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Azerbaijan vows to boost green transition with Europe: Aliyev

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Masood calls for Pak-US strategic coop

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Yuvraj named as T20 WC Ambassador

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Cabinet briefed on PIA privatisation

Govt extends stay of registered Afghan refugees

Elements involved in corruption, criminal negligence be held accountable: PM

ABID RAZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has extended the validity of the Afghan refugees' Proof of Registration Cards (PoRs) that expired on April 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024, to facilitate those who have yet not left Pakistan voluntarily as it presses ahead with its push to boot out illegal foreigners, a statement said on Friday. A decision to this effect was taken in the federal cabinet meeting held at the PM House under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The cabinet was told that this extension would enable the PoR cardholders to have access to schools, bank accounts, and other facilities during their stay in Pakistan. It must be noted that these PoR cardholders will be forcibly sent back to their country in the third phase of the programme of repatriation of illegal foreign nationals living in Pakistan for ages. Pakistan has expelled over half a million undocumented refugees in the repatriation programme's first phase from November 1 till date. The second phase was aimed at driving out refugees holding Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC). The ACCs were provided by the Pakistan government to Afghan refugees in 2017, after processing and registering them with Pakistan's National Database and Regulation Authority (NADRA). On the advice of the Ministry of Law and Justice, the federal cabinet approved the establishment of an additional special court in Makran Division to deal with anti-narcotics cases in Balochistan province. The jurisdiction of this special court will be extended to the districts of Panjgur, Kech, Gwadar, Hub and Lasbela. The cabinet also directed the authorities to appoint the best judge in the special court and ensure effective prosecution. Moreover, during the meeting, the Federal Secretary for the Interior briefed

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Complete independence impossible without economic stability: COAS
Negative propaganda cannot undermine nation's pursuit of prosperity: COAS

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir on Friday said that complete independence was not possible without first achieving economic stability. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army chief made the remarks while addressing the Green Pakistan Initiative conference. The remarks were also carried by state-run APP and Radio Pakistan. The federal government's Green Pakistan Initiative is aimed at introducing the latest farming on 4.4 million acres of land across the country. The government is eyeing to fetch around \$40 billion during the next five years through the agricultural initiative and hopes to create four million jobs through this process. The initiative seeks to revolutionise agriculture with the help of the armed forces and the promised partnerships of friendly countries. It was inaugurated at the National Seminar on Food Security and Agriculture in July last year and Gen Munir had assured the military's full support of the initiative. In his address, the army chief also said: "We are all a united team."

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs meeting of the Federal Cabinet in Islamabad. - DNA

FBR makes 12 senior officers OSD

According to sources, the transfers are made on the instructions of Prime Minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a major reshuffle, the Federal Board of Revenue has notified transfers of 12 BS-21-22 officers of the Inland Revenue Service and Pakistan Customs Service to Member (Admin Pool), Federal Board of Revenue (Hq), Islamabad. According to sources, the transfers are made on the instructions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The transferred officers include Mukarram Jah Ansari (Pakistan Customs Service/BS-22) Member, (Legal & Accounting-Customs), Mrs. Shah Bano G.M Khan (Inland Revenue Service/BS-21) Director General, Dr. Fareed Iqbal Qureshi

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Opp. laments victimisation PML-N, PPP strike reconciliatory tone in Senate

Siddiqui said that if the PTI could nominate Achakzai as its presidential candidate and be willing to Fazlur Rehman, then "why don't you sit with us for Pakistan's construction, to solve issues and take Pakistan forward?"

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: As PPP Senator Sherry Rehman and PML-N's Irfan Siddiqui struck a reconciliatory tone with the opposition on Friday, PTI's Ali Zafar lamented the "political victimisation" of his party. Addressing the Upper House on Friday, Rehman hailed yesterday's Senate session as "very exemplary", adding that it was a source of pride for the lawmakers. Thursday's Senate session - the first of the current parliamentary year - had turned out to be hot and cold where opposition and treasury benches traded barbs but also agreed on working together to pull the country out of the economic quagmire. In a separate statement, she had also called on the PTI to "not add fuel to the fire" and warned that "keeping the country at a boiling point was to no one's benefit". Speaking in the Senate today, Sherry welcomed Leader of the Opposition Shibli Faraz back to the upper house of Parliament.

Continued on Page 06

Nawaz Sharif set to 'retake helm of PML-N'

The PML-N supreme got "clean chit" from the courts, Sanaullah added

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: In a major development, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Punjab chapter President Rana Sanaullah on Friday announced that Nawaz Sharif would retake the ruling party's driving seat. His remarks came as the PML-N supreme got "clean chit" from the courts and National Accountability

Continued on Page 06

PTI stages protest against 'rigging'

PTI leaders have repeated their demand for the release of Imran Khan

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: PTI workers took to the streets in the city after Friday prayers on the allegation of alleged election rigging. Given the protest against the alleged rigging of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) elections, a heavy police force was deployed in Lahore. Lahore Police arrested over 50 PTI workers in a crackdown in different areas of the city. The Police raided the houses of PTI workers and PTI ticket holders. According to the police, the crackdown occurred in Shahdara, Sadar Bazar, GarhiShahu, and other areas.

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Briefs

PTI to hold talks with COAS: Afridi

"Imran doesn't want NRO but dialogues for country's betterment"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: After calls were made to initiate a new round of reconciliation talks, PTI senior leader Shehryar Afridi has claimed that his party will hold "dialogues with the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and the Director General of the Inter-Services Intelligence (DG ISI) soon" instead of talking to "rejected people" who reached the parliament "Form 47". Afridi made the statement while speaking to a private news channel programme when sought his opinion about ways to put the country on the path of political stability.

Achakzai's arrest warrant issued

charges include illegal occupation and violation of the MPO

DNA

QUETTA: A lower court on Friday issued a warrant for the arrest of Mahmood Khan Achakzai, the chief of the Pakhtunkhwa MilliAwami Party (PkMAP), over charges of illegal occupation and violation of the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO). According to a private news channel report, a judicial magistrate in Quetta issued the arrest warrant for Achakzai in connection with a case registered at the Gawalmandi police station.

Holiday Notice

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

Pakistan Hockey Federation still in a shambles

In a significant move, Rana Mashood has delegated the critical task of team selection for the upcoming Azlan Shah hockey tournament to chief coach Roelant Oltmans. This decision aims to streamline the process and ensure the squad's competitiveness, commencing from May

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Recent efforts aimed at reconciling the divergent factions within the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) have yet to yield resolution on key issues. Spearheaded by the Prime Minister Youth Program chief, Rana Mashood, a gathering was convened on April 25, inviting representatives from both factions.

Tariq Bugti, designated as PHF President by the prior caretaker government, and Shehla Raza, assuming a self-appointed role, met with Rana Mashood to outline the ongoing challenges. Accompanying them were Rana Mujahid from Bugti's faction and Haider from Raza's group, further enriching the discourse.

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In a significant move, Rana Mashood has delegated the critical task of team selection for the upcoming Azlan Shah hockey tournament to chief coach Roelant Oltmans. This decision aims to streamline the process and ensure the squad's competitiveness, commencing from May 4. However, recent developments have also seen the exclusion of Umar Bhutta, a veteran former Pakistan captain, from the training camp. Bhutta's abrupt departure has raised eyebrows and sparked discontent among players and commentators, who advocate for a more dignified transition for such a stalwart. Looking ahead, the fate of the PHF, particularly under Shehla Raza's leadership, appears uncertain.

Pakistan in 'contact with US' on energy requirements, FO says

Prime Minister Shehbaz to attend World Economic Forum meeting in Riyadh, says FO Spox

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch on Friday said Pakistan was in contact with the United States regarding the country's requirements for energy. Addressing her weekly media briefing in Islamabad, the spokesperson said she had seen the US's statement on Pakistan's willingness to get energy from Iran. Earlier this week, a State Department spokesperson had warned Islamabad regarding "potential risk of sanctions" following the Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Pakistan. "We advise anyone considering business deals with Iran to be aware of the potential risk of sanctions," the spokesperson said. Baloch, on the other hand, maintained that cooperation for trade on preferential basis was present between Pakistan and Iran to fulfil the former's crucial necessities. She said during President Raisi's three-day visit, the matter of Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline was discussed and it was also reflected in the joint statement later. Both countries cogitated about energy and electricity trade, she added. In a 28-point joint statement on April 24, Pakistan and Iran had reiterated the importance of energy cooperation and

Continued on Page 06

'A robust relationship' US denies rift with Pakistan

State Dept looks to "strengthen" relationship with Pakistan

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The US Department of State denied that there were any rifts between Islamabad and Washington after the latter imposed sanctions on four commercial entities allegedly having links to the former's ballistic missile programme. "Absolutely not. You've heard me say this before. Pakistan continues to be one of our most important partners in the region," said the State Department's principal deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel during a press briefing on Thursday.

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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

ACTIVITIES

- Swimming
- Kids Aerobics
- Taekwondo
- Kids Yoga

RULES & REGULATIONS

Each activity will run for three consecutive weeks, missing days will not be compensated. The female entrance only available for ladies. 15% discount on all meals 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: Maisha.sh@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. Limited seats available. All prices are subject to government taxes.

