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Palestinians across Gaza face 'man-made famine': UNRWA Chief

Detailed News On Page-08

Tarar advocates for ease of doing business

Detailed News On Page-03

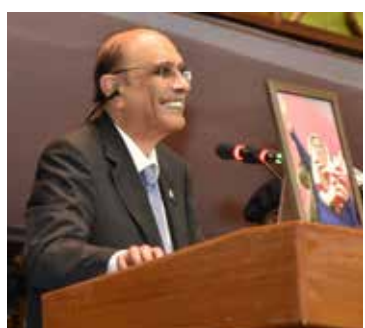
Hafeez criticises team selection for T20I series

Detailed News On Page-06



PTI terms address 'unconstitutional' President calls for steering country out of 'political crisis'

President Zardari delivered speech amid opposition's sloganeering in house. He however remained steadfast in his speech, emphasizing the need for constructive dialogue and cooperation among political parties



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari addressing the joint sitting of the parliament, on Thursday. — DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has called for making joint efforts to steer the country out of crisis and also called upon all stakeholders to play their role for the prosperity of the nation. He stated this while addressing the joint session of parliament on Thursday after the February 8 general elections amid protest staged by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) lawmakers. Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leaders Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Aseefa Bhutto were among the members of the National Assembly and Senate who attended the today's joint session. Top officials including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also attended the session chaired by National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq while provincial chief ministers, diplomats, and representatives from political parties were present in the galleries. "Let me also take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all parliamentarians and provincial assembly members for their trust and confidence in electing me for a second time as the president of Islamic republic of Pakistan," the president said this in his opening remarks.

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ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has called for making joint efforts to steer the country out of crisis and also called upon all stakeholders to play their role for the prosperity of the nation. He stated this while addressing the joint session of parliament on Thursday after the February 8 general elections amid protest staged by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) lawmakers. Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leaders Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Aseefa Bhutto were among the members of the National Assembly and Senate who attended the today's joint session. Top officials including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also attended the session chaired by National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq while provincial chief ministers, diplomats, and representatives from political parties were present in the galleries. "Let me also take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all parliamentarians and provincial assembly members for their trust and confidence in electing me for a second time as the president of Islamic republic of Pakistan," the president said this in his opening remarks.

Tarar condemns PTI for jeopardizing national interests

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar, criticized PTI Thursday, stating that individuals involved in last year's May 9 attacks are now jeopardizing national interests. Speaking to the media, Tarar emphasized that those who undermined the country's interests were adversaries of Pakistan. He expressed dismay at prioritizing political agendas and ego over national interests, highlighting the regrettable pattern of PTI leadership disowning statements against the country's interests. Tarar noted that PTI leaders were embroiled in corruption cases, lamenting that enemies of Pakistan struggle to accept investments in the country. He prayed for divine guidance for such individuals to speak in the country's favour. The minister condemned the actions stooping to anti-national levels, stressing that while criticism of the government and its policies is acceptable, criticizing Pakistan is intolerable. He acknowledged the support of friendly countries in investing and cooperating with Pakistan, expressing optimism for progress with Allah's grace.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the European Union Amb. Riina Kionka calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. — DNA

X says working with Pak govt to 'understand concerns'

The social media website remains suspended in the country since February 17

DNA

ISLAMABAD: For the first time since the services of X, formerly Twitter, were suspended in Pakistan, the social media site has issued a statement on the matter, stating that it continues to work with the relevant authorities regarding their concerns. "We continue to work with the Pakistani Government to understand their concerns," read the statement, posted by X's Global Government Affairs team on their official handle. The social media website, which was bought by American tech billionaire Elon Musk in April 2022,

Continued on Page 06

'Some political parties trying to sabotage foreign ties'

"This is enmity against the country. It is done under a campaign, says Asif

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Responding to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Sher Afzal Marwat's groundless allegations against Saudi Arabia, Defense Minister Khawaja Asif on Thursday said some political parties were trying to sabotage relations

Continued on Page 06

EU calls on Prime Minister PM Shehbaz seeks EU support for reforms in Pakistan

The Prime Minister appreciated in particulars, EU's continued support to Pakistan through the GSP Plus scheme, which has now been renewed till 2027. He also expressed Pakistan's interest in engaging constructively with the EU's Global Gateway Strategy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Amb. Riina Kionka, Ambassador of the European Union, paid a courtesy call on the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister thanked the EU leaders for their congratulatory messages on his re-election and said he looked forward to working closely with the EU. He said Pakistan enjoyed friendly and cordial ties with the EU and expressed satisfaction at the existing institutional mechanisms that were meeting regularly to exchange views on further strengthening cooperation. The Prime Minister appreciated in particulars, EU's continued support to Pakistan through the GSP Plus scheme, which has now been renewed till 2027. He also expressed Pakistan's interest in engaging

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Fin Min, Donald Lu discuss Pak reform agenda

Lu reaffirms US's commitment to bolster ties with Pakistan

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Pakistan's reform agenda came under discussion during a high-level meeting between Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and United States State Department Assistant Secretary Donald Lu. The two dignitaries explored broadening tax base,

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Bilawal condemns killing of innocent citizens in KPK

The perpetrators of the Dera Ismail Khan incident should be brought to justice

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari condemned the killing of 6 people including 4 custom officials in Saggu area of Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Chairman Bilawal said that this killing of innocent citizens is an unfortunate and unforgettable event. "The perpetrators of the Dera Ismail Khan incident should be brought to justice," Bilawal Bhutto Zardari demanded. He expressed sympathy and condolences to the families of those who were martyred in the Dera Ismail Khan incident.

Hafiz Naeem takes oath as JI chief

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Newly-elected Emir of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Hafiz Naeemur Rehman on Thursday took the oath of his office at Mansoorah. Naeemur Rehman became the 6th emir of JI Pakistan. After the oath ceremony, Hafiz Naeemur Rehman convened the meeting of Majlis-e-Aamla. He will also chair the meeting of Majlis-e-Shura on Friday. Naeemur Rehman, former emir of JI Karachi chapter, was elected as the Emir of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan with a majority vote following JI intra-party election which concluded on April 4. The oath-taking ceremony was attended by outgoing emir Sirajul Haq, Amiru Azeem, Liaquat Baloch, Dr Farid Paracha, Qaisar Sharif, Rashid Nasim, other leaders as well as workers and people from different walks of life.

Faizabad dharna

Gen Faiz made deal with TLP before PM's nod

Iqbal, in the report publicised by the inquiry commission, added that former PM Abbasi had objected to the agreement after he saw it and also did not agree with the promise regarding then-law minister Zahid Hamid's resignation

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Iqbal, the federal minister for planning, development and special initiatives — has revealed that the deal with the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) was finalised before it was shown to then-prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. According to the minister's statement, former Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) director general Lieutenant General (ret'd) Faiz Hamid had made the pact with the protesting party before seeking then-premier's nod. The minister made this revelation before the Faizabad sit-in inquiry commission, constituted on the Supreme Court's orders following the case pertaining to the 2017 sit-in protest at Faizabad led by former TLP chief Khadim Hussain Rizvi. Iqbal, in the report publicised by the inquiry commission, added that former PM Abbasi had objected to the agreement after he saw it and also did not

Continued on Page 06

Judges' letter

IHCBA moves SC for fair probe

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA) on Thursday filed a petition in the Supreme Court (SC) to probe the allegations made by six IHC judges against interference in judicial affairs by the country's intelligence apparatus. On March 25, six IHC judges — out of a total strength of eight — wrote a startling letter to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) members, regarding attempts to pressure judges through abduction and torture of their relatives as well

Continued on Page 06

COAS, Turkish Commander reaffirm expanding strategic ties

The visiting dignitary commended Pakistan's efforts in fostering regional peace and stability, as well as Pakistan Army's role in combating terrorism

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: His Excellency General Metin Gurak, Chief of the Turkish General Staff, met with General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at GHQ today. The discussion encompassed various topics of mutual interest, spanning defense, training, and initiatives aimed at bolstering regional peace and stability.

Both sides acknowledged the robust relationship between their nations and committed to expanding defense collaboration further. COAS underscored the imperative of advancing existing military cooperation between their armed forces. The visiting dignitary commended Pakistan's efforts in fostering regional peace and stability, as well as the Pakistan Army's role in combating terrorism. Earlier, upon arrival at GHQ, the Chief of the General

Staff of the Turkish Army paid respects at Yadgar-e-Shuhada by laying a floral wreath. A well-presented contingent of the Pakistan Army rendered a guard of honour to the esteemed visitor. Chief of the Turkish General Staff General Metin Gurak also called upon Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS) General Sahir Shamsad Mirza, said a statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). During the meeting, the two discussed matters related to "enhancing the level and scope of bilateral military engagements and cooperation". The two sides also reaffirmed their commitment to forge deeper strategic ties. The military's media wing added that the visiting dignitary also lauded the professionalism of the Pakistan armed forces and acknowledged the force's sacrifices in the fight against terrorism. Upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, a contingent of the armed forces presented a guard of honour to the Turkish general.



Summer Camp Season 7

| Package | 1 Activity | 2 Activity | 3 Activity |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1 Child | 55,000 | 70,000 | 85,000 |
| 2 Children | 65,000 | 80,000 | 95,000 |
| 3 Children | 75,000 | 90,000 | 105,000 |
| 4 Children | 85,000 | 100,000 | 115,000 |
| 5 Children | 95,000 | 110,000 | 125,000 |
| 6 Children | 105,000 | 120,000 | 135,000 |

RULES & REGULATIONS

Each activity will run for three consecutive weeks, missing days will not be compensated.

The female participants only available for ladies.

15% discount on all Marika services and pool bar menu for the participants and their parents.

For registration, please scan the QR code and email the participant's birth certificate and photograph to marika@serena.com.pk mentioning "summer camp 2024" in the subject line.

This offer cannot be combined with any other discounts or promotions.

Participants can participate in one activity per day.

Participating children are to be accompanied by one of their parents.

The timings of the classes will be assigned at the time of registration for the entire program, however, changing the time will be subject to availability.

Entrance fees are available.

All prices are subject to government taxes.

