



Islamabad POST

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Austrian envoy calls for women empowerment

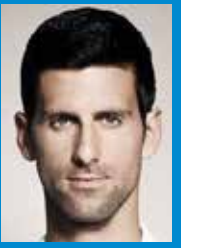
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KP CM calls for innovation in agri sector

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Paris: Djokovic wants last dance with Nadal

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Amid truce talks

Israel 'pulls out troops' from southern Gaza

The Israeli announcement came as its war on Gaza hits the six-month mark, leaving a deadly trail that the International Court of Justice described as a "plausible case of genocide"

NEWS DESK

KHAN YOUNIS: The Israeli occupation military says it has withdrawn its ground troops from the southern Gaza Strip, including Khan Younis, amid conflicting reports about the scale and duration of the disengagement. "Today, Sunday April 7th, the IDF's 98th commando division has concluded its mission in Khan Younis. The division left the Gaza Strip in order to recuperate and prepare for future operations," the army said in a statement on Sunday. "A significant force led by the 162nd division and the Nahal brigade continues to operate in the Gaza Strip and will preserve the IDF's freedom of action and its ability to conduct precise intelligence based operations," it said. The military confirmed the reported withdrawal to Reuters news agency, but added that one brigade has remained, without giving further details. An Israeli brigade is typically made of a few thousand soldiers. It was unclear whether the reported withdrawal would delay a long-threatened incursion into the southern Gaza city of Rafah, which Israeli leaders have said is needed to eliminate Hamas. Meanwhile, journalist Imran Khan said the Israeli claim of withdrawal could be a "new strategy". "We're told that they don't need that number of troops to put this new strategy into place," said Khan, reporting from occupied East Jerusalem. But if you listen to the Israeli military analysts, you get a slightly different take on things. What we are hearing is that this could be a redeployment of forces in order to get ready for a ground offensive into Rafah."

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Death toll surges to 33,175 martyrs

FOREIGN DESK

GAZA: The health ministry in Gaza said on Sunday that the Israeli occupation army committed four massacres in different areas of the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours, killing at least 38 civilians and injuring over 71 others, while a large number of victims are still under the rubble of bombed buildings or lying on roads. In a statement, the health ministry said that the Israeli army killed and injured a large number of civilians in different areas of Gaza during the past 24 hours, but only 109 of them, including 38 martyrs, were transported to hospitals. The health ministry added that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli bombardments and shooting attacks, which started on October 7, climbed to 33,175 martyrs and the number of the wounded surged to 75,886 people. The Gaza Strip has been under brutal bombardment since a cross-border operation was launched by Hamas's armed wing, al-Qassam Brigades, on October 7.

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Shangla attack Vehicle carrying Chinese nationals was not bullet proof: report

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A police report over the deadly suicide attack in Shangla's Bisham city has revealed that the vehicle carrying Chinese nationals was neither bullet nor bomb-proof. The report, which has been sent to the federal government, reveals that the bus targeted in the attack was travelling at a distance of 15 feet from the other bus and fell into a 300-feet-deep ditch after a suicide bomber crashed his explosives-laden vehicle into the vehicle carrying the victims on the Karakoram Highway. The report, second of its nature, further mentions that the buses part of the convoy carrying Chinese nationals was equipped with close circuit television cameras (CCTV). The development comes a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, as per Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, ordered disciplinary action against senior police officers for "negligence" in light of an inquiry report over the March 26 incident which killed five Chinese citizens, including a woman, and a Pakistani driver. "The PM has directed to take action against the regional police officer (RPO) Hazara Division; district police officer

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MAKKAH: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif along with Saudi ambassador to Pakistan performing Umrah. - DNA

Toshakhana case

Info minister rebuts Imran's 'fabricated, baseless' allegations

The former premier had alleged that the senior military leadership "implicated" him and his wife Bushra Bibi in the Toshakhana reference "in an attempt to stifle my spirits

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Sunday rebutted former prime minister Imran Khan's allegations against the senior military leadership in connection with the Toshakhana case, saying they were "false, fabricated and baseless". The former premier had alleged that the senior military leadership "implicated" him and his wife Bushra Bibi in the Toshakhana reference "in an attempt to stifle my spirits". Imran and his spouse were sentenced to 14 years in jail in the case in January, days before the February 8 general elections.

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Elimination of terrorists a national duty

Govts should work together against the enemies of country

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari expressed sorrow and grief over the martyrdom of Police officials in

Continued on Page 06

Yellen, Chinese PM express hope for US-China coop

"China sincerely hopes that the two countries will be partners, not adversaries," Li said in welcoming remarks to Yellen

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: United States Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Chinese Premier Li Qiang sounded a hopeful tone on US-China cooperation on Sunday, though the American policymaker noted both sides cannot shy away from tough conversations. The US-China relationship can only move forward with direct and open communication, Yellen told Li, after arriving in the Chinese capital from the southern city of Guangzhou. "China sincerely hopes that the two countries will be partners, not adversaries," Li said in welcoming remarks to Yel-

len. He added that Chinese internet users have closely followed the details of her trip since her appearance in Guangzhou, showing "expectation and hope for the China-US relationship to continue to improve". Yellen held a series of meetings in the southern port city, including hours of discussions with her counterpart, Vice Premier He Lifeng. Both countries have since agreed to hold talks on balanced growth under an existing working group, allowing officials to discuss the key US concern of overcapacity. This refers to a situation where Chinese government support to

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Briefs

2 terrorists killed in trade of fire in N. Waziristan

Weapons and ammunition were recovered from the deceased terrorists

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Two terrorists were killed in an exchange of fire with security forces on the night intervening April 6 and April 7 in North Waziristan, the military's media wing stated on Sunday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), there was an intense exchange of fire between security forces and terrorists in North Waziristan, resulting in the deaths of both terrorists. The ISPR reported that weapons and ammunition were recovered from the deceased terrorists.

Robbers given 'licence to kill'

MQM-P slams Sindh govt over street crimes

The senator alleged police of connivance for street crimes in Karachi saying robbers would not break the law without the support of the black sheep in the police department

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) on Sunday slammed the Sindh government over the woeful law and order situation and said robbers have been given the 'licence to kill' in Karachi. Addressing media in Karachi, MQM-P leader Senator Faisal Sabzwari said the Home Ministry was with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) for 16 years and the law and order situation in the province was still deplorable. He said multiple citizens were killed while resisting robberies during Ramadan. Billions of rupees of mobile phones were snatched in the metropolis, he said. The senator alleged police of connivance for street crimes in Karachi saying robbers would not break the law without the support of the black sheep in the police department. It is pertinent to

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'Restoration of peace top priority of Sindh govt'

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Department of Energy, Planning and Development Nasir Hussain Shah (left) and MQM-P leader Khawaja Izharul Hassan. Sindh CM has already 'directed top police officials to restore peace'. Police and Rangers are conducting targeted operations in Karachi. Sindh needs police officers who can comprehend situation: PPP. KARACHI: In response to fresh criticism against the "poor"

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Zardari, Erdogan discuss bilateral ties

The two called for further strengthening bilateral relations in various fields



DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday discussed the strengthening of bilateral ties with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during a phone call. According to a statement issued on X, formerly Twitter, President Zardari and Turkish President Erdogan spoke over the phone and discussed matters of mutual interest. "The two called for further strengthening bilateral relations in various fields," the statement added. During their phone call, President Zardari felicitated the Turkish President on the forthcoming Eid-ul-Fitr

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Ruet-e-Hilal meeting on Tuesday

Individuals are urged to report any sightings

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: A pivotal meeting of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, April 9, to determine the sighting of the Shawwal-ul-Mukarram moon. The meeting will take place at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony and will be chaired by Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabir Azad. Esteemed members from various institutions, including the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Pakistan Meteorological Department, and the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), will participate in the meeting.

Opposition parties gear up for a mass movement

Comment

ANSAR M BHATTI

THE incumbent government's honeymoon period is likely to be spoiled by the Opposition parties, which appear to have girded up their loins for a mass movement after Eid. The PTI ostensibly will be leading this movement. In a highly charged press interview on Saturday, April 6, 2024, Imran Khan not only launched scathing verbal attacks against the incumbent chief of the army staff but also revealed the presence of dissenting elements within his own party. These disclosures serve to further fuel and bolster the impending movement, setting the stage for intensified political turbulence in the coming weeks.

Khan's adoption of a belligerent posture towards the Establishment can be attributed to primarily two factors. Firstly, the perception was growing that the founder of PTI was receiving preferential treatment from the courts, hinting at a potential arrangement with the Establishment to expedite his release from incarceration. Although there might be some clandestine negotiations between the Establishment and the PTI founder underway, Khan's recent interview serves to reassure PTI supporters who were dis-



heartened by speculations of a covert agreement. Additionally, as highlighted earlier, the PTI required a compelling narrative to underpin its anti-government campaign effectively. Opposition parties assert that a narrative critical of the Establishment is more likely to garner widespread acceptance and support across various segments of society. In the past, both the PML and the PPP sought to bolster their strength and popularity by challenging the Establishment of the time. Figures like Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz from the PML-N made brazen threats against the Establishment, while the incumbent President Asif Zardari, in a public address, boldly asserted the enduring presence of politicians compared to the transient nature of the Establishment's influence. These tactics seemed to pay off, as both parties eventually ascended to power. Building upon these historical precedents, it's clear that Imran Khan is prepared to embark on a similar path, fueled by the conviction that his vocal opposition to the Establishment will yield comparable dividends for his political aspirations. This assertion gains further credence given his stature as the foremost leader in the nation. The recent decision by the Islamabad High Court judges to write a letter to the Supreme Judicial Council highlighting spy agencies interference in their matters seems

to have favored the PTI founder and provides additional momentum to Khan's cause. In the prevailing political landscape, the absence of PPP's participation in the government could pose significant challenges to the longevity of the Shehbaz Sharif administration. History and precedent suggest that prime ministers typically maintain their position for around two to two and a half years. However, without the support of PPP, the Shehbaz government's ability to sustain itself for even a two-year tenure seems uncertain. The burgeoning opposition protest movement presents yet another formidable challenge to the government's ongoing stability. The inherent tension between the Establishment and the government is a longstanding feature of Pakistani politics, deeply ingrained in its polity. This tension can manifest gradually over time or erupt immediately upon a new government assuming power. Unfortunately, the Shehbaz government appears to have quickly fallen victim to this dynamic. From the outset, the appointment of finance and interior ministers within the Shehbaz administration drew discontent within the PML-N ranks. Despite Shehbaz Sharif's purported pro-Establishment stance, he has seemingly failed to reconcile with these appointments, indicating a fracture within

the party's alignment. Regrettably, this discord is only the tip of the iceberg. The ongoing tug-of-war between the government and the Establishment is poised to escalate into more contentious territory in the days ahead. Such developments bode poorly for Shehbaz Sharif and his administration, signaling potential challenges and hurdles on the horizon. All said and done, politicians possess the capability to effectively address these challenges. Cultivating genuine connections with ordinary citizens is crucial, achievable through meaningful engagement and incentives. However, regrettably, many politicians overlook this vital aspect. Consequently, when they are ousted from power, the public often expresses relief. Imran Khan, inter alia, tried to deviate from the path of status quo and showed his intention to help out the have-nots. What happened to him afterwards needs no elaboration. Even if a new setup replaces the Shehbaz government, it cannot guarantee political and economic stability. The sole solution to escape this quagmire is through holding free and fair elections, facilitating a people's representative government to assume power. Any interim measures, including the current one, will only exacerbate our problems.

– The writer is the newspaper editor.