For more information please scan QR code or call: 051 205249

Valid from 1st April to 31st August, 2024

PRCS head, Moroccan envoy discuss humanitarian ties

Chairman Laghari emphasized on the substantial partnership between the two nations in addressing humanitarian challenges

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari held a courtesy meeting with Moroccan Ambassador Mohammed Karmoune at the Embassy of Morocco, signifying a pivotal moment in the humanitarian relationship between Pakistan and Morocco. The meeting marked a significant juncture in the humanitarian partnership between Pakistan and Morocco, emphasizing their shared commitment to aid and disaster management. Chairman Laghari emphasized on the substantial partnership between the two nations in addressing humanitarian challenges. During the discussions, Chairman Laghari provided insights into the ongoing programs and projects of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, emphasizing the organization's commitment to serving vulnerable communities nationwide. He underscored the importance of international cooperation and solidarity in effectively

addressing humanitarian crises, expressing gratitude for Morocco's past participation in PRCS-organized events such as the International Donors Conference. Chairman Laghari specifically emphasized PRCS's anticipation of support from the Government of Morocco, especially in the recovery phase following the devastating Monsoon 2022 floods. He also expressed a strong desire to enhance cooperation, particularly with the Moroccan government and the Moroccan Red Cross, and other humanitarian organizations aligned with the Red Crescent mandate, aiming to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable communities in Pakistan. Chairman Laghari extended an invitation to Ambassador Mohammed Karmoune to visit the PRCS National Headquarters, which was graciously accepted. Ambassador Mohammed Karmoune expressed gratitude to Chairman Laghari for the comprehensive information and insights provided regarding disaster management during the floods,

noting the impressive execution. He commended the Pakistan Red Crescent Society for its relentless efforts, led by Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, in providing assistance to those in need, especially during times of crisis. The Moroccan Ambassador pledged to facilitate Chairman Laghari's visit to Morocco, arranging meetings with counterparts from the Moroccan Red Cross and heads of humanitarian organizations. The aim is to investigate opportunities for collaboration and address any gaps in interventions, such as shelter, livelihood, health, and cash assistance, being carried out by PRCS during the recovery phase. He recognized the indispensable role of humanitarian organizations like PRCS in mitigating human suffering and promoting resilience within communities. Concluding the meeting, Chairman Laghari presented a memento to Ambassador Mohammed Karmoune, along with a souvenir, symbolizing the spirit of humanitarian collaboration.



Islamabad : PM coordinator on health, Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmad is being briefed regarding Sehat Sahulat programme in State Life Corporation Islamabad, Federal Secretary for Health, Mr. Nadeem Mehub is also accompanying him.—DNA

Govt outsourcing waste management for revenue

DNA

MULTAN: Punjab government is going to outsource the operational and recovery wings of all Waste management companies including MWMC to improve their efficiency and to expand the scope from cities to districts of concerned divisions and to generate more resources. Chairman MWMC Mian Rashid Iqbal while talking to APP here on Friday said that local government Punjab directed the waste management companies to implement the outsourcing plan. The bidders would be short-listed and contract would be assigned to lowest rate bidder and he hoped that it would be implemented from June 2024. He said that the existing machinery of the company would be given to vendor on rent and he (vendor) would also be bound to pay the salaries of the sanitary workers. The vendor would also be bound to meet the shortage of staff, machinery, to establish landfill site and also collect the sanitation tax. Mian Rashid Iqbal said that MWMC would monitor all the sanitation system for which they were planning. He said that new organogram was being developed and staff would be recruited at Tehsil level for better monitoring. He said that it would not only aimed at expanding coverage area from cities to districts but also to improve efficiency and generate more resources. Mian Rashid further stated that they had inked MoU with Nishtar II hospital administration for providing waste lifting services. He however, maintained the hospital administration sent the proposal to Punjab government for approval and services would be provided after approval from the competitive authority. He said that they were also providing services to Fruit and vegetables market and some private housing colonies.

Bilawal wants students to have access to all facilities

Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah has said that Bilawal Bhutto wanted our libraries to be modern and equipped with the latest books

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI : Sindh Minister for Culture, Tourism, Antiquities and Archives, Sindh, Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah has said that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari wanted our libraries to be modern and equipped with the latest books, where students in Sindh could have access to all facilities. He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting of the Directorate of Public Libraries, Sindh here Friday.

DG Libraries Sindh Ejaz Sheikh while briefing the minister, said that there

were currently 44 public libraries in all six divisions of Sindh and due to a large number of students and book readers, the libraries needed to be expanded. He said that due to no recruitment since 2013, 419 out of 645 posts from grade 1 to 19 were still vacant, so the Directorate of Public Libraries was facing a severe staff shortage. He briefed that for the convenience of the readers, more than 100 million books were available on the e-library portal, from where readers can study their favorite books at any time and from any

where. The provincial minister said, our intentions are good and firm and I will soon visit all libraries to review public facilities and modern books. He warned that any kind of falsehood, wrong briefing, or excuse related to public interest would not be tolerated. On this occasion, DG Libraries Sindh Ejaz Sheikh, Directors of Libraries Muhammad Arshad Patoli, Ghulam Sarwar Channer, Bashir Baloch, Shabbir Leghari, Abdul Majid Klui, and Assistant Directors Gul Muneer Jirawar, Javed Iqbal, Sheraz Sheikh and others were also present.

Envoy Jemal inaugurates Ethio-Pakistan unity enclave in Faisalabad

The FCCI set up the enclave at its vicinity to celebrate the Ethio-Pakistan Fraternity Under Green Legacy Initiative

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD : H. E. Jemal Beker Abdula, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, along with Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) President Dr. Khurram Tariq inaugurated Ethio-Pakistan Unity Enclave at the Chamber on Friday. The FCCI set up the enclave at its vicinity to celebrate the Ethio-Pakistan Fraternity Under Green Legacy Initiative launched by the Faisalabad Chamber in collaboration with the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad in the city. H.E. Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula and FCCI President Dr. Khurram Tariq launched the initiative by planting saplings of indigenous species at the Enclave. A large number



of people from all walks of life including business and religious community, academia, students, civil society and media took part in the plantation campaign under the Green Legacy initiative of H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia. Addressing the launching ceremony of the enclave, H.E. Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula lauded the FCCI leadership and all those who had contributed to a historic initiative of the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad that is aimed

at fostering fraternity and brotherhood between the two countries through the Green Legacy initiative. He said it was imperative for both Ethiopia and Pakistan to share their experiences, knowledge and expertise to fight the looming threat of climate change together. The Ambassador recalled the devastation unleashed by the flash floods in Pakistan in 2022 that he had personally witnessed during his visit to the tent cities of Sindh. Highlighting importance of the Green Legacy initiative,

he said the visionary leader of Ethiopia H.E. PM Dr. Abiy Ahmed worked out a home grown solution to the climate change under his Medemer philosophy that advocated for alignment of all resources to resolve home grown problems. He said Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Dr. Abiy Ahmed has been mobilizing the whole nation under the Green Legacy initiative since 2019 and so far, more than 32.5 billion seedlings were planted across the country in the last five years which included saplings of fruits like avocado.

Art exhibition highlighting 'Echoes of Earth' on May 4

ISLAMABAD: Theatre Wallay will feature an art exhibition, titled "Echoes of the Earth", a celebration of climate consciousness on May 4 at Bhattai Auditorium in Islamabad. The exhibition supported by the US Mission in Pakistan in partnership with Pakistan-US Alumni Network orchestrated a transformative writing workshop aimed at cultivating the talents of aspiring writers to tackle pressing climate issues, said a statement issued by Theatre Wallay here Friday. The exhibition would feature stalls and reading corners focused around climate change and sustainable solutions. The activity will be attended by individuals from diverse backgrounds, each contributing their unique perspectives and creativity to address Pakistan's distinct environmental challenges. Together, they forged original narratives that shed light on the urgency of climate issues, emphasizing their tangible impact on our communities. This workshop served as a catalyst for raising awareness and inspiring action, reaffirming the undeniable reality of climate change. Their ideas and original pieces will be showcased at an event "Echoes of the Earth".—APP

Class 9 Biology paper leaked in KP exams

The secretary of the education department is collecting the details of whether the paper has been out or not

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR : In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, annual examination papers continue to be leaked daily with the Biology paper of class 9 of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Mardan being out here on Friday. According to detail not only the first part of the

leaflet but also the second part is viral on social media. The published paper of class 9 is of the Mardan board. Chairman BISE Mardan Farid Khattak is looking into the leakage of the papers, an official of the BISE Mardan told media men. The official said that the paper is not very clear, and there are difficulties in finding out, the official said.

The secretary of the education department is collecting the details of whether the paper has been out or not, the official said, adding, "Information is being taken from the relevant board." Matric exams became controversial in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as earlier, papers of Malakand, Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, and Mardan Boards leaked out daily.

Global experts conclude zoology congress at UAJK

MUZAFFARABAD: The three-day International Pakistan Congress of Zoology reached its conclusion at the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (UAJK), marking a significant leap forward in the field. The congress provided a vital platform for global experts to convene and discuss key topics within zoological sciences. Distinguished scholars and researchers from around the world gathered to share groundbreaking insights across various disciplines, including entomology, pest management, cell biology, molecular biology, bioinformatics, environmental biotechnology, genetics, and wildlife conservation, said a press release. Special sessions focused on addressing future challenges and opportunities in the field. With a presentation of over 500 research papers, the congress demonstrated the depth and breadth of discussions held. Attendees encompassed a diverse spectrum, including

students from across Pakistan, esteemed vice-chancellors, researchers, professors, and senior faculty members from renowned universities in Turkey, China, the four provinces of Pakistan, and Gilgit-Baltistan. A highlight of the event was the recognition of individuals who have made significant contributions to zoological sciences. Several researchers and professors were honored with lifetime achievement awards, while outstanding faculty members and students received gold medals and certificates. The closing ceremony, held at the scenic King Abdullah Campus of UAJK, was attended by officials from the Zoological Society of Pakistan, members of the Executive Council, principal officers of UAJK, delegates from across the nation, heads of teaching departments, and numerous students. Addressing the gathering, renowned scientist and President

of the Zoological Society of Pakistan, Prof. Dr. AR Shakuri, expressed his elation at the resounding success of the 42nd Congress, extending gratitude to all stakeholders involved, particularly highlighting the contributions of students. Prof. Dr. Shakuri emphasized the role of delegates as ambassadors of Kashmir, tasked with showcasing the region's beauty and the illustrious King Abdullah Campus of UAJK to the world. He also shed light on the conference's objectives, accomplishments, and future aspirations. Similarly, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kaleem Abbasi, Vice-Chancellor of UAJK, commended the collaborative efforts of all involved in ensuring the congress's triumph. He highlighted the pivotal role played by international and national scientists, researchers, industry experts, faculty members, and students in shaping the event's success.—APP

UK higher Education leaders visit CUI

The visit was aimed at building sustainable person-to-person and institution-to-institution contacts and collaborations with British universities

