



# Islamabad POST

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**Will do everything to avoid Middle East 'conflagration'**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Ukraine FM calls for air defense support**

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**Babar eyes multiple landmarks**

Detailed News On Page-06



**Saudi FM-led delegation arrives**

## Pakistan, KSA all set to solidify bilateral relations

Saudi FM is visiting Pakistan after Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, during a recent meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, reaffirmed that Riyadh would never leave Islamabad alone

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: As Islamabad eyeing a huge investment from Riyadh, a high-level delegation of Saudi Arabia led by Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah has arrived in the federal capital on a two-day official visit in Monday. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar received his Saudi counterpart at the airport while Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki among other officials was also present. The delegation also comprises Saudi Minister of Water and Agriculture Abdul Rahman Abdul Mohsen Al-Fadley, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar Ibrahim Al Khorayef, Deputy Minister of Investment Badr Al Badr, the head of Saudi Special Committee, Mohammad Mazyed Al Towajiri and senior officials from Ministry of Energy and Saudi Fund for General Investments. The visit is expected to expedite action on the understanding reached between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman, during their recent meeting in Makkah to enhance bilateral economic cooperation. The two had agreed to expedite the first wave of a planned \$5 billion Saudi investment package for Pakistan. The Saudi team is expected to hold meetings with the president, the prime minister, the foreign minister, counterpart ministers, the army chief and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). A statement issued by state-run Pakistan Television said the timing of the visit was "very important" and the Saudi team's arrival itself is a "manifestation of mental harmony, mutual trust and cooperation between the leadership of both countries and the same determination for the development of both countries".

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### Iranian President to reach Pakistan on April 22

Visit's agenda to include potential FTA, security matters

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi is set to visit Pakistan on April 22, citing sources reported a private news channel on Monday, as regional tensions surge after Iran's unprecedented drone and missile strikes on Israeli territory on Sunday. As per sources, Islamabad and Tehran have agreed upon the matters pertaining to President Raisi's visit who will be accompanied by a high-level delegation and will hold meetings with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari and the military leadership. His visit comes after Tehran launched more than 300 drones and missiles at Israel in retaliation to the Israeli airstrike on its Damascus consulate that killed several people including Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) senior commanders Mohammed Reza Zahedi and senior

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar received his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah along with Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki. - DNA

### Hamas response to Gaza ceasefire proposal revealed

Regarding the exchange of prisoners, Hamas demanded that for the release of every Israeli civilian captive, Israel must release 30 Palestinian detainees

AGENCIES

GAZA: Unnamed sources have revealed new details on the response of Hamas Movement to mediators regarding a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement in Gaza. Citing the sources a Qatar based news channel reported that Hamas agreed to the proposed framework of a three-phase ceasefire, each lasting for 42 days. Hamas, however, demanded the

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### Urban flood emergency declared in Balochistan

More intermittent rains expected in Balochistan

DNA

QUETTA: The Balochistan government declared rain and flood emergency due to continuous heavy rains which battered different districts of Balochistan, killing and injuring several people across the province. The areas which witnessed heavy rains include Kohlu, Musa Khel, Zhob, Sherani, Mastung, Nushki. Meanwhile, Chaman, Qila Abdullah, Pishin, Ziarat, Mastung, Muslim Bagh, Mastung, Muslim Bagh,

Continued on Page 06

### Indo-Pak tensions persist

## Probe suggests Indian hand in Amir Tamba's murder: Mohsin Naqvi

During a televised interview on April 5, Indian Defence Minister admitted to the Modi-led government's policy of orchestrating killings in Pakistan

ABID RAZA / DNA

LAHORE: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday said India was suspected to be behind attack on Amir Sarfraz Tamba who allegedly tortured to death an Indian terrorist Sarabjit Singh in jail in 2013. "Police are investigating the firing on Amir Tamba and so far, they suspect India is behind it. India was involved in four other murder incidents on a similar pattern as well. However, it will not be suitable to say anything until the investigation is complete," he said addressing the media at the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) office in Lahore. Police on Sunday said two motorcycle riders fatally shot Tamba in the limits of Islampura police station. Police registered a case against the unidentified bikers on the complaint of

Continued on Page 06

### Iran to free Pakistanis stranded on seized ship

MSC Aries vessel was seized by IGRC on April 13.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Iran on Monday said that they would release Pakistanis, stranded on a ship seized by the Iranian forces, after confirmation of their nationalities and completing legal formalities due to brotherly ties between the two countries. Iranian envoy to Pakistan,

Continued on Page 06

### Briefs

**Child marriage act: Punjab govt asked to revise legislation**

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has struck down the section that deals with gender-based age distinction in the Child Marriage Act, 1929, and ordered the Punjab government to revise the legislation. The high court declared it "discriminatory" the specific portion of the legislation - Section 2(a) and (b) of the 95-year-old Act - which fixes different legal ages for males and females eligible for marriage which is 18 and 16 years respectively, as per a 5-page verdict given by Justice Shahid Karim on Monday. It is noteworthy to mention here that the aforementioned law was replaced by the Punjab Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 2015, for to criminalising the child marriage in the province.

### Aseefa sworn in as MNA

NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq administered the oath

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Aseefa Bhutto Zardari was sworn in as a member of the National Assembly. NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq administered the oath. During the session, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari provided headphones to Aseefa Bhutto Zardari to reduce the noise disturbances as PTI MNAs raised slogans calling for the release of the PTI founder. Following Aseefa Zardari's swearing-in, PPP members also chanted slogans in support of the Bhutto family like 'jiye Bhutto'.

## MQM-P warns of taking to streets amid street crimes

"This is not a political issue, it is about people's lives": MQM-P leader

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: MuttahidaQaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) has warned of taking to the streets if the government fails to curb the rampant scourge of street crimes in Karachi. "We would raise our voice [on the issue] in the Sindh Assembly and in the National Assembly [...] and would protest on the streets if our concerns are not addressed," MQM-P's Ali Khurshidi said while addressing a press conference in Karachi. His remarks come as Karachi has witnessed a significant surge in street crimes in recent months which have resulted in dozens of injuries and fatalities. Since January 1, at least 59 people have lost their lives while 200 were injured due to resisting robbery this year so far in the metropolis. According to a private news channel, as many as 6,780 crimes were committed in Karachi in the holy month of Ramadan

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### Joint session of parliament rescheduled for April 18

Zardari to address session kicking off parliamentary year

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari will address the inaugural session of both the houses of the parliament on Thursday, kicking off the parliamentary year after February 8 general elections. The session was convened by President Zardari under Articles 54 (1) and 56 (3) of the Constitution.

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## Is there any hope at the end of the tunnel?

COMMENT

ANSAR M BHATTI



MIDST the monotony of each passing day, the grim tally of killings and the rampant chaos of lawlessness and poor governance appear to have surged exponentially. During Eid, the unsettling clash between police and military personnel in Bahawalnagar left the populace bewildered. This collision of state institutions compelled individuals to reluctantly draw the conclusion that the fabric of rule of law had frayed beyond recognition in our nation. The age-old adage "might is right" now seems to be the most fitting description of the prevailing state of affairs. On April 10, 2024, a regrettable incident unfolded when police officers, in a sadly familiar scenario, intruded into the home of an army personnel. Promptly reported, the transgression led to a formal case against the offending officers. The aggrieved army personnel stormed the police station, administering a severe beating to the officers

“When contemplating the future of Chinese and other countries’ investments and involvement in Pakistan, a shift in strategy is advised. Rather than solely backing specific individuals, it’s imperative to support the establishment of free and fair elections. Historically, these nations have often thrown their weight behind individuals rather than the broader political system, leading to repercussions”

in custody. Shockingly, reports indicate that the injured officers faced further thrashing during their hospitalization. Eventually, officials from both services purportedly reached an "amicable" resolution to the matter, though the scars of this altercation undoubtedly run deep. Certainly, instances of lawlessness prevail in areas where governance is weak. Powerful individuals often arrogate unto themselves the role of law enforcers, exacerbating the situation. Regrettably, this phenomenon isn't limited to specific entities but has entrenched itself as a pervasive norm within Pakistani society. The lack of adherence to the rule of law is a primary deterrent to foreign investment in Pakistan. Pakistan undeniably presents promising business prospects, attracting foreign investors keen to tap into its vast potential. However, their enthusiasm wanes when confronted with daunting law and order challenges and bureaucratic hurdles. The prospect of navigating through a landscape marred by both security concerns and bureaucratic red tape dis-

suares potential investors, hampering the country's economic growth. The stability of Pakistan's key alliances, such as those with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and China, seems to be in a precarious state, given the escalating law and order challenges. China, in particular, is facing a significant dilemma due to its substantial investments in Pakistan, which are now under threat. The recent tragic incident involving the loss of Chinese engineers has compelled China to halt work on several projects, including those under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has already been experiencing delays. If Pakistan wishes to retain these crucial partnerships, it must urgently address the security concerns of foreign investors. Effectively tackling security issues necessitates a unified national effort, with all stakeholders aligning their interests. However, Pakistan currently lacks the necessary national cohesion, with state institutions, politicians, and the general public seemingly pursuing divergent agendas. This fragmentation is exacting a heavy toll

on the country, particularly affecting the marginalized segments of society. To remedy this situation, Pakistan must foster greater unity and collaboration among its various stakeholders to address security challenges and safeguard the interests of both domestic and foreign investors. This task can only be effectively achieved by entrusting genuine public representatives with control. However, this does not imply the complete elimination of the Establishment's role. It's an undeniable reality that entrusting all responsibilities solely to politicians may lead to chaos. History has shown that unchecked power often results in mismanagement, paving the way for interventions by the military. The Establishment, possessing both power and expertise, can serve as a vital check on politicians. It can act as a watchdog, intervening when necessary to steer politicians back on course if they veer off track. This balanced approach ensures that public mandates are respected while also maintaining a safeguard against potential deviations

from the public interest. When contemplating the future of Chinese and other countries' investments and involvement in Pakistan, a shift in strategy is advised. Rather than solely backing specific individuals, it's imperative for these countries to support the establishment of free and fair elections. Historically, these nations have often thrown their weight behind individuals rather than the broader political system, leading to pitfalls. It's time for a change in approach. Without a transparent system and authentic public representatives, their investments will invariably remain vulnerable. A transformative shift in Pakistan's system can only materialize when its leaders adopt a new mindset. Despite being a nation with limited resources, Pakistan finds itself governed by the affluent, who often cling to power to further enrich themselves. The stark dichotomy between the everyday lives of ordinary Pakistanis and the privileged ruling class is undeniable. It's imperative to narrow this gap for the betterment of the entire nation.



### A historic first

## Donald Trump faces criminal trial

"This is political persecution," Trump said before entering the courtroom

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: Donald Trump became the first former U.S. president to stand criminal trial on Monday when he appeared in a Manhattan court to face charges stemming from a hush-money payment to a porn star that could complicate his bid to win back the White House. "This is political persecution," Trump, 77, said before entering the courtroom and taking his seat at the defense table with his attorneys and wearing his signature blue suit and red tie.

He is required to attend the trial, which is expected to last through May. Jury selection is expected to take about a week, followed by witness testimony. Police stood guard in front of the courthouse amid a maze of barricades, and helicopters shadowed the motorcade of black SUVs that ferried Trump from his Trump Tower apartment. A handful of protesters, gathered in the plaza across the street, carried hand-painted signs reading "LOSER" and "convict Trump already."

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# Dr. Ovamir Anjum calls for rethinking nationalism's toxicity

Dr Ovamir Anjum said that humanity needs to contemplate alternate models of governance

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Amidst global turmoil and evolving dynamics, scholars and political scientists must reevaluate the concept of nationalism and its divisive implications. The current state of the world calls for a more inclusive and compassionate approach to governance based on moral principles and humane values. A reimagined caliphate as a confederation of governments would uphold universal human rights and foster solidarity among diverse communities. This was suggested by Dr Ovamir Anjum, renowned scholar and Imam Khattab Endowed Chair of Islamic Studies at the University of Toledo, US, during a lecture on "The Crisis of the Nation-State System: Quest for a Viable Alternative," held at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad. The session, attended by academics, scholars, and students alike, served as a platform for critical discourse and reflection, inspiring people to strive for a better future through collaboration and collective action. Dr Anjum highlighted that nationalism, while often touted as a unifying ideology, has served as a divisive factor within societies. It can exacerbate existing social, economic,

and political tensions and lead to exclusionary practices where nationalist affiliations may unleash havoc, as is evident today in Israeli aggression in Gaza and global complicity in the genocide. He further underscored that at the core of nationalism lies fabricated notions of identity, which undermine the inherent equality of all human beings. "Nationalism is a powerful yet often bloody idea," he stressed, cautioning against its divisive nature that fosters hatred and xenophobia by categorizing individuals as insiders and outsiders. He emphasized that the pursuit of nationalism often leads to violence and oppression. While examples like the European Union and the USA offer models where civilization and a collective sense of affiliation to certain values overshadow other identities, the Islamic model of caliphate is as practical and productive today as it has ever been in the past. Islam serves as a unifying force for Muslims around the world, but the nationalist movements within Muslim-majority countries have sought to assert their distinct national identities, sometimes at the expense of religious unity. The scholar urged Muslims worldwide to reconsider the concept of nationalism and its

far-reaching implications. Central to Dr Anjum's vision is reimagining the caliphate as a confederation of governments, promoting political and economic stability while upholding universal human rights. He argued that this model offers a viable alternative to the system characterized by oppression and division, envisioning a future where justice, compassion, and solidarity prevail. Moreover, in the rapidly changing world, it offers a path towards much-needed unity and resilience in the Muslim world. The speaker underscored the importance of addressing immediate obligations while nurturing long-term aspirations. He called upon young Muslims to transcend artificial borders, engage in meaningful dialogue, and collaborate on pressing issues such as economic development, religious discourse, and education. Drawing upon his extensive research and expertise, Dr Anjum shed light on the complexities of contemporary challenges facing the Muslim world, ranging from the allure of extremist ideologies to the pitfalls of maintaining the status quo. His insights provide valuable perspectives for navigating turbulent times and emphasize the need for unity and understanding.