For more information please scan QR code or call: 051 2005249

Valid from 1st April to 31st August, 2024

PRCS head, Lt Gen Babar discuss Sindh humanitarian efforts

Karachi Corps Commander Lt Gen Babar Iftikhar highly praised the timely and efficient response of PRCS during monsoon floods 2022 under Chairman Laghari's leadership, hailing him as a "National Hero"

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI : Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, Chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), held a significant meeting with Karachi Corps Commander Lt Gen Babar Iftikhar at the Corps headquarters in Karachi on Thursday. The meeting focused on ongoing humanitarian efforts in the Sindh province. During the dialogue, Chairman Laghari reiterated PRCS's unwavering commitment, particularly in the face of challenging circumstances such as the devastating flood 2022. Through strategic partnerships with esteemed organizations like the IFRC, ICRC, and Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners, PRCS swiftly initiated relief efforts, benefiting over 2.8 million individuals across 55 districts, with a special emphasis on underserved areas. The collaboration between PRCS, the government, and the Armed Forces significantly alleviated the plight of flood-affected communities in the most affected districts of Sindh province. Chairman Laghari provided insights into PRCS's emergency flood response in Sindh, highlighting activities such as the distribution of essential supplies,

provision of shelter, health care, installation of water treatment facilities, and provision of cash assistance to affected families. Additionally, ongoing recovery initiatives in 5 districts of Sindh Province, supported by RCRC Movement Partners, aim to assist 435,000 people with shelter, health, cash assistance, livelihood support, agri-support initiatives, water and sanitation facilities, and hygiene promotion. Furthermore, Chairman Laghari shared details of PRCS's immediate response to the Biparjio Cyclone including early evacuation to the safe sites, provision of NFIs to 28,000 individuals and food packages, to aid 10,000 cyclone-families in the flood-stricken areas of Thatta, Badin, and Sajawal districts, augmenting rescue and relief operations conducted by the Armed Forces and NDMA.

Karachi Corps Commander Lt Gen Babar Iftikhar commended the Pakistan Red Crescent Society's (PRCS) significant contributions, emphasizing its pivotal role in managing natural disasters. He praised the dedication of PRCS under the leadership of Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, highlighting its ability to

transcend ethnic and cultural boundaries in humanitarian efforts. The Corps Commander highly praised the timely and efficient response of PRCS under Chairman Laghari's leadership, hailing him as a national hero. He underscored the importance of enhancing collaborative efforts in disaster risk reduction, anticipatory actions, and disaster management planning, climate change, awareness & preparedness and other initiatives aimed at mitigating the hardships faced by vulnerable communities through engagement of PRCS volunteers and he said Pakistan Army will provide all possible resources to PRCS.

He further said, Pakistan Army stand side by side with PRCS to deal with any natural calamities and disaster situation across Pakistan. Lt Gen Babar Iftikhar also pledged full support to PRCS in all districts of Sindh province to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable communities during peace time and emergency situation. As a symbol of mutual appreciation, Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari and Karachi Corps Commander Lt Gen Babar Iftikhar exchanged mementos at the conclusion of the meeting.



ISLAMABAD : Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding Saudi Investment in Pakistan following the recent visit of Saudi Delegation.—DNA

Tobacco smoke contains chemicals that cause cancer: Cardiologist

HYDERABAD: Smoking damages nearly every organ in the body and is bad for a person's overall health. People can significantly reduce their chance of smoking-related disease by giving it up. Talking to APP here on Thursday, Eminent cardiologists Dr. Zaman informed that the tobacco smoke contains more than fifty chemicals that cause cancer. He said that tobacco also contains nicotine, which is a highly addictive psychoactive drug. When tobacco is smoked, nicotine causes physical and psychological dependency. He said that every third Pakistani after the age of 40 was suffering from high blood pressure, whereas only 3 percent of them get regular medical checkups. He said that the smoking is not only injurious for the users, but passive smoking is also a great threat to those who associate with the smokers as inhaling of cigarettes' smoke could cause more complications. Dr. Zaman said that smoking is the biggest totally avoidable cause of death and disability known to mankind and any support for the growth, distribution or sale of tobacco is indefensible on public health grounds.—APP

Country prepared to become tech hub, says Shaza Fatima

LAHORE: State Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Thursday said that the country was prepared to become regional tech hub and IT leader. She said this while addressing a press conference along with Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) Secretary General Deemah Al Yahya at a local hotel. She said, "Youth is our asset and we have strong connectivity," adding that Pakistan had partners like Saudi Arabia and other countries which wanted to strengthen this sector. The State Minister said that recently Saudi Arabia foreign minister and representative of Investment Ministry visited Pakistan, adding that country's IT sector was also highlighted during meetings with the delegation from Saudi Arabia. She further said that Digital Foreign Direct Investment conference would be organized at the end of this year, adding that World Economic Forum, Digital Cooperation Organization

and Pakistan would host conference every year to bring investment in the country for IT sector, manufacturing, software and telecommunication sides as well. She further said that these initiatives and the policies of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif aimed at supporting private sector would yield positive results to put the country on road to progress. Shaza Fatima said that the incumbent government was working on various policies and legislation whether it was related to data protection, cyber security, cloud policy to create feasible environment for growth of IT, tech and telecom sectors. She said, "Pakistan is a founding member of Digital Cooperation Organization and it is multilateral organization made with the cooperation of Saudi Arabia and its purpose is to take digital cooperation at global level." She said that today ITCN Asia had started in Pakistan and it was a three days conference and more than 600 companies were participating in it. She said that more than 100

delegates had arrived in Pakistan to attend this conference, adding that almost more than 55,000 people would visit Expo Centre to experience this conference. Shaza said that Ministry of Information and Technology along with Pakistan Software Export Board was sponsoring this programme. This initiative was giving a message that how Pakistan could showcase its private sector at international level to attract foreign investment, she said. She said that it was also telling the world that how Pakistan could boost IT exports by using expertise of its youth. Digital Cooperation Organization Secretary General Deemah Al Yahya said, "Whenever I come to Pakistan I see energy, talent and determination to achieve impossible targets," adding that most prominent thing was collaboration between government, private sector and civil society. Deemah said, "We as Digital Cooperation Organization are proud to be here today," adding that event like ITCN helped share ideas and discuss opportunities to get desired results.—APP

PTCL posts 14% revenue growth

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) has announced its financial results for the first quarter of 2024 posting 14 per cent revenue growth Year-on-Year basis to Rs 49 billion, mainly driven by strong performance in the consumer segment led by fixed broadband, mobile data, and wholesale & business solutions. The announcement was made during a board of directors meeting on Thursday. PTCL continued its strong performance throughout Q1, 2024 and achieved revenue of Rs 26 billion for this quarter, which is 13% higher than last year, mainly driven by growth in fixed line and business solutions segments, said a news release. Flash Fiber, PTCL's premium Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) service, continues to show tremendous growth with the highest Net adds share within the FTTH market (since Dec'23) and now stands as the leading FTTH service provider in Pakistan. This phenomenal growth has been possible through the aggressive expansion of PTCL Flash Fiber and dedicated customer experience throughout the country. The company has posted an operating profit of Rs 3 billion, which is 32% higher as compared to the same quarter of 2023. The Company has posted a net profit of Rs 431 million. PTCL's aggressive deployment of FTTH and the strong performance of corporate segment are the cornerstones for the topline growth. Continuing from the past quarters, PTCL's strategic focus remained on enhancing customer experience by providing the fastest and most reliable internet services under its flagship 'Flash Fiber' Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) brand, which boosts PTCL as one of the leading FTTH operator in the industry with majority share of the market's net adds.—APP

Pak Int'l Poultry Expo to start from April 30

PESHAWAR : Pak International Poultry Expo 2024, will be organized here at Gul Mukai Palace in Peshawar in collaboration with Livestock Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Poultry Cooperative Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Livestock Farmers Welfare Association. In this connection, a review meeting was held to shed light on the completion of stages of the Expo at the Civil Secretariat Complex Warsak Road under the chairmanship of Asghar Ali Additional Secretary Livestock Fisheries and Cooperatives. Deputy Sec-

retary Livestock Yousaf Ali, Director General Livestock (Extension) Dr. Asal Khan, Director General Livestock (Research) Muhammad Ijaz, President Livestock Farmers Welfare Association Asif Awan and others also attended the meeting. It was informed that Pak International Poultry Expo will be held on April 30 till 1st May 2024. The purpose of the expo is to create awareness among the people associated with the poultry sector to acquire the business of poultry farming in a better and useful manner.

The expo will have a total of 46 stalls in which poultry farmers will be trained in various ways to increase the quantity of meat and poultry and livestock. The meeting emphasized the importance of exhibiting commercial poultry farming including rural poultry farming and fancy birds farming in the expo because poultry farming is a broad sector and rural poultry farming and fancy birds farming is a part of it which will not only improve the economic status of people, but also lead to the promotion of rare species.—APP



LAHORE : Russian Ambassador to Pakistan Albert Khorev called on Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif.—DNA

Zero tolerance: IGP vows action against women's abuse

There will be strict accountability for violation of authority, high handedness, corruption, violation of code of conduct, IG Punjab

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has said that zero tolerance will be shown in actions against incidents of violence, harassment, abuse and rape with women, children, and domestic workers and accused should be brought to justice. Dr. Usman Anwar said that there will be strict accountability for misuse of authority, high handedness, corruption, and violations of ethical conduct and officers' performance will be evaluated based on performance and accountability. He directed

that DPOs should monitor the complaints received at 1787 Complaint center, all received complaints at 1787 Complaint center should be resolved promptly, and responsible officers should be held accountable for undue delays. IG Punjab said that specialized police force will be deployed to combat smuggling and other illegal activities at inter provincial border checkpoints. Dr. Usman Anwar instructed to expedite the campaign against organized crime, including drug trafficking. He directed to intensify intelligence-based targeted operations against kacha criminals.

IG Punjab directed to eradicate gangs involved in highway robberies through active more patrolling and proactive approach under comprehensive strategy. Dr. Usman Anwar instructed the CTD to intensify the combing operations should continue to combat terrorism and anti-social elements. IG Punjab directed for imposition of real punishments on habitual criminals involved in kite flying and metal strings. Dr. Usman Anwar further emphasized to improve the conviction rate of cases with effective coordination between investigation and prosecution department.

IG Punjab instructed for the timely completion and effective follow-up of investigations of electricity theft cases, ensuring real punishments for those causing financial losses to the national treasury. Dr. Usman Anwar said that measures should be ensured under personal supervision of DPOs for the security of Chinese nationals, residential areas, and route clearance and security. These directions were issued by IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar during a high-level video conference held at the Central Police Office, attended by unit heads, RPOs, DPOs, DIGs, and CTOs.

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

PAKISTAN PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

No.EE.PCD.II/AB/743 Dated Islamabad the, 18/04/2024

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Name OF Work:- ESTABLISHMENT OF CHILD PROTECTION INSTITUTE, ON PLOT NO.81 AT SECTOR H-11/4, ISLAMABAD.