ICCI, IBECHS to build Expo Centre in capital city

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that ICCI is willing to coordinate with the IBECHS for joint ventures aiming to attract foreign investment

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and Intelligence Bureau Employees Cooperative Housing Society (IBECHS) have agreed to construct a state-of-the-art Expo Centre in Gulberg Green. The sides also decided to join hands in terms of national development, promotion of exports, social and cultural events. This understanding reached on Saturday, when a delegation of ICCI under the leadership of its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari visited the Gulberg Green head Office to facilitate its management. At the outset, President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari while extending heartfelt congratulations to the management said that Intelligence Bureau Employee's Cooperative Housing Society (IBECHS) is playing an important role in catering the shelter needs of the IB employees as well as others. He said that ICCI is willing to coordinate with the IBECHS for joint ventures aiming to attract foreign investment saying that Islamabad is the most important diplomatic, governmental, parliamentary and commercial hub, but still lacks the facility of a splendid expo center and we wish to establish this Expo Centre in Gulberg Green, which is located at the most important juncture of the twin cities. He added that the partnership between ICCI and Gulberg Green for the Expo Centre will be a step in the right direction to improve the economy as this permanent facility would showcase the exportable products of Pakistan and boost exports. He said

that many countries including China and Turkey have increased their exports and tourism by organizing expos and hoped that this expo center would also help enhance exports and tourism in Pakistan. He said that Pakistan has great potential to boost exports and expressed hope that the expo center would contribute positively towards achieving this goal. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari expressed the hope that the joint venture between the two organizations will go a long way in attracting the foreign direct investments, much needed by the country. He said that once the agreement is finalized, we wish that this most important project of country's economy should be inaugurated by Prime Minister Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari went on to say that ICCI is planning to construct a hospital to extend the best medical facilities to the business community and the general public and that we will welcome the IBECHS to join hands with us in this project of public importance. He added that ICCI will be happy to collaborate with IBECHS in the construction of a stadium also as to promote healthy activities in the twin cities. President IBECHS Tariq Mehmood assured the delegation that Gulberg Green will continue its cooperation with the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce in the national development especially the business activities. He said that the Expo Centre as a joint venture of Gulberg Green and ICCI in the Federal Capital would play an important role in promoting trade and exports. He said that the Expo Centre would make the federal

capital a hub of business and investment activities and revive the economy. He said that Gulberg Green is situated at an ideal location and that the expo center would open up many new avenues for promotion of business, investment and exports. He said that construction of an Expo Center in Islamabad is a long-standing project of ICCI and Gulberg Green will fully cooperate with the Chamber in this regard. He assured that soon after the Eid ul Fitr a MoU regarding the construction of the expo center will be finalized between the two organizations and they wish to complete this important project as soon as possible. He also apprised the ICCI delegation about the IBECHS' pipelined mega projects which will also play role in accelerating the economic activities in the twin cities. He congratulated the President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and his entire team for envisioning the Expo Centre and other long-standing projects. On this occasion, ICCI Group Chairman Khalid Iqbal Malik Senior Vice President Faad Waheed, Vice President Engineer Azharul Islam, Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari also shared their insight and experiences and hailed the IBECHS for its role in the field. On this occasion from ICCI side Saif-ur-Rehman, Faizan Shahzad, Khalid Chaudhry, Naveed Malik and other executives were also present. Whereas from IBECHS side Ejaz Rasool Malik, Muhammad Ali, Awais Ayub, Sujaat Ullah Qureshi, Bilal Riaz Burki, Allah Rakha Nasir, Mohammad Zaheer, Masood Ahmed, Ch. Riffat and other executives were present.



LAHORE: People along with their luggage arrives at Railway Station to leave for their home towns to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr with their loved ones. —APP

Studies show strawberries potential in kidney health

ISLAMABAD: A recent research showed that strawberries were potentially beneficial in the quest for better kidney health. Studies published in the Clinical Kidney Journal have highlighted the positive impact of fiber-rich diets on the progression of chronic kidney diseases. Studies further underscore the potential benefits of incorporating strawberries into one's dietary routine for promising outcomes for individuals grappling with renal concerns. Addressing the critical link between diet and kidney health, researchers have honed in on strawberries for their low potassium content. Strawberries, with their naturally low potassium levels, thus present a favorable option for those seeking to bolster renal well-being. Furthermore, the antioxidant-rich profile of strawberries, comprising notable compounds such as vitamin C, anthocyanins, and flavonoids is beneficial in combating oxidative stress and inflammation, research suggested. These properties hold promise in not only slowing kidney disease progression but also in reducing the incidence of other chronic ailments. Noteworthy is the fiber content of strawberries, which aids in digestion and blood sugar regulation. The versatility of strawberries in culinary applications offers ample opportunities for integration into daily meals and snacks. —APP

Tobacco industry engaged in malicious campaign to hurt anti-tobacco narrative

ISLAMABAD: Serious concerns have been raised by public health activists in Pakistan over persistent attempts of the tobacco industry to derail tobacco control efforts in the country. This longstanding tactic by the tobacco industry to disrupt tobacco control efforts, particularly during pre-budget months, has once again come under scrutiny by public health advocates. According to activists, "The tobacco industry's misleading campaigns aim to distract the public, especially youth, policymakers, media, and the government of Pakistan from its ulterior motive: profit at the expense of public health." Expressing serious over the widespread dissemination of false statements by the tobacco industry, the health experts said that the propaganda was only aimed to serve to conceal the harm caused to the people of Pakistan. The tobacco industry has spared no effort to expand its business while jeopardizing the future of

Pakistani youth and children by enticing them with its harmful products. These efforts include attempts to block or weaken tobacco control measures such as taxes on cigarettes, smoke-free laws, sales to minors, and promotional and advertising restrictions. The tobacco industry's efforts to divert attention from public health initiatives include using celebrities and social media to attract youth with falsified claims, spreading false statistics and myths to downplay the harm caused by their products, and most recently maligning government departments and officials who support tobacco control. These attempts are driven by their economic interests in maintaining and expanding tobacco sales, despite the well-established health risks associated with tobacco use. However, public health advocates, researchers, and policymakers continue to work to counter these efforts and implement evidence-based strategies to

reduce tobacco use and its impact on public health. Tobacco control remains a critical issue in Pakistan, with smoking-related illnesses imposing a significant burden on healthcare systems and contributing to preventable deaths. Despite being a signatory to the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the number of smokers in Pakistan has reached up to 31 million. The cheap and easy affordability of tobacco means approximately 1200 children start smoking every day, and nearly 170,000 lose their lives every year due to tobacco-induced diseases. In response to these alarming developments, activists are calling on the government to remain vigilant and resolute in their efforts to combat the tobacco epidemic, ensuring the implementation of evidence-based policies that protect the health and well-being of all citizens. —DNA

IHC suggests a conference in Dr Aafia case

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) has suggested a conference amongst parties to move ahead in the Dr Aafia case. As per details, a single bench of IHC of Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaque Khan here the constitutional petition of Dr Fowzia Siddiqui and passed the following order: MoFA has provided an update dated 5.4.2024 (but again serially unnumbered) which was made part of the record. Dr. Saif learned amicus, appraised the court of his preliminary take on the case, in that his review did not return any firm or specific action taken by the government of Pakistan before the United Nations or what he called treaty-based actions. The ministry is required to address that point on the next date of hearing.

In the meantime, the office is required to prepare and send a copy set of the entire file and send those to Dr. Saif. If any documents are marked confidential and not yet cleared for general circulation, the office will hold those for the time being and obtain the direction of the court before sharing them with the learning amici. Ms. Janjua, the learned amicus, appraised the court of what she perceived to be lack of effective communication and appraised the court of the measures she has taken to the Pakistani lawyers based in the US potentially willing to assist pro bono in the matter has been delayed due to MoFA seeking clearance from the Ministry of Law and Justice and Attorney General's office as to whether it could proceed directly to instruct the lawyers in the United States. —APP

VDA gives 4000 saplings to Kalash students

CHITRAL: Kalash Valley Development Authority, distributed free saplings among the students of Government High School Bron Bomburit in order to make the area green. Director General KVDA Minhasuddin was the guest on this occasion. In this regard, a brief event was also organized in High School Bron, in which the principal of the school and other experts highlighted the importance and benefits of trees and plants. In the plantation drive, the forest department provided free saplings with the support of a non-governmental organization. A total of 25000 sap-

lings were distributed free in the same school. Speaking on this occasion, Director General Minhasuddin said that apart from this, he also distributed 700 fruit trees to the people for free and told the local people about their importance so that they not only plant these plants but also cultivate them with care. Minhasuddin further said that Chitral is a dry zone with no monsoon rains, due to which people often face massive loss of life and property in case of floods. It was clear to the school children and teachers in this event that if they plant more trees, they can avoid

the flood damage, as trees act as a natural check dam, he said. School Principal Sanaulah said "we have to educate our younger generation about the importance of plants for their healthier lives". Owais Ahmed, Project Manager said that they have distributed more than 4000 free plants in Kalash Valley and educated the children about the benefits and importance of these plants. "One plant provides us with more than Rs. 70,000 of free oxygen in a year and these plants grow up and have a very positive impact on our environment and can keep Chitral green and clean", he added. —APP



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displaying and selling watermelon to customers at his roadside setup in Federal Capital. —APP

Pakistani Scholar Wins Smiley Charity Award 2024

The project sheds light on the hardships faced by the most vulnerable populations across 14 countries due to soaring inflation in essential commodities such as food, fertilizer, water, and petroleum products

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: An award winning project bagging top position in prestigious Smiley Charity Awards 2024 in the International Impact Category is majorly contributed by a Pakistani scholar, Aftab Alam Khan. Held annually in London, the British awards ceremony celebrates cause-based storytelling, showcasing films that inspire action and awareness for various social causes. The project sheds light on the hardships faced by the most vulnerable populations across 14 countries due to soaring inflation in essential commodities such as food, fertilizer, water, and petroleum products. The short film based on the research won the prestigious Smiley Charity Awards 2024 in the International Impact Category on March 20, 2024, says a press

release issued here on Sunday. Scholar from Pakistan, Aftab Alam Khan made leading contribution in the award-winning project by authoring report titled 'The Human Costs of the Food Crisis: How Price Spikes are Wreaking Havoc Across the Globe'. The event, hosted at Leicester Square's ODEON Luxe, London, also drew a global audience of over 250 thousand viewers via live stream. The Smiley Charity Film Awards are hailed as the "Oscars for the charity sector, the statement added. Aftab Alam Khan is a Chevening Scholar and international expert in climate change, social development, and food security. He has developed climate-resilient solutions across 35 countries and has advised governments in Pakistan, Indonesia, and South Africa. Besides motivating students to conduct their theses on climate change, Mr Khan has contributed to integrating climate change into

university curricula. He is a regular speaker on national and international platforms and has conducted extensive training sessions for youth, university professors, and personnel from the government, private sector, and NGOs. Mr. Khan also conducted research projects on the nexus of climate-water-food-energy and designed successful climate-resilient economic projects for rural women. Spanning over 14 countries, the research underscores the disproportionate impact of price hikes on the most marginalized communities, particularly women and girls. The study reveals that skyrocketing prices have led to higher school dropout rates for children as parents struggle to afford school fees and start relying on child labor to support their livelihoods. The inflation has also resulted in a surge in child marriage rates, a decline in women's health,


and worsening mental well-being. Economic pressures stemming from price hikes have forced families to shift to low-quality food and communities have gone into debt. The report emphasizes that these communities are grappling with compounded crises, including climate disasters, the Ukraine conflict, COVID-19, debt stress, currency depreciation as well as local and regional conflicts. The report also made policy recommendations including the Committee on World Food Security - housed at the UNFAO, should play a greater role in devising policy options for the alarming situation highlighted in the report. National governments should be supported by the United Nations, other international institutions, and donor countries to put in place and strengthen their social protection and public services to cushion the impact of price increases on households.

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Lahore
P.O. Gulberg Centre,
Main Boulevard, Lahore.
Tel: (+92 42) 3579881, 35791085
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Peshawar
Office No. C-8, 3rd Floor, Zameer Plaza,
Lafiq Road, Ring Road, Peshawar.
Tel: (+92 91) 252779
Fax: (+92 91) 2528089
Email: peshawar@freelinemovers.com

Kabul
House #4, Street #4,
Darul Afsar Road, Doha-Han,
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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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Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.1122
& Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police...9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
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PIA Cargo.....9280979
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WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Safe City Project to be fully operational by May

Regional Police Officer (RPO) Babar Sarfraz Alpa Visits RCCI

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Regional Police Officer (RPO) Babar Sarfraz Alpa visited Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI). President RCCI and Chairman Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) Saqib Rafiq along with Group Leader RCCI Sohail Altaf welcomed the RPO and discussed the issues related to the business community of Rawalpindi. President also congratulated the RPO on taking charge. The RPO assured that his office is available at all times. The Safe City project will be fully operational by the end of May, which will help in curbing car and motorcycle snatching, street crime and robbery. The establishment of law and order in the city is the top priority of his office as law and order is very important in the promotion of business activities and investment. He said that collective and joint efforts are required to maintain the law and order issues and also appreciated the recommendations for addressing encroachment and traffic congestion in the city. A joint meeting will be held after eid in this regard, he added. RPO welcomed the Police Trader Liaison Committee at police stations and said



that it will help in resolving disputes. RPO also lauded Chairman RWMC and President RCCI for the efforts being carried out for the clean Rawalpindi. President

Saqib Rafiq in his remarks said that Rawalpindi city has become densely populated due to growth and migration, we need additional police force and police stations.