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Leaders from the UK along with British Council officials visited COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) on Friday to explore avenues of cooperation in higher education sector. The visit was aimed at building sustainable person-to-person and institution-to-institution contacts and collaborations with British universities. The delegation is visiting Pakistan from April 21 to 27 under the Pak-UK Education Gateway – a partnership project between HEC and the British Council. Delegates from the University of Glasgow, University of Salford, Cardiff University, University of London, Queen Mary University of London, Staffordshire University, University of Exeter, INTO University and Bangor University were part of the visit. Senior officials from the UK's Department for Business and Trade, Department

for Education and Office for Students and the British Council also accompanied the delegates. Prof. Dr. Sajid Qamar, Rector of CUI welcomed the delegates on behalf of COMSATS University and shared the historic exchanges with UK that had contributed to the development of CUI as one of the leading institutions of learning in Pakistan. In his welcome address, Rector Prof. Dr. Sajid Qamar said, "CUI has had a longstanding affiliation with the universities in UK. It is really heartening to have UK Higher Education Leaders here to explore and potentially discover more opportunities and avenues where our faculty and students can be engaged with UK universities". He thanked the Scottish Higher Education Trade Envoy for their cooperation in providing scholarships to female students of CUI. Dr. Hammad Omer, T.I., Head In-






ternational Office informed the delegates on CUI's past engagements with the United Kingdom. He revealed that former Prime Minister of the UK, The Rt Hon Lord Cameron visited CUI in April 2011. Around 20 collaborative agreements have been signed with UK universities. Since its inception, over 190 delegates from UK higher education institutions have visited CUI, with over 110 CUI officials reciprocating visits to various research and development organizations and universities in the UK. One hundred fifty (150) UK Alumni are currently serving as faculty members, officers, and staff across all CUI campuses, further cementing the enduring bonds between our nations. A memorandum of understanding on research cooperation between the University of Glasgow, Scotland, and COMSATS University was signed at the occa-

sion. During the visit, the delegates interacted with the faculty and students. A certificate distribution ceremony for Scottish scholarship recipients for female students of CUI was also arranged by the university. Prof. Moyra Boland, Dean for Global Engagement – Central and South Asia on behalf of the Scottish Higher Education Trade Envoy and the UK delegation, said, "We are delighted to be here and very much looking forward to what we can achieve together. How we can conclude mutually beneficial partnerships together between the UK and Pakistan". Ms. Sarah Parvez, Head of Education, British Council Pakistan revealed that the British Council is planning to launch the second phase of the Pak-UK Education Gateway project in May 2024 as per the latest directive of the Prime Minister of Pakistan.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

April

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

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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 Enquiry.....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

ISSI's in-house session on elections in India

The participants exchanged views on the length and breadth of the 7-phase electoral process; relevant developments including issuance of major parties' election manifestos; the tone and tenor of the election campaign by various parties; the role of the Indian Election Commission; the political dispositions and likely inclinations of the various regions of India from the North to the South; and the approaches of the Indian media and civil society

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized an in-house session on the on-going 18th Lok Sabha elections in India. The event was attended by diplomats, academics, practitioners, and researchers of various Islamabad-based think-tanks. The participants exchanged views on the length and breadth of the 7-phase electoral process; relevant developments including issuance of major parties' election manifestos; the tone and tenor of the election campaign by various parties; the role of the Indian Election Commission; the political dispositions and likely inclinations of the various regions of India from the North to the South; and the approaches of the Indian media and civil society. It was noted that a divisive and



polarizing rhetoric was griping the general environment, while several government Ministers had pointedly invoked Pakistan in their campaign shenanigans to garner electoral dividends. Analysts felt this did not portend well either for India's in-

ternal social harmony or for its external engagement in the neighbourhood. The experts also underscored the importance of extreme vigilance by Pakistan as desperation on the part of the ruling dispensation in India could lead to any ill-consid-

ered misadventure (false flag). In terms of Pakistan-India relations, it was deemed prudent to await the final outcome of the elections and its aftermath and then to make a realistic assessment including the steps India would be prepared to take to

create a conducive environment for a result-oriented dialogue process on all outstanding disputes. The 7-phases of the voting in the Indian elections will be completed by 1 June and the results announced on 4 June 2024.

Bridge the gap between academia, industry: FPCCI

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ms. Qurat ul Ain Vice President Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), met Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui Federal Minister of Federal Education and Professional Training. She appraised the FM about gap between academia and industry, research and cooperation, technical education, and other issues. Federal Minister for Education reiterated the government's dedication to

revolutionizing the education sector in Pakistan. By implementing comprehensive strategies and fostering collaboration with key stakeholders, the Ministry aims to create a brighter future for the nation's youth. He further said that bridge the gap between academia and industry is our big mission. In this case will be provide cutting-edge IT skills to the youth, so that ensuring their relevance in the ever-evolving job market. Minister Siddiqui further said that the industry and universities should work together to solve the country's problems

through research and cooperation, he said that people with technical education and technical experience are in demand all over the world. He said that the government is paying special attention to vocational education. He further said that women were very important pillar of our society and skillful women needed to move forward for progress, in every field including politics, religion and education women should play their role, said that the government were spending a lot of money for the promotion of higher education and now it was the responsi-

bility of the universities to pay special attention to research in line with the requirements of the modern era and bring the public sector universities to national and international rankings. FM Siddiqui said that the business community was the backbone of the country's economy and the government was taking pragmatic steps to resolve all their problems. He emphasized on the business community pay special attention to increase exports so as to increase the country's foreign exchange. Ms. Qurat ul Ain Vice President FPCCI said that fortunately we had abundance of natural and human resource but unfortunately we were not utilizing the potential of our manpower. She said that the secret of various developed nations was skilled labor. She said that the governments should devise good policies to facilitate industrialists. He said that we should reduce gap between our import.

ANF recovers 90 kg drugs in 11 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations across the country managed to recover 90 kg drugs and arrested eight accused, said ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed that 5.3 kg Ice was recovered from a passenger going to Qatar at Lahore Airport. 22 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Sharjah at Islamabad Airport. 630 grams heroin was recovered from a parcel booked for the UK at a courier office in Bahria Town, Rawalpindi. 32 grams heroin was recovered from a parcel sent to UK at the courier office in Lahore. In another operation at a courier office in Rawalpindi, 8 grams weed were recovered from a parcel sent from the UK. 22.8 kg hashish was recovered from Dera Ismail Khan. The spokesman said that in two operations in Islamabad, 34.8 kg hashish and 4 kg heroin were recovered from the possession of 4 suspects. 14.4 kg hashish, 2.4 kg opium and 800 grams ice were recovered from a parcel sent to Lahore, Shakargarh and Pannu Aqil at a courier office in Ring Road Peshawar and an accused was arrested. 5 kg hashish was recovered from a parcel sent to Lucky Marwat at courier office in Sukkur and an accused was also arrested. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.—APP

HEC reviews curricula

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD/KARACH: The National Curriculum Review Committee (NCRC) has reviewed the curricula of undergraduate and graduate degree programmes in the discipline of Environmental Science. The draft, developed in line with the HEC undergraduate and graduate education policies, reflects the latest advancements and trends in the field of Environmental Science and will now be considered by the HEC management before its dissemination to the universities for implementation. HEC conducted the three-day consultative meeting of NCRC from 23 to 25 April 2024 at its Regional Centre, Karachi with Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan in the chair. He is a distinguished fellow of the Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS) and a former Vice Chancellor of Kohat University of Science and Technology. Mr. Muhammad Ali Baig, Deputy Director HEC, who is Secretary of the NCRC, highlighted the HEC initiatives regarding promotion of quality education, development of curricula, and the curricula review process. He shed light on the imperatives of promoting environmental education to make the Pakistani youth adept at navigating and mitigating the pressing environmental challenges, both locally and globally. He underscored the importance of developing comprehensive curricula for degree programmes in the discipline of Environmental Science, integrating interdisciplinary courses, capstone project, and internship. He said the purpose of having such comprehensive curricula is to ensure that the graduates have the capability of elucidating theoretical frameworks, implementing practical methodologies, and spearheading initiatives crucial for preserving earth's ecological integrity. The NCRC has representation from the higher education institutions across Pakistan. Notable participants included chairpersons, heads, and representatives from Quaid-i-Azam University, University of Karachi, University of Peshawar, University of the Punjab, Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences, Abdul Wali Khan University, Sindh Agriculture University, University of Swat, University of Sindh, Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences, COMSATS University Islamabad, Government College University Lahore and Government College University Faisalabad.

If Modi gets two thirds majority

DNA

ISLAMABAD: 'If Modi gets a two-thirds majority in the ongoing general elections in India, he would gear up for undoing secular clauses from the Indian constitution to ultimately declare India a 'Hindu State', said Professor Dr. Moonis Ahmar, former Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Karachi, at a roundtable discussion organized by the Institute of Regional Studies on 'Dynamics of Indian Elections and its Implications for Pakistan'. Speaking on the subject, Prof Ahmar said that under Modi's third terms as Prime Minister of India, the Bhartiya Janata Party's distorted and polarized

narratives would continue to grow unabatedly, and a result, all the minorities would have to face the music in case of not conforming to RSS's social order. On Pakistan-India relations, Prof. Ahmar said that relations between the two countries would largely remain disturbed as the Modi regime would probably be lobbying for the absorption of the Gilgit Baltistan (GB) through its propaganda network, adding that, such motives could be a continuing source of tensions between Pakistan and India. Despite Modi's headline stance on the GB, and state-sponsored terrorism mantra, there could be some breakthroughs in terms of trade resumption, and easing of visa restric-

tions but in near completion of his third terms as a PM, he opined. Why because Modi would like to leave a legacy as a peace-maker since it would be his last stint in the power, he added. However, looking at the ground realities, the current elections in India would be a one-on-one contest between BJP-led NDA and Congress-led INDIA, said Prof. Ahmar and thus it was difficult to predict Modi's clean sweep, he added. He further argued that the two-thirds majority would not be a piece of cake for Modi as there was no 'Modi Wave' in these elections as such which was there in 2019 elections primarily because of the so-

called Pulwama incident in February 2019, he added. Prof. Ahmar said that the Congress-led INDIA alliance had been banking on Modi's communal politics for a long but it could not make a significant impact in terms of increasing their vote bank in the past, however, in recent elections there were chances that INDIA might be able to capitalize on Modi's highly charged polarized politics, he argued. In addition, the persecution of opposition leaders and workers by the BJP and systematic strangulation of freedom of the judiciary at home had also a ripple effect on the society said Prof. Ahmar but how it reflected in the election results was yet to be seen, he added.