- Well reputed /experience consulting firms are invited for consultancy services for Feasibility, detailed designing & Construction supervision of the "Establishment of Child Protection Institute on Plot No.81 at Sector H-11/4, Islamabad". The Building consist of Basement + 03 Storey.
- The bid shall comprise a **single package** containing two separate envelopes. Each envelope shall contain **separately the financial proposal and the technical proposal**. The envelopes to be marked as "FINANCIAL PROPOSAL" and "TECHNICAL PROPOSAL" in bold and legible letters to avoid confusion. Initially, only the envelope marked "TECHNICAL PROPOSAL" be opened and the envelope marked as "FINANCIAL PROPOSAL" shall be retained in the custody of the procuring agency without being opened.
- The procuring agency shall evaluate the technical proposal in a manner prescribed in advance in the RFP, **without reference to the price** and reject any **Technical Proposal** which manifests material deviation from the specified requirements. The financial proposal of Consultants, whose technical proposal did not meet the minimum qualifying marks and/or were considered technically and legally non-responsive to the RFP & TOR shall be returned un-opened to the respective Consultant.
- Detailed TOR and bidding document can be obtained from the office of the undersigned upto 06.05.2024 till 4.00 pm after depositing requisite fee of Rs.5000/-.
- The interested Consultants /Firms can submit documents till 09.05.2024 at 11:00 am in the office of the undersigned. The technical proposals will be opened on same day at 11:30 am in the office of the undersigned, in the presence of the consultants /their authorized representatives.
- Following information /documents are required to be submitted with the bid.
 - Organizational details and financial status duly certified by the concerned banks
 - Registration as Consultant with Pakistan Council of Architects & Town Planners (PCATP) and Pakistan Engineer Council (PEC) along with upto date renewal.
 - The consultant must furnish the certificate of performance about the consultancy services provided for mega hospitals as explained above.
 - NTN along with upto date clearance certificate for last five (05) years from Income Tax authorities. The firm must be an active Taxpayer list of F.B.R.
 - List of Technical /Non-Technical Staff along with their qualification on the payroll of the consulting firm, which can be verified.
 - Undertaking on stamp paper that firm is neither involved in any litigation nor abandoned any work in any department, nor black listed as result. A certificate to the effect that all documents /particulars /information furnished are true and correct.
 - Conditional application will not be entertained.
 - In case of Joint Venture, a legal agreement between the parties would be required.
 - Summary of overall experience indicating separately the details of similar assignments duly complete and in progress. .
 - Information about the projects implemented with cost of each project, amount of consultancy contract, number of full time staff working on the project, number and expertise of consultants /resources persons employed and duration of the project.
 - Incomplete applications will not be entertained.
 - The sealed Technical & Financial proposals received after closing time will not be entertained.
 - Under Rule 33(1) of PPR Rule 2004, the undersigned reserve the right to accept or reject any or all bids /proposals at any time prior to acceptance of bid /proposal.

(Muhammad Latif Awan)
Executive Engineer,
Project Civil Division No.II, Pak.P.W.D, Islamabad.
Ph # 051-9260118

PII/06230-23

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 Exchange 9270831-5
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



ISLAMABAD: Ladies posing for a picture on the occasion of the National Day of Bangladesh. —DNA

British HC, minister discuss opportunities in edu sector

Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said that the Ministry of Education is working on a programme that aims to declare education emergency in Pakistan

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ms Jane Marriott, here on Thursday called on the Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui to discuss the challenges and opportunities being faced by the country in the education sector. The meeting was attended by the Secretary of Education Mr Mohyuddin Wani and the Country Director British Council Mr James Hampson. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said that the Ministry of Education is working on a programme that aims to declare education emergency in Pakistan. He said that the number of out-of-school children in Pakistan is ballooning and the only way to address this issue is by making it a national agenda. The minister said that due to rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation slums in major cities are popping up. He said that these slums are ignored in every education policy. He highlighted the im-

portance of ensuring that no child should be left behind. He encouraged the UK to provide support in the cause of eliminating out-of-school children. We need to bring all the stakeholders especially donors on the same platform so that all the effort can be channelled and streamlined, he added. "We are burning the midnight oil in ensuring that the cause of education becomes one of the main agendas of national effort towards progress". Ms Jane Marriott, British High Commissioner to Pakistan said that UK and Pakistan are the oldest partners and have been shoulder to shoulder since 1947. She informed the minister that the UK encourages expansion of its green programme which can lead to an increase in enrolment of Pakistani students in UK universities via distance learning. She also informed the minister that Google Education is highly interested in supporting Pakistan in its bid to address the issue of access to education. British High Commissioner and the education minister also discussed the challenges and opportunities that come with the devo-

lution of education to the provinces. Secretary of Education Mr Mohyuddin Wani highlighted that the Ministry of Education is developing a comprehensive plan which will declare an education emergency in the country and will furthermore align all the stakeholders on the same page. He said that all the donors and NGOs operating in Pakistan are working in silos and compartments. He said that there is a concerted effort on the way to ensure that a single platform can align and channel the efforts of all stakeholders in the education sector of Pakistan. Khalid Maqbool said that we have set a target to train one million youth in the IT sector. He said that he hopes that in the medium term, Pakistan will become one of the biggest suppliers of IT professionals to the world. He asked the UK to help in attaining IT certification for this IT-trained professional that would be recognised globally. Furthermore, he said that the mental health of our students must be also catered to by professionals. He said that the education ministry aims

to establish mental health awareness and support desks in all of the colleges in Islamabad. He said that efforts have been underway to address the education woes of Pakistan however, more effort and more focus is still required. He told the British High Commissioner that a National Nutrition Program in Islamabad has also been launched to increase enrolment. He said that expense on education is not expenditure but investment. James Hompson, Country Director British Council told the minister that after China the biggest British Council Programme is in Pakistan. He requested the minister that the Global Chief Executive of the British Council visit Pakistan in May and would like to visit him. The Federal Minister welcomed the initiative from the British Council and expressed a deep desire to enhance collaboration between the British Council and Pakistan, especially concerning increasing educational outreach programmes for slums in the metropolitan cities of the country.

ANF recovers 60 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 60 kg drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He said that 960 grams Ice was recovered from a parcel booked for Saudi Arabia at a courier office in Rawalpindi. 515 grams heroin was recovered from a parcel booked for the UK at the cargo office at Islamabad Airport. 24 kg opium and 30 kg hashish were recovered from the possession of two accused netted from M-2 Sargodha. 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects arrested on Express Highway Islamabad. 1 kg hashish was recovered from Khyber. In another operation, 1 kg of hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused rounded up near Cantt station in Karachi.—APP

Muneer political shift not aligned with party policy

ISLAMABAD: Muneer Khan's decision to join mainstream politics has nothing to do with the policy of the National Front and its leader, said Jammu and Kashmir National Front (JKNF) spokesman. In a statement, the Front spokesperson Muhammad Haseeb Wani clarified that Muneer Khan was never affiliated with the party. Wani emphasized that Khan's choice to enter mainstream politics is entirely his own and is unrelated to the political ideology advocated by the imprisoned party chairman, Nayeem Ahmed Khan, who Wani noted has been a staunch advocate for the right to self-determination of Kashmiris. "During his lifelong struggle Nayeem Ahmed Khan didn't budge from his principled stance on the issue of Kashmir", he said, adding that Khan followed the diktats of none but his conscience.—APP

10 new high-yield pulse varieties recommended for cultivation

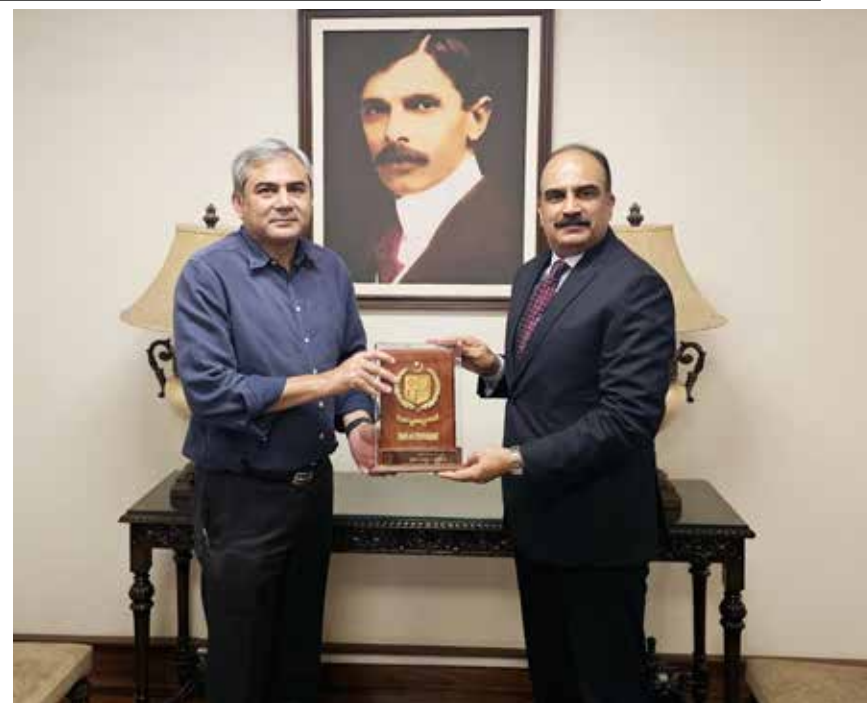
MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: In a major development for Pakistan's agriculture sector, the Variety Evaluation Committee has recommended 10 new high-yield pulse varieties for cultivation to boost food productivity in the country. The new varieties of pulses recommended by the committee for cultivation in Pakistan are NIFA Mung-24, NIAB-CH26, NIAB-CH30, NIAB-CH32, NIAB-CH69, NIAB-CH73, NARC Lentil 24, NARC Mung 24 and Mahnoor 24. The Variety Evaluation Committee met at the Pakistan Agri-

culture Research Council under the chairmanship of Dr Intiaz Hussain, Member of Plant Sciences Division. Seed certification and agricultural scientists also participated in the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Intiaz expressed his faith that the release of high-yielding pulse varieties would contribute to improving pulses productivity in the country. He also emphasized PARC's commitment to support public and private sector institutes and seed companies in evaluating and releasing new varieties. Hailing the development, Federal Minister of Industries and

Production and National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer said consistent and result-oriented efforts are needed to improve research and boost production of fine quality seed varieties. In a statement issued by the spokesperson of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research Sajid Shah, the federal minister said the new pulse varieties are a milestone and a step towards increasing the productivity of pulses and overall agricultural development in the country. "This development is a significant step towards enhancing productivity and profitability in the

agriculture sector," he added. The minister commended the scientists and researchers for their hard work and dedication in developing these new varieties. He said the new pulse varieties will not only benefit farmers but also contribute towards ensuring food security in the country. "We will continue to make strenuous efforts for the promotion and growth of the agriculture sector in Pakistan. We will work towards providing farmers with the necessary support, resources, and technology to further enhance their productivity and income," he maintained.