Senior Vice President RCCI Mr. Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, distinguished RCCI members, President Markazi Anjuman Tajran Rawalpindi Mr. Shahid Ghafoor

Paracha, President Rawalpindi Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries/VP FPCCI Mr. Tariq Jadoon, among others were also present in the meeting.

Speakers show grave concern over influencing judiciary

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The speakers at the Devcom-Pakistan 'Public Forum' urge the Executive to take all possible measures to stop spy agencies undue fiddling and influence on the rule of law, saying the judiciary is the last hope of justice against all forms of tyrannies in the society. They said the spy agencies influencing or interfering with the judiciary has raised potential dangers to the principles of justice, democracy, and the rule of law. While intelligence agencies may play a crucial role in national security and gathering intelligence to protect citizens, their involvement in judicial matters is an attempt to undermine the independence of the judiciary, one of the cornerstones of a democratic society. Any form of interference from spy agencies could compromise this independence, leading to biased judgments or decisions that may serve the interests of the Establishment rather than upholding the rule of law. The Devcom-Pakistan weekly online public discussion was organized on Saturday with the keynote speech by former Senator Farhatullah Babar, the Board Member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). The other guest speakers included Vice Chancellor Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) Dr. Nadeem ul Haq, Executive Director Devcom-Pakistan Munir Ahmed, development expert Qaiser Aijaz, journalist Sadia Rasheed, and social worker Amina Sadaf. Farhatullah Babar said that independence of judiciary is enshrined in all the three constitutions of 1956, 1962 and 1973 and enhanced by jurisdiction like the Al-Jehad Trust case the judiciary has security of tenure, adequate emoluments & pensions and exemption from accountability by the executive, elements

necessary for its independence. However, judiciary independence has been undermined by repeated martial laws on the one hand and by pliant and compromised PCO judges who readily took oath of allegiance to the dictator on the other, he said. Farhatullah Babar said the pliant and PCO judges legitimized repeated military interventions, abrogation of constitutions, murder of elected Prime Minister, dissolution of assemblies and political parties and much worse, not once but many times over. The judges-general nexus has been the greatest undermined independence of judiciary more than anything else. He said however it is reassuring that now the judges appeared to jettison the past as evident from the recent verdict in the ZAB case and the letter written by 6 IHC judges calling it "a most welcomed step in course correction". "The judiciary needs to be supported in this by all other

institutions taking similar steps for course correction. The letter by the judges is also an opportunity to politicians, the generals, media and the people to correct their course, he said. He said that the six judges had taken a bold step in exposing the agencies who undermined their independence. Now the political parties should make legislation defining the mandate of the intelligence agencies to end their meddling. He said that a Bill to make legislation for ISI was endorsed by the Senate sometime back. All political parties must join hands in getting that bill passed, he said. He also called for implementation of the SC verdicts of 2012 in Asghar Khan case and 2019 in Faizabad dharna case and to hold accountable those in the agencies who manipulated public mandate and indulged in politics in violation of their oath. Not doing so will be a huge disservice to the country, he said.

NEPRA disposed of 17,545 consumers' complaints

ISLAMABAD: The Consumer Affairs Department of National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) disposed of, 17,545 complaints of electricity consumers against various power distribution companies (DISCOs) during the last fiscal year 2022-23 while 1,294 were still under process. According to official data, the authority received a total of 18,839 complaints from the electricity consumers against various DISCOs during the fiscal year 2022-23. As per breakup, out of total, the head office received 2,209 consumers' complaints against various DISCOs while the regional offices received 16,630 complaints during the last fiscal year. Similarly, the head office disposed of a total of 1,946 complaint while the regional offices disposed off 15,599 complaints of consumers during the said period. The head office received a total of 313 complaints against Islamabad Electric Supply Company, 268 Peshawar Electric Supply Company, 223 Hyderabad Electric Supply Company, 419 K-Electric, 133 Sukkur Electric Supply Company, 184 Multan Electric Supply Company, 176 Lahore Electric Supply Company, 125 Faisalabad Electric Supply Company, 4 Quetta Electric and 3 Tribal Electric Supply Company while 255 complaints were received through Pakistan Citizen Portal during the said period. It is pertinent to mention here that NEPRA has established 10 Regional Offices across various cities dedicated to the receipt and processing of the consumers complaints for enhancing consumer satisfaction. Furthermore, a significant number of complaints are also received through Pakistan's Citizens Portal for resolution.—DNA

Court Notice

In the court of Medum Rabia Tarif Civil Judge Gujrat

Title: Rehmat Khan. Versus Muhammad Nawaz etc.

Notice to: 3A-Saad Ghafoor Son, 3B-Shanza Ghafoor Daughter Muhammad Nazir urf Ghafoor, 5A-Imran Anwar, 5B-Noman Anwar Sons Muhammad Anwar cast Gujrat R/o. village Banth P.O. Daulat Nagar Tehsil & District Gujrat. Suit for Declaration with permanent injunction etc.

Whereas in the above mentioned case it has been proved to the satisfaction of the court that the above mentioned defendants are not served in ordinary way. It is therefore proclaimed under order 5 rule 20 CPC that if the said defendants will not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8 AM on 24-04-2024, otherwise case will be decided ex party.

Court Notice

In the court of Muhammad Asif Civil Judge Gujrat

Title: Ehtesham Zamir Shah etc. Versus Syed Sadiq Ali etc.

Notice to: 1-Syed Sadiq Ali S/o. Syed Muhammad Kamal Shah R/o. Suhawa Dilwana Tehsil & Distt Mandi Bahaudin. 2-Syed Sibat Husnain S/o. Syed Muzfar Hussain R/o. Ditewal Tehsil & Distt. Gujrat.

Suit for Application under section 94/151 CPC Whereas in the above mentioned case it has been proved to the satisfaction of the court that the above mentioned defendants are not served in ordinary way. It is therefore proclaimed under order 5 rule 20 CPC that if the said defendants will not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8 AM on 15-04-2024, otherwise case will be decided ex party.

IRSA releases 81,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD :Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 81,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 84,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1419.29 feet and was 21.29 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet.—APP



RAWALPINDI: Customers taking interest in arts and crafts bazaar in Rawalpindi. —DNA

Message of the Prime Minister on World Health Day 2024

Towards our destination of a healthier nation, I once again reiterate the commitment to transform Pakistan's healthcare sector at all levels that will ensure that each and every Pakistani has access to quality healthcare

ISLAMABAD: On this World Health Day 2024, I renew the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to provide and ensure health facilities for all of our population. This year's theme "My health, my right" aptly encapsulates every citizen's right to quality health services. In order to ensure health for all and as promised to the nation in the PMLN manifesto, our focus would remain on improving primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare, medical education, preventive healthcare and improved governance. We will partner and encourage provincial governments to expand and upgrade health facilities, launch mobile health clinics for enhanced access, re-energize immunization and improve mental health services. The establishment and operationalization of Medical City, establishment of Cancer Care Hospital and establishment of Pakistan Kidney & Liver Institute facilities in each province remains our key priority. We take pride in having launched the Health Card during PMLN's 2013-18 tenure. We remain committed to universal health coverage and universal health insurance for our population, particularly providing free-of-cost healthcare services to low and middle-income families. On this World Health Day, I applaud the services of our health professionals, paramedical staff, nurses, and other health workers who selflessly work day and night to provide health services to the nation. Towards our destination of a healthier nation, I once again reiterate the commitment to transform Pakistan's healthcare sector at all levels that will ensure that each and every Pakistani has access to quality healthcare.—DNA

ICP launches search and combing operation

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Sunday jointly conducted a search and combing operation within Secretariat police station jurisdiction. A public relations officer said that, following the special directives of SSP (CTD) the search and combing operations are being conducted in different areas of the city, to ensure the safety and security of the Islamabad citizens. Following these orders, a search and combing operation was conducted in different areas of Secretariat police station by CTD and local police teams. During the search and combing operation 61 suspicious persons.—APP



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Briefs

FRIA stresses need for a revisit of economic policies

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ferozpur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) senior vice chairman Shahbaz Aslam has stressed the need for a revisit of the economic policies, as the economic indicators throughout the previous fiscal year remained very depressed amidst high inflation, low exports, depleting foreign reserves and continued uncertain position of the local currency. Shahbaz Aslam, who is also the PIAF senior leader, said that almost all indicators of the economy continued to show poor performance, including volatile exchange rate, unprecedented hike in markup rate, repeated increases in electricity rates, gas shortage, price spiral, mismanagement and bad governance, becoming the hallmarks of the government. He said that massive fall of rupee value continued to damage the economy, as the rupee witnessed a huge depreciation; one of the highest devaluations of local currency in Pakistan's history in this period. He urged the policy makers to concentrate on increasing tax-to-GDP ratio which was the lowest in Pakistan in the region in 2023.

BMP emphasizes need for affordable energy alternatives

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel has warned that the continued escalation of energy prices could result in the closure of numerous industries, amplifying unemployment rates and diminishing Pakistan's export capabilities, appealing to the government to reverse the decision promptly and establish a fixed gas price for industries. The FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar, emphasizing the need for the government to explore and provide affordable energy alternatives for the industry, stressed that such measures are crucial for ensuring the competitiveness of Pakistani products in the global market. As the industrial sector grapples with the ramifications of the gas price hike, the BMP leader's stance advocates for the preservation of industrial stability and the prevention of potential economic setbacks for Pakistan. He said that the repeated increase in the gas and electricity prices to an unbearable level by the government has left the trade and industry uncompetitive; blaming it for trapping the country in the IMF plans.

Walton Tobacco demanded to restore employment of 400 workers

ISLAMABAD: Walton Tobacco Company said that illegally sealing of company before Eid has left over 400 workers unemployed and demanded the Azad Kashmir government for action. Addressing a press conference at Kashmir Press Club, Walton Tobacco Company's spokesperson Arif Zia urged the authorities concerned to immediately open the company to restore livelihood of hundreds of employees. The spokesperson was also accompanied by Muhammad Ali and Omar Ahmed on the occasion. They informed the media that Walton Tobacco was the highest taxpayers in Kashmir, contributing Rs 240 million every month. The company has been raided illegally, products seized, and were threatened with serious consequences by the authorities, they highlighted. They were of the view that we were doing business and paying taxes for last 18 years.—DNA

Broadening of tax net need of hour: ICCI chief

He added that tax net has to be broadened for the economic development of the country but business community must not be unduly disturbed/harass and the business leaders as well as Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry must also be taken into confidence before going for any such significant decision

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has welcomed the Federal Board of Revenue's 'Tajir Dost Scheme' under which the trader would register themselves through Tajir Dost scheme in Tax Asaan App through their mobile phones or FBR's web portal or by visiting FBR's tax facilitation centers. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the business community always remained tax compliant and favors broadening of tax net to pull the country out of the economic crunch. However, he emphasized that the tax should be simplified and the shopkeepers should be given facilities and have to be made to file a single page return once in a year. He added that tax net has to be broadened for the economic development of the country but business community must not be unduly disturbed/harass and the business leaders as well as Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry must also be taken into confidence before going for any such significant decision. The ICCI President said economic problems cannot be resolved until the problems of the business community are amicably resolved and for this purpose the government should introduce measures to enhance the confidence of the business community.