ISLAMABAD : President Asif Ali Zardari meeting with the Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq.—DNA

## Eurobond payments positive for Pakistan's economy

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has said that the payment of international Eurobonds worth one billion dollars will increase the confidence of financial institutions and also a healthy sign for Pakistan's economy. RCCI President Saqib Rafiq in a statement said that the timely payment of Eurobond has negated the negative propaganda that Pakistan is going to default. Saqib Rafiq said that the payment will not only increase the confidence and trust of external investors, IMF and World Bank on Pakistan's economy but also show significant progress towards economic stabilization. Despite the payment, the rupee has not come under pressure and the value of the rupee has stabilized against the dollar, he added. Saqib Rafiq said that there is only one demand from the government that the Chamber of Commerce should be involved in economic policy making. He said that in order to stabilize the economy on a solid foot, it is necessary to reduce unnecessary expenses, focus on industrialization so that the country's economy can stand on its own feet and dependence on external financial institutions is minimized.

## Pakistan's economic growth boosted by Saudi support

Ashrafi said a high-level delegation led by Saudi Foreign Minister was expected to arrive in Pakistan on Monday

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Monday said that Pakistan was poised to make economic growth with the strong support of the brotherly country of Saudi Arabia. He attributed the country's positive economic trajectory to the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, particularly in fostering friendly relations with Islamic nations to bolster investment and business opportunities in Pakistan. Talking to the media, Ashrafi said a high-level delegation led by Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, accompanied by representatives from vital ministries and business sectors, would reaffirm the growing partnership and commitment to mutual

prosperity. He expressed optimism about Pakistan's future, foreseeing an end to economic hardships and a brighter outlook for its citizens. He said all the credit in that regard went to setting up of the Special Investment Facilitation Council under the vision of General Asim Munir and the government's dedication under Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's leadership in facilitating investments from friendly nations. All such initiatives were poised to drive economic growth and alleviate the financial burdens faced by the Pakistani people, he added. Ashrafi expressed the hope that with deepening collaborations and partnerships with the Muslim countries would help Pakistan overcome its economic challenges, ushering in an era of sustained growth and development.

## Traffic control measures in place for T20 matches

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi has issued a traffic plan to keep the traffic flowing on alternative routes during the T20 International Cricket Pak vs New Zealand matches to be held at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium Double Road from April 16 to April 21. During the arrival and departure of the cricket teams, Murree Road would remain closed from Faizabad to Double Road. During the matches, the Stadium Road would be closed for traffic from both sides. More than 367 traffic police officers and personnel including seven DSPs/Circle Incharges, 40 Inspectors, and 318 Traffic Police Wardens and assistants will be on special duties. This robust deployment underscores the commitment to facilitate the movement of cricket fans and ensure the safe passage of the teams. To ease congestion, three designated parking areas have been earmarked, namely Civil Aviation Ground Shaheen Chowk, Shahbaz Sharif Park near Shaheen Chowk, and Government Degree College Satellite Town. Chief Traffic Officer Taimoor Khan emphasized the importance of disseminating information to the public. Awareness banners will be prominently displayed along major highways, guiding citizens towards alternative routes and parking areas.—Agencies

Rescue 1122 responded to 421 emergencies during Eid-ul-Fitr

SIALKOT : Rescue 1122 saved 393 precious lives by responding to 421 different emergencies in a timely manner during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays. According to rescue spokesperson, Rescue 1122 performed its duty under the leadership of District Emergency Officer (DEO) Engineer Naveed Iqbal on Eid-ul-Fitr to ensure the safety of people's lives and property. He said that rescuers saved 393 precious lives by responding to 421 emergencies in a timely manner during the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays. The incidents include 198 road accidents, 15 fire incidents, 12 crime cases, 1 train accident, 11 falling incidents, 134 medical emergencies and 50 different rescue operations. Rescuers responded in time and provided first aid to 196 people on the spot while 197 injured were shifted to hospital.—APP

## IMF Urges Pakistan to tax non-essential items including cigarettes

IMF has recommended Pakistan to overhaul tax machinery and to tax non-essential items including cigarettes to boost revenue and improve public health

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recommended Pakistan to overhaul tax machinery and to tax non-essential items including cigarettes to boost revenue and improve public health. The global lender has given a set of recommendation and taxing non-essential items including cigarettes has received appreciation by health advocates and experts. "This is a crucial time for the government to fix economic problems and implement the IMF recommendation," said Professor Muhammad Zaman, head of Zaman Research Center at Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU). He said the IMF report has referred to

a phenomenal study on this subject conducted by Capital Calling, an Islamabad-based think tank, which says the cigarette consumption has decreased due to increase in prices. He said there is a need to bring into account the cost of morbidity and mortality that smoking inflicts on the society. "Smoking is injurious to health regardless of the cigarette brand," he said. He pointed to critical flaws within Pakistan's tax system particularly the cigarette industry, which has facilitated a loss of Rs567 billion during last seven years, as revealed by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). The study further exposed the influence of multinational cigarette companies on policymakers, particularly evident in the introduction of

a three-tier excise duty structure in 2017, which prioritized revenue collection over public health considerations. However, subsequent analysis proved this approach to be ineffective and misleading in revenue generation. The SDPI research highlighting global best practices and how high and middle-income countries have successfully used high cigarette taxes to reduce consumption and boost government revenues. Pakistan, however, lacks a coherent strategy in utilizing cigarette taxation and pricing as a public health tool. Dr. Hassan Shehzad from the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) echoed sentiments from the World Health Organization (WHO).



LAHORE: An artisan is giving final shape to various decorative artwork patterns at his work place.—APP

## IG Punjab launches initiative for police welfare

IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that Punjab Police is providing maximum possible support to all districts and field formations through its welfare sources so that the personnel posted in these districts and forces and their families do not have to face any difficulty in terms of welfare

ABID RAZA

LAHORE :Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar is ensuring regular good measures for the welfare of the police constabulary and families of the martyrs, in continuation of which, IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has released an amount of 85 lakh rupees to various units and districts of Punjab Police. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that districts and units that do not have own welfare projects are given money every month from the Police Endowment Fund, this money is being spent on police constabulary and welfare of martyrs' families

and educational scholarships for children. Spokesman of Punjab Police said that Special Protection Unit, Tele Communication, Investigation Punjab was given 10 lakh rupees each, while Special Branch, CTD has been released Rs. 05 lakh rupees to each both. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that Punjab Police is providing maximum possible support to all districts and field formations through its welfare sources so that the personnel posted in these districts and forces and their families do not have to face any difficulty in terms of welfare. Earlier on, POLICE arrest suspect in attempted rape case The Galiwal police

in Lodhran arrested a man for attempting to rape and murder a housewife in the absence of her husband in the village of Mianpur. The suspect, along with his unidentified accomplices, trespassed into her house and attempted to rape her at gunpoint. However, with the arrival of her father-in-law and other people, the suspect managed to flee. Meanwhile, health screening of over two Lakh cops completed Inspector General Police (IGP) Punjab has said that only a healthy force can better protect the nation and fight against criminals and anti-national elements with full force. In a special message on the occasion of

World Health Day, he said that for the first time in the history of the country, health screening of more than two lakh policemen was completed besides vaccination of hepatitis B of police personnel, treatment of personnel suffering from hepatitis C. He said that psychological profiling of police personnel and concrete measures to restore mental health of affected personnel were implemented. He said that wheelchairs were provided to the police personnel suffering from permanent physical disabilities. MoUs were signed with well-known hospitals to provide free and discounted treatment facilities to police employees and their families.

## CM visits girls high school Murree

LAHORE : Teachers and students of the Government Girls High School, Murree got pleasantly surprised to see Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, who reached there in heavy rain. Madam Chief Minister inquired about the studies and other issues from the students. She asked them, "Where do you come from? If there is any problem or need, let me know." Madam Chief Minister expressed her love and affection for the girls, and directed to get the best medical treatment for a girl with disability in one arm. She appreciated arrangements of the school. Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman was also present at the occasion. Earlier on, Maryam condolees loss of precious human lives. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif expressed grief and sorrow over the loss of precious human lives in Kallar Kahar accident. She offered condolences and expressed sympathies with the bereaved families. Madam Chief Minister directed to provide best medical facilities to the injured.—APP

**PAKISTAN RAILWAYS**  
HEADQUARTERS OFFICE  
LAHORE

**TENDER NOTICE**

Sealed tenders on through rate / non-schedule basis are invited by the Deputy General Manager, Pakistan Railways Headquarters Office, Lahore from the contractors / suppliers registered with Sales Tax Department and appearing on Active Tax Payers List (ATPL) of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for supply of following goods.

Description	Approximate Cost	Earnest Money	Completion Period	Cost of Tender Non-refundable
Supply of Office Furniture for Central Control Office P.R./HQ Office Lahore	4.0 million	2% of bid amount	15 days	Rs.1000/-

The tender documents containing detailed terms and conditions can be obtained from the office of the undersigned on payment as described above during office hours from the date of publication till 03.05.2024 up to 11:00 hours and shall be opened on the same day at 11:30 hours.

Tender documents accompanied by the original Earnest Money receipt in shape of CDR in favor of FAB&CO, Pakistan Railways Headquarters Office, Lahore may be dropped in the tender box placed in the office of the undersigned till 11:00 hours on 03.05.2024

(SYED ALI NAEEM)  
Assistant Secretary to CEO  
for Deputy General Manager  
☎ 042-99201785

ریلوے ان کو صرف ریلوے گرانٹ سے اہلیت سے پار کریں

PID13174



## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### April

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

### Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



### Emergency

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



### Enquiry

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



### Hospitals

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



### Departments

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



HASSANABDAL: Ambassadors of Nepal, Austria, Hungary and other diplomats attending Baisakhi celebrations at the Gurdwara Panja Sahib. —DNA

## Eid Bazaars to be organized at all markets from next year

The President ICCI impressed upon the Capital Development Authority to focus on the beautification of the market by removing encroachments and extending maximum possible facilities to the traders for a suitable atmosphere for their businesses. He said that the Office Bearers of Market Associations are playing an important role in solving the problems of the traders by sacrificing their own businesses and family responsibilities, which is highly laudable

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Irfan Nawaz Memon, Deputy Commissioner, Islamabad has said that the business community is the key player in the economic development of the country and that he would initiate all the necessary steps to facilitate it. He said this while addressing the closing ceremony of Eid Festival Bazaar on Chand Raat at Aabpara market as Chief Guest. It is worth mentioning that the ICCI in collaboration with the Traders Welfare Associations organized Eid Festivals

at five different markets of the capital to enable the customers to buy articles of their choice at affordable price. The Deputy Commissioner appreciated the ICCI and the Traders Welfare Associations for organizing Eid Festival Bazaars for the benefit of the consumers. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that the Aabpara Market is the oldest market of Islamabad and is playing central role in improving the economy by promoting trade activities and that ICCI would continue to work with relevant government departments to resolve the issues of the business community. He also impressed upon the Capital Development Authority to focus on the beautification of the market by removing encroachments and extending maximum possible facilities to the traders for a suitable atmosphere for their businesses. He said that the Office Bearers of Market Associations are playing an important role in solving the problems of the traders by sacrificing their own businesses and family responsibilities, which is highly laudable. He expressed gratitude for all the government bodies and traders for extending complete cooperation with

the ICCI for the promotion of trade activities in the capital and announced that from next year Eid festival Bazaars will be organized at all the markets of the capital. Speaking on the occasion, Ajmal Baloch, President, All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tijaran and Traders Action Committee Islamabad commended ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari for extending complete cooperation with the traders for solution of their problems and revitalizing the commercial activities. He also assured his fullest cooperation with the ICCI for the protection of traders' rights and overcoming their problems. On his part former Senior Vice President ICCI Khalid Chaudhry said that traders will continue their just struggle for their rights and nobody will be allowed to create rift in their ranks. On this occasion shields from Traders Welfare Association Aabpara were also presented to DC Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and SSP Traffic Sarfraz Virk in recognition of their services for the business community Prizes were also distributed among consumers through lucky draws.