ISLAMABAD Chairman NADRA Lieutenant General Muhammad Munir Afsar presenting a souvenir to Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi at NADRA Headquarters.—DNA

Govt chalks out concrete road-map for reforms in power sector

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Division Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari on Thursday said that on the directives of Prime Minister, a concrete road-map had been chalked out to bring comprehensive reforms in country's power sector to control power pilferage, over-billing and circular debt. Addressing a press conference, he said after assuming charge of the ministry, short comings of the power sectors were reviewed to address chronic issues permanently. The government was committed to bringing improvement in the energy sector, he added. He reiterated that no leniency would be given to the power pilferers irrespective of their status and position adding that over-billing would also not be tolerated at any cost. Solid strategy had also been devised to eliminate menace of power theft in the country, he said. The minister said lower-middle class had been suffering from the power theft and we had to rectify existing shortcomings in the power system. He went on to say that accumulative loss of power distribution companies (DISCOs) would surge to Rs 560 billion by June. Electricity units worth over Rs 300 billion were consumed by the power pilferers, he added. He said it was the need to hour to deal such power pilferers and officials involved in this illegal practices strictly. The country could not afford such misappropriation of billions of rupees to the economy, he added. He vowed not sparing even higher officials such as XENS, SDOs, Chief Engineers involved in patronage of power pilferage. He claimed that around 20 per cent officials of power sector were involved in this dirty practice. Awais said that all CEOs had already been directed to remove 'kunda' before April 23 failing which strict action would be taken against the responsible officials. The minister appreciated the support of Interior ministry and FIA for supporting the DISCOs to eliminate power theft.—APP

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Briefs

**FPCCI
wavier
off 50%
membership
fee of women
chambers**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) wavier off 50% membership fee of women chambers. President FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh said that the country and society cannot progress without the full role of women, this step is very important for women empowerment by reducing the membership fee for women by 50 percent. We have fulfilled our promise, for which the full credit goes to the leadership of UBG, who had promised their community during the election campaign today we kept that promise. Federation President Atif Ikram further said that Pakistani women are extremely talented and we are striving to empower them in the economic field. If Pakistan is to progress, we have to make our women educated, skilled and empowered to business women.

**Solar
Enterprise
to invest Rs.
470.78 Million
in Rashakai
Psez**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Steller, a Pakistani solar manufacturing enterprise is set to invest Rs. 470.78 million in the Rashakai prioritized Special Economic Zone (pSEZ), a flagship project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It was approved during the 8th SE Committee meeting of Rashakai pSEZ, Gwadar Pro reported. The committee comprised representatives from the Board of Investment Pakistan (BOI), Rashakai Special Economic Zone Development and Operations Company (RSEZDOC), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KPEZDMC), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Special Economic Zone Authority (KP-SEZA), Deputy Commissioner Nowshera, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment & Trade (KP-BOIT). "After completion of formalities, the enterprise will be issued a formal letter of approval, entitling it to the fiscal benefits of SEZs," according to an official statement from BOI. According to BOI, in line with the government's present-day vision to promote clean and sustainable energy solutions, BOI actively encourages and facilitates investments in the solar panel manufacturing sector. This strategic focus not only contributes to environmental sustainability but also enhances long-term revenue generation for the government. BOI, as the secretariat of the SEZs, will provide all-out facilitation to enable the new enterprise to commence its construction activities within 6 months and commence production within 24 months of their approval.

7Up launches innovative campaign to bring neighbors together

DNA

ISLAMABAD: 7UP has introduced a remarkably innovative outdoor campaign with the aim of inspiring neighbors to eat together. Billboards that dispense Dastarkhans have been installed in various locations with a wonderful message on them: let's eat together with our neighbors. Anybody can simply roll a new Dastarkhan off the billboard and take it home. The insight behind this novel campaign was simple: In Ramadan, a time of spiritual reflection and communal harmony, traditionally brings people together from all walks of life to break their fast and share meals. However, after Ramadan in recent

Tarar for enhanced collaboration between public, private sector

Says the Special Investment Facilitation Council had been set up to attract investment in Pakistan and ensure 'ease of doing business'. He said it was main thrust of the government policy to encourage innovation and investment in the country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar on Thursday stressed the need for enhanced collaboration between the public and private sectors to fast track the process of economic development of the country. Addressing the First Pakistan Semiconductor Summit, he said that the Special Investment Facilitation Council had been set up to attract investment in Pakistan and ensure 'ease of doing business'. He said it was main thrust of the government policy to encourage innovation and investment in the country. He said that Pakistan, as the fifth largest democracy in the world, was endowed with great natural resources and its biggest resource was its human resource. "We are blessed with a huge population of youth which constitutes 68 per cent of its population". That is a huge potential which we can offer to the world, he added. He said Pakistan was strategically located at the crossroads of the world which was a source of pride for the nation.

He said that the Government of Pakistan as a policy encouraged innovation and investment in the country which this summit was offering precisely - a collaboration between public and private sector. He said that the federal cabinet meeting on Wednesday had approved a public private partnership policy framework to eventually facilitate investment in the country. He said that the job of the government was not only to regulate but also facilitate investment. He said unfortunately sometimes governments forgot their primary responsibility as a facilitator which hampered the investment. He said that the government could fulfil this responsibility through collaboration between public and private sector and by ensuring 'ease of doing business'. He said that Pakistan has been producing 50,000 engineering graduates every year and it has the best engineering universities in the world. "Our engineering graduates are well placed globally but unfortunately we are not able to reap the benefits of the semiconductor industry. It is \$ 550 billion industry at this



moment with the projection of \$ 1 Trillion by 2030." Tarar said that Pakistan had great potential to deploy its human resource in this industry. The minister said that he was proud to inform that Shehbaz Sharif during his stints as chief minister of the Punjab had attached great importance to vocational training and skill development. From day one, the priority of the PML-N was skill development of the youth. "The manifesto of the political party

that I represent, highlights the importance of enhancing skills and placing importance on skill development, on setting up institutes where skills training is imparted to youth and this is the way forward", he remarked. Expressing gratitude to Founder and CEO of GS Microelectronics (SME) Farhat Jahangir, he said he had done a great job by organising this summit to bring public and private sectors together and bringing members of esteemed

universities of Pakistan under one roof for optimum collaboration. He urged the luminaries from leading universities to come up with workable solutions and tangible proposals. He assured that the government would be on the forefront in these endeavours. Saying that several discussions have been held on semiconductor business, he expressed the optimism that it would be from chip designing to providing skill development to enhancing research in development and planning, He said Pakistan had a lot of expertise in skill development as well as research and development, adding though research and development was one area with regard to chip designing, Pakistan could contribute immensely in this regard. "I hope one day we may develop some capacity towards manufacturing (semiconductors) after a few years", he said. However he said there was a need to set a direction, and set an objective and goal," adding experts in the summit who had spent decades in this field could guide the way forward. Thanking the

forum for hosting the event, he hoped that collaboration in this sector would continue and Pakistan could be linked with the global economy. "This is something we need to emphasize and focus on which will help our economy in a big way as the world is opening up", he opined. He said since coming to power this year, the present government had received many delegations from abroad. "We just hosted a Saudi Arabian delegation a few days ago and the Iranian President is due next week, so there are a lot of positive activities". Attaulah Tarar said that economic indicators were positive and international financial institutions and international financial journals were unanimous that Pakistan had great potential for economic development. "If we put our heart into it, the sky is the limit; and with good intentions, we set on this path", he said. He assured the participants that the government would not only provide resources, but it would be at the beck and call to support the semiconductor business in Pakistan.

Influential unjustly getting trillions should be highlighted

Snatching the resources of people with low incomes and giving them to influential people and groups does not develop the economy but weakens it and stoke poverty

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Shahid Rasheed Butt, the former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), stated on Wednesday that it is necessary to reveal the names of the influential individuals and groups receiving annual benefits of 17.5 billion dollars. If the privileges that elites are getting are legal and moral, why have they been kept a secret for so long, he asked? Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that in the financial year 2022, the elites were exempted from Rs 2.24 trillion in federal taxes, which was 36.4 percent of the total tax collected by FBR and 3.4 percent of the GDP.

This amount was higher than the federal government's total expenditures, and without these exemptions and privileges, the country would not have required the IMF loans. According to research by a former Finance Minister, the privileged classes receive annual benefits of Rs 14000 billion, he said, adding that when accounted for inflation, this amount comes to 7.5 trillion rupees. Snatching the resources of people with low incomes and giving them to influential people and groups does not develop the economy but weakens it and stoke poverty. Many experts believe that drama is being made in the name of reforms aimed at further squeezing low-income people to benefit the rich.

If the undue and unethical support of the elite is stopped, Pakistan will not need to beg from the IMF and friendly nations, he said. Tackling the elite capture will reduce inflation, cut unemployment, and decrease illiteracy. The rupee's value, growth rate, and quality of public health will all improve, and the country will not face a long-term crisis. Mr. Butt noted that there is a concerning disparity between the rich and the poor in Pakistan, and people in positions of authority are deliberately widening it. Regarding human development rankings, Pakistan's low average income and poor health and literacy rates are notable. While a tiny percentage of Pakistan's elite enjoy

remarkable wealth, most citizens lack the bare essentials. Despite the populist rhetoric of our opportunistic politicians, Pakistan's glaring socio-economic inequities are the result of various structural problems that have not been intentionally addressed. Influential people need to re-evaluate our country's goals. It's high time our government shifted their attention to ensuring growth through progressive policies that boost production from the bottom up. Otherwise, the situation would exacerbate already-existing disparities and affect the entire nation, not just low-income people. However, he said it is doubtful that the government will stop rewarding and bribing the elite.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq receiving British High Commissioner Ms. Jane Marriot at Parliament House.—DNA

Entrepreneurship curriculum introduced in FDE schools

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has introduced an entrepreneurship curriculum in schools working under the ambit of the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE). The official sources told APP that as per the declaration of the education ministry, from the next academic session, students from grades 6 to 10 will have an opportunity to venture into the world of entrepreneurship. This curriculum reflects the

successful model implemented in Gilgit-Baltistan in the last two years, they informed. The curriculum is carefully designed to develop entrepreneurial skills in students, equipping them with the necessary tools and mindsets for innovation and creativity. According to the declaration, unlike traditional assessment-based learning, this curriculum will focus on project-based learning. This will help the students to apply the theoretical knowledge to real world scenarios,

it added. The sources further stated that to ensure the successful implementation of this initiative, training will be provided to 200 teachers in FDE (ICT). Meanwhile commenting on this declaration, the Secretary Education said that introducing entrepreneurship at an early age, not only fosters entrepreneurial spirit but also inculcates valuable skills like critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork. He further said that the move marks a significant departure from traditional education methods.—APP

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Briefs

President calls for steering...

FROM PAGE 01
President Zardari said their agenda and ideology will strengthen the country and underlined the need for creating a political environment to fulfill the expectations of all stakeholders. He asked the political leadership of the country to highlight their priorities and stressed the need for ending differences for the country's prosperity. "While there are many economic reforms the government will drive in spurring jobs, reducing inflation and expanding the tax net, I want to underscore the importance of promoting positive working relationships and effective coordination, within our constitutional framework, between the Federal Government and the Provinces. This is absolutely essential for promoting an inclusive national development agenda and rolling out policies that execute tangible action on the ground."

Gen Faiz made deal with TLP...