Pakistan, China to promote cooperation on legal affairs

Current legal cooperation between China and Pakistan is mainly based on specific business cooperation between law firms and lawyers, mainly in handling cases and specific non-litigation business

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A key figure in bridging legal and academic ties between China and Pakistan, Cheng Deyong, Managing Director of Pakistan ZAO Law LLP and legal advisor to the Consulate General of China in Lahore, has been appointed as the legal advisor to the Consulate General of China in Karachi with a 2-year term. "As strategic hubs for diplomatic activities between China and Pakistan, Chinese Consulates play a crucial role in facilitating communication, promoting cultural exchanges, and strengthening economic ties. I am honored to take on this role and look forward to making due contribution to the strengthen-

ing of legal ties between the two countries," said Cheng. According to Gwadar Pro, Cheng actively assisted in promoting the cooperation between the Law School of Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu, Sichuan, China and the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan, and between Sichuan Lawyers Association and Islamabad Lawyers Association, etc. These collaborations have played a positive role in promoting the training of legal talents, legal exchanges and continuous improvement of foreign-related legal services. However, current legal cooperation between China and Pakistan is mainly based on specific business cooperation

between law firms and lawyers, mainly in handling cases and specific non-litigation business. The scope of legal cooperation between China and Pakistan is insufficient to meet the economic and personnel needs of the two countries. Another most prominent challenge is the communication and understanding difficulties caused by cultural differences and differences in legal systems. To address the issue, he suggested that the two sides further strengthen cooperation in personnel training and technical support, and promote the sharing and exchange of judicial resources. Working with lawyers and experts from Supreme Court Bar and High Court Bar in Pakistan, ZAO is building a local team of

professional lawyers in Pakistan covering the practices in the country's major cities. Cheng also called on more lawyers, law schools, bar associations, arbitration bodies and other relevant departments to jointly promote Sino-Pakistani legal cooperation. "Improving the legal awareness and literacy of citizens of the two countries through organizing various publicity and education activities will inject new impetus into the development of bilateral relations. Meanwhile, the two sides can actively participate in international events such as the International Forum on the rule of law and contribute wisdom and strength to promoting the development of global rule of law," he added.

Cultural festivals contribute to economic development

ISLAMABAD: This year too, the Pakistan Cultural Festival is being celebrated by one of the oldest educational institutions of the Punjab provincial capital with same traditional zeal and enthusiasm at the end of the current month, which would be a blend of competitive enthusiasm and impressive learning. The cultural festivals contribute to the economic development of a region by creating cultural resources, promoting tourism, and generating economic value through branding and accessibility, said Mr. Maxwell Shanti, the principal of the historical St. Anthony's High School. Maxwell Shanti, who has given the school a new look with his hard work and outstanding performance, said in a statement that the school's students will display the vibrant colors and diverse culture of their country through stunning performances of folk songs and delivering speeches on this important matter. The Principal, who is running simultaneously the main campus on Lawrence Road as well as the Faisal Town branch of St. Anthony's School, added that the attired in colorful costumes of their respective provinces, the young and talented students will mesmerize the audience with their performances of traditional and folk songs. The students will also set up a stall, displaying various traditional items, and offering food. Mr. Shanti observed that the Cultural Festival embodies St. Anthony's commitment to deliver an unforgettable and captivating experience, combining the thrill of competition with the richness of cultural diversity. While sharing his thoughts, he shared the significance of distinct values of acceptance, peace, tolerance and respect in Pakistani culture and the way they have evolved over a period of time. He mentioned that the recognition of diversity on economic, political and social basis is very important for the inclusion of different genders, cultures and ethnicities at institutions as well as at family level for the progress of overall nation and the country. With this, the Principal shared the relevance of culture of an institution and organization with the performance of people. He gave an important message to the students to develop conducive environment around them.—DNA

Reaping bounties as Ramadan culminates

ISLAMABAD: As the holy month of Ramadan culminates with all its bounties, the faithful sought Allah's benediction Saturday night - during Laylatul Qadar (The Night of Decree) - 27th night of Ramadan. It was one of the series of five Nights of Decree falling during last Ashra of Ramadan - a night better than thousands months worshipping and the most important segment of an Ashra defined for seeking Allah's blessings (Jannah) and protection from Hell. Starting from the first decade of blessing and benediction and then to second decade of forgiveness, this month culminates with salvage from Hell during last decade and entering one of Allah's favorite Jannah (Paradise).

Additional to the Laylatul Qadr - also known as the Night of Power or the Night of Destiny - and besides all other charity and prayers - Aitkaaf (seclusion) is another hallmark of this decade. Forgoing their families and societal duties, the faithful cut off themselves from everybody to pray in seclusion in an artificially erected cabin at a Mosque to seek forgiveness and benediction of Allah Almighty. This is surely the peak of worshiping during this holy month when it is the last decade; there is Laylatul Qadr in odd nights; and then there is somebody restricting himself to seclusion diligently searching Allah's benediction and blessings. "We wait this month whole of year.

Kyrgyz businessmen want to collaborate with Pakistani counterparts, says Meher Kashif

ISLAMABAD: Honorary Consul of Kyrgyzstan, Meher Kashif Younis said on Sunday that tremendous positive response from Kyrgyzstan entrepreneurs to Pakistani counterpart underscores the potential for deeper economic ties between the two countries. Sharing the outcome of his recent two-week long visit to Kyrgyzstan with a delegation of exporters and importers led by Chaudhry Faran Shahid Arain here, he said the Pakistani trade delegation under his leadership remained engaged in a series of fruitful and result-oriented meetings with representatives from both the private and public sectors. The primary focus was on exploring avenues for cooperation in key sectors, notably pharmaceuticals.—DNA

Tax-to-GDP Ratio should be increased: Atif Ikram

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has emphasized that, while FPCCI supports the efforts to increase tax-to-GDP ratio, it has to be achieved through broadening of tax base and simplification of the taxation system - rather than further squeezing the already taxed. The only pragmatic approach to achieve tax-to-GDP ratio of 15 percent in the next 5 years is to add 1.5 to 2 million new taxpayers in the tax-net, he added. Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh maintained that the tax and FBR reforms should not be attempted in a consultation-less manner as these kinds of efforts have been grossly unsuccessful multiple times in the past; and, the successive governments resorted to the regressive and anti-business measures of further increasing the taxes on existing filers. Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh stressed a three-pronged strategy to broaden the tax base: (i) end-to-end digitalization of the taxation system to bring transparency & fairness (ii) FBR reforms in consultation with the business community in light of the ground realities (iii) an end to maladministration & harassment of trade & industry at the hands of taxation machinery. FPCCI Chief stated that the business, industry and trade community understands the need for the country to enter into a new, expanded and longer-term IMF program; which will entail, as per past practice, imposition of more taxes - however, FPCCI wants to make it clear that last few years have been unprecedentedly difficult for trade and industry due to COVID, floods, cost of doing business, exchange rate volatility; and, incremental rounds of increase in electricity, gas and petroleum prices. Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh apprised that the core inflation has come down to 12.8 percent and headline inflation recorded at 20.7 percent in the month of March 2024; which is the lowest in 22 months; and, the trajectory is categorically showing a downward trend for the months to come.—DNA

IFA inspects 1291 food outlets, issues fines worth Rs 2.8 mln

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Director Operations (DDO) of Islamabad Food Authority (IFA), Dr. Tahira Saddique, while sharing a monthly report of the authority, stated that the authority inspected 1,291 food outlets and imposed fines totaling Rs 2.8 million on errant shopkeepers found flouting regulations. Talking to APP, she said that with an unwavering commitment to quality assurance, the authority's latest report underscored its relentless pursuit of adherence to food safety standards across the Federal Capital. On the directions of Director Food, Irfan Nawaz Memon, she accompanied by the Food Safety Teams (FSTs) inspected 1,291 establishments.—APP

Political consensus needed to steer country out of crisis

STAFF REPORT



ISLAMABAD: Renowned social worker, economic expert, and political figure from Pakistan, 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 Pakistan to overcome current challenges, all stakeholders must unite on one platform. All political parties need to set aside their vested interests and focus solely on the betterment of Pakistan. Economic, security, and other issues need to be addressed

collectively. Everyone needs to sit together and deliberate on the long-term measures because short-term actions will now be difficult. In my opinion, no single party can rescue the country from any crisis. Everyone needs to come together, united, and work for the country's broader interests beyond their party agendas. Parties should keep their personal interests aside and focus their politics separately for the wider benefits of the country, offering their suggestions and working towards progress. To pull the country out of the current crisis, we need to focus on the economy, security issues, peace, and agriculture. There is a need to increase the support price of wheat

set by the government. President Zardari's formula of providing facilities to farmers will attract them to cultivation. If the price is low, farmers will not turn to cultivation. Currently, the support price of wheat in Punjab, set at 3900 rupees, is very low because the farmer's cost per month goes up to 4500 rupees. Consequently, farmers are already in losses, and problems arise from the purchase of wheat, middlemen, and issues with companies like Pasco, etc. He said that as 75% of Pakistan's dependency lies on agricultural production, providing farmers with maximum facilities holds the key to a better future. Efforts should be made to focus on crops that use less water.

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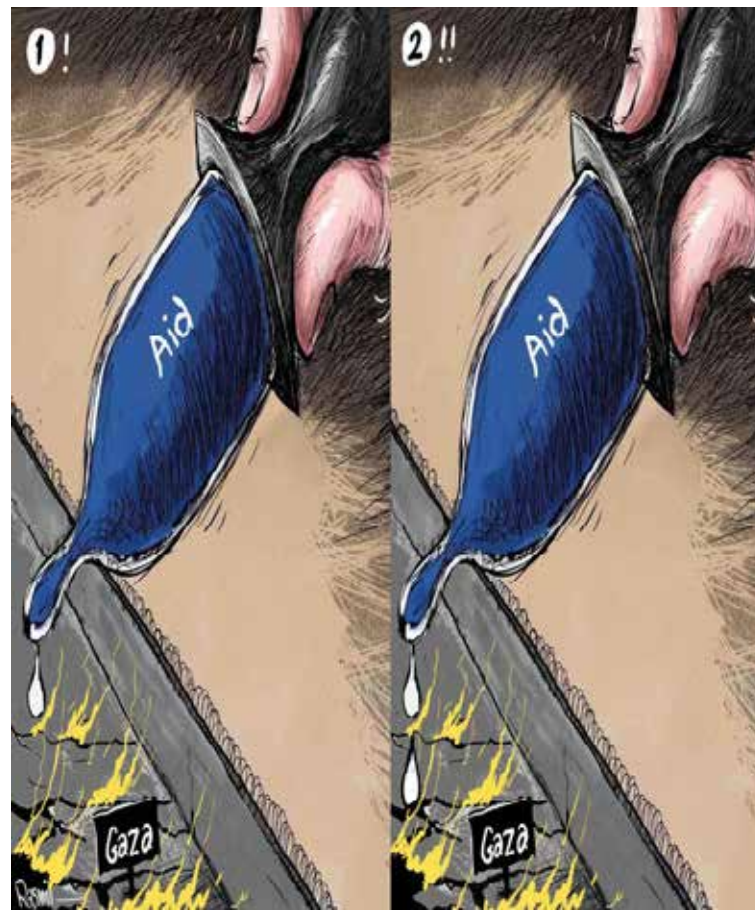
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Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

Environmental destruction in Gaza

THE atrocities committed by Israeli forces in Gaza bear resemblance to the relentless bombardment of German cities by coalition forces during World War II. In less than seven weeks, from October to December, the occupation forces dropped a staggering 30,000 explosives in Gaza. This is equal to the overall quantity of bombs dropped by US-UK forces during their invasion of Iraq in 2003. Not only did the Zionist state's ceaseless bombardment result in the deaths of over 32,000 Gazans and the entrapment of scores of bodies beneath the debris of destroyed structures, but it also inflicted unprecedented damage on the environment. Munitions and toxins contaminate the soil and groundwater, reducing olive plantations to compacted earth, clogging the sea with sewage and garbage, and polluting the air with smoke and particulate matter. The situation in Gaza is dire, and environmental organizations are showing concerns regarding the catastrophic impacts on Gaza's ecosystems and biodiversity. Demands have arisen to classify this devastation as "ecocide" and potentially investigate it as a war crime. The environmental and civilian consequences in Gaza, while not precisely comparable to the devastation of World War II, are alarming and significant. UNEP is unable to investigate. Although the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) is digging deep into the environmental impact of the war in Gaza to get a clear picture of the sky-high levels of land, soil, and water pollution, it hasn't been able to hit the ground running with field-based surveys in Gaza due to "Israel's" non-stop attacks on civilian targets, including hospitals and residential places. In late January, UNEP's executive director, Inger Andersen, said during a speech that they had given the green light to an official request from the State of Palestine to conduct an environmental impact assessment in Gaza. Last month, Andersen demonstrated UNEP's unwavering commitment during the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi, where she met Dr. Nisreen Al-Tamimi, the chairperson of the Environment Quality Authority of the State of Palestine. The stockpiles in question have brought the Biden administration into greater scrutiny, coinciding with mounting pressure over its endorsement of "Israel's" bombardment of Gaza. The indiscriminate nature of "Israel's" bombardment of Gaza is a subject of widespread concern. The US government is currently facing inquiries about the quantities and types of weapons it supplies to "Israel" and the proportion that is available through the hidden, pre-positioned stockpile. A White House proposal sought to loosen restrictions on the types of weapons placed in the stockpile, exempt spending limits on its replenishment, and grant the Pentagon more latitude in transferring items from the arsenal of perturbed legislators in Washington. In protest of Washington's continued lethal assistance to "Israel", Josh Paul resigned from his position at the State Department. He stated that the proposed changes to the stockpile were part of an effort by the Biden administration to find new methods to supply "Israel".