Need to develop definitive accounts of novel economic technologies

DNA

ISLAMABAD: 'We must develop definitive accounts of novel economic technologies.' This was the core message of a book launch for the edited volume titled 'Non-Fungible Tokens: Multidisciplinary Perspectives', held at the Centre for Aerospace &

Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad. Dr Usman W. Chohan, Advisor for Economic Affairs and National Development, CASS, and the book's editor, presented the key findings of the edited volume, and urged all stakeholders in Pakistani society to be aware of emerging economic technologies for Pakistan's development. Focused on the

blockchain-based technology known as Non-fungible Tokens (NFTs), the edited volume brought together 14 renowned authors from 10 countries spanning 8 academic disciplines, including economics, technology, mathematics, law, and sociology, among others. Dr Chohan's presentation was accompanied by remarks from contributors to the

edited volume Dr Hong Bao (China), Alesha Serada (Finland), Drs. Thapeli Matima & Nyane Mofokeng (South Africa), and Dr Carlos Yebra López (Spain). The speakers covered key aspects relating to the economics, technology, semiotics, and sociology of NFTs as contained in their chapters. Senior Director Air Marshal Farooq Habib (Retd) congratulated Dr Chohan on this seventh book at CASS and emphasised the role of innovation and technology in economic development. He urged young researchers to remain abreast of economic technologies and to make contributions to their advancement. Given the scope and detail covered in the collective research endeavour, he lauded the comprehensiveness of the book and expressed hope that the edited volume would serve as the definitive account of NFTs internationally for many years to come.



Jashn-e-Baharan festival rescheduled

RAWALPINDI, Apr 26 (AP-P):Rawalpindi Jashn-e-Baharan festival scheduled to be held from April 26 to 28, has been postponed due to heavy rain forecast.

According to a Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi spokesperson, the authority was finalizing all the arrangements for the Jashn-e-Baharan festival, scheduled to be held from April 26, Friday to April 28, Sunday at Allama Iqbal Park Rawalpindi.

The festival has been postponed due to the forecast of heavy rains across the country including Rawalpindi. The Jashn-e-Baharan festival would be held next week in the first week of May for which the final date would be announced soon, she informed.—APP

Kitchen items' prices ease as weekly inflation falls by 1.1%

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 1.10 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on April 25, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 320.14 points as compared to 323.71 points during the past week. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 26.94 per cent.—APP

PNCA, IFWA to organize a special puppet show

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), in collaboration with the International Foreign Women Association Islamabad, will organize a Puppet Show for foreigners and the general public on April 28. The activity will be held at PNCA Auditorium. The family puppet show will be performed in English, featuring 20 minutes performance followed by the presentation. The puppet theatre PNCA will showcase the skills of its puppeteers featuring vibrant costumed puppets and will present puppet folk tales, skits and folk dances. Children along with parents have been invited to attend the show.—APP

Police arrest two bike lifters with eight motorcycles

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested two bike lifters and street criminals and recovered eight stolen motorcycles, four mobile phones, two electric motors, cash Rs 37,000 and other items from their possession, said a Police spokesman here on Friday. He informed that a team under the supervision of SHO, Taxila Police Station managed to net two bike lifters namely Yasir Mehmood and Muhammad Hussain and recovered eight stolen motorcycles, four mobile phones, two electric motors, cash Rs 37,000 and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway.—APP

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Briefs

Machinery equipment assembling grew by 70.98% in 08 months

ISLAMABAD :Manufacturing of machinery and equipment in the country during the first 08 months of the current financial year grew by 70.98 per cent as compared to the manufacturing of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-February, 2023-24 tractors assembling grew by 68.57 per cent as compared to the assembling of the same period last year, according to the Quantum Index of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. During the period under review, 32,211 tractors were locally assembled as against the assembling of 19,108 tractors of the same period of last year. However, the manufacturing of heavy machinery in the country during the period under review went down by 53.11 per cent as about 113 units of heavy machinery were locally assembled as against the 241 units assembled in the same period of last year. Meanwhile, the import of agriculture sector machinery and equipment during the first 09 months of the current financial year surged by 102.31 per cent as agriculture machinery valued at \$61.095 million were imported as against the import \$30.198 million of the same period of last year. The imports of the overall machinery group recorded an increase of 30 per cent during the first three quarters of the current fiscal year (2023-24) compared to the corresponding period of the last year. The total imports of the machinery group during July-March (2023-24) stood at \$5.854 billion against the imports of \$4.493 billion during the same period of the last year.—APP

Govt. proposed to hold cabinet meetings other than timings of NA

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Whip in the National Assembly, Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, stated on Friday that a proposal has been submitted to the government to hold cabinet meetings at times other than the scheduled sessions of the National Assembly, or to convene them in the Parliament's meeting room. He stated this in response to a point of order raised by PPP MNA Nazir Ahmed Bhugio in the National Assembly regarding the failure to hold a meeting on Friday at 12 pm with the Minister for National Food Security and Research, despite the minister's commitment to addressing agricultural issues and their remedies. Chaudhry assured fellow Members of the National Assembly that a meeting with the Minister for National Food Security and Research would take place on April 29 (Monday) to discuss agricultural concerns. He explained that the minister's absence was due to a prior commitment to a cabinet meeting. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry emphasized the need to avoid scheduling conflicts with National Assembly sessions.—APP

Police to take every step for security of business community

The Inspector-General of Police said this while talking to a delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry led by its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari which called on him in his office to felicitate him on assuming the charge of his office

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi has assured foolproof security to the business community of the capital city by saying that a comprehensive strategy is being chalked out to address security-related issues being faced by the community.

The Inspector-General of Police said this while talking to a delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry led by its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari which called on him in his office to felicitate him on assuming the charge of his office.

The IGP commended the hard work of the traders community for the development of the country by saying that all the concerns of the community will be removed by taking all out efforts to overcome the trust deficit between Police and the masses and assured that capital will be purged off encroachments beggary and drug trafficking also. He called upon the traders to extend their full cooperation to police in its efforts to strengthen security and maintain peace in the city.

Earlier, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari apprised the IGP of the police related problems being faced by the



traders. He said that the rising criminal incidents have created a sense of insecurity among the traders which is badly affecting business activities and investment prospects. He also proposed a bet-

ter liaison between Police and traders to overcome the issue. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari also extended an invitation to IGP to visit Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry,

which he accepted by saying that he will pay a visit at the earliest. The ICCI delegation included Chairman Founder Group Khalid Iqbal Malk, Secretary General United Business Group

Zafar Bakhtawari, Vice President Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, former SVP Khalid Chaudhry, former VP Saif ur Rehman, Zia Khalid, Assad Aziz and Nadeem Akhtar.

West overplaying China's high tech capacity in green energy

Does overcapacity exist in China or it is just flimsy excuse of G7? Is it true as trumpeted by US-led Western nexus that China is flooding world markets with cheap products in the name of green energy or China is among top contributors producing premier renewable energy helping global endeavours to meet zero-carbon footprints?

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Amid US-West' intensive badmouthing China as exporter of "overcapacity" in green energy compared to China's super high-tech capacity to the world, let's be fair and honest in making realistic point differentiating true from untrue, says a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Friday. Without siding anyone, why not sit down calmly and mull over same strings being harped by the US as well as Western countries to understand nitty-gritty of undercurrents. "Does overcapacity exist in China or it is just flimsy excuse of G7? Is it true as trumpeted by US-led Western nexus that China is flooding world markets with cheap products in the name of green energy or China is

among top contributors producing premier renewable energy helping global endeavours to meet zero-carbon footprints? Do facts substantiate the accusations being levelled by the US and the West that China is violating international market norms by dumping its new energy industry overcapacity around the globe or it is all about to exert last ditch effort to safeguard protectionism by hook or crook? Spiral phony-baloney gained new ground when U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen blamed China with "overcapacity" in new energy during her recent China trip. While, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen also jumped the bandwagon arguing that the necessity of the EU to take a tough stance in its dialogue with China over what the EU perceived as 'unfair trade practices', echoing the "overcapacity"

charge against China by the U.S. Honestly speaking, all indictments sound "crocodile tears" of those players in the US and the West who cannot complete with China due to their incompetence or lack of knowledge in innovative green energy infrastructure that suits world. China's high-tech capacity is exponentially lowering down prices of renewable energy products in developing as well as developed countries. Technically it favours general public at large but deflation trend has dismayed US-West market players as their overpricing plan is doomed to flop. At least over the last few years, China's clean energy spectrum has done hard yards to bolster research and development (R&D) - the key driver in advanced productivity. China's climate-friendly technologies also reached new heights of international competitiveness. Home to the world's

top filer of international patents, China is rated as leading country in clean energy R&D. A report from Dutch information and data analytics brand Elsevier, annual patent publications for net-zero clean energy technologies have observed high-octane growth since 2008, driven chiefly by China. The report further shows by the end of 2020, nearly 50 percent of all active global patents related to carbon-free technologies originated from China. A report from Bloomberg shows that global spending on the clean-energy transitions reached a record \$1.8 trillion in 2023, up 17 percent year-on-year, driven largely by China. Global spending on clean-energy transition last year which includes investments to install renewable energy, build hydrogen production systems, buy electric vehicles and deploy other green technologies is still insufficient to reach net-zero emissions.

