the situation of Gaza," he added.

Sirajul Haq said that millions of people would be marching towards the American embassy on the 27th of Ramadan.

MBS, Jordan's King discuss Gaza crisis

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Jordan's King Abdullah II on Thursday discussed developments in the Middle East and in Gaza over the phone, Jordan News Agency reported. The crown prince expressed Saudi Arabia's support for the measures taken by the Jordanian government to maintain Jordan's security and stability, the Saudi Press Agency reported, and the king expressed his appreciation for Saudi Arabia's supportive stance.

Prince Mohammed and the king spoke about the necessity of finding a political solution to the Palestinian crisis based on the two-state solution, which guarantees the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state along 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, the Jordanian news agency Petra reported.

The crown prince and King Abdullah also discussed relations between the Kingdom and Jordan. The king expressed to Prince Mohammed "his pride in the level of Jordanian-Saudi relations, and his keenness to consolidate them in all fields," Petra said. - Agencies

Senate chairman PPP nominates Yusuf Gilani

A notification in this regard has been issued by Jamil Soomro

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: PPP on Thursday nominated former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani as its candidate for the prized slot of Senate chairman. A notification in this regard has been issued by Jamil Soomro, political secretary to PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

As per an agreement between the PPP and PML-N, the post of president, Senate chairman and governorship of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were given to the PPP, while the posts of Senate deputy chairman, National Assembly speaker and governorship of Sindh and Balochistan were given to the PML-N. At the moment, Gilani has the support of 24 senators from the PPP, 19 from PML-N, four from BAP, three from ANP, three independents and one from the National Party, taking the tally to 54. If he gets the support of three MQM-P and five JUF senators, then the tally will be 62 which suggests that the ruling coalition nominee will be in a comfortable position to win election.

# Practical steps to be taken for media workers' welfare: Tarar

He expressed the resolve during his separate meetings with the office bearers of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors and Pakistan Broadcasters Association



NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attallah Tarar reiterated the government's resolve to address all the issues being faced by journalists, media workers and media houses on priority. He expressed the resolve during his separate meetings with the office bearers of the

All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors and Pakistan Broadcasters Association. On the occasion, he vowed to take practical steps for ensuring well-being of the media workers and houses. The minister, during the meetings, had a detailed discussion on the problems faced by media workers, journalists and newspaper industry. Tarar said he was fully aware of the prob-

lems of media workers and journalists and would take practical measures to protect their rights. Besides, all-out efforts would be made to provide required facilities to them, he added. The minister assured the office bearers of his full cooperation in getting the pending dues of media houses cleared at the earliest possible time. In this regard, concerted efforts were under way in line with the directives of PM

Shehbaz Sharif, he added. He said the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) had approved supplementary grant for payment of media houses' arrears and dues.

The minister highlighted the role being played by the Ministry of Information between the government, journalists and media houses. He said health cards for medical treatment of journalists would be issued soon. Nobody would be allowed to violate rights of journalists and media workers, he remarked. He also spoke on economic issues and expressed the government's strong commitment to address those issues in line with the vision of PM Shehbaz Sharif. He said work on digitization of Federal Board of Revenue had been initiated to ensure documented economy.

All stakeholders would have to play their role for the stability of the economy, he noted. The representatives of different media organizations expressed their full support to the government for the initiatives aimed at economic stability and growth. They thanked the Minister for his support in the release of funds. Earlier, Principal Information Officer Mubashir Hassan gave a detailed briefing in the meeting.

## PTI urges ECP to restore its 'bat' symbol

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Core Committee expressed serious concerns over the slow pace of the court proceedings of the cases against PTI Founding Chairman Imran Khan and strongly demanded to speed up the process of hearing of the cases so as to ensure his release from incarceration at the earliest. PTI Core Committee meeting held on Friday, where in a detailed briefing regarding the cases against PTI Founding was given. The participants expressed disappointment over the snail pace of the hearing of the cases of Imran Khan and delay his release, demanding that the process of the hearing of his cases should be accelerated in order to ensure his release at the earliest. PTI Core Committee demanded that the electoral watchdog should restore the PTI's election symbol "bat" sans any further. They stated that the electoral body did not have any legal justification to delay the restoration of PTI's

electoral symbol because the party had already submitted all the relevant details of the intra-party elections. The forum vehemently denounced the postponement of the Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and termed this action of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) an open violation of the Constitution, an attack on the unity and solidarity of the federation and an attempt to violate the public right to vote. PTI Core Committee strongly condemned the attempts to tarnish the democracy through incomplete houses and the making people right to vote ineffective with criminal support of the electoral watchdog. They also denounced the efforts to harass judges of Supreme Court and high courts judges through threatening letters laced with toxic chemical and stressed the need for taking stern action against the responsible.

About the issue of IHC six judges' letter, the forum reiterated its demands that a full court should be constituted to probe the matter and the court proceedings should be broadcast live, besides holding a judicial convention. PTI Core Committee urged the electoral body and related tribunals to quickly address the election complaints. The forum endorsed launch of a countrywide mass movement after Eid-ul-Fitr under the banner of the newly constituted grand political alliance. They announced that the first mega public gathering of the grand political alliance would organize on April 13 in Pishin district of Balochistan. Moreover, the PTI Core Committee strongly denounced the re-arrest and remand to women prisoners, especially Aliya Hamza and Sanam Javed. They demanded immediate release of all PTI's workers and leaders including Imran Khan and his wife.