Egypt-Turkiye rapprochement and Libya

THE rapprochement between Turkiye and Egypt, after years of frigid relations, heralds a new era of regional diplomacy, with consequential ripples across the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. The detente, crystallized by a series of diplomatic exchanges and culminating in a significant state visit by Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Egypt, marks a turning of the page on bilateral tensions. This warming of relations between Cairo and Ankara is especially significant for Libya, a nation that has been afflicted by internal divisions and foreign meddling since the fall of Muammar Qaddafi in 2011. The Egypt-Turkiye rift has had profound implications for Libya, partly contributing to the country's east-west leadership divide amid the complex interplay of geopolitical interests and regional dynamics. Both countries have become involved in Libya, with differing objectives and methods. Turkiye's support for the UN-recognized Government of National Accord has been multifaceted, including military assistance, the deployment of Syrian mercenaries, and diplomatic backing. This support culminated in a maritime delimitation deal, signed by Ankara and the GNA in 2019 with the aim of securing Turkiye's interests in western Libya and parts of the Eastern Mediterranean. Military reinforcements provided by Turkiye, particularly ahead of the GNA's counteroffensive in 2020, proved crucial in helping to repel the advance of the rival Libyan National Army toward Tripoli, leading to an enduring strategic stalemate. Egypt, meanwhile, has primarily backed the LNA, led by Khalifa Haftar, through the provision of military aid and political support. Cairo's involvement is driven by concerns about border security, Islamist militants, and a desire for a friendly regime in eastern Libya. Its support for the LNA includes a declaration that Sirte, a strategically located city, represents a "red line" for Egyptian national security, and authorization for troop deployments to support the LNA. This backing is also rooted in a broader regional strategy to contain Islamist militancy, which Cairo perceives as a threat to domestic stability. The involvement of Egypt and Turkiye is just one aspect of the broader proxy dimensions to Libya's internal struggles, with each country supporting its respective allies through military, logistical, and diplomatic means. This external support has not only exacerbated Libya's internal fragmentation, it has also complicated peace efforts by reinforcing the military and political divisions between the GNA in the west and the LNA in the east. The deadlock has been further cemented by the strategic importance of Libya's vast oil and gas resources, over which both rival factions seek control, with significant implications for the nation's long-term economic stability and sovereignty. Against this backdrop, Egypt-Turkiye rapprochement presents an incredible opportunity for the two nations to recalibrate their roles amid geopolitical realignments and shared concerns, potentially fostering an environment more conducive to Libya's future reconciliation. The political fragmentation in Libya, made worse by the postponement of elections, is at a critical juncture where joint mediation by Egypt and Turkiye could help foster unity and stability.

“Extrajudicial Killing: Responding to India’s actions”

Qamar Bashir



The Guardian report garnered significant attention in Pakistani media, becoming the main topic of prime-time talk shows, however, the Pakistani government did not provide its official response until the next day, when the Foreign Office spokesperson issued a detailed press release beginning with customary rhetoric, but later offered specific details about two assassinations: that of Shahid Latif and Mohammad Riaz. In both cases, a RAW agent stationed abroad recruited a professional killer in Pakistan, who then assembled a team of target killers responsible for targeted assassination

IN January 2024, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary made a significant revelation, alleging that India had orchestrated at least 12 extrajudicial killings in Pakistan linked to the Kashmir cause and the Khalistan movement. This disclosure marked the third high-profile accusation against India following similar allegations involving Canada and the United States. By engaging in these unlawful acts, India has aligned itself with countries like the USA, Russia, and Israel, known for eliminating adversaries both domestically and internationally with impunity. The statement made by Pakistan's Foreign Secretary made in January this year did not gain significant traction and was dismissed within and outside the country as routine accusations exchanged between the two countries for political point-scoring, lacking substantial evidence. The Foreign Secretary's statement was vindicated when similar allegations were corroborated by an investigative report by "The Guardian," on April 4, 2024 disclosing that nearly 20 killings in Pakistan since 2020 were attributed to India. The Guardian report was authenticated when in a revealing interview with CNN, Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh admitted to carrying out extrajudicial killings and warned of similar actions in Pakistan if terrorists sought refuge there after committing acts of terrorism. While aimed at Pakistan, this admission hinted at India's readiness to extend such operations across international borders, including in the territories of influential nations like the USA and Canada." The narrative of the Indian espionage agency was compelling. This is how the narrative unfolds. India has successfully managed the rebellion and insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir and has, for the most part, tightened its grip over Sikh separatists inside the nation. However, neutralizing their handlers—who were mostly based in Pakistan, the US, and Canada—was a more pressing issue. To resolve the issue, the Indian government authorized RAW to conduct covert operations to kill firebrand Sikh and Kashmiri leaders and handlers, in the US, Canada, and Pakistan motivated by the KGB, Mossad, and CIA, which are notorious for eliminating its enemies abroad. The Raw launched strikes in three distinct nations as part of Compliance. It eliminated Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a well-known Sikh activist who was shot and killed in Vancouver, Canada, in September of 2023. On 30 Nov, 2023, RAW enlisted the help of a hitman in New York to murder Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, another Sikh activist, but

before the killer had accomplished the task, the US security forces frustrated the attack. The Raw was particularly careful while targeting Pakistan. It first created sleeper cells in the UAE, later established a system to finance the killing spree through Dubai, Nepal, and Mauritius. Later, it cultivated local criminals, Afghan illegal aliens, and Jihadis to carry out the assassinations of individuals primarily connected to Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, allegedly linked with masterminding high profile terrorist attacks inside India. The narrative, while seemingly logical and compelling, ultimately failed to achieve its objectives in any of the three cases. Canada and the United States reacted assertively, issuing stern warnings to India and demanding accountability for the masterminds, financiers, and RAW operatives involved in the killings. Canada went a step further by expelling the Indian Ambassador and downgrading diplomatic and economic ties. This action could potentially jeopardize Canadian Investment of \$3,754.05 Mn and Bilateral trade of \$9.9 Bn in 2022 with India. Similarly, strained relations with the United States will impact Indian exports of \$118.8 billion and US investments totaling \$63.03 billion. The Guardian report garnered significant attention in Pakistani media, becoming the main topic of prime-time talk shows, however, the Pakistani government did not provide its official response until the next day, when the Foreign Office spokesperson issued a detailed press release beginning with customary rhetoric, but later offered specific details about two assassinations: that of Shahid Latif and Mohammad Riaz. In both cases, a RAW agent stationed abroad recruited a professional killer in Pakistan, who then assembled a team of target killers responsible for targeted assassination. In both the cases, assassins were apprehended, leading to the disclosure of the entire plan to Pakistani authorities. The Press Release primarily drafted for consumption of the media ended with a safe, calibrated and measured customary response, where it condemned India, charged it for breaking the United Nations Charter, violating the sovereignty and integrity of Pakistan and international diplomatic norms, and calling on the international community for collective action to hold India accountable. However, it fell short of outlining Pakistan's concrete counteractions. While

behind closed doors, the government must be thinking of adopting a firm and strategic approach, drawing inspiration from the responses of Canada and the United States to similar incidents and giving a befitting response to India. Though the diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan have already been downgraded, however, similar to Canada's expulsion of the Indian Ambassador and reduction of diplomatic ties, Pakistan may be considering diplomatic measures to register its protest. Pakistan-India economic ties have already been downgraded, and this development has impeded any possible efforts through formal or informal channels to reconnect any meaningful trade, investment and business ties. Pakistan must be actively engaging with the international community, particularly through the United Nations and other multilateral forums, to raise awareness and seek support for holding India accountable for its actions. This could involve filing formal complaints or seeking resolutions condemning India's violation of Pakistan's sovereignty. The Pakistani ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) on its part must be conducting thorough investigations to uncover any other instances of foreign interference or covert operations on Pakistani soil. This could involve strengthening counterintelligence measures and monitoring suspicious activities more closely and developing appropriate, proportional and effective countermeasures as deterrent to any such attack in future. While maintaining restraint and prioritizing de-escalation, the Pakistani armed forces must have already increased vigilance and readiness to defend the country's sovereignty against potential threats or provocations. This may have included enhancing border security, and maintaining preparedness to respond effectively to any hostile actions, similar to the responses against past airspace violations by India, Iran, and Afghanistan. Pakistan's response should be calculated, strategic, and focused on exposing India's misconduct on the international stage while ensuring the protection of Pakistan's national interests and security besides increasing collaboration with allied nations and multiplying diplomatic efforts aimed at garnering support and achieving accountability for India's extrajudicial actions.

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

Alexei Navalny's journey in Russian politics

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Due to critic of the Russian government he faced imprisonment and was sent to a prison in the Russian Arctic after being poisoned the year before. The circumstances surrounding his demise raise questions, as the cause of death was undisclosed, and the customary practice of handing over the body for burial to family members was not followed

OPPOSITION parties in Russia operate within a challenging political landscape dominated by the ruling United Russia party and President Vladimir Putin's administration. Despite attempts at pluralism, opposition parties often face significant obstacles such as limited media access, restrictive legislation on political activity and occasional harassment of activists. Prominent opposition figures like Alexei Navalny have garnered international attention for their anti-corruption campaigns and calls for political reform but they face substantial barriers to electoral success. Efforts to enact meaningful political reforms in Russia have been met with mixed results with some limited measures introduced to enhance transparency and accountability in government. However, broader systemic changes remain elusive as the Kremlin maintains a tight grip on power and resists substantial shifts towards greater democratization. The future of opposition politics and political reforms in Russia hinges on complex dynamics between state controls societal demands for change and international pressure for respect of democratic norms. As a prominent Russian opposition leader and anti-corruption activist, Alexei Navalny has gained international recognition for his outspoken criticism of the Russian government under President Vladimir Putin. He born on June 4, 1976 and grew up in Russia and initially pursued a legal career. However his experiences with corruption and injustice in the country led him to become a vocal advocate for political reform. Navalny's activism gained momentum in the late 2000s when he started blogging about corruption in Russian politics. His blog which he called "Live Journal," became widely popular for exposing the alleged financial misdeeds of Russian officials and oligarchs. Navalny's sharp wit and straightforward style resonated with many Russians who were disillusioned with the systemic corruption prevalent in their country. In 2011, Navalny played a crucial role in organizing and leading protests against alleged fraud in the parliamen-