## Chinese firm to send 5,000 aid PV power generation systems to Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As many as 5,000 sets of household photovoltaic power generation systems, supported by China, have been completed and will soon be shipped to Pakistan. This project is one of the South-South cooperation material assistance projects of China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment to address climate change. It is contracted and implemented by Lattice Technology Co., Ltd of China Energy Conservation and Environmental Protection Group (CE-CEP), Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. The 5,000 sets of household photovoltaic power generation systems included approximately 80,000 products across 9 categories. From program design to production inspection, Lattice High-tech successfully completed the project in less than 30 days. The aid will be installed in Balochistan province, where the temperature in some parts can exceed 50 degrees Celsius. Lattice High-tech fully investigated the local climate environment and people's electricity habits to customize the design of household photovoltaic power generation systems. The system mainly consists of monocrystalline silicon photovoltaic modules, lithium iron phosphate batteries, solar controllers, inverters, LED lamps, power boxes, photovoltaic brackets, etc.

## Govt disburses Rs 66k mln for various water schemes

ISLAMABAD: The government has released an amount of Rs 66,037 million for various water resource schemes so far under the annual Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) of the current fiscal year 2023-24. According to the official data issued by the Planning Commission, the government had specified a sum of Rs 110,500 million for various projects in PSDP 2023-24.—APP

## Visit of Saudi delegation will be a: Atif Ikram Shaikh

The visit might spell positive continuity for investment, process spearheaded by the Facilitation Council

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Shaikh termed the visit of the Saudi delegation as a milestone for the economy and hoped that it happens in response to the recent visit of Prime Minister of Pakistan's to the capital of the brotherly kingdom. The focus is on a positive continuation of the investment projects in Pakistan. The pledge to complete the five-billion-dollar investment trail would soon



begin restoring the confidence of investors from all over the world. Atif Sheikh said investment of this denomination from the platform of the SIFC in the Reco Deq prospect was a positive step for the bolstering the economy.

The role of the Investment Council is significant and timely, he added. There is a need for a framework to help widen the possibilities of cooperation in different fields of the economy. President Federation Atif Ikram said that Pakistan has vast potential to augment investment-driven relations with Saudi Arabia in sectors like textile, pharmaceutical, rice, leather, dairy farming etc. It is bound to play a supporting role for the welfare of the people in the two brotherly countries, he concluded.

## Buffalo embryos allowed to China

ISLAMABAD: The General Administration of Customs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China issued a joint announcement recently, allowing specific regions of Pakistan to export buffalo embryos that meet quarantine requirements in China. The latitude and longitude coordinates provided in the announcement correspond to the buffalo epidemic-free ranch of Royal Group in Punjab, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Monday. This marks the first ranch in Pakistan and the only one in the world capable of exporting high-yield buffalo embryos to China. As one of the first agricultural projects initiated under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Royal Group's "Buffalo Breeding Project" has made significant progress. The importation of buffalo embryos into China can significantly shorten the cycle of improving dairy buffalo breeds from 12 years in the past to 3 years. Additionally, the milk production of a single buffalo can be increased by more than threefold. In addition, Royal Group has established an in vitro embryo production factory and pastures in Pakistan. They have also recruited and trained local researchers and farm managers, and provided high-quality germplasm resources of milk buffalo to Pakistan. This has helped solve the issue of maintaining the local super buffalo resource. In 2021, Royal Group established Royal Cell Biotechnology (Pakistan) and officially launched the "Milk Buffalo Provenance Chip" strategy. In the following year, the Royal Cell in vitro embryo production plant was formally inaugurated.—APP

## 47 premises sealed for violating dengue SOPs

RAWALPINDI: District Health Authority (DHA) had sealed 47 premises and lodged 47 FIRs on violations of anti-dengue SOPs from January 1 to date, said District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control Dr Sajjad Mehmood here Monday. Giving details of the penalty actions, the health officer said that the district administration, in collaboration with allied departments had issued tickets to 112 and a fine of Rs 199,000 was imposed on violations of dengue SOPs in 2024. Dr Sajjad informed that around four confirmed cases had been reported in the district this year, while the number was two in 2022, and 2023 during the period.—APP

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## Briefs

## Industry in middle of deep economic crisis

ISLAMABAD: The Feroze Road Industrial Association (FRIA) senior vice chairman has said that the country is in the middle of a deep economic crisis amid interest rates hikes and soaring inflation with its major debt sustainability indicators witnessing marked deterioration. Shahbaz Aslam said that amid the crippling economic crisis, the govt will have to return \$77.5 billion as external debt in the next three years. Quoting the media reports, he noted that a major portion of the \$77.5 billion is owed to China, and has to be paid in June when a \$1 billion Chinese SAFE deposit and a roughly \$1.4 billion Chinese commercial loan would mature. The FRIA SVC stated that the total public debt and liabilities of the country has presently been standing at Rs68 trillion in FY22-23, expressing the fear that it would go up further by Rs11.8 trillion in the current fiscal year.

He pointed out that the total public debt and liabilities would go up manifold mainly because of the rising fiscal deficit and it is estimated that fiscal deficit would escalate by Rs8.227 trillion for the current fiscal year, equivalent to 7.8 percent of GDP. He said that the government will have to manage budget financing to the tune of Rs7.5 trillion through domestic avenues and only Rs1 trillion would be made available as budgetary support from foreign avenues. The subsidies amount was kept unchanged at Rs1.39 trillion for the current fiscal year although the government had so far released only Rs2.5 billion during the first quarter of the current fiscal year. The defence spending was also kept unchanged at Rs1.8 trillion for the current fiscal year. On the fiscal side, the IMF and Pakistani sides agreed to slash the development spending at federal and provincial levels. At the federal level, the development spending was reduced from Rs843 billion to Rs782 billion for the current fiscal year. The government had allocated Rs950 billion for PSDP projects in the current fiscal year.—APP

## ICT admin tightened surveillance to control fare hikes

ISLAMABAD: As the commuters are coming back to the Federal Capital from different cities of the country, the district administration has ramped up monitoring efforts across various bus stands in the city to deter any attempts at exploiting passengers during this busy period. According to the Spokesman of ICT, Dr Abdullah Tabassum, all Assistant Commissioners were present at Faizabad, 26 Number, Karachi Company and other bus stands and actively monitored the transportation process to curb the fare hikes. In a recent operation, Assistant Commissioner Uzair Ali Khan wielded swift action, imposing a hefty fine of Rs 5,000 on a vehicle found overcharging at Karachi Company Bus Stand. This decisive move underscored the administration's commitment to ensuring fair pricing for commuters.—APP



RAWALPINDI: Two students on the way back home on bicycles during rain that experienced the Twin Cities. —APP

## Pakistan should be cautious as ME conflict is escalating

Difficult economic conditions increasing Pakistan's dependence on Arab nations

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Monday that the Middle East crisis is worsening; therefore, Pakistan needs to exercise caution. The challenge for Pakistan will be to strike a balance between its relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that Pakistan's reliance on Arab nations is growing due to challenging economic circumstances. Talking to the

business community, the veteran business leader said that the Middle East conflict is increasing, which can take any shape.

It is most likely that this conflict will continue but will not turn into a major war, but still Pakistan has to be careful in this regard, he added. The business leader said that Pakistan's dependence on Arab countries is increasing, but this relationship should not be at the cost of any third party. In the current situation, balancing relations with Arab countries and Iran will be a severe test of our leadership in which success is the only option. Mian Zahid Hussain said that Presi-

dent Asif Ali Zardari's contact with his Iranian counterpart is very important in the current situation as the scope of tension between Israel and Hamas is expanding, and now Iran has also jumped into this matter. Now, the US and Israel, with the help of their allies, will try to teach Iran an economic lesson instead of a military one. Mian Zahid Hussain said that a few months ago, Iran had launched a missile attack on Pakistan in which some people were killed, to which Pakistan immediately retaliated, but due to diplomatic efforts from both sides. That issue between the two neighbours was resolved, but trust was not

fully restored, and both sides continued to accuse each other of supporting terrorists. Mian Zahid Hussain said that Saudi Arabia wants to invest heavily in Pakistan, while millions of its Pakistanis also work there and send billions of dollars annually. Millions of Pakistanis are also working in other Arab and Gulf countries and sending massive foreign exchange, which cannot be ignored in any case. On the other hand, Pakistan wants natural gas from Iran and the employment of a large number of Pakistanis along the Iranian border is related to trade with Iran. Therefore, it is challenging to ignore Iran. It is impossible to

import gas from Iran because it is not acceptable to America. Still, it is also a fact that more than a dozen countries in the American camp are doing business with Iran, so Pakistan also hopes that, sooner or later, it will be able to import gas. Pakistan will have to pay a fine of up to twenty billion dollars if it decides not to buy gas from Iran. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that President Zardari has contacted the Iranian leadership, and now Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Mian Nawaz Sharif should also take Saudi Arabia into confidence because the kingdom leadership trust this family the most in Pakistan.

## The entire burden of corruption falls on public

He said that if the Pakistani government can get rid of failed institutions, there will be no need to impose more taxes on the people and increase the cost of electricity, gas, and petrol

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Monday that the resources of Pakistan are insufficient to support two hundred white elephants. State-owned firms had wasted four trillion rupees in five years, and the entire cost of corruption rests with the people, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that the country's resources are not able to carry the burden of two hundred white elephants, so the government should get rid of them. These two hundred state-run enterprises have not contributed to the country's development. Instead, four trillion rupees have been wasted in five years, the entire burden of which was borne by the poor, which has compromised their quality of life. According to Shahid Rasheed Butt, every government that comes to power transforms government institutions into recruitment centers. Every government recruits an army of incompetent and corrupt individuals, contributing to losses worth trillions of rupees. Apart from this, new departments are also established to get party workers employed at the cost of the country. Moreover, political interference in state-run corporations has crumbled them, which has become a burden on the country. At present, there are many

such departments whose existence is unnecessary, but millions of rupees are being spent on them. Shahid Rashid Butt said that dozens of countries have developed by adopting the path of privatization, foreign investment, elimination of subsidies, discouraging manipulation, promoting competition, and adopting a free trade model. He said that Vietnam was a very backward country that decided to undertake economic reforms in 1986 to overcome poverty, unemployment, and inflation. Their leadership surprised the whole world by selling 9000 state-owned companies in a few years. Now, Vietnam has become a model for many countries, which is growing at a rate of seven percent per year. On the other hand, it takes decades for Pakistani politicians to sell a single company, which speaks volumes about the competence and honesty of leaders and bureaucrats. The business leader noted that with a young and expanding population, the largest difficulty facing Pakistan is its sluggish economic growth. The current state of affairs shows that the middle class is shrinking and poverty is increasing. The situation in regional nations is precisely the opposite of this. Their vibrant middle class is growing, poverty is declining and their growth rate is impressive. He said that if the Pakistani government can get rid of failed institutions, there will be no need to impose more taxes on the people and increase the cost of electricity, gas, and petrol.

## IRSA releases 152,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 152,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 197,600 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1418.22 feet and was 20.22 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 51,200 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1108.20 feet, which was 58.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 34,100 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 122,800, 38,100, 35,100 and 7,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 98,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 8,900 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

## E&amp;T Deptt removed 55 tinted glasses

ISLAMABAD: The Excise and Taxation (E&T) Department on Monday intensified action against illegal vehicle modifications in the Federal Capital and a total of 180 vehicles underwent inspection, leading to the removal of 55 tinted glasses and 65 fancy number plates. On the directive of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, the Excise Department were ramping up efforts to curb illegal modifications on vehicles and continued crack down on vehicles sporting black tinted glasses and unauthorized fancy number plates, said the ICT Spokesman, Dr Abdullah Tabassum here. In a recent operation spearheaded by Assistant Commissioners alongside Assistant Excise & Taxation Officers (AETOs) and Traffic Police, thorough checks were conducted at key locations including Lehtar Road, Taramuri Chowk, F-6, F-7, and nearby areas, he said adding a total of 180 vehicles underwent inspection, leading to the removal of 55 tinted glasses and 65 fancy number plates. Those found in violation were issued warnings, while the registration of vehicles with illegal modifications was suspended. On the occasion, Deputy Commissioner urged citizens to comply with the law by removing unauthorized modifications from their vehicles. Only number plates approved by the Excise and Taxation Department should be used to avoid facing punitive measures.—APP

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## ANF nabbed 15 accused

RAWALPINDI: Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) has nabbed 15 accused and recovered more than 165 kg of drugs during 13 massive operations against drug trafficking across the country. Spokesman ANF informed that ANF's countrywide crackdown against drug trafficking was continuing during which various operations were conducted at different airports and places. According to details, 700 grams of heroin was recovered from a passenger going to Bahrain at Multan Airport. During operation at Lahore Airport, 523 grams of ice was recovered from a passenger going to Doha and 61 heroin capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Jeddah. During two operations conducted at Peshawar Airport, 1 kg of ice was recovered from two passengers going to Doha. In other miscellaneous crackdowns in Islamabad, 67 grams of heroin were recovered from a parcel being dispatched to the UK at a private courier office, while 1 kg of heroin, 6 kg of hashish and 375 grams of ice were recovered from two suspects in two operations near M-1 Motorway Islamabad.—APP