## ECP issues notification of 37 senators-elect



ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday issued notifications of 37 candidates who have been elected to the Senate. According to the notification, Rana Mehmoodul Hasan, Ishaq Dar, Bilal Ahmad Khan, Abdul Wasi, Husna Bano and Rahat Jamali have been elected senators from Islamabad. From Punjab, Ahmad Cheema, Parvez Rashid, Hamid Khan, Raja Nasir Abbas, Mohsin Naqvi, Talal Chaudhry, Nasir Mahmood, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Mussadiq Malik, Anusha Rehman, Bushra Anjum Butt and Khalil Tahir have been elected to the upper house of parliament. From Balochistan, Ahmed Khan, Anwarul Haq Kakar and Aimal Wali Khan have been declared elected. The 12 successful candidates from Sindh include seven winners on general seats - Syed Masroor Ahsan of PPP, Dost Ali Jaisar, Ashraf Jatoti, Kazim Ali Shah, Nadeem Bhutto, Aamir Chishti of MQM-Pakistan and independent candidates Faisal Vawda. Quratulain Marri and Rubina Qaimkhan of the PPP have won the women's seat, while Panju Mil Bheel of the PPP was declared winner on minority seat and Zameer Ghamro and Sarmad Ali on the technocrat seat. It may be recalled that half of the Senate members - 18 - retired after completing their six-year term in March. Elections were held on April 2 to fill 30 vacant seats as 18 members had already been elected unopposed. However, elections on 11 seats of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were postponed due to a stand-off between the provincial government and opposition over the oath-taking of MPAs-elect on reserved seats - DNA

## Serving people top priority of PPP: Bilawal

DNA

LARKANA: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said on Friday that serving the people was the top priority of his party. Addressing the party workers in Larkana, the former foreign minister said: "The elected representatives have a key role to play in a bid to address the masses' problems."

"The elected representatives should roll out projects considering the needs of the masses," he added. Bhutto-Zardari said, "The personal ego, divide, and hate will not be helpful in overcoming the challenges." "All the institutions should work while remaining within the constitutional limits," he added. He vowed to continue to fight for the sake of the masses' rights. Speaking about former president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, he said: "The Supreme Court has announced a key verdict in the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto case. It was accepted that justice was not delivered to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto." Last month, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said that the coalition government will look to revive the country's economy.

## Trump says he would have warned Putin about terror attack

WASHINGTON: Former US President Donald Trump has said he would have personally alerted Russian President Vladimir Putin about a potential terrorist attack on Moscow's Crocus City Hall, if he had been in a position to do so. Trump made the remarks in an interview with US radio host Hugh Hewitt on Thursday. The journalist suggested that Washington "knew that the Moscow attack last week was going to happen," and expressed doubt that US President Joe Biden had called Putin to inform him. Hewitt asked the former president whether he would have personally warned the Russian leader about the terrorist plot. On March 22, four gunmen stormed the Crocus City Hall concert venue just outside Moscow, going on a shooting spree and setting fire to the building. At least 144 people, including six children, were killed in the massacre and over 500 were injured. - Agencies

## Macron slams Moscow's claims of French role in terror attack

Paris had earlier said it had no intelligence linking the Crocus City Hall shooting spree to Kiev

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron has dismissed claims that Paris may have been involved in the Crocus City Hall massacre outside Moscow, speaking to French media on Thursday. In a phone call on Wednesday with his French counterpart, Sebastian Lecornu, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu suggested that Kiev's Western backers, including Paris, may have been behind the attack. The terrorist incident in March claimed over 140 lives, after armed gunmen stormed a packed music venue near the capital. The suspected shooters were apprehended by Russian law enforcement on the way to the Ukrainian border. The French and Russian defense ministers talked by phone on Wednesday. During the conversation, Lecornu repeatedly told his Russian counterpart that Western countries and Ukraine had no involvement in the massacre, the Russian MOD reported. Shoigu replied that he had intelligence to the contrary, saying, "the Kiev regime does

nothing without the approval of its Western backers." "We hope that in this case the French intelligence services are not behind this," he added. Macron called the statements "ridiculous," "baroque and threatening." "It makes no sense," to say that France "could be behind [the Moscow terror attack] and that the Ukrainians are behind it," the president told the media on Thursday. He added that the phone call was prompted by Paris' willingness to share "useful information" as a part of "joint work" among countries affected by terrorism. Moscow also maintains that the terrorists had a "window" prepared for them to cross the border into Ukraine. While Islamic State's Afghanistan-based wing (ISIS-K) has claimed responsibility for the attack, the head of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), Aleksandr Bortnikov, suggested in March that the US, UK, and Ukraine may have been involved. - Agencies

## British HC takes up security coop issues with Mohsin Naqvi

Both sides expressed a commitment to bolster relations and cooperation between their counties across various domains



ABID RAZA

LAHORE: British High Commissioner (BHC) to Pakistan Jean Marriott held a special meeting with Interior Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi at his office in Islamabad on Friday and discussed a raft of issues. The British High Commissioner was warmly welcomed by Mohsin Naqvi at the Ministry of Interior building, where bilateral security cooperation and matters of mutual interest were also discussed. Both sides expressed a commitment to bolster relations and cooperation between their counties across various domains. The British envoy also engaged in discussions regarding

the upcoming Pakistan-England cricket series with Mohsin Naqvi who is also Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). Ms Jane Marriott has been the British High Commissioner to Pakistan since July 2023. Before taking up her current position, she was British High Commissioner to Kenya (2019-23) and Ambassador to Yemen (2013-15). She has previously served as Director of the UK's Joint International Counter-Terrorism Unit; joint FCDO Director for the Middle East and North Africa; Ambassador to Sana'a, Yemen (2013-15); Deputy and Acting Ambassador to Tehran; and as an adviser to the US Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke. She has also completed two postings to Iraq and one to Afghanistan.

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