FROM PAGE 01
agree with the promise regarding then-law minister Zahid Hamid's resignation. The then-premier also objected to Hamid's name in the contract with TLP. At the time, Hamid was heading ISI's counter intelligence wing and held the rank of a major general. However, the prime minister was told that the agreement has been finalised, signed and cannot be withdrawn. Iqbal said, apprising the commission. In his statement to the commission, former interior secretary Arshad Mirza said he, when he was called to the PM Secretariat, witnessed tension between Abbasi and then-Punjab chief minister Shehbaz Sharif. The Punjab CM was in favour of Hamid's resignation as per the agreement, while Abbasi opposed it. The former secretary said the tension between the PM and Punjab CM escalated to such an extent that he felt awkward and left the room.

IHCBA moves SC for fair probe

FROM PAGE 01
as secret surveillance inside their homes. The letter was signed by judges Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Babar Sattar, Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, Arbab Muhammad Tahir and Saman Rafat Intiaz. A day later, calls had emerged from various quarters for a probe into the investigation, amid which Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa summoned a full court meeting of the Supreme Court's judges. After a meeting between CJP Isa and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on March 28, the duo decided to form a commission to investigate the concerns of interference in judicial affairs following the cabinet's approval. However, former CJP Tassaduq Hussain Jilani, who was appointed to head the commission, subsequently recused himself from the matter, leading to the apex court taking a suo motu notice of the issue.

PM Shehbaz seeks EU...

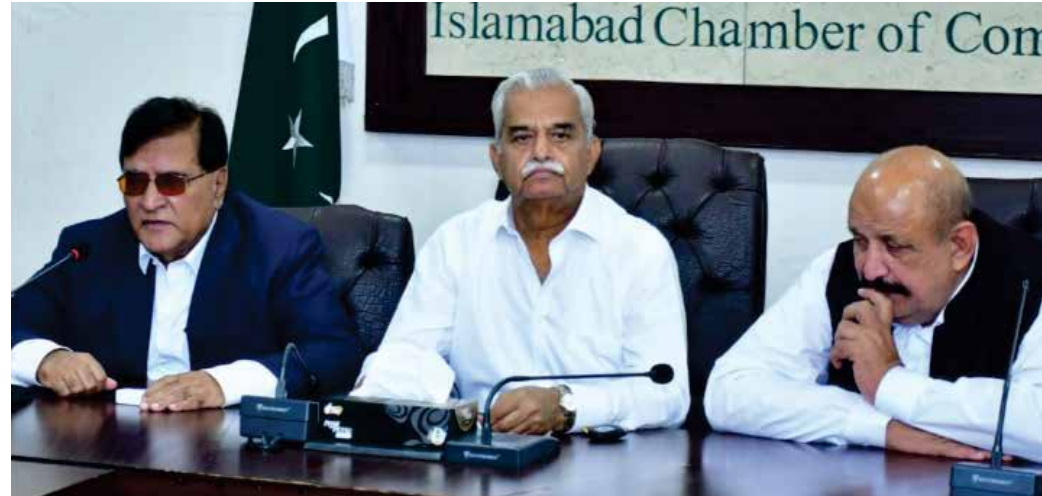
FROM PAGE 01
constructively with the EU's Global Gateway Strategy through the European Investment Bank. The Prime Minister sought EU's support in providing consultancy and expertise to help Pakistan carry out important reforms in various sectors. The EU Ambassador briefed the Prime Minister on various cooperation initiatives, including the ongoing dialogue on migration and mobility issues between the two sides, as well as facilitating European businesses operating in Pakistan. Progress on resumption of flights from Pakistan to EU countries was also discussed. Meanwhile, PM Shehbaz Sharif has termed the recent visit of Saudi delegation as the beginning of a new era of Saudi investment and commercial and strategic partnership in Pakistan.

ICCI's plan: eco-friendly capital with business support

Khalid Iqbal Malik said that ICCI under the leadership of its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari is working day and night for the betterment of the business community and the civil society

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Founder Group, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Khalid Iqbal Malik has said that Islamabad is the pride of Pakistan and ICCI is resolute to make it an eco-friendly city with the cooperation of all the stakeholders. He said this while addressing a ceremony held here at the Chamber House in honour of Raja Javaid Iqbal, President Traders Welfare Association G-9 markaz, who has recently turned back after performing the Umrah. Khalid Iqbal Malik said that Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry under the able leadership of its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari is working day and night for the betterment of the business community and the civil society. He paid richest tributes to Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari for his outclass performance as the ICCI President who is not only extend-



ing facilities like installation of filtration plants at different markets and trade centres but is providing computers and filtrations to schools and colleges also by spending millions of rupees from his own pocket, which is a unique example of big-heartedness. Addressing the ceremony, former

President ICCI and Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari said ICCI is steadfast in offering the finest services to the business community and turning Islamabad a model city for its residents and the rest of the world. He said that impressive inaugural ceremonies with

regard to the newly installed filtration plants at different markets will be held separately with the participation of representatives of all the stakeholders. Raja Javaid Iqbal said that ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has played a key role in resolving the problems of the busi-

ness community in all the nooks and corners of the capital city that is why he has emerged as the darling of the business community. He expressed his gratitude to Chairman Founder Group Khalid Iqbal Malik and Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari for arranging an exclusive ceremony in his honour.

In their speeches office bearers of Traders Welfare Associations made mention of the achievements of ICCI during last one and a half year by terming its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari as a brand ambassador of the capital city. They said that the ICCI President is serving the community without any discrimination of liking and disliking. Those who spoke on the occasion include Nasir Chaudhry, Ikhlaq Abbasi, Ch. Naeem, Ch. Abdul Ghaffar, Ch. Nazeer, Syed Ather Haider Shah, Haji Zafar, Khalid Ch. Abbas Hashmi, Mohsin Khalid, Malik Ifthikhar, Khurshid Qureshi, Babar Chaudhry and Naeem Awan.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan Yusuf Raza Gilani meets with Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. - DNA

Stuart Law named head coach of T20 WC hosts USA

WASHINGTON: T20 World Cup hosts the United States of America (USA) have named Stuart Law as head coach, with the Australian calling it "an exciting opportunity." The 55-year-old former batter takes charge of the USA men's team ahead of a three-match home T20 series against Bangladesh next month. The USA will host the World Cup with the West Indies in June. USA Cricket did not reveal the length of Law's contract as head coach. "It is an exciting opportunity to join USA Cricket at this time," said Law, who has previously coached Bangladesh, the West Indies and Afghanistan at international level. "USA is one of the strongest associate nations in the sport and I believe that we can mold a formidable squad going ahead. "The first task will be to prepare the team for the series against Bangladesh and then set our sights on our home World Cup, which will be huge." Venu Pisike, chairman of USA Cricket, called the Australian "one of the most accomplished coaches in the sport." - Agencies

Juventus ordered to pay Ronaldo 9.7m euros

ROME: Juventus must pay Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo 9.7 million euros (\$10.4 million) in back wages for the 2020-21 season, the Italian courts announced on Wednesday. The Court of Arbitration, to which Ronaldo appealed, "orders Juventus Turin to pay the sum of 9,774,166.66 euros", plus interest and procedural costs, it stated in its decision. The sum equates to the difference between the salary actually received by Ronaldo and that which he should have received after tax and other deductions. Ronaldo, who spent three seasons in Italy with Juventus (2018-21) before joining Manchester United (2021-22) and then the Saudi club Al Nassr, was claiming 19.5 million euros but the arbitration panel reduced that by 50 percent. Contacted by AFP, Juventus declined to comment, but said it would be issuing a statement "shortly". - Agencies

PAK vs NZ: Hafeez criticises team selection for T20I series

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez on Thursday criticised team selection for the T20I series against New Zealand on home soil. According to a local cricket website, Hafeez was unimpressed with the criteria of selection after Babar Azam's return as captain.

"I understand that if Babar has learned from his mistakes and if he makes better decisions now and does all the things he didn't do before, then things might get better. But the selection for this [New Zealand] series will give you an idea that the same process has started again," Hafeez said.

"For a weak New Zealand, where 12 to 13 main players are not available, for that, we have selected every player who was perhaps sitting at home and called him to come and play for Pakistan. So, I think this is a weak decision regarding this series," he added. It must be noted that the first match of the five-T20I series between Pakistan and New Zealand will be played today in Rawalpindi. However, the rain could play spoilsport during the match according to The Weather Channel. The latest weather forecast states that there is 60 percent chance of rain during the day and 80 percent at night today. There is also 49 percent chance of rain on April

20, which is the day of the second T20I. However, the chance of rain on April 21, when the third T20I is set to take place, is considerably less at 19 percent. After the first three matches at the Pindi Cricket Stadium, both sides will move to Lahore, where they will play the remaining two T20Is of the series on 25 and 27 April, respectively. All five matches of the T20I series will start at 7:00pm (PST).

Meanwhile, Hafeez said that Shaheen was reluctant to talk to Rizwan, Babar Mohammad Hafeez, former director of the Pakistan national men's team, has claimed that Shaheen Afridi was reluctant to talk to Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan over splitting the opening pair when the pacer was captain of the T20I team. While speaking to a local cricket website, Hafeez said that his decision to change the opening pair during New Zealand T20I series earlier this year was for the betterment of the team. "I didn't change anyone's batting position just because I wanted to. My plan was for the betterment of Pakistan team, so I did that," Hafeez said. "Even I spoke to the captain [Shaheen] but he was reluctant to talk to Babar and Rizwan and so I took that responsibility. I went to talk to them and I had no problem with it because what I did was for Pakistan. "And if someone feels that addressing all these issues and Pakistan performing well can be achieved by having Babar and Rizwan as openers, or if they can as-

sign some other role to Saim Ayub or whoever the other cricketers are, then I have no issue. We want the best results for the Pakistan cricket team and all players should be given equal opportunities."

Hafeez and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had parted ways in February this year. Former Test captain Hafeez was given the responsibility of Director Cricket in November last year. Hafeez has featured for Pakistan in 55 Tests, 218 ODIs and 119 T20Is and has scored 12,780 runs while also bagging 253 wickets.

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, Cofe McConchie, 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.

Fin Min, Donald Lu discuss...

FROM PAGE 01
energy sector streamlining, and privatisation during the huddle at the World Bank headquarters in Washington on Wednesday. Ambassador Lu, flanked by State Department's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Horst in the meeting, reaffirmed Washington's commitment to bolster ties between the US and Pakistan. Aurangzeb, who is currently in Washington to hold negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new bailout package and attend World Bank meetings, has also been conducting meetings with top officials in the US on the sidelines. Aurangzeb and the US official focused on upgrading economic partnerships, with emphasis on alternate energy, agriculture, climate resilience and tech industry. The Pakistani minister identified American investment opportunities in information technology, renewables, agriculture and minerals extraction. He also pledged close collaboration with the US International Development Finance Corporation and Exim Bank for mutual development.

X says working with Pak...