## PIEDRR 2024 to be rescheduled

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Monday announced that the first ever Pakistan's International Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction (PIEDRR-2024) has been rescheduled due to unavoidable circumstances and administrative instructions. In a post on the social networking and microblogging website X erstwhile Twitter, the NDMA wrote on its official handle, "It is to inform that due to unavoidable circumstances & administrative instructions, the PIEDRR Pakistan's 1st International Expo on DRR - 2024 (planned from 23 to 25 April 2024) at Islamabad, Pakistan has been rescheduled." However, it added that fresh dates would be communicated.—APP

## Pakistan, Tajikistan ties excellent

MUHAMMAD SIDDIQ ANZAR

Pakistan and Tajikistan are important countries located at a sensitive location, geopolitical sensitivity and mineral resources in the region, and close relations in neighbouring countries are a great gift of nature. With great progress in science and technology, Pak-Tajik relations can set an extraordinary milestone for developing countries to achieve ideal development, fulfilment of common interest, and prosperity in the region. The two countries are located just 16 km (10 mi) apart. The Wakhan Corridor is a narrow region in northeastern Afghanistan, extending into China, separating Tajikistan from Pakistan. Relations between the two states were established when the Tajik Republic became independent after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Trade and cooperation between the two countries is steadily growing. Like Pakistan, Tajikistan has always supported Pakistan's position on international affairs, bilateral rela-

tions and long-standing issues facing Pakistan, and this sweetness in Pakistan-Tajik relations is the basic foundation of historical, political, commercial and cultural relations between the two countries. Tajikistan has given importance to its ally, friend, and close relations in contemporary political and cultural relations in Central Asia, Tajikistan has also always supported Pakistan's efforts in establishing peace in the region. Mutual respect between the two countries and common interests in the context of peace and development in the region have been of great importance. Moreover, the Pak-Tajik vision in the industrial sector, energy resources, trade, education, defense, and international affairs was also seen with respect. A network of roads and rail tracks is being set up between China, Pakistan, and Tajikistan, which can play an important role in the development of all the countries of the region. Pakistan sees Tajikistan in the context of its strategic depth policy - this is a positive sum policy from which both countries will bene-

fit - under this policy, Pakistan is economically, politically and defensively different from other countries in the region. Strengthening the relationship. Pakistan wants to work together with Tajikistan and other Islamic countries to promote peace in the whole world - Central Asian countries are rich in natural resources, while Pakistan is facing a crisis in the energy sector - in this context, Central Asian countries A good relationship with Tajikistan, in particular, can help to deal with this crisis in a better way.

In the form of increased land connectivity and other projects, the two countries can benefit from each other in various fields - it is reasonable to understand here that China, Pakistan, or Tajikistan are not leaving the other countries alone and these projects should they wish, can join as these projects are declared open to the entire region. Due to internal challenges, Pakistan is facing an energy crisis despite having abundant hydropower potential - Tajikistan, which is rich

in natural resources such as vast mountain ranges, is the third largest producer of hydropower in the world. In such a country, cooperation in the energy sector becomes important - an electricity supply project CASA-1000 (CASA-1000 electricity transmission and trade project) has been decided between the two countries - under this project between Tajikistan and Pakistan. Work has been started on the project of laying a line for the transmission of electricity - this project will provide about 1300 megawatts of electricity to Pakistan - under this project, both countries will also provide technical and economic support to each other in this field - this project has provided many opportunities to the people of both the countries which need to be fully exploited. Tajikistan presented a resolution in the United Nations to celebrate the year 2025 as the year of the glacier, which was fully supported by Pakistan and now the next year 2025 will be celebrated as the year of the glacier.



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## The Gaza syndrome

ALMOST everyone in the world feels that the last seven months have changed our lives, and in a way, dramatically changed the world we were born and brought up in, to the extent that people everywhere, especially the inhabitants of the Arab world, feel alienated in their own homes and countries. This is because what has been taking place in Gaza has undermined all the ideas, concepts and basics of human relations and behavior, international relations and justice, human rights and freedom, free thought and media, and other notions we were fed. At every juncture of a war, civil conflict, or natural disaster (famine, earthquakes...) anywhere, we used to wait and see what the international community would do to help or even save fellow human beings who happened to be at the short end of these events. But as time went on with the genocide that has targeted millions of civilians in Gaza in particular, and the Palestinian people in general, the international reaction shifted from the call for urgent action to a mood of shock, astonishment, and helplessness that is approaching a state of despair, especially when the Western governments steadily supply the war criminals with much more advanced weapons and deadly ammunition in order to kill more helpless children and mothers. The entire world had known, prior to October 7, of the horrid situation the Palestinians have endured for the last 75 years, and have especially known the siege of Gaza, which has been described as the largest open-air prison in the world, imposed by the last apartheid regime in modern history. But no one would have been able to imagine the way in which a large military machine, supported and fed by the largest military power in the world, would corner 2.2 million civilians to demolish their homes right over their heads, and kill medical teams along with the ill and wounded seeking medical treatment, rendering almost all hospitals totally out of service. No one would have imagined targeting the press corps, who are only trying to inform the world of developments, as the press does in all wars. In Gaza, the genocide killed more journalists, both men and women, along with their entire families, than in all the wars in the past century. No one would have imagined the targeting of helpless women and children, and deliberately killing pregnant women, killing both mothers and the babies in their wombs. No one would have imagined the targeting of workers from UNRWA, World Central Kitchen, or anyone trying to get aid delivered to starving children. This has turned out to be the worst state of terror that the world has witnessed; it has terrorized all inhabitants of this earth and pushed them into a state of despair and helplessness. That is why the first priority now, besides saving the people of Palestine from this genocide, is to save the faith of people on earth in their humanity and their capacity to make the wheel turn in a direction that respects the integrity and sanctity of human life. All God's creations were created to serve humans, to serve their well-being, preserve their human dignity and their happiness on earth, as the Almighty considered mankind to be His representatives on earth. That is why the humiliation and killing of God's representatives on earth has brought the whole world into a dark and endless tunnel, and that is why God warned that the killing of one's fellow man is akin to killing humankind.



## How much is Biden willing to sacrifice

ALTHOUGH US President Joe Biden's attachment to Zionism is well-known, it has nevertheless been remarkable in the last six months to witness just how much he is willing to hurt himself in order to enable Israel's genocide in Gaza. Despite his occasionally tough words for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Biden has continuously provided Netanyahu's government with the armaments it is using to kill and maim Palestinians by the tens of thousands and destroy entire neighbourhoods and critical infrastructure. "I'm a Zionist," the president has said repeatedly since last October. This does not entirely come as a surprise, as Biden has been a staunch supporter of Israel throughout his long political career. In 1982, for example, then-Senator Biden praised Israel's bloody invasion of Lebanon, which had killed thousands of civilians. Speaking to Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin, Biden said at the time, "You annihilated what you annihilated. It was great! It had to be done!" Four years after that, Biden declared on the Senate floor that "were there not an Israel, the United States of America would have to invent an Israel to protect her interests in the region." In exchange for his loyalty, pro-Israel groups have donated a total of \$4.2 million to Biden during his 36 years as a senator. But now, by backing Israel's ghastly killing spree, the president is alienating huge numbers of voters from his own party during an election year where his victory is far from assured. According to a recent Gallup poll, a whopping 75 percent of Democrats oppose Israel's assault on Gaza, even as Biden continues sending US-made weapons to the Israeli military. In several states, some 530,000 Democratic Party voters have recently protested Biden's unchecked support for Israel by choosing the "uncommitted" or "uninstructed" option on their primary ballots rather than vote to re-nominate the president as the party's candidate in the upcoming November election. As former State Department official David Miller said in a recent interview with the New Yorker: "Do I think that Joe Biden has the same depth of feeling and empathy for the Palestinians of Gaza as he does for the Israelis? No, he doesn't, nor does he convey it. I don't think there's any doubt about that." For six months, the president's advisors have kept him informed of the daily atrocities and indignities Palestinians are experiencing because of his policies, with some even resigning in protest. But he has continued to unconditionally provide Israel with the military means and diplomatic cover to implement genocide, all while mouthing concern over the "humanitarian crisis" in Gaza that he himself has caused. This is not simply because Biden has an affinity for the State of Israel, but because he refuses to see Palestinians as human beings. Indeed, despite over 33,000 Palestinians slaughtered, it was only after Israel killed a group of Western aid workers last week that Biden reportedly warned Netanyahu that the US may condition military aid. In response, Netanyahu quickly opened three previously blocked humanitarian aid routes into Gaza, demonstrating the power Biden could have exerted all along, but chose not to.

## Iran's operation, "The True Promise"...

Qamar Bashir



Iran's military strategists knew very well the formidable challenge its operation was faced with from the combined airpower of Israel and its allies including US, UK and France in particular. Acknowledging their collective destructive and defensive power and their overwhelming and vastly superior capabilities, the operation "True Promise" needed to be carefully orchestrated, and the launching of varied aerial assets needed to be timed carefully to challenge the air superiority of Israel and its allies to achieve the intended objectives

ISRAEL, the US, UK, and France mobilized their diplomatic, military, and reconnaissance assets in response to potential retaliation from Iran following Israel's direct attack on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, resulting in its destruction and the deaths of seven high-ranking officials from Iran's Revolutionary Guards. Sensing a retaliatory threat, prompted Joe Biden and other world leaders to issue public warnings and threats to Iran, urging it to refrain from any retaliatory actions. Biden emphasized the ironclad alliance between the US and Israel, warning Iran against attacking Israel and pledging full support and defense. To demonstrate seriousness, the US redirected its naval assets towards the Middle Eastern theater. But Iran had had enough and its resolve to punish Israel for orchestrating several attacks on Iran which left the entire Iranian nation wounded, bruised and angered, brushed aside all the warnings and intimidations and both spiritual and formal leadership in Iran vowed revenge, declaring that the time had come to punish Israel for his acts of aggressions. Iran mobilized its strategic military assets, preparing to turn threats into action. Both civilian and military leaderships named the retaliatory strikes "Operation True Promise." Iran's military and defense experts convened to strategize and outline the objectives, scope, impact, and expected outcomes of Operation True Promise. On the other side of the isle, the combined reconnaissance and intelligence assets of Israel, the US, UK, France, and their allied countries in the Middle East—including Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other nations hosting US military assets—were mobilized. Military strategists collaborated to accurately assess the scope and scale of the potential retaliatory attack. Air, land, and sea assets were placed on high alert and fully prepared to neutralize any impending threats. Iran's military strategists knew very well the formidable challenge its operation was faced with from the combined airpower of Israel and its allies including US, UK and France in particular. Acknowledging their collective destructive and defensive power and their overwhelming and vastly superior capabilities, the operation "True Promise" needed to be carefully orchestrated, and the launching of varied aerial assets needed to be timed carefully to challenge the air superiority of Israel and its allies to achieve the intended objectives. Iran first launched 170 suicide drone, knowing very well that they being slow moving will most likely will be intercepted and destroyed even before reaching to their intended targets. As anticipated, as soon as the drones entered into the middle east airspace, they were intercepted by

the pilots of Israel, US, UK, who, sitting in their sophisticated fighter jets, with precise weapons systems relished bringing these drones to the ground. As a Result, hardly any drone successfully penetrated the Israel air defense. While successfully engaging them with drones, Iran put to test their ground to air and sea to air defense system. It fired additional 120 ballistic missiles, and 30 cruise missiles simultaneously launched from the militias in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen, and Hezbollah in Lebanon. As expected and as claimed by the Israeli defense forces commander, more than 99% of these threats were neutralized, but admitted that the Iranian attack was "unprecedented" and was thwarted by unprecedented accuracy. It also admitted that Nevatim air force base in Israel's southern Negev desert was hit, one 7 year old girl died and 12 people in southern Israel received hospital treatment. Iran asserted that it had achieved all of its set objectives. First and foremost, Iran aimed to demonstrate to Israel and its allies that there exists at least one country willing to challenge their perceived invincibility and pose a credible threat to their security. The second objective focused on ensuring there were no civilian casualties on the Israeli side during the retaliatory strikes. This strategic choice aimed to position Iran on higher moral ground, even amidst conflict, by demonstrating a commitment to minimizing harm to civilians. Additionally, by avoiding civilian casualties, Iran aimed to differentiate itself from Israel, which has been criticized for civilian casualties during ongoing operations in Gaza since October 2023. Iran's this strategy had successfully prevented Israel from leveraging such casualties to justify its actions or sway international public opinion against Iran. The third objective was to limit the extent of damage inflicted during the retaliatory strikes to prevent providing Israel and its allies with justification or leverage for a counter-attack on Iranian assets and thereby has successfully minimized the risk of further escalation or retaliation, thus safeguarding its own assets and strategic interests. Israel was quick to exploit the attack, both internal and internationally. Internally, it claimed that the Iran attack was squarely defeated, and now Israel reserves the right to give a befitting and decisive response to Iran's direct attack on Israel. The Israeli War cabinet hurriedly convened its meeting to strategize the response. Internationally Israel requisite the emergency meeting of The United Nations Security Council in the afternoon of 14 April describing the Iranian attack as a "clear violation" of the UN Charter and international law, accused Iran of stoking regional in-

stability, demanded unequivocally condemnation of Iran and designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRSC) as a terrorist organization. Iran defended its attack by saying that the operation was in exercise of its right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter in response to Israel's 1 April attack against an Iranian facility in Damascus. It declared that the matter between Iran and Israel has been concluded, but added that if Israel were to make "another mistake", Tehran's response would "be considerably more severe". Iran also warned the US to remain uninvolved in the conflict. The US also jumped in to exploit the attack and hurriedly convened the meeting of G-7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as the European Union) to coordinate a rebuke to Iran for its unprecedented aerial attack on Israel, and to prevent a wider regional escalation. The joint statement unequivocally condemned in the strongest terms "the direct attack by Iran and reaffirmed their commitment towards Israel's security. The Iranian attack generated a diverse reaction in the diverse world public. According to Press TV, Iran's official TV Channel, it was the first night since October 2023, when the entire population of Gaza did not sleep, not because of the fear of Israel's air bombardment, but to celebrate the Iranian attack on Israel. Yemen, Syria and Hezbollah issued public statements declaring the Iranian attack as legitimate and an act of self defense. The Iranian public came out on the streets with joy and congratulated the Iranians leadership for conducting a successful operation. Highly controlled Iranian attack has minimized the escalation of the hostility and war to spread to the region of the world. Iran has declared a ceasefire by declaring the matter between Israel and Iran as concluded. With no civilian or military casualties, there would be much less public pressure on the Israeli government to take revenge. Israel has taken the matter to the UN showing its intention to resolve the issue on the platform of the United Nations. The G-7 leaders in their joint statement have shown no appetite for escalating the war. Israel currently has too much on his plate, dealing with Hamas, hostage release, planning and preparing for ground attack on Rafah, dealing with Hezbollah, Iraqi Militia, hostile Syria and Houthis in Yemen. Therefore most likely there may be a big pause before Israel and its allies consider direct attack on Iran.