ary elections. He coined the term "party of crooks and thieves" to describe the ruling United Russia party and this phrase gained widespread use in public discourse. Despite facing arrests and harassment, he continued to challenge the government, using social media and online platforms to disseminate information and rally support. In 2013, he ran for the position of Moscow mayor, finishing second in the election with a strong showing that surprised many observers. However, his political ambitions were hindered by legal troubles. In 2014, he was convicted of embezzlement charges, which he and his supporters contended were politically motivated. The European Court of Human Rights later ruled that Navalny's conviction was arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable. Navalny's most significant challenge to the Russian government came in 2020 when he was poisoned with a nerve agent known as Novichok. After falling seriously ill, he was airlifted to Germany for medical treatment. Subsequent investigations by independent laboratories confirmed the presence of Novichok in his system, leading to widespread condemnation and accusations against the Russian government. Navalny accused Putin of orchestrating the poisoning, an allegation that the Kremlin vehemently denied. Upon recovering from the poisoning, Navalny returned to Russia in January 2021, despite facing the imminent threat of arrest. He was promptly detained upon his arrival, sparking protests across the country. In February 2021, Navalny was sentenced to two and a half years in prison for violating the terms of his probation, a decision widely criticized as politically motivated. Due to critic of the Russian government he faced imprisonment and was sent to a prison in the Russian Arctic after being poisoned the year before. The circumstances surrounding his demise raise questions, as the cause of death was undisclosed, and the customary practice of handing over the body for burial to family members was not followed. This deviation from the norm may stem from Russian President Vladimir Putin's desire to pre-

vent a thorough examination of the body by doctors and to instill fear in the population. There are two potential motivations behind this unusual handling of Navalny's death. Firstly, Putin may be avoiding scrutiny into the cause of death, and secondly, he might be attempting to intimidate and terrorize the public. While it's conceivable that Navalny died of natural causes, the peculiar actions taken by the Russian authorities raise suspicions. The narrative takes a geopolitical turn as Russia achieves success in Ukraine, with Putin hinting at potential further conquests in the west and north, as revealed in his interview with Tucker Carlson. Publicly making such threats poses a military risk, considering the United States is viewed as Putin's primary adversary. Putin seems to gauge a divided U.S. stance on Ukraine and a potential weariness of the ongoing conflict. Consequently, he may believe that by escalating Russia's ruthlessness, the U.S. could be swayed to abandon its support for Ukraine. The current week presents two strategic moves for Putin: the capture of a significant Ukrainian city and the willingness to resort to Stalinist tactics, blaming the U.S. for compelling him into such actions, thereby undermining the U.S. position further. Putin's focus appears to be on the United States, and he aims to demonstrate his readiness for ruthless actions. This calculated move is deemed low-risk, as even if it fails, it maintains the status quo while sowing discord and destabilizing the U.S. stance. While speculative, these observations suggest that Putin has carefully considered his course of action. Despite the challenges and risks he faced, Alexei Navalny remained a symbol of opposition to the Russian regime, inspiring many Russians to question the status quo and demand political change. His activism and resilience underscored the complexities of dissent in contemporary Russia, where opposition figures often face suppression, legal challenges, and, in Navalny's case, even physical harm.

Briefs

Israel 'pulls out troops' from southern Gaza

FROM PAGE 01
Khan said, noting that the United States is "dead set" against the plan. The White House, commenting on the partial withdrawal, said it was likely to be an opportunity for troops to "rest and refit".

Death toll surges to 33,175...

FROM PAGE 01
Besides the large number of casualties and the huge displacement of people, basic food, fuel, water and medical supplies have run out for the 2.3 million residents in Gaza due to the tight Israeli blockade and the massive destruction of infrastructure and facilities.

MQM-P slams Sindh government..

FROM PAGE 01
mention that street crimes have gripped Karachi claiming lives of dozens of citizens in last few weeks. Many have been killed while resisting robberies, particularly in Ramadan.

'Restoration of peace top priority...

FROM PAGE 01
law and order in Karachi by MQM-P leaders, Sindh Minister for Department of Energy, Planning and Development Nasir Hussain Shah Sunday clarified that restoration of peace is the top priority of the provincial government.

Zardari, Erdogan...

FROM PAGE 01
which is expected to fall on April 10 (Wednesday). Moreover, the head of state also extended an invitation to Erdogan, inviting him to visit Pakistan.



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. - DNA

Babar & Co praises Kakul fitness camp

29 cricketers took part in the fitness camp in Abbottabad, established in collaboration with the Pakistan Army

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

LAHORE: Pakistan team players have opened up on their 11-day Kakul physical fitness camp which culminated on Saturday terming the experience as "highly valuable" and of "tremendous benefit" for their conditioning and well-being as well as team bonding.



"exceptionally valuable" with regards to upcoming challenges. "This was my third boot camp, and with each visit, I've gleaned new insights [...] This time, our focus extended beyond physical fitness to encompass team bonding activities and performance-improving lectures," Babar said underscoring the significance of these elements and terming them as a key to collective performance to achieve desired results.

camp after retracting his retirement from international cricket and declared availability for the national side after meeting Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials, said he tremendously benefitted from the fitness camp as the "sessions and drills were markedly different from cricket-related training, but we dedicated extra hours that I'm confident will benefit us all in match situations."

Dominant Verstappen wins Japanese GP in Red Bull

Max Verstappen returns to winning ways to lead Red Bull 1-2 in Japan

SUZUKA : Max Verstappen said Red Bull must capitalise on their early season dominance after romping to victory in Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix ahead of teammate Sergio Perez.

will be tracks coming up that might not be so favourable for us," said Verstappen, who took the chequered flag 12.5sec ahead of the Mexican Perez.

mate Charles Leclerc on 59. Mercedes boss Toto Wolff told reporters after the race that "no one is going to catch Max this year". "Basically the rest of the season now is the best of the rest, that's the fact," said Wolff.

Djokovic wants last dance with Nadal at French Open

LONDON :Rafa Nadal's withdrawal from the Monte Carlo Masters has cast doubt over the 22-times Grand Slam champion's participation at the French Open, but Novak Djokovic said he is still hoping for a final chapter in their storied rivalry.

Athletic club ends 40-year trophy drought

Athletic Club ended a 40-year wait to win the Copa del Rey by beating Real Mallorca in the final on penalties 4-2

SPORTS DESK

SEVILLA: Athletic Club ended a 40-year wait to win the Copa del Rey by beating Real Mallorca in the final on penalties 4-2 following a 1-1 draw after extra time here at La Cartuja stadium.

"The team worked hard, the fans are always with us and they deserve it, I've dreamed of this for a long time." Athletic Club, whose players celebrated on a boat known as the 'Gabarra' after they last won it, will now get the chance to launch the barge once again next week.



target man Vedat Muriqi's long-range effort was tipped over uncertainly by Agirrezabala. In the final for the fourth time, the islanders took the lead after 21 minutes through Rodriguez's perfectly placed finish.

Info minister rebuts Imran's...

FROM PAGE 01
Last week, the Islamabad High Court suspended the sentences. However, appeals against the convictions in the case are still pending. A post shared on Imran's official account on X gave a transcript of his conversation with reporters at Adiala Jail - where he is currently incarcerated - on Saturday.

Elimination of terrorists a national...

FROM PAGE 01
Lakki Marwat area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari expressed his sadness and sorrow over the martyrdom of DSP Gul Muhammad Khan and his two guards Naseem Gul and Salamat Khan who succumbed to the injuries afterwards.

Yellen, Chinese PM express...

FROM PAGE 01
industries fuels production capacity, but risks a surge of exports at depressed prices to the global market, undercutting international competitors. Washington is especially concerned about this phenomenon in new industries such as electric vehicles and solar energy.

Vehicle carrying Chinese nationals...

FROM PAGE 01
of Upper Kohistan and Lower Kohistan; director security, Dasu Hydropower Project and command special security unit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within 15 days," the minister said while speaking to the media in Lahore.

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Briefs

RSF paramilitary attack on Sudan village kills 20

KHARTOUM : Sudanese paramilitary forces have killed at least 20 people in an attack on a village south of the capital Khartoum, a local activists' committee said. The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) "attacked the village of Um Adam" 150 kilometres (93 miles) south of the city on Saturday, said a Sunday statement from the local resistance committee, one of many pro-democracy groups that coordinate aid. Sudan's war between the military, under army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the RSF, commanded by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, began last April 15. Many thousands of people have been killed, including up to 15,000 in a single town in the war-ravaged Darfur region, according to United Nations experts. The war has also displaced more than 8.5 million people, practically destroyed Sudan's already-fragile infrastructure and pushed the country to the brink of famine.—APP

Chinese Embassy hosts iftar for the needy people in Gwadar

GWADAR : The Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Pakistan in collaboration with China Overseas Ports Holding Company (COPHC), the operator of Gwadar Port and Free Zone organized an iftar dinner for the needy families in Gwadar. The program was organized with the collaboration of local volunteers under the platform of Helping Hand Foundation Gwadar. More than 300 needy people participated in the program which will continue till the closing of Ramadan. They were served date, milk, fruits and boxes of rice. This is the third consecutive year that the Embassy and COPHC sponsor this program in collaboration with Helping Hand Foundation, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. Earlier this week, Karachi Consulate and Linyi Trade city distributed 4000 packages of rice and cooking oil to the local people affected by rain. Moreover, following the heavy shower, COPHC donated canned food items to 1000 families.—Agencies

Govt greenlights "Gwadar rail freight connectivity"

ISLAMABAD : In a major development, the Pakistani government has green-lighted the mega project "Gwadar Rail Freight Connectivity" that aims to link Gwadar Port with the rest of the country, especially the Balochistan hinterlands. The Gwadar Rail Freight Connectivity, under the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan, will reinforce inland connections, enhance cargo flows, and ensure Gwadar's competitiveness as a newly emerging modern port, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. It will also unlock environmental benefits by reducing the logistics and transportation carbon footprint through train freight movement, including cargo loading and unloading from the sea leg. In this regard, Pakistan Railways and the Gwadar Port Authority have already carried out a detailed survey outlining the framework for laying down the railway track and allied structures. According to the master plan of Gwadar city and port, the track is planned for construction along Koh-e-Batil and the Eastbay Expressway. The proposed track will connect the berths of Gwadar port with the main railway yard of Gwadar, which will be extended further upcountry. For this purpose, the Gwadar Port Authority and port operator have begun vacating the infrastructures along the route. Following instructions from Prime Minister of Pakistan Shabbaz Sharif, the Gwadar Development Authority has initiated efforts to acquire 50 acres of land.—APP

Ukraine's Zelensky warns of dwindling air defense missiles

President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has been appealing to allies for weeks to rush in more air defenses

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Ukraine could run out of air defense missiles if Russia keeps up its intense long-range bombing campaign, President Volodymyr Zelensky warned in remarks aired. The Ukrainian leader's starkest warning to date of the deteriorating situation faced by his country's air defenses follows weeks of Russian strikes on the energy system, towns and cities using a broad arsenal of missiles and drones. "If they keep hitting (Ukraine) every day the way they have for the last month, we might run out of missiles, and the partners know it," he said in an interview that aired on Ukrainian television. Zelensky, who has

been appealing to allies for weeks to rush in more air defenses, said that Ukraine had enough stockpiles to cope for the moment, but that it was already having to make difficult choices about what to protect. He singled out in particular the need for Patriot air defense systems and said Ukraine needed 25 of them. The sophisticated US air defense system has been vital during Russian attacks with ballistic and hypersonic missiles which can hit targets within a matter of minutes. His remarks followed a fresh spate of attacks that Ukrainian officials said killed civilians. Two Russian missile and drone strikes, one in the early hours of Saturday and a second in the afternoon, killed eight people and wounded at least

10 more people in northeastern Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city. In the eastern region of Donetsk, artillery shelling killed four people in the village of Kurakhivka including a 38-year-old woman and her 16-year-old daughter, and a 25-year-old man in the village of Krasnohorivka was killed, while in Odesa in the south, a missile strike killed one civilian. Ukraine's largest private power company DTEK says the strikes had hit 80 percent of its generating capacity and the grid has introduced rolling blackouts to stabilize the system. "WE WILL AGREE TO ANY OPTIONS" The battlefield momentum has moved against Ukraine in recent months as Kyiv grappled with a slowdown

in military assistance from the West and in particular from the United States. "The situation is difficult, but nevertheless stabilized. The enemy does not advance: when it takes steps forward, ours repel (them), and it retreats. On the contrary, our guys are taking some steps forward," he said. Zelensky said he still believed that a major aid package would be approved by Congress where it has been stuck in deliberations since last year facing determined Republican opposition. "I still believe that we can get a positive vote in the United States Congress," he said. Asked by the interviewer about the possibility of Ukraine receiving the package in the form of a

loan, he said: "We will agree to any options." He added that some artillery shells were being supplied to Ukraine under foreign initiatives that he did not name and that they were being used for defensive operations. "We don't have shells for counteroffensive actions, as for the defense — there are several initiatives, and we're receiving weapons," he said. The interview was recorded next to a military fortification in north-eastern Chernihiv region, which borders Russia. It was not clear exactly which day the interview was recorded, but Zelensky met with a bipartisan group of members of Congress in the region on Friday.