FROM PAGE 01
remains suspended in the country since February 17. The suspension of the website occurred over a week after the general elections in Pakistan on February 8 that triggered debate on the fairness and transparency of the polls. Users reported problems accessing the site, but no official comment was issued by the government of Pakistan on the matter. However, the interior minister, in its report submitted to the Islamabad High Court in a separate case related to the suspension, maintained that it shut the website following national security concerns in the wake of which the social media platform has issued its statement. The ministry, in its report to IHC, stated that the "content uploaded on the internet" is a "threat" to the country's national security. The decision to impose a ban on Twitter/X in Pakistan was made in the interest of upholding national security, maintaining public order, and preserving the integrity of our nation, it added. "It is very pertinent to mention here that the failure of Twitter/X to adhere to the lawful directives of the government of Pakistan and address concerns regarding the misuse of its platform necessitated the imposition of a ban," the ministry said in the report.

Some political parties...

FROM PAGE 01
with other countries to undermine the foreign investment inflows. "Such statements were made to serve condemned political motives and to spread anarchy so that no investment comes into the country," he said talking to meida. The federal minister emphasised the religious and economic importance of relations with certain countries for Pakistan. "This is enmity against the country. It is done under a campaign. They feel that their policy is failing. Such behaviour towards the country was shown before. They want to create chaos in the country." It must be noted that Marwat, speaking during a TV talk show had suggested that Saudi Arabia, alongside the United States, played a part in the ouster of Imran Khan's government. Asif said by propagating and making statements, they were aiming to undermine Pakistan's economic ties with other countries. "There is no greater enmity against your country than this. We should treat them as enemies of the state." As soon as the controversial statement started doing rounds of the media, the PTI top brass distanced itself from Marwat's allegation that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had a hand in the so-called "regime change operation". Moreover, Barrister Aqeel Malik, the government spokesperson on Legal Affairs, said the PTI leader's statement came at a time when a high-level Saudi delegation was visiting the country.

West Indies women thump Pakistan in first ODI
Captain Hayley Matthews scored an unbeaten century, followed by three wickets to help her team thump the Pakistan women's team

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Captain Hayley Matthews starred as West Indies women eased past Pakistan in the first ODI of the series on Thursday at the National Bank Stadium (NBS) in Karachi. Opener Matthews led from the front and scored 140 runs in 150 balls, which included 15 fours and a six, after she won the toss and opted to bat first. Matthews added 102 runs in 127 balls for the second wicket with Shemaine Campbelle after Windies lost opener Rashada Williams (1) in the third over of the match with the score just a single run. Campbelle scored 45 runs in 71 balls and was the second highest run-scorer in the innings. Meanwhile, Chinelle Henry chipped in with run-a-ball 23. West Indies finished on 269-8 in 50 overs. For Pakistan, Sadia Iqbal and Tuba Hassan claimed two wickets each.



In reply, the home side were bundled out for 156 runs in 35.5 overs and lost the match by a massive 113 runs. Pakistan kept on losing wickets at regular intervals and never threatened to chase down the 270-run target. Tuba was the highest scorer for Pakistan with 25 runs. After impressing with the bat, Matthews also dominated in the bowling department with three wickets for 17 runs in six overs. Afy Fletcher and Zaida James also clinched two wickets each.

The three ODIs will be followed by five T20Is from April 26 to May 3. The series is being broadcast live on Pakistan's first sports channel Geo Super.

Schedule of remaining matches:
21 Apr - Second ODI at NBS
23 Apr - Third ODI at NBS
26 Apr - First T20I at NBS
28 Apr - Second T20I at NBS
30 Apr - Third T20I at NBS
2 May - Fourth T20I at NBS
3 May - Fifth T20I at NBS.

Briefs

EU, Netherlands to maintain good ties with Türkiye: Rutte

LONDON : Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Wednesday underscored the significance of enhancing the EU's relationship with Türkiye, highlighting Ankara's pivotal role as a geopolitical actor in the region and beyond. He stated that talks would be held at an EU Council meeting in Brussels to strengthen ties between Türkiye and the EU. "Türkiye is a geopolitical actor with a big influence in the region and beyond. It's a NATO ally, and a partner in a wide range of areas. Examples include counterterrorism, security, climate change and energy, the economy and migration," Rutte said on X. "It's important for the EU – and the Netherlands – to maintain good relations with Türkiye. So it's good to look at what steps we can take to strengthen our ties," he added. Rutte also highlighted the urgent need to address Iran's "reckless" attack on Israel. He emphasized the importance of exploring measures to "ensure that Iran and groups affiliated to Iran refrain from further hostile actions against Israel." "De-escalation is essential for the security of the wider Middle East region," the Dutch prime minister added. The EU Council meeting will also discuss the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. —Agencies

Iran warns Israel against attacking nuclear sites

TEHRAN : An IRGC official has warned that if Israel takes action against Iran's nuclear facilities, it will definitely face "tit-for-tat" retaliation against the regime's nuclear centers with advanced weapons. "If the Zionist regime decides to take action against our nuclear facilities and centers, it will definitely face our reaction," head of the Nuclear Protection and Security Corps Gen. Ahmad Haqtab said on Thursday, adding "for a tit-for-tat retaliation, the regime's nuclear facilities will be attacked with advanced weapons". Haqtab issued the stern warning after Israeli officials' suggestions of a possible attack on Iran's nuclear facilities following the Islamic Republic's Operation True Promise to "punish" Tel Aviv for assassinating Iranian military advisors in Damascus. "If the fake Zionist regime decides to use the threat of attacking our country's nuclear centers as a tool to put pressure on Iran, it is possible and conceivable to revise the nuclear doctrine and policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran and deviate from the previous reservations declared" by the country, he added. —APP

Tesla, Starlink entry on agenda when Musk heads to India

MUMBAI: Tech billionaire Elon Musk is set to visit India as his businesses seek new markets in the world's most populous nation, with electric carmaker Tesla – suffering a sales downturn in the United States – reportedly scouting factory locations. Another Musk-owned business, satellite internet operator Starlink, is set to receive initial approvals to operate in India, a government source told AFP. Also likely to be on the agenda for the self-described "free speech absolutist" is the large number of content takedown orders India's government imposes on X, the social media platform he took over in 2022. "Looking forward to meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India!" Musk wrote on X last week without giving a date for the visit. Indian media reports suggest the trip will begin as soon as Sunday and last two days, coming after months of aggressive courtship between the billionaire and Modi. The two met last June in New York, after which Musk said Modi had pushed the entrepreneur to "make significant investments in India" – something he said his companies intended to do. —DNA

Iran tells US it does not seek 'expansion of tensions'

FM Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said that before the operation, we clearly told the American side that we will not target American bases and interests in the region

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's top diplomat said Thursday his country has told the United States that it is not seeking escalation after an unprecedented attack on Israel. The Islamic republic carried out its first-ever direct attack on Israel, firing drones and missiles on the weekend. The barrage – to which Israel's army chief has vowed a response – was retaliation for an April 1 air strike on Tehran's consulate in Damascus. Iran blamed Israel for the consular attack. Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who is in New York to attend a UN Security Council meeting, said his country has "tried to tell the United States clearly" that Iran is "not looking for the expansion of tension in the region," he said in a video posted by his ministry. Iran and the United States have had no diplomatic relations since 1980, but neutral Switzerland represents Washington's interests in Iran. Both the US and Iran have alluded to the Swiss role as an intermediary.

According to Amir-Abdollahian, Iran communicated with Washington "before and after" launching its attack on Israel. Iran informed the United States that the decision by the Islamic Republic of Iran to "respond to the (Israel) regime is final," and the matter concluded, he said. Iran's retaliation against Israel left a girl severely wounded but caused little damage. It followed the strike in Damascus that killed seven members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, including two generals. "Before the operation, we clearly told the American side that we will not target American bases and interests in the region," Amir-Abdollahian said. The Islamic republic has celebrated the attack as a success but President Ebrahim Raisi warned of "a fierce and severe response" to further "aggression" by Israel. During his trip to New York, Amir-Abdollahian is set to meet United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and his counterparts from other countries. The United States, Israel's top ally, has said it would soon impose new sanc-

'We're on edge of war in Middle East,' warns Josep

LONDON : In a stark warning issued during a gathering of G7 foreign ministers, the EU foreign policy chief on Thursday voiced grave concerns over the escalating tensions between Israel and Iran, saying they have led the world to the brink of war. Speaking to reporters, Josep Borrell painted a bleak picture, cautioning that the current course of events could lead to a full-blown regional conflict with far-reaching consequences. "I don't want to exaggerate but we are on the edge of a war, a regional war in the Middle East, which will be sending shockwaves to the rest of the world, and in particular to Europe. So stop it," he said. He also reiterated the EU commitment to imposing additional sanctions on Iran in response to its recent actions. However, he also directed a pointed message towards Israel, urging restraint and warning against any actions that could further exacerbate the volatile situation. Tension is running high in the Middle East as Iran on Saturday launched an airborne attack on Israel in retaliation for an April 1 airstrike on its diplomatic compound in the Syrian capital. It reportedly fired more than 300 drones and missiles, with almost all intercepted by the air defense systems of Israel and its allies – the US, France and the UK. Iran claimed that some targets were hit. Israel, in turn, said it would respond to Iran's attack, despite a chorus of world leaders imploring it to hold back. Meanwhile, Israel has waged a deadly military offensive on the Gaza Strip since a cross-border attack by the Palestinian group Hamas last Oct. 7 in which some 1,200 people were killed. Nearly 34,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have since been killed in Gaza, and over 76,000 others injured amid mass destruction and shortages of necessities. The Israeli war has pushed 85% of Gaza's population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN. Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice. An interim ruling in January ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza. —Agencies

tions on Iran's missile and drone program following the strike on Israel, and said it expects allies and other allies helped Israel intercept the Iranian strike. to take parallel measures. The US

Australia mulls citizenship for Pakistani guard in Sydney attack

Pakistani guard Taha has a graduate visa due to expire in less than a month, the paper said

WEB DESK

SYDNEY : Australia's prime minister said on Thursday he will consider granting citizenship to a Pakistani security guard wounded in the deadly Sydney shopping centre knife attack. The guard, Muhammad Taha, reportedly said he believed he "deserved recognition and consideration for citizenship" after being stabbed. In a bedside interview with The Australian, Taha said he was attacked just after fellow Pakistani security guard Faraz Tahir, one of the six people killed at the Westfield shopping complex in Bondi Junction. Taha has a graduate visa due to expire in less than a month, the paper said.

The guard reportedly noted that Frenchman Damien Guerot, since dubbed "bolland man", had been offered permanent residency after a video shared on social media showed him using a bollard to fend off the attacker, Joel Cauchi. Asked in a radio interview if the Australian government would entertain Taha's citizenship request, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said: "Yes, we certainly will." Albanese described the killing of Faraz Tahir as a "tragedy".