Lawmakers highlight critical issues from their respective areas

ISLAMABAD: Lawmakers in the National Assembly raised various critical issues from their respective areas on Friday and called upon the government to take action to address them. During a point of order, Mian Ghous Muhammad highlighted that approximately Rs. 20 billion is payable to sugarcane growers by sugar mills. He said that in Punjab, there is a law mandating mills to pay interest to farmers if payments are delayed. He expressed concern that mill owners are not meeting their obligations and urged the government to ensure prompt payment to the growers. Muhammad Iqbal Khan asked the government to address law and order challenges in his area, urging the federal government to enhance security measures and take care of the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Khalid Ahmed highlighted similar concerns about law and order in his constituency, appealing for federal intervention to improve the situation. Agha Rafiullah Syed expressed disappointment over the absence of ministers in the house and said that government representatives must be present to address public concerns raised by members. He stressed the importance of government representatives being available in the National Assembly to respond to the issues and queries brought forth by legislators on behalf of their constituents. Riaz Fatyana acknowledged the Speaker's directive to ensure ministerial presence and requested assistance from the Interior Ministry to facilitate Umrah visits for National Assembly members. Jamal Shah Karar urged the government to combat inflation and alleviate the burden on the general public.—DNA


Education deptt holds awareness walk

ISLAMABAD: An awareness walk as part of enrolment of children in government schools drive was arranged here by Helvetas and Education department at historical and most famous Government Primary School Drosh established in 1938. The walk started from the school and after passing through old and new bazaars of Drosh converted into a function at Drosh Chowk. The walk was led by Field Officer Azhar Iqbal, DEO Chitral, ADEO Lower Chitral, Qari Jamal Nasir and attended by former Chairman District Council Alhaj Khurshid Ali Khan, President Trader Union Drosh Haji Gul Nawaz, Village Council Damil Chairman Haji Sher Zamin, Principal Government Higher Secondary School Drosh Saleem Kamil, headmaster of the school and members of trade Union, social workers, as well as a large number of students. Addressing the participants of the walk, Field Officer Azhar Iqbal said that education was basic right of every child and as

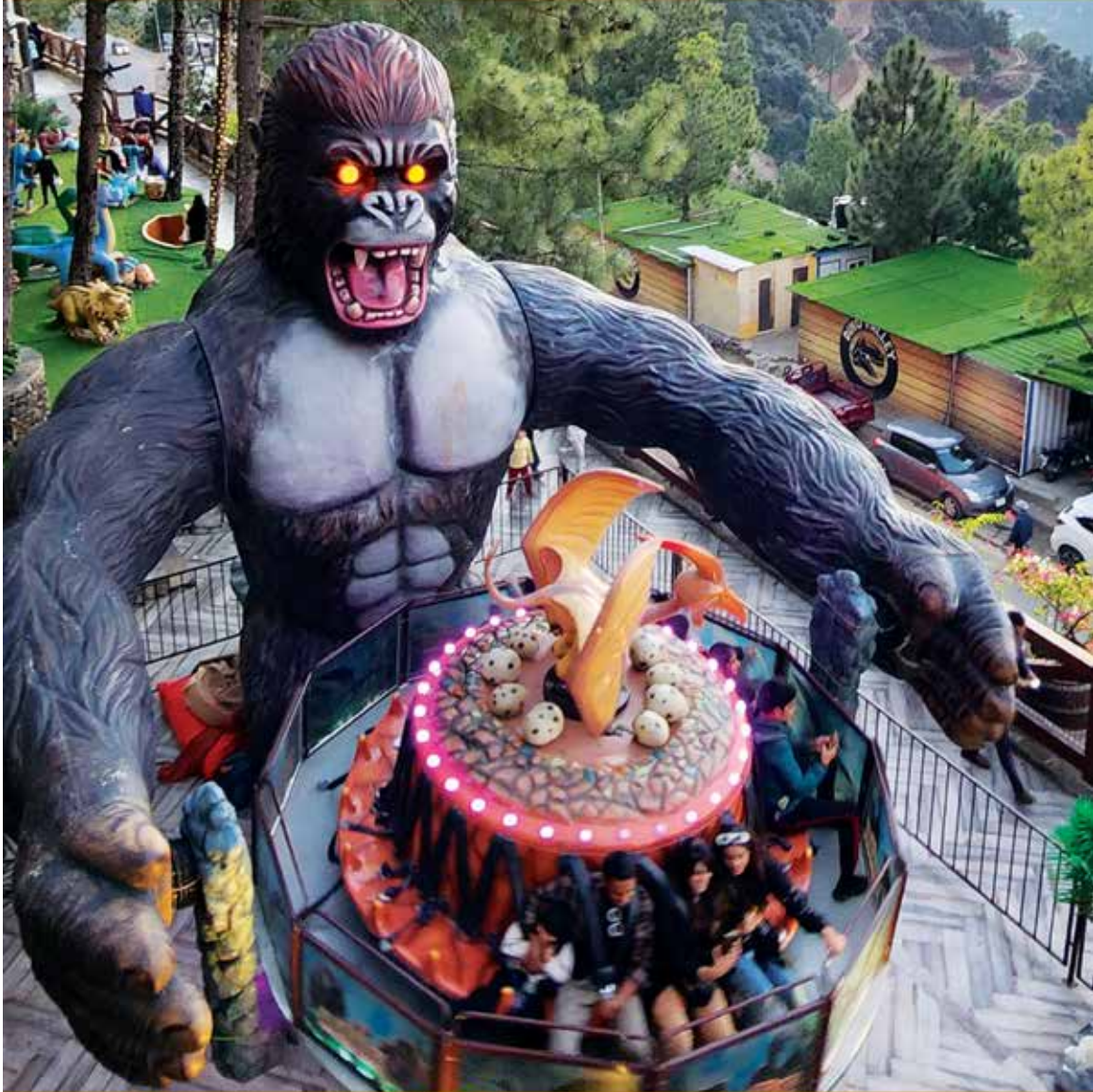
per the government directions every child including the children of Afghan refugees living in different camps in lower Chitral would also be enrolled in the government schools. He urged parents to send their children to schools by the age of five years. VC Chairman Haji Sher Zamin pointed out that the academic year had already started and after four months, free books had not been provided to Government schools in Chitral. He criticized the education department and said that the government was urging people to send their children to Government schools, but the department failed to provide books to the government schools despite passage of four months. President Trade Union Drosh Gul Nawaz and other notables including Khurshid Ali Khan, Azhar Iqbal also urged parents to send their children to schools. Apart from this different programmes related to enrolment campaign were also held in various parts of lower Chitral.—APP



ISLAMABAD: The Interior Ministry has introduced Margallah Trail police squad to ensure safety of the hikers. The test-run of this service has already begun.—DNA



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How to help Sudan

Only a few days into the second year of Sudan's civil war, the alarm bells have begun ringing about el-Fasher, Darfur. Fearful that the city would become the next battleground in the war, top United Nations officials warned that more than 800,000 civilians were in "extreme and immediate danger," amid multiple signs of imminent attack, including the razing of nearby villages. At least half a million refugees and internally displaced people are right now sheltering in the North Darfur capital, afraid for their lives and with nowhere to go. Experts note that the window of opportunity to put a stop to the impending massacre is rapidly closing. According to Nathaniel Raymond, executive director of Yale's Humanitarian Research Lab, the risk is of "Hiroshima and Nagasaki levels of catastrophe." Speaking at a press event, he added, "We call this situation a 'kill box.'" It is the final battle for Darfur, and the RSF intends to "complete the 2004/2005 genocide," Raymond said. A kill box. Hiroshima and Nagasaki levels of catastrophe. Almost one million lives at risk of massacre. These words seem impossible to understand, bewildering in their horror. Yet again, genocide looms in Darfur, and this world turns away. The RSF is on the brink of unleashing yet another tsunami of violence, as the group has done time and time again, yet the spectre of such unspeakable atrocity elicits little more than mealy-mouthed press releases and "calls for a ceasefire." This is not bringing a knife to a gun fight, this is sending a fax to defend against a combat drone. "It's so painful to see the level of neglect by the international community towards Sudan," said Hala al-Karib, regional director of the pan-African feminist SIHA network. Her words echo the sentiments of Sudanese people across the world. To be Sudanese is to feel like one is forever begging for scraps of attention, to be relegated as an afterthought or a hashtag, if we're lucky. The year-long conflict has already been dubbed "The Forgotten War" by many media companies and observers. How have we been relegated to the archives, spoken about in the past tense, when this war is still a living, breathing monstrosity? Sudan is currently home to the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, yet it is unable to raise the funds to feed millions fending off famine's vicious claws. At a summit in Paris this month, on the one-year anniversary of the conflict, donors from around the world pledged more than \$2 billion in aid. As political analyst Kholoud Khair points out, much of this was made up of previous commitments that had not been honoured. Even so, "were it not for the Paris pledging conference, there would be little to no new money committed to Sudan at all," Khair said. Pressure must be placed on RSF allies to stop arming the paramilitary force because it cannot continue its war effort without the support of international actors. Second is tackling the issue of the looming famine alongside compounding humanitarian crises, including outbreaks of tuberculosis and other contagious diseases in displacement camps across the country. Pressure must be exerted on the warring parties to allow humanitarian aid into deprived areas, to prevent more dying from hunger. In addition to mass humanitarian relief envoys, funding must be made available to Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) around the country, providing meals to tens of thousands of civilians waiting out the war.

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China-Europe relations

While the interaction between China and Europe is frequent and the atmosphere is warming, the complexity of the bilateral relationship is also becoming more apparent. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's recent visit to China demonstrated the essence of mutually beneficial cooperation between China and Germany as well as China and Europe, and China has held talks and political consultations these days with Hungarian minister of foreign affairs and the director general of political and security affairs of the French Foreign Ministry, maintaining strategic communication on issues of common concern. China-Europe relations have maintained a momentum of stability and progress. However, the European Union's sudden raid of Chinese companies' offices in Europe, and probe into China's market access of medical devices procurement, as well as the false information about "Chinese espionage threats" emerging in some European countries, are fueling a wave of smearing under the "China threat" banner on multiple fronts, from trade frictions to espionage accusations. To a certain extent, this reflects Europe's performance on China-related issues in recent years. Whenever the China-Europe relationship is improving and stabilizing, there are always significant disruptive forces emerging from within Europe at almost the same time. For example, when forces hoping to develop practical cooperation with China push bilateral relations forward, other interest groups or anti-China forces under the guise of "reducing dependence on China" would create trouble for China in trade. When China and Europe enhance political mutual trust through communication and interaction, there are forces that use unfounded claims of "Chinese spies" and "Chinese infiltration" to stoke fear among the European public. This is related to the different interest groups within Europe and their expressions of demands, and is also a tangible manifestation of the increasing diversification of European politics. Overall, in the past two years, Europe's perception of China has been moving toward rationality and returning to European strategic autonomy. When the "triple positioning" of China as a "partner, competitor, and systemic rival" was first introduced, the European side emphasized more on China as a "systemic rival," with prevailing talk of "decoupling" and "de-risking" causing a huge shock on the China-Europe relationship. After two years of practice and development, although there are still conflicts and contradictions in Europe's perception of China, it has realized that China and Europe cannot decouple, nor engage in ideological systemic confrontation, but should instead focus on economic, technological, and other areas that are more in line with Europe's own strategic interests. This is not only the outcome of communication and interaction between China and Europe, but also Europe's reflection on the costs and benefits of following a confrontational strategy toward China in various aspects, such as economy and geopolitics, after aligning with the US. The typical case of the Dutch chip machine giant ASML is a good example. After the Dutch government decided to restrict ASML's exports to China in accordance with US requirements last year, the incoming new chief Christophe Fouquet expressed his primary focus on Chinese customers.