Hundreds rescued after flooding in Australia

SYDNEY: Widespread flooding in Australia left hundreds needing to be rescued after a natural disaster was declared in regions across New South Wales on Sunday. Intense rainfall at the start of the weekend saw around 300 homes evacuated in north-east Sydney, emergency services said. Floodwaters had caused widespread damage across the state in a very short amount of time, federal minister for emergency management Catherine King said. "The New South Wales government is continuing to assess the damage and understand the impact of this disaster," King added. Emergency crews had performed about 200 flood rescues since Friday, said state minister for emergency services Jihad Dib, as some regions were left cut off by damaged or flooded roads. Around 5,000 volunteers had worked through the night helping those affected, he added. Rescue teams evacuate flood-ravaged Australian town State emergency commissioner Carlene York said 60 community warnings remained in place for regions affected by the flooding. Disaster support had been triggered by officials in a dozen areas to help cover clean-up costs and pay for emergency accommodation. It was the region's seventh flood in 18 months. Researchers have repeatedly warned that climate change amplifies the risk of natural disasters such as floods, bushfires and cyclones.—APP

UK FM warns of 'real' Gaza famine threat

Cameron said Britain was working with the United States, Cyprus and others to set up a "new temporary pier off the coast of Gaza to get aid

WEB DESK

LONDON: London: British Foreign Secretary David Cameron on Sunday warned the "prospect of famine is real" in Gaza, as a Royal Navy ship headed to the Mediterranean to help set up a maritime aid corridor. Cameron said Britain was working with the United States, Cyprus and others to set up a "new temporary pier off the coast of Gaza to get aid in as quickly and securely as possible." "We need to continue to explore all options, including by sea and air, to ease the desperate plight of some of the world's most vulnerable people," he said. Cyprus has vowed to continue with the humanitarian corridor despite the killing in an Israeli strike of seven aid workers unloading aid in the war-ravaged Palestinian territory.

The seven workers, including three Britons, from the World Central Kitchen (WCK) charity died Monday as they left a warehouse having unloaded aid delivered by ship. The UK also announced £9.7m for aid, equipment and expertise to help set up the maritime corridor from Cyprus to Gaza. A first vessel, organized by the Spanish charity Open Arms and WCK, successfully delivered its cargo to Gaza on March 15 using the corridor. The second left Cyprus on March 30. Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides said Monday that preparations were underway for a third voyage and Cyprus was coordinating with the United States, which has sent military engineers to build a port in Gaza to facilitate aid deliveries. With the situation in Gaza increasingly dire,

donors have pursued alternatives including aidrops and maritime shipments. But aid groups have been critical saying aidrops and maritime deliveries cannot make up for the lack of aid being delivered overland, which is at a fraction of its pre-war levels according to the UN. The Gaza war broke out on October 7 with an unprecedented attack by Hamas militants into Israel that resulted in the deaths of 1,170 people, mostly civilians, Israeli figures show. Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants also took more than 250 hostages, and 129 remain in Gaza, including 34 who the army says are dead. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 33,137 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

Storm Kathleen: Scotland braces for flooding

EDINBURGH : Scotland will continue to face the threat of power cuts and travel disruption as high winds and heavy rain from Storm Kathleen persist into Sunday. The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) has 18 regional flood alerts and 43 flood warnings in place in Scotland. They have been in force since Saturday. The Met Office has also issued a new yellow wind warning from 9am on Sunday covering parts of the east and northern Highlands, the Isle of Skye and the Hebrides. It will remain in force until 3pm. Winds as high as 73mph were recorded in Drumalbin, South Lanarkshire. A previous warning stretched from the Scottish Borders to just south of Stirling. It spanned the west coast, throughout much of central Scotland, and ended just short of the east coast. Vincent Fitzsimons, Sepa's flood duty manager, said: "Across the weekend, Scotland is braced for impacts from Storm Kathleen including very high winds and coastal flooding in western areas.—APP

Restrictions on religious freedom in Kashmir condemned

BRUSSELS: Chairman Kashmir Council Europe (KCEU) Ali Raza Syed has condemned restrictions on religious freedom in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir (IIOK) including ban on procession of last Friday of Ramadan in main Jamia Mosque of Srinagar. He issued a statement from Brussels for denouncing locking of the main Jamia Mosque of Srinagar on the occasion of Juma Al-Wada (Last Friday of Ramadan held on April 5, 2024) by the Indian authorities. He said, "Lockdown of Jamia mosque of Srinagar is not acceptable" as it is against the international norms related to religious freedom. "Putting locks on the Jamia Mosque of Srinagar and preventing Mirwaiz Maulvi Muhammad Umar Farooq from leading the last Friday of Ramadan is the worst violation of the religious rights of Kashmiri citizens," he said. He added that it is not for the first time, while the Indian government is continuously violating the religious rights of Kashmiri Muslims and they are facing such severe situation since 1947. Chairman KCEU demanded the International Community to pressurize Indian government to allow the religious practice in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Ali Raza Syed also said, main religious gatherings including last Friday of Ramadan and congregations of EIDs in occupied Kashmir are banned for many years. Purpose of India by such unacceptable acts is to stop voice of Kashmiris struggling for their right to self determination. He said, beside ban on the religious and political gatherings, the Indian authorities are also involved in brutal crimes against the humanity in the occupied Kashmir. "Extra judicial killings, forced disappearances, assassinations of youth in fake encounters, sexual assaults against women etc. are being committed for many years by the Indian forces in occupied Kashmir," he claimed. Ali Raza Syed said, not only occupied Kashmir, India is also accused of extra judicial killings and murder attempts in different countries including Canada, US and Pakistan. Canadian authorities have been actively pursuing credible allegations of a potential link between agents of the government of India and the killing of a Sikh Canadian leader in British Columbia last year and United States also investigate involvement of an Indian official in last year murder attempt on another Sikh leader in New York.—DNA

Rwanda commemorates 30 years since genocide

KIGALI : Rwanda's President Paul Kagame on Sunday said the international community "failed" his country during the 1994 genocide, as he paid tribute to victims 30 years after Hutu extremists tore apart the nation. Rwanda was completely humbled by the magnitude of our loss. And the lessons we learned are engraved in blood," Kagame said in Kigali during a solemn ceremony to commemorate a 100-day massacre that claimed the lives of 800,000 people, largely Tutsis but also moderate Hutus. "It was the international community which failed all of us, whether from contempt or cowardice," he said, addressing an audience that included several African heads of state and former US president Bill Clinton, who had called the genocide the biggest failure of his administration. In keeping with tradition, the ceremonies on April 7 — the day Hutu militias unleashed the carnage in 1994 — began with Kagame placing wreaths on mass graves and lighting a remembrance flame at the Kigali Genocide Memorial, where more than 250,000 victims are believed to be buried. The tiny nation has since found its footing under the iron-fisted rule of Kagame, who led the rebel militia which ended the genocide, but the scars of the violence remain, leaving a trail of destruction across Africa's Great Lakes region.—APP

Turkish forces 'neutralize' 6 PKK terrorists

DNA

ANKARA : Turkish security forces "neutralized" six PKK terrorists in northern Iraq, the National Defense Ministry said on Sunday. The terrorists were targeted in the Metina and Gara regions via airstrikes, the ministry said on X. "Our heroic Turkish Armed Forces will continue to destroy terrorist hideouts with perseverance and determination," it added. Turkish authorities use the term "neutralized" to imply the terrorists in question surrendered or were killed or captured. PKK terrorists often hide out across the border in northern Iraq to plot terror attacks in Turkey. In its nearly 40-year terror campaign against Turkey, the PKK-listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the US, and EU, has been responsible for the deaths of over 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants.

NAB asks victims to submit compensation claims

Contact details for inquiries include Fax: 051-9220832, Phone: 051-9222064, and email: rawalpindi@nab.gov.pk

ISLAMABAD : The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has instructed individuals robbed by AAA Associates to submit their compensation claims to the NAB Rawalpindi bureau within the next two weeks. Those who have already submitted claims are advised not to resubmit their applications. According to NAB, Rawalpindi sources, the Bureau was investigating the allegations of extortion of money, fraud, cheating, and false promises perpetrated by individuals such as Fawad Bashir, Shahzad Ali Kayani, and others from AAA Associates, targeting the general public. The Bureau is probing allegations of money extortion, fraud, cheating and false promises perpetrated by individuals like Fawad Bashir, Shahzad Ali Kayani, and others associated with AAA Associates. Their alleged activities, centered at office no. 20121 on the Second Floor of the Business Centre in Bahria Town, Rawalpindi, have targeted the general public. The NAB has asked individuals deceived by AAA Associates with false promises to submit their claims for the return of their stolen money. These individuals are required to provide supporting documentation, including a copy of their Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) and receipts, either via post or email within next fifteen days. This will enable the commencement of legal proceedings against the culprits. Victims are asked to submit their claims, along with required documents, to the office of the Director General, NAB Rawalpindi, the Investigation Officer at Investigation Wing-II, National Accountability Bureau (Rawalpindi), situated at Melody, Islamabad, G-6, Civic Centre. Contact details for inquiries include Fax: 051-9220832, Phone: 051-9222064, and email: rawalpindi@nab.gov.pk.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov met with Ezaz A. Dar, Secretary of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination of Pakistan. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest.—DNA

Poland's local elections test PM Tusk's coalition

About 190,000 registered candidates running for local government positions, including mayors and councillors

FOREIGN DESK

WARSAW : Poles are set to vote in local elections in the first test for the coalition government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk nearly four months since it took power. Voters on Sunday will elect mayors as well as members of municipal councils and provincial assemblies, with nearly 190,000 registered candidates running for local government positions in the Central European nation of 38 million people. Tusk's appointment as prime minister in December marked a turning point for the largest country in the European Union's east, drawing a line under eight years of nationalist rule

that set Warsaw at odds with Western allies and putting the nation of 38 million people on a resolutely pro-European course. A woman walks with the dog in front of the election posters hanging on the fence, ahead of next weekend Polish local elections, in Szczytno, Poland. The broad coalition which Tusk leads won a majority in October's parliamentary elections on promises to roll back judicial reforms implemented by the last government that critics said undermined the independence of the courts while boosting the rights of women and minorities. He has painted victory on Sunday for his liberal Civic Coalition (KO), the largest grouping in the ruling alliance, as essential

if Poland is to avoid sliding back towards nationalist rule under the Law and Justice party (PiS). "Our dream — once a beautiful dream, and today an increasingly better reality — may end overnight," he told a rally in Warsaw on Friday, before an election blackout began. "If someone believes that freedom, human rights, women's rights, democracy, free economy, self-government — that all this is permanent, will defend itself ... we will lose it all again." PiS has repeatedly rejected accusations that it undermined democracy and human rights. 'Yellow card' With the three groups that form the ruling coalition running on sepa-

rate tickets, the vote is also a chance for Tusk to cement KO's dominance in government. Elections to the European Parliament are scheduled for June, and Sunday's results will be closely watched in Brussels. FILE PHOTO: Election posters are seen hanging on the fence, ahead of next weekend Polish local elections, in Jedwabno, Poland. Election posters are seen hanging on the fence in Jedwabno, Poland [Kacper Pempel/Reuters] While Tusk has unblocked billions in EU funds that were frozen over rule-of-law concerns and launched sweeping changes in the courts and state media, he has also faced criticism for not delivering on a

host of election promises and questions over the legality of some reforms, particularly regarding the media. For PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the local elections offer a chance to send a warning shot to a government he accuses of lying about what it could achieve and about the record of the previous administration. "We have a chance ... to show the authorities who are at the helm in Warsaw today a yellow card," he told supporters on Friday, in a reference to the way football referees warn players. Run-off votes will take place two weeks later, on April 21, in cases where mayoral candidates do not win at least 50 percent of the vote in Sunday's first round.