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

## Can Swiss initiative open the door for peace in Ukraine?

Yasar Yakis

Swiss President Viola Amherd did not promise the moon but said that it was worth trying. As the Ukraine crisis has unfolded, some transatlantic community countries have grown skeptical about whether NATO will be able to militarily sustain Kyiv for a prolonged period. Such misgivings have also been voiced in certain quarters in the US, with some having lost their appetite for getting deeply involved in the Ukraine war. Presidential candidate Trump says that he could bring the Ukrainian crisis to an end within 24 hours

AN international conference on the Ukrainian question is scheduled to be held on June 15-16 in the resort of Burgenstock in Switzerland. This country has a tradition of mediating in complicated processes. Therefore, the summit stands a chance of success. The idea is to work out a framework for a comprehensive and lasting peace regarding the situation in Ukraine. Russia has announced that it will not participate in the meeting because it believes that Switzerland has relinquished its neutrality in the conflict. China previously conducted a similar initiative by issuing a 12-point plan for the solution of the Ukrainian problem, but without entering into specifics. Russia displayed a lukewarm attitude to the Chinese initiative but did not discard it entirely. China has now said that, if the Burgenstock meeting materializes, it might consider participating in it. This will be the first serious attempt to find a solution to this complicated problem. Swiss President Viola Amherd did not promise the moon but said that it was worth trying. As the Ukraine crisis has unfolded, some transatlantic community countries have grown skeptical about whether NATO will be able to militarily sustain Kyiv for a prolonged period. Such misgivings have also been voiced in certain quarters in the US, with some having lost their appetite for getting deeply involved in the Ukraine war. Presidential candidate Donald Trump says that he could bring the Ukrainian crisis to an end within 24 hours. He believes that both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky have strengths and weaknesses. He probably believes that Ukraine might settle for an arrangement that will give Russia the territories that it already occupies. Zelensky will, of course, strongly oppose such a solution, especially in light of the present US administration's policy of prolonging the

war to weaken Russia. There are differences between President Joe Biden's approach to the Ukrainian crisis and that of Trump. The present US administration believes that a joint NATO mission may be set up in Ukraine. It will not aim at declaring war on Russia but will try to improve Kyiv's military capabilities in terms of planning, training and fighting. Turkey has intricate relations with both Russia and Ukraine. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan maintains fair relations with Putin. He also maintains good relations with Zelensky. This combination allows Ankara to remain neutral in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, although the risks of it getting out of control are also real. Relations between Turkey and Ukraine have followed a stable course since the dismemberment of the Soviet Union. A few weeks before the outbreak of the Ukrainian war in February 2022, Ankara and Kyiv signed a deal to allow Ukrainian factories to manufacture Turkish drones and, as this was a commercial deal, Russia did not oppose it. This arrangement is still valid and Moscow does not make it a problem with Turkey. The deal is now bearing fruit. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg referred to this project as an example of how NATO allies were supporting Ukraine and increasing this country's capacity to manufacture its own weapons. Hopefully, this will not drag Turkey into a conflict with Russia. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also seems deeply committed to making Ukraine a member of NATO sooner or later. He said that a roadmap had to be drawn up as soon as possible to that effect. The election of a new secretary-general for NATO is another issue that keeps the alliance busy. This time we have been lucky enough to produce several candidates. Stoltenberg, whose term expires on Oct. 1, is the second longest-serving NATO secretary-general after Joseph Luns. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte

is one of the new candidates. He is supported by the US, UK and Germany. Romanian President Klaus Iohannis and Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas are also in the running. As the secretary-general is elected by consensus, a compromise has to be worked out. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan insisted that whoever becomes secretary-general has to "fully and unconditionally support Turkey in its fight against terror." Ankara may try to obtain as firm a promise as possible on this critical issue, but the US will probably again attempt to distinguish between the Kurdish fighters in Syria and the PKK terror organization. NATO's expansion toward Asia-Pacific is another major concern in the alliance. China is the biggest challenge for the US. If reelected, the Trump administration will probably give priority to the Pacific Rim. The US has initiated in the Pacific area a loose co-operation framework known as the Quad, which includes the US, Australia, India and Japan. It is a loose gathering with no binding mechanisms. AUKUS is another pact and it brings together Australia, the UK and the US. It aims to contribute to the military presence of the West in the Pacific area. These cooperation mechanisms contribute to the militarization of Japan and South Korea. The US wanted NATO to open a liaison office in Tokyo that would cover the alliance's relations with Japan and South Korea, but France blocked this initiative. It is contested whether a minuscule group of Hawaiian islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean should be considered part of the North Atlantic alliance just because it is part of the US' territory. If an armed conflict erupted in Hawaii, very few NATO countries outside of the US would be eager to send troops to this archipelago. The Swiss initiative is the best available option for peace in Ukraine. If it works, some progress may be expected; if not, we will stay where we are.



## Briefs

## Pakistan, KSA all set to solidify...

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It said the delegation will consult on the next stages of investment and issues related to implementation. The statement said export capacity will increase, joint ventures will be launched, new opportunities will be paved and the achievement of the SIFC's objectives will be advanced, along with bringing more speed and confidence to the economy. "The diplomatic isolation that Pakistan suffered in the last few years has come to an end. A new closeness, innovation and warmth is being seen in Pakistan's relations with its always reliable and brotherly countries, especially Saudi Arabia."

## Iranian President to reach...

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commander Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi. Apart from this, the visit is part of ongoing efforts by the two countries to deepen their cooperation which received a temporary setback earlier this year. In January, relations between the two countries had turned sour after Pakistan, in retaliation to Tehran's cross-border strikes, carried out precision strikes using killer drones, rockets, loitering munitions and stand-off weapons to target terrorists inside Iranian territory. Pakistan had even withdrawn its ambassador from Iran and announced that it would not allow the Iranian envoy visiting his home country at that time to return as a gesture of protest against the breach of its sovereignty by Iran.

## MQM-P warns of taking to...

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alone in which 20 vehicles were snatched and more than 130 others stolen. Moreover, 830 motorcycles were also snatched with 4,200 others stolen in the same month. Meanwhile, 19 people lost their lives in Ramadan while 55 were injured. The two parties, both of whom are key allies of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) government in the Centre, have been engaged in a verbal spat in recent weeks over the issue of street crimes in the city. Last month, Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjar termed crime a "part of a daily life" saying that the issue of the law-and-order situation in Karachi was being "exaggerated".

## Joint session of parliament...

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He will address the joint session under Article 56(3) which will begin at 4pm. Earlier, the joint session was convened on April 16 which has now been rescheduled for April 18. Hence, the notification for the joint parliamentary session on April 16 stands cancelled. It should be noted that this will be the first joint session following the start of the new parliamentary year in the country after both the upper and lower houses have its members elected constitutionally. Despite elections taking place on February 8 and former president Arif Alvi still in office, he was unable to summon a joint session as elections in the Senate were yet to be conducted.

## Urban flood emergency declared...

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Kan Mehtarzai and Kalat saw hailstorms accompanied by strong winds which has caused destruction to trees, gardens and solar panels. Torrential rains and hailstorms also disrupted land connectivity, affecting the communication system of rural areas of Sinjawi, Pishin, Toba Kakari, Shelabagh, Qila Abdullah and Pishin, due to which the citizens are facing severe problems.

## Bugti is the President of PHF, minister told

2025 will be revival for sport in Pakistan, claims Ahsan Iqbal; During briefing secretary IPC informed minister that Prime Minister is the Patron in Chief of Pakistan Hockey Federation and he made President Tariq Bugti as President of Pakistan Hockey Federation with legal status but Shehla Raza belongs to Pakistan People's Party has made a parallel hockey federation who also illegally announced the national hockey camp as well

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) and Planning, Development Prof. Dr Ahsan Iqbal has declared the year 2025 as the year of revival of sports and said that steps will be taken to restore the lost dignity of sports of the country. Talking to the media after assuming charge as Federal Minister of Inter Provincial Coordination, Ahsan Iqbal said that we will try to establish the Pakistan Sports Board as an independent institution as well as taking all measures to develop and promote sports standard to bring back our medal standard in Olympics and other international games. I will also meet with all the stakeholders for the improvement and development of sports in the country. "We are planning to organize the National Games this year to provide the opportunity young and talented players to show their skill in the games as well as to improve our sports infrastructure in the country", Federal Minister said, adding that Pakistan is going to host the South Asian Games and this international event will show the soft



image of Pakistan in the world. Answering the question Ahsan Iqbal said that Hockey is our National game and we will also take steps for the improvement of hockey standard. He made it clear that Tariq Bugti was the President of the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) adding, the creation of a body parallel to the Pakistan

Hockey Federation will be discussed with the Prime Minister. He said that politics, grouping, parallel bodies in sports federations are on main reasons for the downfall of sports standard but we have to take right decisions for the betterment of the sports, adding that Narawal Sports City project was the example of every one which I only

made for the sports development but I paid this cost by facing fake NAB cases. The federal minister said that the total income of the federal government is seven thousand billion and the expenditure is eight thousand billion. We are a running country with one thousand billion loans but we have to stop the theft of resources and all stakeholders have to play their part to come out from this situation.

Earlier, Federal Secretary of Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) Irshad Nadeem Kayani gave a detailed briefing to the federal minister on the ministry and other parent departments. During briefing secretary IPC informed minister that Prime Minister is the Patron in Chief of Pakistan Hockey Federation and he made President Tariq Bugti as President of Pakistan Hockey Federation with legal status but Shehla Raza belongs to Pakistan People's Party has made a parallel hockey federation who also illegally announced the national hockey camp as well. He also briefed that Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) does not have any body from the last five years as PFF Normalization Committee running football affairs in the country.