SYDNEY : Pakistan's High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri visits Pakistani security guard Muhammad Taha at a hospital in Sydney. —DNA

"This other person, Muhammad Taha, he confronted this guy, the perpetrator, Joel Cauchi, on Saturday. And it just shows extraordinary courage," the prime minister said. Both men put themselves in danger to protect Australians they did not know, Albanese said. "That's the sort of courage that we want to say thank you to, frankly," Albanese said. Guerot would receive permanent residency, which he had been seeking, on Thursday. French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday hailed Guerot and his fellow Frenchman Silas Despreaux for trying to stop the mall at-

tacker. Pakistan's High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri visited Taha at the hospital today and said his condition was improving. "Both Taha and other Pakistani Faraz showed exemplary courage to confront the knife attacker. They made us proud," he said. Sydney mall reopens Meanwhile, the Westfield shopping mall held a sombre reopening today with members of a sorrowful community filing past rows of still-shuttered stores to pay their respects. Shops will reopen properly on Friday, nearly a week after 40-year-old Cauchi rampaged through

the mall. But Thursday's "slow reopening" was billed as a chance for shocked Sydneysiders to reflect. It's an opportunity to express solidarity and condolences and to "turn the page on what's been a very difficult period" for the city, said New South Wales Premier Chris Minns. It was, he said, a "first step in healing". Throughout the week, wellwishers left piles of flowers knee-deep outside the shopping centre – usually thronged with families or people grabbing some food, groceries or clothes. The crowds thinned considerably today.

UN experts concern over destruction of schools in Gaza

The experts called on the international community to send a clear message that those who target schools and universities will be held responsible

GENEVA: UN experts on Thursday expressed "deep" concern over attacks on schools, universities, teachers, and students in Gaza, raising alarm over the "systemic destruction" of the Palestinian education system. "With more than 80% of schools in Gaza damaged or destroyed, it may be reasonable to ask if there is an intentional effort to comprehensively destroy the Palestinian education system, an action known as 'scholasticide'," the experts said in a statement. The term "scholasticide" refers to a "systemic obliteration of education through the arrest, detention or killing of teachers, students and staff, and the destruction of educational infrastructure," they said. According to the experts, more than 5,479 students, 261 teachers and 95 university professors have been killed in Gaza since Oct. 7, 2023, and over 7,819 students and 756 teachers injured. Moreover, at least 60% of educational facilities, including 13 public libraries, have been damaged or destroyed and at least 625,000 students have no access to education. They decried how the last remaining university in Gaza, Israa University, was also demolished by the Israeli military on Jan. 17. "The persistent, callous attacks on educational infrastructure in Gaza have a devastating long-term impact on the fundamental rights of people to learn and freely express themselves, depriving yet another generation of Palestinians of their future," they said. "When schools are destroyed, so too are hopes and dreams," they added. Even UN schools sheltering forcibly displaced civilians are being bombed, they warned, saying: "These attacks are not isolated incidents. They present a systematic pattern of violence aimed at dismantling the very foundation of Palestinian society." The experts called on the international community to send a clear message that those who target schools and universities will be held responsible. —DNA

Medicine shortages in UK reach alarming levels

LONDON : Medicine shortages in the UK have reached a critical juncture, with Brexit exacerbating an already dire situation, according to a report by a health think tank released on Thursday. The report, authored by Mark Dayan, the Brexit program lead at Nuffield Trust, paints a troubling picture of a healthcare system grappling with a "new normal" of scarcity in essential medications. The findings underscore a dramatic escalation in the unavailability of crucial drugs, creating profound challenges for healthcare professionals, pharmacies, the National Health Service (NHS), and most critically, patients. According to the report, the number of warnings issued by drug companies on impending supply issues has more than doubled, surging from 648 in 2020 to a staggering 1,634 last year alone. Dayan expressed deep concern over the unprecedented rise in medicine shortages. "The rise in shortages of vital medicines from rare to commonplace has been a shocking development that few would have expected a decade ago. More and more patients across the UK are experiencing a pharmacist telling them that their medication is not available, it may not be available soon, and it may not be available anywhere nearby," he said. He also said Brexit added several additional problems, with products no longer flowing as smoothly across the borders with the EU. —DNA

Google fires 28 employees over protests

WASHINGTON : Google terminated 28 employees for their involvement in a 10-hour sit-in at two of the tech giant's offices in California and New York City, protesting the company's ties with Israel. In response to the Tuesday protests led by a group called No Tech For Apartheid against Project Nimbus, a \$1.2 billion cloud contract with Israel, Google on Wednesday fired 28 employees accused of taking part in the protests. "This evening, Google indiscriminately fired over two dozen workers, including those among us who did not directly participate in yesterday's historic, bicoastal 10-hour sit-in protests," said a post on X by No Tech For Apartheid. Chris Rackow, Google's head of global security, emphasized the company's zero-tolerance policy towards the behavior of the protesters in a memo sent to all employees that also circulated on social media. "Behavior like this has no place in our workplace and we will not tolerate it," it said. "Following investigation, today we terminated the employment of twenty-eight employees found to be involved. We will continue to investigate and take action as needed," it added. In a response, No Tech For Apartheid condemned the move, calling it a "flagrant act of retaliation." "This flagrant act of retaliation is a clear indication that Google values its \$1.2 billion contract with the genocidal Israeli government and military more than its own workers," the group said. —APP

2 schoolgirls wounded in knife attack in France

SOUFFELWEYERSHEIM : An assailant on Thursday wounded two girls aged six and 11 in a knife attack close to their school in the east of France and was later arrested, officials said. The 11-year-old was stabbed outside the school in the town of Souffelweyersheim just outside the main regional city of Strasbourg, while the six-year-old was attacked by the same man nearby. Both received superficial wounds, police said, adding the attacker did not appear to have any known links to radicals and was not previously known to the security services. Both girls are being treated in a paediatric hospital. Parents were later in the afternoon allowed to pick up their children, who had been confined to the school in the immediate aftermath of the attack. —APP

Norway's wealth fund posts \$107 bln first quarter gain

OSLO: Norway's sovereign wealth fund, the world's largest, posted a gain of more than \$100 billion in the first quarter amid the global stock market recovery, it said Thursday. The fund – fuelled by the Norwegian state's oil and gas revenues – saw a return of 6.3 percent in the first three months of the year. The \$107 billion gain brought the fund's total value to a dizzying 17.7 trillion kroner (\$1.6 trillion) at the end of March, or almost \$291,000 for each of Norway's 5.5 million inhabitants. "Our equity investments had a very strong return in the first quarter, particularly driven by the tech sector," the fund's deputy chief executive Trond Grande said in a statement. Shares, which accounted for 72.1 percent of the fund's portfolio, saw a 9.1 percent return in the first quarter, buoyed by a stock market rally amid the prospect of falling interest rates. The fund is the world's biggest single investor, with stakes in some 9,000 companies around the globe and representing 1.5 percent of the total market capitalisation. —DNA



Washington DC: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, met with Pakistan Staff Association of World Bank-IMF. —DNA

Lords reject UK's Rwanda plan, Afghan soldiers exemption

Bill to return to commons after Lords also vote to set up committee to monitor safety in Rwanda

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: The UK's House of Lords rejected the government's plan to send migrants to Rwanda for asylum processing in a vote after it approved two amendments to the legislation. The upper chamber of Parliament voted in favor of a proposal to exempt Afghans who worked with UK military personnel from being deported to the East African country, and of another that would see a committee established to monitor safety in Rwanda. The bill will return to the House of Commons early next week, where MPs have previously refused to back amendments made to it by the Lords. The government of Prime Minister

Rishi Sunak, who has made the Rwanda scheme a core part of his pledge to lower illegal migration across the English Channel before the next general election, says the bill in its current form is "the right way forward." However, a previous version of the scheme was rejected by the UK Supreme Court in 2023 as unlawful. The plan has also drawn cross-party criticism for its expense, worries about its effectiveness, the government's inability to implement it and for the way it treats people in need of asylum, including former Afghan soldiers, translators and their families, many of whom risked their lives to assist the UK during operations in Afghanistan. Numerous Afghans have been identified as having been

threatened with deportation to Rwanda for entering the UK illegally, with many claiming safe legal routes either don't work in practice or don't exist. The Independent highlighted the cases of a former Afghan Air Force pilot hailed as a "patriot" by former colleagues, who crossed the Channel in a small boat, and of two former Afghan special forces soldiers belonging to units known as "Triples" run by the British Army, who were wrongly denied assistance by the UK Ministry of Defence. Along with reporting by Light House Reports and Sky News, hundreds of other former Triples soldiers have also been identified hiding in Pakistan, awaiting a MoD review after many were refused entry to the UK. The Lords amendment on

protections from deportation for former Afghan military personnel was proposed by a former UK defense secretary, Lord Browne of Ladyton, and supported by two former chiefs of the UK's defense staff. Earlier on Wednesday Home Office minister Michael Tomlinson said peers should reject the amendments to "send a clear signal that if you come to the UK illegally, you will not be able to stay." But Lord Browne told the Lords: "Now is the time to give these people the sanctuary their bravery has earned." He added the government needed to be reminded of "the political consequences of their failure not to give either an assurance that is bankable or to accept this amendment. Be-

cause there is little, if any, support in your lordsships' House for their failure to do this and there (is) certainly no majority support in the country to treat these brave people this way." Lord Coaker, shadow home affairs spokesperson in the Lords, added: "Why on earth would the government oppose that particular amendment? It's one of those things that is completely unbelievable." On Wednesday, Conservative MP Sir Robert Buckland told the Commons: "There is still a class of people who have served this country, who have been brave and have exposed themselves to danger, who have not yet been dealt with. Many of them are in Pakistan, and I think that it would have been helpful to have perhaps seen an amendment in lieu to deal with that point."

Briefs

Rain emergency declared in Karachi

DNA

KARACHI: The Met Department on Thursday revised its advisory for Karachi, stating that "heavy showers are not expected" in the metropolis amid rain emergency measures. While rain continued to hit various parts of Balochistan, Chief Meteorologist Sardar Sarfraz said heavy rain was not expected in Karachi. Sarfraz said the rain system from Balochistan was entering into Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and there were chances of heavy rain in different areas of both the provinces. Whereas, there was a forecast of torrential rains along the coastal belt in Balochistan, he maintained. "Heavy rain is falling in some parts of Balochistan," the chief meteorologist added. On the other hand, light rain hit different parts of Karachi including Numaish Chowangi, MA Jinnah Road, Saddar, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karimabad, Safora and their adjacent areas. Meanwhile, Chief Operating Officer (COO) Karachi Water Sewerage Corporation (KWSC) Engineer Asadullah Khan on Wednesday dispatched 55 suction machines to all important highways of the city. In a video statement, he stated that Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab had imposed a rain emergency in anticipation of rain by the meteorological department. Khan added that the water corporation had completed all arrangements to tackle the rain.