Briefs

PPP MNA seeks army chief's help against crimes in Sindh

MATIARI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Member of National Assembly (MNA) Makhdoom Jameel Uz Zaman has appealed to Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir to carry out an operation to end the crimes in Sindh. Speaking to the media persons in Matiari, Zaman said that crime rate had multiplied in Sindh, so the army should come once and eradicate it. "The army chief is requested to take action and save Sindh from this calamity forever. All the stakeholders should sit at a table. How long will we protest and run movements?" he said. Karachi has been gripped by street crimes claiming the lives of dozens of citizens who have fallen victim at the hands of criminals for the past few weeks. Many have been killed while resisting robberies and snatching incidents, particularly in the month of Ramadan during which criminals seem to have been let loose. From January till March, at least 50 citizens have lost their lives due to street crimes. Meanwhile, six robbers have been killed in 75 police encounters while 93 accused were arrested with injuries. - Agencies

FBR surpasses tax targets with SIFC's support

DNA
ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has exceeded its tax collection goals for the third quarter of the current fiscal year. With a total collection of Rs6,710 trillion, surpassing the set target of Rs6,707 trillion by Rs3 billion, the FBR is on track to meet the government's annual collection target of Rs9,415 trillion. This success marks a significant milestone, especially considering that the current fiscal year's target stands at Rs2,219 trillion, representing a 30% increase over the previous fiscal year's target of Rs7.2 trillion. The achievement has been attributed to the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders, notably the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), which played a pivotal role in facilitating investment and streamlining tax collection processes. However, challenges remain, particularly concerning the implementation of the FBR restructuring plan aimed at boosting the tax-to-GDP ratio to 15%. Legal hurdles impeding the plan's execution are being actively addressed to ensure its successful implementation.

KP CM calls for innovation in agri sector

SHAMIM SHAHID
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Sunday called for innovation in the agriculture sector. According to details, CM Gandapur chaired a meeting of the agriculture department. The chief minister emphasised the need for rolling out modern farming technology. The field of research in agriculture should be aligned with modern requirements. CM Gandapur stressed the need for accumulating facts and figures in line with the agricultural lands from across the province. Few days back, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa CM Gandapur called for providing full facilities to investors. CM Gandapur chaired a meeting of the housing department. On this occasion, matters in line with the public and new housing schemes were discussed. The matters in connection with the uplift of private investors in the field of housing were also discussed. Expressing his thoughts, CM Gandapur was of the view that employment opportunities can be created by elevating the field of housing.

Austrian envoy calls for women empowerment

Empowering Artisans: Serena Hotels and Behbud Association Collaborate for Cultural Celebration



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels under the Cultural Diplomacy initiative collaborated with Behbud Association to jointly organize the two-day Handicraft Eid Bazaar to support women artisans from all over Pakistan and to foster their economic empowerment. The chief guest of the event, the Ambassador of Austria H.E. Andrea Wicke, who inaugurated the Eid Bazaar said, this is a way to celebrate the artistry and creativity of home-based workers. I understand the dedicational passion required to create beautiful pieces of art; therefore, I am particularly delighted to witness the exquisite craftsmanship on this event and I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Behbud and Serena Hotels for organizing such a beautiful event to promote women empowerment. The two-day bazaar aimed to celebrate the strength and creativity of home-based workers and women artisans across Pakistan, who continue in crafting remarkable artifacts despite facing challenging

circumstances. Guests were treated to a diverse array of traditional crafts and needlework originating from various regions of Pakistan, including Ralli, Hand & Machine Embroidery, Kantha, Chikankari, Block Printing, Smocking, Cutwork, Cross-stitch, Taarkashi, Phulkari, Crochet, Knitting, and more. The artisans graced the stalls, offering live demonstrations of their craft and techniques. The exhibition attracted many visitors, who thoroughly enjoyed exploring the intricate craftsmanship on display. The President of Behbud Association Ms. Abida Malik said, Behbud has been steadily working in the pursuit of the economic empowerment of the women from the most overlook communities of Pakistan. Over the years, it has touched the life of thousands of women and their families in a very positive way. By investing in women, we invest in the future of our communities and our country. We recognize the immense potential and talent that women possess, and it is our mission to create an environment where they can succeed. Serena Hotels, re-



nowned for its support of cultural preservation and community empowerment, provided invaluable support for these initiatives. The collaboration with Behbud Association highlights their ongoing commitment to uplifting local artisans and celebrating Pakistan's rich heritage. By hosting events such as the Handicraft Bazaar, Serena Hotels actively promotes sustainable tourism while showcasing the talents of home-based workers and women artisans to a global audience.

Russia-friendly elected Slovak president

MOSCOW: Populist Peter Pellegrini has been elected president of Slovakia, succeeding the liberal Zuzana Caputova. Mr Pellegrini, 48, defeated the pro-Western Ivan Korčok, a former diplomat, with 53% of the vote. A former prime minister, he is an ally of Prime Minister Robert Fico, and shares the PM's dovish attitude towards Russia. Mr Fico and his allies now control Slovakia's parliament, government, and soon the president's office. Slovakia had been one of Ukraine's staunchest allies before Mr Fico came to power in October on a pledge to halt supplies of Slovak Army military stocks to Kyiv. With Mr Pellegrini replacing Mrs Caputova, Ukraine has now definitively lost a voice of support in an EU and Nato capital. Mr Fico has called for an end to Western military support for Ukraine, an immediate ceasefire, and peace talks with Moscow. He said recently President Vladimir Putin had been "unfairly demonised" and argued admitting Ukraine to Nato would mark the beginning of a third world war. Mr Pellegrini's campaign echoed some of that Moscow-friendly rhetoric, accusing Mr Korčok of being a warmonger who would send Slovak soldiers to fight in Ukraine - a constitutional power the president does not have. Mr Pellegrini vowed "to ensure that Slovakia remains on the side of peace and not on the side of war". "You don't have to worry that the Presidential Palace, as it has been for the last 10 years, will become a centre of oppositional, opportunistic power that will harm govt, that will harm the state abroad and will rejoice in the failures of the Slovak government," he said. - Agencies

No Israeli embassy is safe anymore: Iran

"The resistance front is ready; how it (the response) will be, we have to wait," Safavi said, noting that "confronting this brutal regime is a legal and legitimate right"

TEHRAN: An adviser to Iran's supreme leader warned on Sunday that Israeli embassies are "no longer safe" after a strike in Syria which Tehran blamed on Israel killed seven Revolutionary Guards members. "The embassies of the Zionist regime are no longer safe," Yahya Rahim Safavi, senior adviser to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was quoted as saying by the ISNA news agency. Tehran has vowed to avenge Monday's air strike on Damascus that levelled the Iranian embassy's consular annex, killing seven Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) members including two generals. "The resistance front is ready; how it (the response) will

be, we have to wait," Safavi said, noting that "confronting this brutal regime is a legal and legitimate right". He also noted that multiple Israeli embassies around the region "have been shuttered". There was no immediate comment from Israel. Monday's attack, which Britain-based war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said killed 16 people, was the fifth raid on Syria in a week blamed on Israel. Among the dead were generals Mohammad Reza Zahedi and Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi who were senior commanders in the Quds Force, the IRGC's foreign operations arm. Zahedi, 63, had held several commands during a career spanning more than 40 years. He was the most senior Iranian soldier killed since a United States missile strike at Baghdad airport in 2020 killed Quds Force chief General Qasem Soleimani. Monday's strike in Damascus took place against the backdrop of Israel's military campaign in Gaza, which began with Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel which killed 1,170 people, according to Israeli officials. Tehran backs Hamas but has denied any direct involvement in the attack which sparked massive Israeli retaliation against the Gaza Strip. According to the health ministry in Gaza, at least 33,175 people have been killed during six months of bombardment. Iran does not recognise Israel, and the two countries have fought a shadow war for years. The Islamic republic accuses Israel of having carried out a wave of sabotage attacks and assassinations targeting its nuclear programme. - Agencies

Russia's FM to Visit China



MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will visit China on Monday and Tuesday to discuss the war in Ukraine and the deepening partnership between Moscow and Beijing. Talks between Lavrov and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who extended the invitation to the Russian minister, will include bilateral cooperation as well as "hot topics", such as the crisis in Ukraine and the Asia-Pacific, the Russian Foreign Ministry said. Reuters reported last month that Russian President Vladimir Putin will travel to China in May for talks with

Chinese President Xi Jinping, in what could be the Kremlin chief's first overseas trip of his new presidential term. China and Russia declared a "no limits" partnership in February 2022 when Putin visited Beijing just days before he sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine, triggering the deadliest land war in Europe since World War Two. The United States casts China as its biggest competitor and Russia as its biggest nation-state threat, while US President Joe Biden argues that this century will be defined by an existential contest between democracies and autocracies. Putin and Xi share a broad world view, which sees the West as decadent and in decline just as China challenges US supremacy in everything from quantum computing and synthetic biology to espionage and hard military power. China-Russian trade hit a record of \$240.1 billion in 2023, up 26.3% from a year earlier, according to Chinese customs data. Chinese shipments to Russia jumped 46.9% in 2023 while imports from Russia rose 13%. China-United States trade fell 11.6% to \$664.5 billion in 2023, according to the Chinese customs data. -Agencies

Morale at US State Dep 'worse than during Iraq War'

LONDON: A former director of the US State Department's Office of Security and Human Rights has claimed the mood in the department is worse than during the Iraq war, on account of President Joe Biden's policy on Gaza. Charles Blaha told The Independent he had "never seen this much dissent," adding: "I was in the State Department for 32 years, including during the Iraq War, and I have never seen this much unhappiness. It was even worse than Iraq. So yes, people are concerned." Pressure is growing on Israel to cease its military operation in Gaza, now in its sixth month, while the Biden administration has been criticized for its continued support for the Middle East country. That pressure has only grown after the killing of seven aid workers, including a US citizen, earlier this month. Around 33,000 Palestinians are thought to have died in the conflict since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7 last year. The White House recently approved a new delivery of bombs to Israel and is considering an \$18 billion deal to sell fighter jets and other equipment to the Israeli military. Josh Paul, who resigned as the director of the State Department's bureau of political-military affairs over "an unprecedented unwillingness to consider the humanitarian consequences of

our policy decisions" in Gaza, told The Independent that discontent in the department was growing and he was aware of at least seven internal memos critical of the White House's stance. "I've certainly heard from a lot of people in the department in recent weeks, at an increasing clip, who are just deeply upset, I can say horrified, by the way the department is working and moving forward on arms transfers in the context of what we're seeing in Gaza," he said. "My impression is that there are a number of people who are trying to push things in a better direction. There are also probably a larger number of people who are just saying 'I'm not going to touch this stuff.'" "The absence of a willingness to hold that debate when it comes to Israel is not proof of our commitment to Israel's security. Rather, it is proof of our commitment to a policy that, the record shows, is a dead end - and proof of our willingness to abandon our values and turn a blind eye to the suffering of millions in Gaza when it is politically expedient." Annelise Sheline, who also resigned from the department because she "no longer wanted to be affiliated with this administration" over its arming of Israel, told The National: "There were certainly many people inside the State Department who are so distraught by what's happening."

Islamabad starts work to complete 80-km section of Pak-Iran gas pipeline

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's expected visit to Pakistan on April 22

ISLAMABAD: With Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's expected visit to Pakistan on April 22, authorities have commenced the work to begin the construction of the 80-kilometre section of the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline from Gwadar to a point where it can be connected with the Iranian section of the project. As per the publication, citing a senior official of the Energy Ministry, the Inter-State Gas Company (ISGS) has already issued tenders seeking the much-delayed re-validation of survey and Front-End Engineering Design (FEED) by consultants. The development comes amid the United States's explicit opposition to the bilateral project, coupled with warnings of potential sanctions, which has faced a nearly decade-long delay as it was set to be completed in December 2014 followed by its operationalisation in January 2015. - DNA

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