## Nadal still the ultimate test on clay: Tsitsipas 37-year-old has not played an ATP tournament since January due to a muscle issue

LONDON: Rafael Nadal is set to return to action this week in Barcelona and play just his second event of an injury-hit season. While the Spaniard lacks match practice, Stefanos Tsitsipas said it would be no surprise to see him battling for the title. Nadal, who has said he expects to retire after the 2024 season, returned to the tour in Brisbane in January after nearly a year out with a hip flexor injury and the 37-year-old has not played an ATP tournament since due to a muscle issue. The 22-time Grand Slam singles champion looked set to make another comeback at the Monte Carlo Masters in April but withdrew days before the start of the clay-court tournament, saying his body would not allow him to play. Nadal has won the Barcelona title 12 times and is drawn to play Flavio Cobolli on April 16. "I'm happy to be here, of course. Barcelona is a place that has brought me a great deal of joy, and where I have spent periods of my life," said Nadal at the draw ceremony on April 13. "Over the last two years I've had very few days on tour, so spending days here, seeing people, being able to practise with players is a joy. I'm keen to carry on. The tournament has some incredible players." One of those incredible players will now be absent, though,

after world No. 3 Carlos Alcaraz withdrew on April 14 due to a right arm injury. He also missed the Monte Carlo Masters. Tsitsipas believes the other home hope, Nadal, would have no trouble finding form on his favourite surface. "I wouldn't be surprised if we saw Rafa in the final of Barcelona, because that's something he has done over and over again for years and years," said Tsitsipas, who won the Monte Carlo title for the third time on April 14. "What this competitiveness and this when he gets into the momentum that sometimes feels unstoppable... I think he's the ultimate challenge on he's playing



## Jamshed issues apology for his mistakes after 7 years

ISLAMABAD : Former Pakistan opening batter Nasir Jamshed expressed regret over his role in the spot-fixing controversy in 2017 and issued an apology for his mistake. Jamshed is currently serving a 10-year cricket ban, slapped by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in 2018 for his involvement in the spot-fixing in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) as well as the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) in 2017. He later pleaded guilty to his role in the spot-fixing conspiracy in February 2020 and was subsequently sentenced to 17 months in jail in the UK. However, he recently took to his official X (formerly Twitter) account to apologize for his wrongdoings. The left-handed cricketer shared a video of himself bowling to his daughter and expressed regret over his tarnished career. "I won't forgive myself for what I did with my career," Jamshed posted. "I am truly sorry, but I will try to pass my talent on to my daughter and give her the best chance." Nasir Jamshed represented Pakistan in two Test matches, 48 ODIs, and 18 T20Is, since his debut in 2008 against Zimbabwe, scoring a total of 1832 runs across formats. He played a crucial role in Pakistan's 2-1 victory during their last bilateral series against India in 2013. Jamshed emerged as the leading run-scorer in the three-match ODI series, amassing an impressive 241 runs, including two centuries. - Agencies

## Babar Azam eyes multiple T20I landmarks in NZ series

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan's white-ball captain Babar Azam is on the verge of breaking multiple records in T20I cricket during the upcoming home series against New Zealand. The five-match T20I series will kick off on April 18 at Rawalpindi's Pindi Cricket Stadium, marking Babar Azam's return as Pakistan captain. The star batter has scored 3,698 runs in T20I cricket and is third among the highest run-scorers in the format. Indian star batter Virat Kohli tops the list with 4,037, followed by his teammate Rohit Sharma, who has amassed 3,974 runs. Azam needs 340 runs in five games to become the highest-scorer as well as the second batter to surpass the 4000-run mark in T20I cricket. The right-handed batsman has captained Pakistan in 71 T20I matches, leading them to 42 victories. He is only three wins short of the record for the most wins as a T20I captain. The record is currently held by Uganda's Brian Masaba, who led his team to 44 victories. Moreover, former Australian batter Aaron Finch holds the record for scoring the most runs (2236) as captain in T20I cricket. He is closely followed by Azam, who has accumulated 2195 runs and is all set to surpass the record tally. Meanwhile, Pakistan's wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Rizwan is nearing another milestone in his remarkable career as the Green Shirts prepare to host New Zealand for a five-match T20I series. Rizwan, who made his T20I debut against Bangladesh in 2015, is on the verge of breaking Virat Kohli and Babar Azam's record of becoming the fastest player to score 3,000 runs in T20I cricket. Kohli and Babar both completed 3,000 runs in the shorter format in 81 innings each in 2021 and 2022 respectively against the same opponent, England. Rizwan, 31, has amassed 2,981 runs in 78 T20I innings so far and he is just 19 runs away from becoming the fastest player to score 3,000 runs in T20I cricket, overtaking Kohli and Babar. While doing so, he would also become just the second Pakistani to cross the 3000-run mark in T20I cricket as only Babar (3,698) has accumulated more runs than the 31-year-old for Pakistan. **Pakistan squad:** Babar Azam (c), Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Saim Ayub, Usman Khan, Ifthikhar Ahmed, Azam Khan (wk), Imad Wasim, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Afridi, Naseem Shah, Mohammad Amir, Abbas Afridi, Abrar Ahmed, Fakhar Zaman, Irfan Khan Niazi, Usama Mir, Zaman Khan. **Reserves:** Haseebullah, Mohammad Ali, Agha Salman, Sahibzada Farhan, Mohammad Wasim Jr. **New Zealand squad:** Michael Bracewell (c), Mark Chapman, Josh Clarkson, Jacob Duffy, Dean Foxcroft, Ben Lister, Cole McConechie, Jimmy Neesham, Will O'Rourke, Tim Robinson, Ben Sears, Tim Seifert (WK), Ish Sodhi, Tom Blundell, Zak Foulkes. **Pakistan vs New Zealand T20I series schedule:** April 18 – 1st T20I, Rawalpindi, April 20 – 2nd T20I, Rawalpindi, April 21 – 3rd T20I, Rawalpindi, April 25 – 4th T20I, Lahore, April 27 – 5th T20I, Lahore. - DNA

## Roelant Oltmans roped in by PHF for two events Oltmans earlier had expressed his inability to join the Pakistan team

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

ISLAMABAD: Roelant Oltmans has penned a two-tournament contract with the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) after Spanish Juan Escarre's reluctance to go into a short-term contract with the PHF. Oltmans earlier had expressed his inability to join the Pakistan team due to some reservations about the offered contract clauses. "Only the other day he intimidated PHF that he would be available for coaching only for the two coming international events - the Azlan Shah Hockey and later for the Nations Cup to be held in Poland. He is expected to join the national hockey camp in Islamabad on April 22 to start training the team ahead of the Azlan Shah Hockey," a PHF official said. The News has learned that Oltmans will charge Rs100,000 per day besides boarding, lodging, and ticket from the PHF. "He will only be there for two tournaments.

It all depends on how Pakistan hockey shapes up in the coming tournaments before we decide on future events which also include some Asian tournaments. The PHF will decide lat-



er on offering a fresh contract to Oltmans." On the failure of the PHF negotiations with Spanish top coach Escarre, the official said he was demanding a two-year contract. "The negotiation broke down with Escarre due to the condition he set to sign the contract. We cannot offer such a long contract considering the federation's financial condition and uncertainty on the team's future commitments." Meanwhile, Zeeshan Ashraf, Usman Sheikh, and Asif Ahmad have been appointed as assistant coaches to Oltmans for the two coming international events. Gulam Jilani will be the goalkeeping coach while Shahid Faqir will be the physical trainer. Dr Asad Abbas and Abu Zar have also been deputized with the Pakistan team. The training camp for the Azlan Shah Hockey starts at the Naseer Bunda Ground on April 16 with Azlan Shah Hockey set to begin in Ipoh (Malaysia) from May 4-11. As many as 57 players have already been announced for the camp training.

## Probe suggests Indian hand in Amir...

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Tamba's brother Junaid Sarfraz, cordoned off the area and started searching for the shooters with the help of CCTV footage. In April 2013, Tamba and Mudasir Munir allegedly attacked Sarabjit Singh with bricks and iron rods in Kot Lakhpat jail. Singh was sentenced to death for a series of bomb attacks that killed 14 people in Lahore and Faisalabad in 1990. On December 14, 2018, a sessions court in Lahore acquitted Tamba and Munir of the charge of killing Singh and ordered their release after all witnesses retracted their statements. Tamba, 45, was unmarried and lived with his brothers in a five-marla house in Islampura. He was a spice dealer. During a televised interview on April 5, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh admitted to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's policy of orchestrating killings in Pakistan.

## Iran to free Pakistanis stranded...

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Reza Amiri Moghadam, told a Pakistani news channel that they were waiting for the confirmation of the presence of Pakistani nationals on the ship. He confirmed that the Iran Embassy has shared the details with higher officials in Tehran. "If there's a Pakistani on the ship, we will free the national after completing legal formalities considering brotherly ties," the diplomat said. On Sunday, the Foreign Office had taken up the matter with Iranian authorities in Islamabad and shared details with them, sources told the TV channel. The development came after the family of the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Israel-linked container ship seized by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) asked the government of Pakistan for help.

## Donald Trump faces criminal...

FROM PAGE 01

Though the case is regarded by some legal experts as the least consequential of the four criminal prosecutions he faces, it is the only one guaranteed to go to trial before the Nov. 5 election. Trump has pleaded not guilty. If convicted, he could still hold office but Reuters/Ipsos polling shows a guilty verdict could hobble his prospects. The businessman-turned-politician, who served as president from 2017 to 2021, has used past court appearances to rally his supporters and claim he is being persecuted by his political enemies. New York state prosecutors accuse him of falsifying records to cover up a \$130,000 payment in the waning days of the 2016 presidential campaign to buy the silence of porn star Stormy Daniels about a 2006 sexual encounter she has said they had.

## Hamas response to Gaza...

FROM PAGE 01

withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces to areas parallel/close to the fence separating 1948 Occupied Palestine from besieged Gaza in the first stage and demanded the return of the displaced to the northern Gaza Strip and the guarantee of their freedom of movement. In the second phase, Hamas demanded that a permanent ceasefire be reached before any exchange of prisoners, and that the Israeli occupation army must leave the Strip entirely. Regarding the exchange of prisoners, Hamas demanded that for the release of every Israeli civilian captive, Israel must release 30 Palestinian detainees. Besides, Hamas demanded that for every Israeli female soldier, Israel must release 50 Palestinian detainees, including 30 who have been sentenced to 25 years or more, adding that Israel must remove all restrictions that have been imposed on Palestinian prisoners since October 7.



## Briefs

## Ukraine calls for 'bold' air defence support from allies

KYIV: Ukraine appealed again to allies on Monday for "extraordinary and bold steps" to supply air defences to help defend against waves of Russian air strikes that have targeted the energy system in recent weeks. Russian missile and drone attacks have pounded Ukrainian energy infrastructure since mid-March, prompting Kyiv to issue increasingly desperate calls for air defence help. "We urgently require additional Patriot and other modern air defence systems, weapons and ammunition," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told a Black Sea security conference via video link. "I take this opportunity to once again urge all of our partners to take extraordinary and bold steps." "Ukrainian air defence is now protecting not only Ukrainian skies from Russian air terror, it also shields neighbouring Moldova, Romania and Poland from the immediate threat of missiles and drones entering their air space," he added. The minister said on Sunday negotiations were ongoing for more Patriot systems for Ukraine, but decried their slow pace.—APP

## Landslides Kill 18 in Indonesia's Sulawesi island

TANA TORAJ: A search and rescue team found 18 people killed by landslides on Indonesia's Sulawesi island and are still looking for two missing, officials said Monday. Rescuers found about 14 bodies in Makale village on Sunday afternoon and four in South Makale, said Mexianus Bekabel, the chief of Makassar Search and Rescue. "We are still looking for two more victims, but fog and drizzle made the search difficult and officers in the field were overwhelmed," Sulaiman Malia, chief of the Tana Toraja district Disaster Management Agency, said on Monday. Loosened by torrential rain, mud poured from surrounding hills onto four houses just before midnight Saturday in the Tana Toraja district of South Sulawesi province, said local police chief Guarnardi Mundu. He said a family gathering was being held in one of the houses when the landslide hit. Dozens of soldiers, police and volunteers joined the search in the remote hillside villages of Makale and South Makale, Mundu said. Rescuers early Sunday managed to pull out two injured people, including an 8-year-old girl, and rushed them to a nearby hospital.—Agencies

## Sapporo records earliest 25c day in history

TOKYO: Temperatures in Japan's northern city of Sapporo - famous for skiing - on Monday passed 25 degrees Celsius at the earliest point of any year on record, a weather agency official said. Sapporo, the main city on the island of Hokkaido, hosted the 1972 Winter Olympics and each February holds a snow festival where massive ice sculptures draw tens of thousands of visitors. "The temperature in Sapporo hit 26 degrees... and is still rising," Shuichi Yoshida, an official at the regional headquarters of the Japan Meteorological Agency, told AFP in the early afternoon. It is the earliest that temperatures in the city have passed 25 degrees Celsius (77 Fahrenheit), which the JMA classifies as a "summer's day", since records began there in 1877. Over 30 degrees is classed as "mid-summer" while over 35 is "extremely hot", according to the JMA's system. "We can't rule out the possibility that climate change has played a role in the high temperature," Yoshida said. Other factors such as high-pressure systems may have also contributed, he added. On average between 1991 and 2020, the highest temperature in Sapporo on April 15 was 11.5 degrees Celsius, the JMA says.—APP

## EU's chief Borrell urges Iran-Israel de-escalation

EU foreign policy chief warned of the risk of a conflict that could "destabilize" the entire Middle East and ripple across the world

## FOREIGN DESK

MADRID: The European Union's foreign policy chief said on Monday the Middle East stood "on the edge of the cliff" and called for de-escalation in the conflict between Israel and Iran. Iran launched hundreds of drones and missiles at Israel on Saturday night in response to a suspected Israeli attack on the Tehran consulate in Damascus that killed seven officers of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards including two senior commanders. Israel has neither confirmed nor denied responsibility for the April 1 airstrike on the consulate in Syria's capital.

"We're on the edge of the cliff and we have to move away from it," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told Spanish radio station Onda Cero. "We have to step on the brakes and reverse gear." Borrell said he expected a response from Israel to the unprecedented aerial attack by Iran but hoped it would not spark further escalation. He said there was "profound division" within the Israel's right-wing governing coalition between hardliners seeking fierce retaliation and a "more moderate and sensible" faction. That faction advocates for retaliation, Borrell said, "but in a way that avoids a response to the response". Borrell, who spoke with



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian late on Sunday, said the EU needed to have the best possible relations with Iran despite the sanctions the bloc has imposed on the Islamic Republic

over its disputed nuclear energy programme and other issues. "It's in everyone's interest that Iran does not become a nuclear power and that the Middle East is pacified," he said. Wider recognition of Palestine would 'boost' 2-state solution Borrell added that he hopes Iran is not a nuclear power yet and criticized the US for exiting the Iran nuclear deal in 2018. "The risk that Iran becomes a nuclear power is a lot greater without the pact than with it," he said, lamenting the fact that the negotiations were recently frozen again. He also said he doubts negotiations will get revived anytime soon, despite it "being in our interest." Borrell also discussed

how more countries recognizing the state of Palestine would be a "boost" for the two-state solution, which he said should be implemented. He criticized the approach of the 1990s Oslo Accords for not explicitly endorsing a two-state solution, saying that the "gradual project" of a five-year transition period "didn't lead anywhere except making things worse." "Look at the West Bank, where every day there is violence... this weekend there were seriously violent acts resulting in the death of a 14-year-old. There are four times more settlers in the West Bank now than during the Oslo Accords," he said.