NADRA to ban SIMs issued on expired ID cards

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has directed officials to ban mobile SIMs issued on ineffective and expired identity cards, highlighting the importance of upholding data integrity and safeguarding citizens' information. The minister has taken decisive action to enhance security measures and streamline services at the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA). During a visit to the NADRA headquarters, he received comprehensive briefings on various sectors, emphasizing the need for enhanced security measures and improved service delivery. In line with this directive, he instructed NADRA authorities to ensure the complete security of citizens' data while also enhancing mobile platforms to provide greater convenience to the public. Additionally, he underscored the importance of leveraging social media platforms to effectively promote NADRA's initiatives and services. Furthermore, Minister Naqvi outlined plans to establish model NADRA offices, akin to the successful model police stations established in Punjab.

Speakers call for cultivating closer links with African region

Mushahid launches Pakistan's first think tank on Africa, urges need to broaden Pakistan's foreign policy outlook as Pak, China and Africa are part of Global South



ISLAMABAD: President of PAIDAR Senator Mushahid Hussain, Dean of African Group Mohammad Karmoune, Ambassador of Ethiopia and others inaugurating the Pakistan African Institute, at ISSI. - DNA

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad: The Centre for Afghanistan Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) held a Seminar for the Launch of Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR). The thematic focus of the seminar was on 'Reviving the Bandung Spirit of Afro-Asian Solidarity: Paki-

stan-Africa Relations'. President PAIDAR, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, delivered a keynote address. The event was moderated by Ms. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA. The speakers at the seminar included Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI; Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, President PAIDAR; H.E. Mohammed Karmoune, Dean of the African Envoys Corps and Ambassador of Morocco; H.E. Mary Nyambura Kamau, High Commis-

sioner of Kenya to Pakistan; H.E. Jemal Beker Abdulla, Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan; Ambassador Aftab Hassan, High Commissioner of Pakistan to South Africa; Ambassador Atif Sharif Mian, Pakistan's Ambassador to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and African Union; Ambassador Arshad Jan Pathan, High Commissioner of Pakistan to Mauritius; Mr. Zafar Bakhtawri, Secretary General United Business Group (UBG); Dr. Bashir Bahar, Assistant Pro-

essor Department of Translation and Interpretation, International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI); Dr. Ismail Adaramola, Assistant Professor Department of Politics & International Relations, International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI); Mr. Shehryar Akbar Khan, Additional Secretary Africa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA); Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman ISSI. Ms. Amina Khan in her remarks said that Pakistan's commitment to engaging with Africa is underscored by Pakistan's comprehensive "Engage Africa" policy. Recognizing Africa's potential as the 'Continent of the Future', and in line with the "Engage Africa" policy, CAMEA was established in 2020, to fortify relations with Africa, as well as to assist the government in chalking out a roadmap for future cooperation with the African continent. She said that CAMEA looked forward to working with PAIDAR to further Pakistan's ties with Africa. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his welcome remarks, appreciated Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed's dynamic and inspiring efforts throughout his professional life and his latest initiative of establishing PAIDAR, which aims to sharpen Pakistan's focus on Africa through promotion of academic research and development partnerships. He said it was fitting that this launch ceremony recalled the "Bandung Spirit" - dating back to 1955 when 29 countries from Asia and Africa met in Bandung, Indonesia, from 18-24 April. He recalled the contribution of the Bandung Conference to the international community's subsequent efforts for global peace as well as cooperation among the developing coun-

tries. He particularly highlighted Pakistan's whole-hearted support for the liberation struggles of African nations and Pakistan's contribution to Africa's peace and security through consistent participation in UN Peacekeeping operations since 1960. He added that Pakistan's overall engagement with Africa has been growing in recent years. In 2019, Pakistan expanded the scope of collaboration within the framework of its "Engage Africa" policy aimed at enlarging Pakistan's diplomatic footprint in Africa and deepening economic partnership with the Continent. Ambassador Sohail concluded by saying that for Pakistan, deeper engagement with Africa remains a strategic imperative. Forging a strong and effective partnership for peace, progress and prosperity is an indispensable goal, which should be advanced through a clear vision, consistent policy, and a long-term strategy. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed said that the launch of PAIDAR coincides with the 69th anniversary of the Bandung Conference, emphasizing Africa's pivotal role in the South with 54 African Union members. He underscored Pakistan's longstanding ties with Africa, dating back to pre-independence when Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah initiated relations with Egypt in 1946. Senator Mushahid outlined PAIDAR's objectives, aiming to reinvigorate Pakistan-Africa relations through people-to-people and business-to-business exchanges. He said PAIDAR seeks to prioritize mutual interests, promoting cooperation in education, environment, trade, energy, and sustainable development goals.

Palestinians across Gaza face 'man-made famine': UNRWA

Call to close UNRWA is attempt to strip millions of Palestinians of refugee status: agency chief

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: The United Nations Relief Works and Agency (UNRWA) has warned that the grip of a "man-made" famine is tightening its grip across the war-torn Gaza Strip, as Israel has severely blockaded the Palestinian territory plunging it into a humanitarian crisis. UNRWA Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini on Wednesday sounded the alert, condemning Israel for blocking aid deliveries to the besieged Gaza Strip and attempting to end the agency's activities in the war-ravaged coastal sliver. "Today, an insidious campaign to end UNRWA's operations is underway, with serious implications for international peace and security," he told the 15-member UN Security Council, warning, "Across Gaza, a man-made famine is tightening its grip." Lazzarini, whose agency is a critical

source of support for people in Gaza, also said that in the north of the Palestinian territory, "infants and young children have begun to die of malnutrition and dehydration." The occupying regime, however, prevents UNRWA from delivering the desperately needed aid to starving inhabitants of Gaza. "Across the border, food and clean water wait. But UNRWA is denied permission to deliver this aid and save lives," Lazzarini further told the UNSC. Founded in 1949, the agency provides services for over six million Palestinian refugees living across the occupied West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. In Gaza, it is the primary UN agency delivering healthcare, and essential humanitarian support to the Palestinians trapped in the blockaded territory. Many of the UNRWA's 13,000 staff are Palestinian. Israel has repeatedly equated UNRWA staff with members of Hamas, claiming that the agency has links to the Palestinian resistance group without providing any proof of the allegations. Israel has also been lobbying hard to have UNRWA closed as it is the only UN agency to have a specific mandate to look after the basic needs of Palestinian refugees.

Ukraine warns of WW3 ahead of Congress aid vote

KIEV: Ukraine's prime minister has told the BBC there will be a "Third World War" if Ukraine loses its conflict with Russia, as he urged the US Congress to pass a long-stalled foreign aid bill. Denys Shmyhal expressed "careful optimism" that US lawmakers would pass the hotly contested measure, which has \$61bn (£49bn) earmarked for Kyiv. The House of Representatives is set to vote on the package this Saturday. The proposal includes funding for Israel as well as the Indo-Pacific. Russia says any fresh American aid for Ukraine will not make a difference on the battlefield, as situation on the front line is looking "unfavourable" to Kyiv. Speaking to the BBC in Washington DC on Wednesday, Ukrainian Prime Minister Shmyhal said of the US security assistance: "We need this money yesterday, not tomorrow, not today." "If we will not protect... Ukraine will fall," he added. "So the global, the global system of security will be destroyed... and all the world will

need to find... a new system of security. "Or, there will be many conflicts, many such kinds of wars, and in the end of the day, it could lead to the Third World War." This is not the first time Ukraine has issued such an alarming warning about the consequences of its potential defeat. Last year, President Volodymyr Zelensky said that if Russia won the conflict, it could next invade Poland, triggering World War Three. But Kremlin officials have ridiculed such claims as Western scaremongering. Last month President Vladimir Putin dismissed suggestions that Russia might one day attack Eastern Europe as "complete nonsense". Russia has never attacked a country within Nato, which includes Poland. Nato's collective defence pact means that an attack on one member constitutes an attack on all. In Wednesday's interview, Prime Minister Shmyhal was asked about a recent claim by Republican House Foreign Affairs Chairman Michael McCaul that members of his own party were being "infected" by Russian propaganda. Mr Shmyhal said: "We should understand that disinformation and propaganda is influencing here in the United States on many people, in European Union on many people, such as in Ukraine." Opposition from the right wing of the Republican party has blocked potential assistance to Ukraine for months. - Agencies

Boy killed after being hit by a Maryam's security squad

STAFF REPORT

NAROWAL: A young motorbike rider was Thursday killed after his bike collided with a vehicle of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's security squad in Chandowal area of Narowal district. The district police officer (DPO) said the vehicles were going to Kartarpur for CM Maryam's security. The elite security squad's vehicle hit the motorcycle while trying to overtake it, he said. The chief minister was visiting the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur today to address a gathering of pilgrims on the occasion of the Baisakhi Mela.

CAA chief hopes EU will lift flight ban next month

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: A delegation led by Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Director General Khaqan Murtaza will attend a of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) scheduled for May to review the revival of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight operations in Europe. During the meeting, the authority will scrutinize a report on the audit of various departments of the CAA in light of EASA standards. In a statement, DG CAA Murtaza said that EASA is likely to lift restrictions on Pakistan after the safety review board meeting. If this occurs, PIA flights to Europe and the UK will resume after a prolonged hiatus, he added. It is pertinent to mention here that in November 2023, an EASA team visited Pakistan to assess various aspects of the CAA and PIA, including licensing, flight safety, flight standards, and airworthiness. EASA had imposed a ban on the flight operations of the national flag carrier following a PIA plane crash in Karachi in May 2020. The EASA in a letter conveyed to the national flag carrier, said that they had suspended the Third Country Operator (TCO) Authorisation to PIA after it failed to comply with the proposed corrective action plans (CAPs).

Wang warns of 'small cliques' amid South China Sea tension

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, met with Indonesian President Joko Widodo and his successor Prabowo Subianto. Widodo and Wang expressed their desire for regional peace and stability and repeated calls for a de-escalation and ceasefire in Gaza,

FOREIGN DESK

JAKARTA: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Thursday warned of "small cliques" and called for joint efforts to preserve hard-won peace in the South China Sea during his visit to Indonesia. The call represents the consensus of most countries in the region, analysts said, warning that if the Philippines continues on the wrong path of following the US' strategy, it will be isolated in Southeast Asia and risk burning itself by the fire it started. Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, met with Indonesian President Joko Widodo and his successor Prabowo Subianto on Thursday. Widodo and Wang expressed their desire for regional peace and stability and repeated calls for a de-escalation and ceasefire in Gaza, the Jakarta Post reported Thursday. Wang, during the meeting with Indonesian Foreign Minister



Retno Marsudi, said the two sides are highly vigilant against the formation of various "small cliques" in the region, and oppose any attempts by certain groups to create camp confrontation. We shall cherish and maintain the hard-won peace and stability in the region, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry. China is willing to continue working with other ASEAN members to fully and effectively implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, accelerate the negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, and turn the South China Sea into a sea of peace and cooperation. Xu Liping, director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the Global Times on Thursday that Wang's remarks in Indonesia represent the consensus and sincere hope of most countries in the region for peace and stability, amid the US' continuous attempts to reshape regional geopolitics against China with the Philippines as an auxiliary, Xu said.

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