How Erdogan's visit to Iraq reaped fruits of solid diplomacy

Bekir Aydogan

Significantly, Erdogan's visit to Erbil after Baghdad once again buttressed Türkiye's viewpoint that it evaluates Iraq as a whole, including its relations with the federal government and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), and does not prioritise one over the other. In addition to the economic, diplomatic and security outcomes of the visit to Iraq and KRG, it stressed the need for calm, especially in mending the problematic relations between Erbil and Baghdad in the face of the corrosive effects of Tehran-aligned groups in the country. Erdogan's long-awaited visit signified the increasing importance of Baghdad and KRG in Ankara's bilateral

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's first visit to Iraq in 13 years embodied the consensus reached between the two countries on politics, economy and security at the highest level. The display of the Turkish flag on the streets of Baghdad and Erbil—the provincial capital of the semi-autonomous and mainly Kurdish region—underlined the significance of Erdogan's visit in the eyes of both Iraqi and Kurdish officials. Significantly, Erdogan's visit to Erbil after Baghdad once again buttressed Türkiye's viewpoint that it evaluates Iraq as a whole, including its relations with the federal government and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), and does not prioritise one over the other. In addition to the economic, diplomatic and security outcomes of the visit to Iraq and KRG, it stressed the need for calm, especially in mending the problematic relations between Erbil and Baghdad in the face of the corrosive effects of Tehran-aligned groups in the country. Erdogan's long-awaited visit signified the increasing importance of Baghdad and KRG in Ankara's bilateral relations and regional policy. The signing of 26 agreements and memoranda of understanding in areas such as energy, trade, media, defence industry, tourism, and security signalled that close diplomatic contacts are bearing fruit, especially after ministerial-level visits by both sides over the past year. The most important outcome of the visit was the progress made on the Development Road Project, which includes rail and road connectivity starting from Basra in the south of Iraq, passing through Baghdad and Mosul and reaching Europe via Türkiye. The fact that Türkiye, Iraq, Qatar and UAE signed a preliminary agreement to cooperate on the project will increase the possibility of funding and feasibility of the \$17-billion project with contributions from the Gulf nations. However, to realise such a huge project, clearing the region from terrorism and ensuring security is

as important as funding. And in this regard, Erdogan's visit highlighted Baghdad's changing position. After years of criticising Ankara's anti-PKK operations, Baghdad has now come to the closest position ever to Ankara's stance in the fight against the terror group, though not entirely on the same page. An Iraqi government spokesperson's statement that they are working to sign a security agreement with Türkiye similar to the one reached with Iran implies that Ankara's efforts are on the right track. But it would require Ankara to keep close diplomatic contacts as seen before the visit. Having said that, Erdogan's demand that Iraq should designate the PKK as a terrorist organisation signals that Baghdad's stance on the PKK will be tested in Türkiye's planned military operations against the terror group in the summer. On the other hand, Erdogan's separate meeting with Turkmen and Sunni representatives in Baghdad emphasises Ankara's strong ties with these groups. But the fact that no separate meeting was held with the Shia groups once again emphasised the importance of Türkiye's recently increasing official contacts with these groups, including pro-Iran actors. Erdogan's visit to northern Iraq comes at a time when the Erbil-based KDP seems to be caught between Iran's increasing attacks and the rulings of the Iraqi Federal Court. KDP argues that the decisions of the court, which is dominated by pro-Iranian political groups, aim to target the region's constitutional authorities. However, Erdogan's visit reinforced the fact that KDP is not alone in its search for balance against Iran. While the KDP is known to be close to Ankara, its rival, the Sulaymaniyah-based PUK, enjoys good relations with Tehran. Furthermore, Erdogan's statement that "the Baghdad and Erbil administrations should establish a healthy dialogue and working relationship without allowing third parties to interfere" is crucial in terms of

calling on the parties to find common ground. To put the issue in context, relations between Erbil and Baghdad have been strained since the halt of oil exports to Türkiye, financial constraints, and a series of decisions taken by the federal court—such as ruling the KRG's independent oil sales illegal and abolishing the minority quotas in the northern parliament. Undisputedly, restoring Erbil-Baghdad relations will have a positive effect on stability in northern Iraq and increase the feasibility of Türkiye's Development Road Project and potential partnership in the fight against the PKK in the country. Although the KRG does not consider the PKK a terrorist organisation, Ankara seems to be especially pleased with the cooperation of the KDP on this issue. In contrast, Türkiye is deeply concerned over the ties of the PUK with the PKK. Despite the tense relations between Ankara and PUK, the moderate Qubad Talabani—the KRG Deputy PM and the younger brother of PUK leader Bafel Talabani—was also in the welcoming delegation, and among those included inter-delegation meetings during Erdogan's Erbil visit. This shows that the communication channel is still open between Ankara and PUK. However, it seems that as long as the PUK maintains its close ties with the PKK, Türkiye is expected to keep the airspace ban on Sulaymaniyah and will continue its sanctions against the party. Considering Iraq's fragile and fragmented political structure, Ankara should continue its multifaceted diplomatic pressure, especially involving pro-Iranian groups that may pose an obstacle to Türkiye's fight against terrorism, particularly in Sinjar and on the Development Road Project throughout the country. Additionally, for the two countries to carry out long-term, stable, and sustainable projects and mutually agreed-upon security steps, it is significant that the troubled relations between Erbil-Baghdad and KDP-PUK are sorted out as well.

"US Country Report: A True Reflection, or..."

Qamar Bashir

The impugned report comprehensively cataloged a multitude of incidents, events, and statements with detailed dates, names, and qualifications forming its foundation. Noteworthy examples include the killing of seven Shia Muslims, including four teachers, in Upper Kurram, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on May 4, apparently in retaliation for the earlier killing of a Sunni Muslim; a suicide bombing in Mastung, Balochistan, on September 29, which claimed the lives of at least 60 individuals during a religious procession

AKISTAN'S Foreign Affairs promptly rejected the US Department of State's 120-page "2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan" without acknowledging its comprehensive compilation process where the source of almost all necessary data rests in Pakistan. The compilation involves gathering data from embassy and consulate reports, local NGOs, media coverage, government agencies, international organizations, academic institutions, testimonies, diplomatic channels, official government reports, and open-source intelligence. The report aims to provide a thorough and accurate assessment of human rights conditions in Pakistan indicating a failure to address shortcomings. Rather than addressing issues and implementing reforms, Pakistan tends to respond with generic statements disconnected from reality which is shortsighted, as baseless rejection only draws more attention to the report's contents, prompting further scrutiny. Pakistan's tendency to ignore issues and reject criticism perpetuates poor human rights practices rather than fostering improvement. "There is nothing in the report that has not been discussed almost on a daily basis by our courts, political parties, civil society, and both traditional and social media. Our media and civil society, day in and day out, in their reports, comments, and analyses, discuss, refer to, and quote, rightly or wrongly, all those issues, matters, and incidents which were referred to in the report. These include unlawful or arbitrary detentions and killings, including extrajudicial killings; enforced disappearances; torture; and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government or non state actors." "They discuss harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; political prisoners; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; punishment of family members for alleged offenses by a relative; and serious abuses in conflict, including reportedly unlawful civilian deaths and enforced disappearances. The elite journalists and opposition political parties have raised concerns about significant restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom. These include violence against journalists, unjustified arrests, and disappearances of journalists, as well as censorship and serious constraints on internet freedom. Additionally, there are substantial interferences with the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including overly restrictive laws governing the operation of non-govern-

mental organizations and civil society groups. The media and civil society have been vocal about issues such as restrictions on religious freedom, coerced or forced returns of individuals to countries where they may face torture or persecution, government corruption, and government restrictions on both domestic and international human rights organizations. They have also highlighted extensive gender-based violence, including domestic or intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and child and early forced marriage. Media reports also suggest physical abuse of criminal suspects in custody, leading to injuries or deaths. Besides, lengthy trial delays at both the commencement and conclusion of trials, along with the failure to adequately investigate, discipline, and prosecute those responsible for killings, have contributed to a culture of impunity. Our media is full of reports that there is a significant increase in attacks against police and security forces. According to the independent think tank Center for Research and Security Studies, there were at least 386 reported deaths of police and military personnel in terrorist attacks and counterterrorism operations during the first three quarters of the year. The number of attacks and casualties were higher than in 2022 or 2021. However, they may not realize that these commentaries and analyses are being recorded, compiled, and reported upon by human rights watchdogs around the world, including those in the US reflecting negatively on our human rights record." The impugned report comprehensively cataloged a multitude of incidents, events, and statements with detailed dates, names, and qualifications forming its foundation. Noteworthy examples include the killing of seven Shia Muslims, including four teachers, in Upper Kurram, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on May 4, apparently in retaliation for the earlier killing of a Sunni Muslim; a suicide bombing in Mastung, Balochistan, on September 29, which claimed the lives of at least 60 individuals during a religious procession; and an attack by Tehreek-e-Jihad on Pakistan Air Force Training Base M.M. Alam in Mianwali, Punjab, resulting in the deaths of nine militant attacks on November 4. Ironically, instead of addressing these issues, there was a tendency to blame rating agencies for using inaccurate data, ignoring the fact that much of the data originates from within our own country, often from government sources. During my tenure as Joint Secretary, I compiled a com-

prehensive report on all international ratings, rankings, and indexes, revealing a dismal picture of our nation's neglect, lethargy, aimless governance, and widespread lawlessness. It underscored the multitude of challenges we faced, including multiple power centers, injustice, economic stagnation, and social degradation. Surprisingly, the government at that time took my report seriously. It was shared with the Prime Minister and other key government figures, who instructed me to develop a robust plan of action to improve our international ratings and rankings. I diligently crafted such a plan, which was subsequently shared with the higher echelons of the government. The national security advisor was entrusted with leading the implementation of this plan, and I was tasked with briefing him on the report and the proposed strategy. However, as fate would have it, the government was dissolved before any significant progress could be made. Sadly, this scenario mirrored the fate of similar plans throughout Pakistan's history—promising initiatives often succumbing to the tide of political change, leaving crucial reforms languishing on the shelf. It is imperative that reports by the US state department and such other reports reflecting our national performance and responsibilities are thoroughly reviewed and referred to relevant committees of the National Assembly and Senate for in-depth analysis. These committees should scrutinize the reports meticulously, identifying any inaccuracies in the data and bringing them to the attention of the rating agencies for clarification or amendment. Furthermore, these committees should establish robust collaboration with the focal persons of rating agencies in Pakistan, providing them with accurate and reliable data to ensure the integrity of subsequent reports. If the data and analysis in the report are found to be accurate, the committees should then formulate a comprehensive plan of action to address the shortcomings highlighted. Rather than blaming the mirror, we must have the courage to acknowledge the reflections it presents and strive to ensure that what the mirror reflects is indeed a true representation of our nation's beauty and charm. This approach fosters accountability and facilitates proactive measures to enhance our national performance and reputation.