## Marcos refuses handing Duterte to ICC for drug war

Thousands of people have been killed in the anti-narcotics campaign started by Rodrigo Duterte in 2016

## WEB DESK

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos said Monday he would not hand his predecessor Rodrigo Duterte to the International Criminal Court, which is investigating his deadly drug war. Thousands of people have been killed in the anti-narcotics campaign started by Duterte in 2016 and continued under Marcos. Asked Monday if he would hand Duterte - who has accused him of being a drug addict - to the ICC if it issued a warrant for his arrest, Marcos said "no." "We don't recognize the warrant that they will send to us. That's a no," he said at a forum with the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines. "We are well within international law when we take the position of not recognizing the jurisdiction of the ICC in the Philippines," Marcos said. Duterte withdrew the Philippines from the ICC in 2019 after the

Hague-based tribunal started probing allegations of human rights abuses committed during his drug war. It launched a formal inquiry into Duterte's crackdown in September 2021, only to suspend it two months later after Manila said it was re-examining several hundred cases of drug operations that led to deaths at the hands of police, hitmen and vigilantes. The ICC's chief prosecutor later asked to reopen the inquiry, and pre-trial judges at the court eventually gave the green light in late January 2023 - a decision that Manila appealed shortly afterwards and lost. More than 6,000 people were killed in anti-drug operations under Duterte, according to official data released by the Philippines. ICC prosecutors estimate the death toll at between 12,000 and 30,000. Marcos has repeatedly ruled out rejoining the court and insisted it does not have jurisdiction in the country because there is a functioning judicial system. Relations between the

Marcos and Duterte families have deteriorated in the past two years. Marcos, the son and namesake of the country's former dictator, won the 2022 presidential election by a landslide following a massive social media misinformation campaign whitewashing his family's history. His vice presidential running mate Sara Duterte, the daughter of the former president, helped him win vital support from her family's home island of Mindanao. In recent months there has been a very public falling out between the families as they begin to shore up their rival support bases and secure key positions ahead of the mid-term elections in 2025 and presidential elections in 2028. Marcos also said the US would not be given access to more Philippine military bases. "The answer to that is no. The Philippines has no plan to open or to establish more EDCA bases," Marcos said in response to a question. Manila last year announced the locations of four more military bases it is allowing

the US military to use on top of the five agreed on under the 2016 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, known as EDCA. The deal allows US troops to rotate through and store defense equipment and supplies. The four additional bases include sites near the hotly disputed South China Sea and another not far from Taiwan. Marcos made his remarks during a forum with the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines that was attended by members of the Philippine military and foreign diplomats. Marcos also said the trilateral agreement signed between his country and the United States and Japan was not directed at anyone, but merely a strengthening of relations between the three. Marcos met with US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in the nations' first trilateral summit in Washington last week. A death of a Filipino soldier in the South China Sea could be grounds to invoke a mutual defense treaty with the US, Marcos told foreign correspondents in Manila.

## France hosts Sudan conference a year into 'forgotten' war

PARIS: France and its allies Monday sought to drum up hundreds of millions in aid for Sudan a year since its civil war erupted, sparking one of the world's worst and most underfunded humanitarian crises. Tens of thousands of people have been killed and 8.5 million more have been forced to flee their homes since fighting broke out on April 15 last year between rival generals. Sudan is experiencing "one of the worst humanitarian disasters in recent memory," with more people displaced inside the country than anywhere else in the world and a fast-growing hunger crisis, the United Nations says. At the international conference in Paris, France is seeking contributions from the international community, and attention to a crisis that officials say is being crowded out of the global conversation by ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. "For a year the Sudanese people have been the victims of a terrible war," French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne said. Yet they had also suffered from "being forgotten" and "indifference." "This is the reason for our meetings today: to break the silence surrounding this conflict and mobilize the international community," he said in opening remarks. The conference, co-hosted by Germany and the European Union, was to include a ministerial meeting on political matters as well as a humanitarian meeting to raise funds for the crisis. Aid workers say a year of war has led to a catastrophe, but the world has turned away from the country of 48 million as conflict rages between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Force. Only five percent of the 3.8-billion-euro (\$4.1 billion) target in the UN's latest humanitarian appeal had been funded ahead of the conference this year, according to the French foreign ministry. At its opening, a total of 840 million euros (\$895 million) had been pledged after separate announcements from France, Germany, the European Union and the United States. A diplomatic source, asking not to be named, said total donations could well top "a billion euros" by the end of the meeting. On the fifth anniversary of a fire that ravaged the French capital's Notre Dame cathedral, the charity Save the Children contrasted the lack of donations for Sudan with the international response to the Paris blaze.—Agencies

## Largest Halal fair in Russia opens May 14

MOSCOW: More than 40 thousand visitors and 4.5 thousand goods according to Halal standards from all over the world. On 14-19 May 2024 in Russia (Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan) will open the country's largest trading platform for Muslims - the International Trade Fair Kazan Halal Market. The fair will be held as part of the annual International Economic Forum "Russia - Islamic World: Kazan Forum", which traditionally gathers representatives of all countries of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). "In recent years, trade turnover between Russia and the OIC states has been growing. In 2021, it totalled \$113.3 billion, a 43.2% increase compared to 2017," said Hussein Ibrahim Taha, Secretary General of the OIC, in an address to the participants of KazanForum-2023. The halal market and mutual supply of products complying with the norms of Islam opens new opportunities, he believes. "The global Halal market is growing very fast and is now estimated at \$2.6 trillion. I hope the work of the Forum will contribute to the further development of the Halal industry in Russia and trade. And by 2028, the market is expected to be worth more than \$11 trillion," said the OIC Secretary General in May 2023. The development of the industry and foreign trade is facilitated by the international fair of the best halal products within the framework of KazanForum. At Kazan Halal Market one can buy food, clothes, accessories, cosmetics and other consumer goods with Halal certification from leading manufacturing companies of the Islamic World. In 2023, visitors could familiarise themselves with products from Iran, Afghanistan, Senegal and Turkey. It is expected that this year companies from Indonesia and Malaysia will show additional interest in the fair and in entering the growing Russian Halal market. A total of 400 exhibitors took part in Kazan Halal Market and presented 4,500 products.—Agencies

## Sunak's Rwanda scheme set to pass parliament

LONDON: The British parliament is set to finally approve a divisive law this week to pave the way for asylum seekers to be deported to Rwanda, but further legal hurdles could yet hold up or derail one of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's key policies. Sunak has invested huge political capital in the Rwanda scheme whose success or failure might be crucial to his Conservative party's fortunes in an upcoming election, given his promise it will stop tens of thousands of people arriving without permission in small boats across the Channel. The new legislation is poised to get lawmakers' approval, unamended, by the end of the week. But whether the Rwanda scheme does finally get off the ground by the middle of the year as Sunak has promised remains far from certain. "In our view, the legislation is utterly performative," said Paul O'Connell from the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union which has previously brought lawsuits over the policy and is preparing further action. "We think the government knows it hasn't got a cat in hell's chance of surviving a legal challenge, but they just want to keep it alive as an issue to fight in the general election." Under the policy formulated two years ago, any asylum seekers who arrive illegally in Britain will be sent to the East African nation, in a bid to deter dangerous cross-channel crossings in small boats and smash the people smugglers' business model. The first planned deportation flight in June 2022 was blocked by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), before the UK Supreme Court last year declared the scheme unlawful. Sunak's new law, which disapples some existing human rights statutes, is designed to override the Supreme Court's ruling by stating Rwanda must be treated by British judges as a safe destination, as well as also limiting individuals' options for an appeal to only exceptional cases. For critics, ranging from senior figures in his own party to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the policy is immoral, unworkable and probably breaches international law. But, some right-wing Conservative lawmakers say it won't work because it is still not tough enough. After months of parliamentary battles, the government is likely to finally win backing from the House of Commons and House of Lords in votes on Monday and Wednesday. WHEN WILL FLIGHTS GO? How long until deportation flights then leave is unclear, and one government official said it would probably take at least a month from the moment when the legislation is passed. Charities and human rights groups say they are gearing up to bring challenges on behalf of individuals, although as yet none have been specifically told they would be sent to Rwanda. O'Connell said his union, which represents border force staff who would help carry out the deportations, would submit a legal challenge arguing the new legislation was unlawful "within days" of the first asylum seekers being informed they will be deported. The PCS and other unions are also exploring action on the grounds that implementing the policy would put civil servants in breach of international law, especially if the ECHR were to again issue a temporary injunction - known as Rule 39 interim measures - on removals. The court has amended its rules since the 2022 decision so injunctions will only be issued in "exceptional circumstances" where there was an "imminent risk of irreparable harm". Sarah Gogan, a partner at law firm Harbottle & Lewis, said the wording of Sunak's bill was designed to all but eliminate legal challenges, although an intervention by European judges would be the hardest to overcome. With his party trailing the opposition Labour Party by about 20 points in polls, and his own position in question, Sunak has been determined to have flights leave as soon as possible.—DNA

## Kazim Ali Pirzada a wise choice for Irrigation Minister

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI



Giving the portfolio of Minister of Irrigation Muhammad Kazim Ali Pirzada as the Irrigation Minister for the leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has been met with widespread appreciation and optimism. Hailing from PP-245, Pirzada brings a wealth of experience, dedication, and political acumen to the table, promising a new era of progress and efficiency in the crucial Irrigation Department of Punjab. Muhammad Kazim Ali Pirzada was born on December 25, 1973, in Bahawalpur, into the

illustrious Pirzada family known for its deep-rooted political legacy. His educational journey includes completing F.Sc. from Aitchison College, Lahore, and graduating in Commerce from Punjab College of Commerce, Lahore. Besides his academic achievements, Pirzada has also served as Tehsil Nazim of Khairpur, Tamiwali from 2001 to 2005, showcasing his early leadership skills and administrative abilities. In 2008, Pirzada was elected as a Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) of Punjab. This electoral success underscored his popularity and support among constituents, further solidifying his position as a prominent political figure in the region. The political grooming of Muhammad Kazim Ali Pirzada is deeply rooted in his family's longstanding involvement in public service and governance. His late father, Mian Zafar Hussain Pirzada, was a respected figure in regional politics, contributing significantly to the Pirzada family's political heritage. Kazim Pirzada's grandfather, Mian Bahadur Sultan, has also left indelible marks in the

political landscape of Pakistan.



KAZIM ALI PIRZADA

This familial tutelage has undoubtedly equipped Kazim Pirzada with a nuanced understanding of political dynamics, grassroots issues, and the importance of public service—a foundation that bodes well for his role as the Irrigation Minister. The irrigation sector in Punjab faces multifaceted challenges that demand immediate attention and strategic interventions. One of the pri-

mary concerns is the deterioration of the canal system, which, despite being one of the best globally, has suffered neglect and inefficiencies over the years. Farmers, especially those residing at the tails of canals, have long lamented the unequal distribution of water, often exacerbated by the influence of powerful landowners who divert water for personal gain. Muhammad Kazim Ali Pirzada's ascension to the role of Irrigation Minister holds significant promise for addressing these challenges and ushering in a new era of efficiency and equity in Punjab's irrigation sector. His firsthand experience as an agriculturist, coupled with his political acumen and familial legacy, positions him as a formidable leader capable of enacting meaningful reforms. Initiating comprehensive rehabilitation programs for Punjab's canal system to improve functionality, minimize water wastage, and ensure equitable distribution to all stakeholders, particularly small-scale farmers. PIDA Reform: Overhauling PIDA's operational framework, enhancing its monitoring capabilities, and implementing strict measures to prevent water theft and ensure fair allocation

based on agricultural needs. Establishing a robust oversight mechanism or committee to monitor the execution of development projects, ensuring adherence to quality standards, timely completion, and transparency in resource allocation. Addressing concerns related to political interference in administrative matters, particularly regarding engineer postings and transfers, to promote meritocracy and professionalism within the irrigation department. Muhammad Kazim Ali Pirzada's appointment as the Irrigation Minister represents a prudent and strategic decision by the PML-N leadership. His blend of educational qualifications, political pedigree, and hands-on experience positions him as a catalyst for positive change in Punjab's irrigation sector. By focusing on canal system rehabilitation, PIDA reform, development project oversight, and mitigating political interference, Pirzada has the potential to leave a lasting impact, ensuring sustainable water management and agricultural prosperity for the region.

## Floods kill 58 in Tanzania with heavy rains persisting

DODOMA: Floods have killed 58 people in Tanzania over the last two weeks, spurring the East African country to seek an answer in major infrastructure projects. The government announced the death toll late on Sunday as heavy rains continued to lash the country. April marks the peak of Tanzania's rainy season, and it has been exacerbated this year by the El Nino phenomenon, which has caused droughts and floods across the globe. "From April 1 to April 14, 2024, there were 58 deaths caused by the heavy rains, which led to flooding," government spokesman Mubarek Matinyi told a press briefing, stressing that the country's coastal region was one of the worst affected. "Serious flood effects are experienced in the coast region where 11 people have so far died," he added. Tanzania has plans to construct 14 dams to prevent flooding in future, the spokesman said. Just four months ago, at least 63 people were killed during floods in northern Tanzania that also triggered devastating landslides. On Friday, eight schoolchildren drowned after their bus plunged into a flooded gorge in the north of the country. A volunteer in the rescue operations also died. More than 75,000 farms have been damaged in the coastal and Morogoro areas - about 200km (124 miles) west of the economic capital, Dar-es-Salaam.—APP

## Tokyo shares close lower on Middle East tensions

TOKYO: Tokyo stocks closed lower Monday after Iran's unprecedented missile and drone strikes on Israel raised fears of wider conflict in the Middle East. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index fell 0.74 percent, or 290.75 points, to end at 39,232.80, while the broader Topix index gave up 0.23 percent, or 6.44 points, to 2,753.20. The yen stood at 153.79 per dollar, its weakest rate in more than three decades, sliding from 153.24 yen in New York on Friday. Geopolitical risks in the Middle East and lingering worries about inflation weighed on the market, analysts said. "Risk-off moves became more dominant" after the Iranian attack, Daiwa Securities said. But bargain hunters helped the market avoid a free-fall, Iwaco Securities said. The yen's fall continued to concern Japanese authorities, but comments from Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki reiterating that the government is ready to take "all possible measures" failed to quell its decline. Heavily weighted shares drove down Tokyo markets. Tokyo Electron lost 0.53 percent to 39,290 yen and Advantest fell 1.31 percent to 5,938 yen.—APP

## Turkish airstrike eliminates 12 PKK terrorists in Iraq

ANKARA: Twelve PKK terrorists were eliminated in Iraq's north in an aerial operation, the Defense Ministry announced on Monday. The airstrike took place in the Hakurk region, a hotbed of PKK activity. The ministry said in a statement that the operations would continue until the last terrorist is eliminated. Northern regions of Iraq and Syria, two southern neighbors of Turkey, are the last remaining bastions of the terrorist group, which lost its clout in Turkey's southeast, where it killed thousands over the past decades. Monday's airstrike is the biggest yet in terms of the number of eliminated terrorists in recent memory. The ministry also shared a video of the operation, showing fighter jets taking off an airbase, followed by aerial video of targets struck by jets. Hakurk was among the Iraqi regions in which Turkey lost 21 soldiers in two separate attacks by the terrorists in December and January. Since Jan. 1, 2024, Turkey has eliminated a total of 286 PKK terrorists who often hide out across the border in northern Iraq and plot terrorist attacks on its soil, as well as over 390 members of the group's Syrian affiliate, the YPG, in northern Syria.—APP



## Briefs

### Ahmad Abdullah named as Kuwait PM

DNA

DUBAI: Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has appointed Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as prime minister, state news agency KUNA reported on Monday. The Kuwaiti ruler also tasked the new prime minister to form a government. The Kuwaiti ruler last week accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, after elections were held to choose new members of the National Assembly. He also instructed the cabinet to act as caretakers until the formation of a new government.

### Woman tortured by policeman in train found dead

DNA

BAHAWALPUR: The woman, who was subjected to torture by policeman Mir Hasan on a moving train, was found dead near Chani Goth Railway Station in Bahawalpur, police said Monday. The incident came to light after a video of the policeman went viral on social media, in which he could be seen holding the woman by her hair and hitting her multiple times while other passengers watched silently. Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Railways Abdullah Sheikh had said that the incident took place on April 7 on Karachi to Lala Musa-bound Millat Express. The woman, who belonged to Jaranwala, Faisalabad, was identified as Maryam Bibi. The victim's brother, Afzal, said that his sister used to work at a beauty parlour in Karachi and she was coming to Jaranwala to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr. Afzal said that Maryam left Karachi on April 7 by Millat Express. He said that the Bahawalpur police informed his family of Maryam's death, saying she fell from train. "We buried her on April 9 in the village thinking it was a train accident. When the video went viral, the truth behind the incident and the violence on my sister came to the fore," he added. Afzal alleged that the policeman tortured and killed his sister and threw her body on a railway track, adding that they requested the police to register a case but no action was taken.

### Philippines: No plans to grant US access to more bases

DNA

MANILA: The Philippines has no plans to grant the United States access to more military bases, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said on Monday, after nearly doubling the number last year under a joint defence pact. Beijing has previously accused the Philippines of "stoking the fire" when it increased the number of bases the US military could use to nine from five, with the new sites located close to potential flashpoints. "The answer to that is no," Marcos said in response to a query whether the Philippines would allow the US access to more bases. "The Philippines has no plan to create any more bases or give access to any more bases," he told a forum with foreign correspondents. Last year Washington and Manila discussed further expanding the number of bases US forces could access under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) from nine. Three of the four sites faced north towards Taiwan and one was near the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, where Manila and Beijing have had frequent maritime run-ins that included China's use of water cannon and collision tactics.

# PM Shehbaz for maximising renewable energy utilization

The prime minister said utilizing renewable energy resources would also ensure riddance from crude oil tanker mafia acting as parasites and eating up national funds



MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday vowed to check power theft and stressed the need for shifting to renewable energy not only to decrease the tariffs but also successfully face the challenge posed by climate change. He said there was an urgent need to transform the power plants fuelled by expensive fossil fuels – diesel and furnace oil – to renewables, adding that the wind, solar and hydropower projects would produce long-lasting positive effects. Addressing a meeting held to review the latest developments in power sector, the prime minister also talked about the poor transmission system which, he said, must

be improved to achieve the desired goals. Shehbaz praised the Punjab government for the steps taken to arrest power theft and asked the other provinces to follow the suit. Different mafias were draining the precious resources, said the prime minister who described crushing these elements as a prerequisite for the economic development and prosperity of Pakistan. Higher electricity tariffs are consistently curbing the demand which witnessed another 12 per cent decline by February-end in the first two months of the year. That's why the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has indicated further increase in prices under the quarterly tariff adjustment (QTA) for the period January-March 2024. The warning comes as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is

pressing Pakistan for energy tariff hikes to deal with the circular debt which has been, in fact, multiplying despite the repeatedly increased power and gas prices. Hence, the solution prescribed for addressing the challenge is worsening the situation by easing the power consumption at an alarming rate and thus nullifies the very target of boosting the revenue collection while also hampering the business activities at a time when the skyrocketing costs of doing business – a combination of inflation and high interest rates – have paralysed the economy. Nepra noted that the capacity payments made to the power producers were 60 per cent of the electricity prices, representing a ratio which is much higher when compared with international standards and oth-

er countries. In this connection, the regulator directed the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) to work on reducing the capacity payments, which was determined at Rs2.75 for October-December – the second quarter of the fiscal year 2023-24 – and would be collected through the monthly bills of April, May and June. One must remember that the rupee devaluation has boosted the capacity payments because the rates fixed in the agreements signed with the power producers are in dollar while the failure to check line losses and power theft is also responsible for the burdening the consumers. On the other hand, increase in electricity prices has not only dampened the consumption by existing consumers but also made the people hesitant to opt for obtaining new connections – a process also made complicated by the bureaucratic red tape. At the same time, the affluent consumers, responsible for the bulk of share of electricity consumption, are switching to solar power. This process is further encouraged by a massive decline in solar panel prices in international market thanks to the cheaper Chinese products dumped around the world – a phenomenon that is accelerating the US-China trade war. The United States is accusing the Asian giant of crushing other developed economies due to the so-called "Chinese excess production capacity" promoted by the state subsidies in the case of solar energy and electric vehicles (EVs) – an allegation vehemently denied by Beijing which says this stance is an excuse for justifying US protectionism. Former president Donald Trump had imposed US tariffs to discourage Chinese exports and the Biden administration is continuing with these tariffs but may also sanction new ones.

### Israeli court orders eviction in Sheikh Jarrah

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: The Israeli Magistrate Court issued a verdict on Monday evicting three Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Occupied Jerusalem in favor of settlers. According to the court's decision, the three families were given until mid-July of the current year to implement the eviction ruling targeting the homes, where three families comprising 20 individuals reside. The Wafa news agency quoted Saleh Diab, a member of the defense committee for Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, who owns one of the targeted houses, as saying that the Jerusalem Magistrate Court held a session regarding the case at the end of May last year, during which the court judge said that there was a decision from the Israeli Supreme Court to freeze the eviction decisions of 28 families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. Lawyer Diab confirmed that the settler organization Nahalat Shimon exerted pressure on the Magistrate Court judge to reconsider the case, which made him reopen the case and give the families' lawyer and the settlers' lawyer four months to respond to the allegations.

### Multiple stabbed in Sydney

SYDNEY: Days after a massacre in a Sydney shopping mall, authorities reported that at least four people including a Bishop were stabbed Monday in the south west of the city, leaving the residents terrified of such a heinous act. The suspect has been apprehended from Wakeley, western Sydney, after multiple stabbing reports. The condition of the victims is said to be non-life threatening. NSW Ambulance said that a man in his 50s had been taken to Liverpool Hospital for stabbing injuries. The other three are being given medical assistance at the scene. The incident comes nearly three days after a suspect started stabbing people in Westfield Bondi Junction shopping centre in the bustling city of Australia, in which at least six people were killed. In Saturday's attack, eight others were also wounded and the suspect was shot dead who was identified as 40-year-old Joel Cauchi. – Agencies



WASHINGTON: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb met with a delegation from the US Pakistan Business Council. – DNA

### Debt and climate back on IMF, WB spring meetings agenda

WASHINGTON: The spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are due to open Tuesday, with two clear objectives: help countries combat climate change, and assist the most indebted nations. The meetings – which bring central bankers together with finance and development ministers, academics, and representatives from the private sector and civil society to discuss the state of the global economy – will kick off with the IMF's publication of its updated World Economic Outlook. Even as they look ahead, the meetings will have an air of nostalgia this year, as 2024 marks the 80th anniversary of both institutions. They were born of the Bretton Woods conference, held in 1944 as allied nations sought to regulate the international financial order after World War II, which was then still raging. At the time the financial challenges were huge, with great swathes of Asia and Europe needing to be rebuilt. In many ways the problems now are no less daunting, particularly as the World Bank and IMF – which just reappointed its managing director Kristalina Georgieva to a second five-year term – seek a path forward on climate change. "There's the climate crisis, debt, food insecurity, pandemics, fragility, and there is clearly a need to accelerate access to clean air, water and energy," World Bank head Ajay Banga said during a recent live streamed press conference. The Bank "cannot tackle poverty without the broader view," he added, saying it is taking steps to widen its scope in order to help "create a world free from poverty on a livable planet." – Agencies

### World leaders urge Middle East tension de-escalation

Leaders urge restraint and rational decision-making to avoid further instability in the region

NEWS DESK

LONDON: World leaders, including President Emmanuel Macron, British Foreign Secretary David Cameron, and the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, emphasized on Monday the need to prevent escalation in the Middle East following Iran's failed attack on Israel. They urged restraint and rational decision-making to avoid further instability in the region. EU's Borrell says Middle East on cliff edge. The European Union's foreign policy chief said on Monday the Middle East stood "on the edge of the cliff" and called for de-escalation in the conflict between Israel and Iran. Iran launched hundreds of drones and missiles at Israel on Saturday night in response to a suspected Israeli attack on the Tehran's consulate in Damascus that killed seven officers of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards including two senior commanders. Israel has neither confirmed nor denied responsibility for the April 1 airstrike on the consulate in Syria's capital. "We're on the edge of the cliff and we have to move away from it," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told Spanish radio station Onda Cero.

### France hosts Sudan conference a year into 'forgotten' war

FOREIGN DESK

PARIS: France and its allies Monday sought to drum up hundreds of millions in aid for Sudan a year since its civil war erupted, sparking one of the world's worst and most underfunded humanitarian crises. Tens of thousands of people have been killed and 8.5 million more have been forced to flee their homes since fighting broke out on April 15 last year between rival generals. Sudan is experiencing "one of the worst humanitarian disasters in recent memory," with more people displaced inside the country than anywhere else in the world and a fast-growing hunger crisis, the United Nations says. At the international conference in Paris, France is seeking contributions from the international community, and attention to a crisis that officials say is being crowded out of the global conversation by ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. "For a year the Sudanese people have been the victims of a terrible war," French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne said. Yet they had also suffered from "being forgotten" and "indifference." "This is the reason for our meetings today: to break the silence surrounding this conflict and mobilize the international community," he said in opening remarks. The conference, co-hosted by Germany and the European Union, was to include a ministerial meeting on political matters as well as a humanitarian meeting to raise funds for the crisis.

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