Former Press Secretary to the President
 Former Press Minister to the
 Embassy of Pakistan to France
 Former MD, SRBC

Briefs

Govt extends stay of registered...

FROM PAGE 01
The cabinet on the progress of the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) operations. The Secretary of Aviation, filled in the meeting on the recent measures taken to improve the facilities at Pakistan's airports, particularly Lahore and Karachi. The meeting was informed that the service counters at the airports had been increased and the facilities were being upgraded. The meeting was told that the advertisements inviting expressions of interest were published in national and international newspapers on April 2, with the last date being May 3, and so far several companies had expressed keen interest in PIA.

Complete independence impossible...

FROM PAGE 01
God willing, with the cooperation and support of the people, the efforts of those who distract and obstruct Pakistan's development journey will fail." He said "negative propaganda and social media trolls" would not be able to distract from working towards the nation's prosperity and development. "In today's era, complete independence is not possible without economic stability," he said. "No instability will be tolerated in Pakistan's journey towards prosperity and development," he added. He called on everyone to collectively reject "negative forces" and remain focused on the country's path towards progress and stability.

Pakistan Hockey Federation..

FROM PAGE 01
Rana Mashood's endorsement of the ongoing Islamabad camp suggests a shift in legitimacy, potentially marginalizing Raza's faction. Despite encouragement for Karachi camp players to integrate with the Islamabad contingent, no significant crossover has materialized thus far. Meanwhile, Tariq Bugti might sustain his role as PHF President until a new appointment is made, with the Pakistan Olympic Committee entrusted with resolving the Secretary's appointment. These deliberations underscore the complexity of PHF's internal dynamics and the broader efforts to rejuvenate Pakistan's hockey landscape.

Pakistan in 'contact with US'...

FROM PAGE 01
electricity trade, despite the warning of potential sanctions hinted at by the United States following Raisi's visit. After the Iranian head of state had departed for Tehran from Karachi, the FO issued a joint statement, sharing details about bilateral agreements, including plans pertaining to the Pak-Iran gas pipeline project, set forth by both the two nations. The FO's statement came a day after the US State Department had hinted at the risk of sanctions in light of the business deals between both nations. Baloch also said that talks with Iran on free trade agreement were underway. "We think that controlling export has become political," she said.

US denies rift with Pakistan

FROM PAGE 01
The spokesperson said that the US continues to have a "lot of cooperation" with Pakistan's government, especially in the security space and trade sector. "This is a robust relationship and we'll look to continue strengthening it," added Patel, when asked if there was something going on between Washington and Islamabad. Last week, the US State Department imposed sanctions on four entities — three Chinese and one from Belarus — for reportedly supplying items to Pakistan's ballistic missile programme.

Pakistan set for another series against NZ after CT

New Zealand will also tour Pakistan for a tri-series before the Champions Trophy

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

ISLAMABAD: Following the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy scheduled to be held in Pakistan from February to March 2025, the Pakistan cricket team is set to embark on a limited-overs tour of New Zealand. This announcement follows a productive meeting at the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) headquarters, where Chairman Mohsin Naqvi and New Zealand Cricket Chief Executive Officer Scott Weenink discussed upcoming cricket engagements.

The meeting, attended by PCB COO Salman Naseer and Director International Cricket Usman Wahla, focused on the ongoing Pakistan-New Zealand series and Pakistan's subsequent tour to New Zealand next year. The tour will see Pakistan engaging in a series of five T20I matches and three ODIs in New Zealand. PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi, also the country's interior minister, assured comprehensive arrangements for the New Zealand team, emphasizing the importance of



ensuring their comfort and security during their stay in Pakistan. "Looking after New Zealand team is our responsibility. The team is very close to our hearts and I am myself monitoring the whole arrangements as well as the security arrangements for the tour,"

Naqvi said. Expressing satisfaction with the arrangements made, Weenink praised the facilities at Rawalpindi and Lahore, where the New Zealand team will be hosted. "I am very happy with the arrangements at both these places," said Weenink. Weenink also

mentioned that New Zealand is scheduled to tour Pakistan for a tri-series before the 2025 Champions Trophy. Meanwhile, Former chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Ramiz Raja bashed the Green Shirts after losing the fourth T20I against

New Zealand saying that the team shouldn't use the excuse of testing the bench strength.

Raja, who served as the chairman of PCB for two years, lashed out at the team's approach of doing experimentation and said that the same players are playing in the name of experimenting. "There's experimentation happening here, 'so-called experimentation'.

The same players are still involved, just their positions have been changed. Some are put on the bench, while others are given a chance to play," Ramiz said while talking on his YouTube channel. He then urged the team to focus on winning matches and not give the excuse of testing bench strength whenever they lose. "It is very important that the Pakistan team focuses on winning right now, rather than giving the excuse that they are testing bench strength. They're trying to assess the skills of some players, which is why they are justifying their below-par performance that if we lose the match, please bear with us," he further added.

Wasim Akram defends Pandya following relentless criticism

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistani captain Wasim Akram voiced his support for Mumbai Indians' skipper Hardik Pandya, who has been criticised relentlessly due to the team's poor performance in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024.

It has not been a smooth ride for the five-time IPL winners as they have just won three matches in the IPL 2024 so far and their chances of qualifying for the playoffs continue to shrink. Pandya has been the main subject of criticism and trolls directed towards the franchise ever since replacing Rohit Sharma as the skipper, he had to deal with a hostile environment in several stadiums as the decision wasn't welcomed by fans. Akram talked about the mindset of fans in the sub-continent saying that they love to hold on to past grievances which does not allow them to rally behind the skipper. "This is the problem in India, Paki-



stan, and Bangladesh. We never forget. We tell our kids that when Pandya's kid is born, you have to remind him why he became captain 20 years ago. We don't move on," Akram said while speaking to Sportskeeda. While he did voice his support for Pandya, Akram was of the mind that Sharma should've continued as MI's captain for at least one more season. "In franchise cricket, such things happen. Look at how CSK took the cap-

taincy decision for the long run, and maybe, even they (MI) had the same idea. This was not a personal decision, but in my view, Rohit Sharma should have continued as captain for one more year. Perhaps, next year, Hardik Pandya could have been the captain," Akram said. Earlier, former Indian player and the 2007 T20 World Cup winner, Robin Uthappa, revealed that Pandya is dealing with mental health issues due to constant booing. "The mocking, trolling, the memes about his [Pandya] fitness. You don't think it hurts him? It hurts him. It hurts any human being. How many people actually know the reality of it? Hardik is dealing with mental health issues, for sure," Uthappa had said. "We, as people, I understand, as Indians, we are emotional. But it is not right to impose this kind of treatment on any human being. It is unbecoming as a society for us to do that to someone and be okay with it. We should not be laughing along with it. We should not be forwarding these memes."

Rafael Nadal wants to continue playing for his son

PARIS: Nadal eased past wild card Darwin Blanch 6-1 6-0 in the first round of the Madrid Open on Thursday, with his wife and one-year-old son Rafael Jr among the spectators. - Tennis great Rafael Nadal wishes to continue playing long enough in order to ensure that his son remembers him on court. However, the 22-time Grand Slam champion admitted that time is running out for that to happen. The 37-year-old Spaniard, who could bring the curtain down at the end of the 2024 season, returned to action in Brisbane after recovering from a hip flexor injury which kept him on the sidelines for almost a year. Soon after a thigh issue ensured he was on the sidelines once again but he made a comeback in Barcelona last week. However, Nadal says he is still not sure if he will play in next month's French Open. Nadal eased past wild card Darwin Blanch 6-1 6-0 in the first round of the Madrid Open on Thursday, with his wife and one-year-old son Rafael Jr among the spectators. "Well, I would love to play a little bit longer and give him a memory of myself playing tennis," Nadal said of playing in front of his son. "That's what will be the ideal thing for me and for my wife and family. "Probably I will not be able to make that happen. But at least I'm happy to have a great team and family and friends around me during all my life that helped me in every single way of being happy." Nadal, a five-time champion in Madrid, will lock horns with Australian 10th seed Alex de Minaur in the next round on Saturday. - Agencies

Yuvraj named as ICC T20 WC 2024 Ambassador

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) unveiled former Indian all-rounder Yuvraj Singh as ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 Ambassador on Friday. The tournament will be jointly hosted by the United States of America (USA) and the West Indies from 1 June to 29 June. Singh will participate in the World Cup promotional events in the United States before and during the tournament. He will also attend the much-anticipated match between archrivals India and Pakistan in New York on 9 June. The former all-rounder expressed his excitement about being the ambassador of the T20 World Cup and shared his best memories from the tournament. He set the stage on fire during the inaugural T20 World Cup in 2007, hitting six sixes in an over against England. India went on to win the tournament by defeating Pakistan in the final. "Some of my fondest cricketing memories have come from playing at the T20 World Cup, including hitting six sixes in an over, so it's very exciting to be part of this edition, which is set to be the biggest one yet," Yuvraj said. "The West Indies is a great place to play cricket with the fans coming to watch creating a vibe that is completely unique to that part of the world, while cricket is also expanding in the USA and I'm excited to be part of that growth through the T20 World Cup. - Agencies

Azhar Mahmood points out positives from Pakistan's loss

New Zealand defeat Pakistan in a last over-thriller

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Azhar Mahmood, head coach of Pakistan, has pointed out the positives from the national team's narrow loss against an inexperienced New Zealand team in the ongoing T20I series. Pakistan team failed to chase 179 during the last-over thriller in Lahore's iconic Gaddafi Stadium. New Zealand are currently leading the five-match series 2-1. The two teams will square off in the last match of the series on April 27. Despite the loss, Azhar Mahmood stated that Pakistan outperformed New Zealand in many areas of the game, but acknowledged that there were still areas for improvement. "There were a few positives for

us as we scored more boundaries than New Zealand. We also bowled more dot balls but they just took more doubles than us," the former all-rounder said. "These are areas of concern for us and we're constantly working on it." He also defended young batter Usman Khan, who failed to live up to the expectations during the series, scoring a meagre 28 runs in three innings. "We always talk about showing intent. The way Usman Khan showed intent today was pleasant to watch. He played some good shots but couldn't perform the way we wanted him to. But intent-wise, he was spot on," he added. Azhar Mahmood also stated that the team has all bases covered, but they were testing their bench strength during the ongoing series.



Swiatek, Gauff through in Madrid Open as Osaka falls

World number one beat Wang Xiyu 6-1, 6-4 to reach the third round

SPORTS DESK



MADRID: World number one Iga Swiatek beat Wang Xiyu 6-1, 6-4 to reach the third round of the Madrid Open on Thursday as she bids to win the competition for the first time. Earlier Coco Gauff sailed through to the third round with a 6-0, 6-0 thumping of Arantxa Rus, while Ludmila Samsonova ousted Naomi Osaka in three sets. Runner-up last year, Swiatek bounced back from her semi-final defeat by Elena Rybakina in Stuttgart with a largely comfortable straight sets victory. The Pole, a four-time Grand Slam winner and an expert on clay, wobbled in the second set as Wang won three games in a row but recovered to triumph in one hour 16 minutes. "I love this place - I got to know the city a little better last year," Swiatek said. "So this time I feel more comfortable around." Madrid is the only major European clay tournament that three-time French Open champion Swiatek has yet to win. Swiatek coasted through the first set, breaking twice for a 4-0 lead. She wrapped up it up with another break, leaving Wang no chance of reaching her red-hot backhand return. The Doha and Indian Wells winners took a 4-1 lead in the second set but Wang fought her way back in for 4-4, before the top seed steeled herself to hold. Wang then handed the second set on a plate to Swiatek with two double faults, and the Pole will face 27th seed Sorana Cirstea in the third round. Earlier Gauff, 20, earned the first 'double bagel' victory of her career in a WTA Tour main draw event in only 51 minutes against her 33-year-old Dutch

opponent Rus. The American saved four break points in the match to become the third player ever to win 6-0, 6-0 in the Madrid Open main draw. World number three Gauff will face Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska next. Samsonova brought former world number one Osaka's return to clay to a halt with a 6-2, 4-6, 7-5 victory. Four-time Grand Slam champion Osaka twice battled back from a break down in the second set to force a decisive third but world number 17 Samsonova eventually ground out the win. Japanese star Osaka returned to tennis in January after a long break and earned her first victory on clay for two years on Wednesday against Greet Minnen. However Russian 15th seed Samsonova, whom Osaka beat at Indian Wells in March, was able to end a four-match losing streak with her victory in two hours 22 minutes in the Spanish capital. Hard-court expert Osaka, 26, is not overly fond of the red dirt and has not won back-to-back matches on the surface since 2019. She lost last week at the Rouen Open in France against Martina Trevisan in her first match back on clay but improved this week. "I felt - I don't want to say happy - I felt good that I was able to fight back," said Osaka. "I think it's a big difference from my match in France, so I was happy that I learned from that match, but obviously really sad that I lost." Samsonova raced into a 4-0 first set lead, breaking in the first and third games as Osaka struggled. "Honestly, it's not the sliding part for me, it's the touch," said Osaka. "I feel like I'm getting the balls, I'm just not really placing them well." Samsonova will face Madison Keys in the next round.

PML-N, PPP strike...

FROM PAGE 01
The PPP leader also said that she had not prepared a speech since "speaking from the heart on the first day is a good indicator". "I think that what President Zardari has said should be welcomed," Rehman said, referring to the president's parliamentary address wherein he had called for moving on from the polarisation plaguing domestic politics. She stressed that instead of repeating old statements made by former premier Imran Khan, politicians would have to "genuinely forge a new beginning and respect each other if we want to turn a new page". Separately, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, the PML-N's parliamentary leader, also urged the PTI to hold talks with his party to solve the crises plaguing the country. He said he was seeing a "better, good, positive and constructive environment" in the Senate over the past few days. Siddiqui also congratulated PTI Senator Shibli Faraz on assuming his role as the opposition leader.

Nawaz Sharif set to 'retake'...

FROM PAGE 01
Bureau (NAB) in multiple cases lodged against him. During an interaction with journalists in Lahore following a meeting of the party's leadership, the former security czar said: "Nawaz Sharif will lead the party again. The PML-N will move forward under his leadership. The PML-N supreme got "clean chit" from the courts, Sanaulah added. Nawaz stepped down as the country's prime minister in 2017 after he was disqualified for life from holding public office by the Supreme Court for not declaring a receivable salary. Following his case in the Panama Papers case, the Supreme Court, in February 2018, disqualified Nawaz as PML-N president. In its verdict, the top court had said that a person disqualified under Articles 62 and 63 cannot serve as the head of a political party. The veteran politician, however, arrived back home from four years of self-imposed exile in London in October last year.

FBR makes 12 senior officers OSD

FROM PAGE 01
(Pakistan Customs Service/BS-21) Member, (Customs Operations), Tariq Mustafa Khan (Inland Revenue), Ahmad Rauf (Pakistan Customs Service/BS-21) Director General, Directorate General of Law & Prosecution, Mirza Mubashir Baig (Pakistan Customs Service/BS-21) Director General, Directorate General of Customs Valuation, Karachi, Hyder Ali Dharejo (Inland Revenue Service/BS-21) Chief Commissioner, Regional Tax Office I, Karachi, Muhammad Azam Sheikh (Inland Revenue Service/BS-21) Director General, Directorate General of Internal Audit (Inland Revenue), Islamabad, Muhammad Saleem (Pakistan Customs Service/BS-21) Chief Collector, Chief Collector of Customs, Appraisalment (South), Custom House, Karachi, Abdul Wahid Uqaily (Inland Revenue Service/BS-21) Chief Commissioner, Regional Tax Office II, Karachi are other officers who have been transferred.

PTI stages protest...

FROM PAGE 01
Lahore police claimed that the arrests were made because of concerns about affecting the law and order situation. PTI leaders have repeated their demand for the release of their party founder Imran Khan and an end to "political persecution and election manipulations". Addressing the participants of a rally in Islamabad, they said they rejected 'rigged election and by-election' PTI chairman Barrister Gohar said they wanted to build a stable and prosperous Pakistan where the rule of law will reign supreme and no one will be compelled to take to the streets for justice. Gohar said the PTI founder was jailed for becoming the voice for the poor. "Had he (Imran Khan) compromised on principles, he would have been out of jail.

Briefs

Malaysia's Mahathir faces anticorruption probe

KUALA LUMPUR : Malaysia's former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad is being investigated in connection with a corruption probe involving his sons, the country's anticorruption agency has confirmed. Azam Baki, chief commissioner of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), said on Thursday that Mahathir was "among those being investigated". "Let the investigations conclude first, until an appropriate time when we can state the findings of the case," Azam told reporters in the northeastern state of Kelantan. A spokesperson for Mahathir, who led the Southeast Asian country from 1981 to 2003 and again from 2018 to 2020, declined to comment. In January, the MACC ordered Mahathir's two eldest sons, Mirzan Mahathir and Mokhzani Mahathir, to declare their assets as part of inquiries prompted by the Pandora and Panama Papers leaks. Mahathir, 98, is known as a vocal critic of sitting Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who was elected in 2022 on a platform to root out corruption among the upper echelons of power. Anwar, who served as Mahathir's deputy during the 1990s before being jailed, has denied accusations of using his anticorruption as a pretext to target political rivals and insisted he does not intervene in legal cases. —Agencies

UN peacekeepers shut DR Congo base, prepare exit

WASHINGTON : The United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has helped in the fight against rebels for more than two decades, has closed one of its key bases as it prepares to leave the Central African nation this year at the request of the government. The mission, also known as MONUSCO, closed a major base near the city of Bukavu in a ceremony on Thursday attended by Bintou Keita, the head of MONUSCO, along with DRC military and government officials. UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told a briefing at the organisation's headquarters in New York on Thursday that peacekeepers from Pakistan, who constituted the bulk of the forces deployed in South Kivu province, are leaving after more than 20 years of service. "Since 2003, when they were first deployed, more than 100,000 peacekeepers from Pakistan have served in South Kivu, including 31 Pakistani soldiers who died in the line of duty, in the service of the United Nations and the people of the Congo," he said. The departure comes after the Congolese government, which was re-elected in a disputed vote at the end of December, said the increasingly unpopular mission has failed to protect civilians from armed groups. —APP

Australian ex-PM reveals anxiety struggle

Australia's former Prime Minister Scott Morrison has revealed he sought treatment for debilitating anxiety during his time in office. In a new book, Mr Morrison points to "pure physical exhaustion" and the "unrelenting and callous brutality of politics" as central to his struggles. "My doctor was amazed I had lasted as long as I had," Mr Morrison writes, in an extract published by The Australian. "Politicians are not made of stone, yet they're often treated as though they are, including by each other," he continued. Mr Morrison - a conservative who led Australia from 2018 to 2022 - wrote on social media that he wanted to "normalise" something that was "very common for many Australians". "Because I sought help I was fully functional. [It is] important that people understand that this doesn't have to hold you back. —Agencies

Azerbaijan vows to boost green transition with Europe

President Aliyev says country will significantly increase investments in green energy, will be able to supply Europe with electricity via subsea cable

NEWS DESK

BERLIN: Azerbaijan's green transition projects will enable closer energy cooperation with the EU, and will help increase gas supplies to the bloc, President Ilham Aliyev said on Friday. Addressing the Petersberg Climate Dialogue meeting in Berlin, Aliyev said the country will be able to produce 2,000 megawatts of green and solar energy by 2027, and the capacity will further increase through new investments in the following years. "So using this potential we will largely substitute gas consumptions for producing electricity. We will save a lot of natural gas which Europe needs. And that volume, I think at least five additional billion cubic meters of gas, will be exported to Europe. So it's actually a win-win situation," Aliyev said. "At the same time we are at the final stage of



feasibility study to build integrated transmission lines from Caspian offshore wind farms to Europe, including subsea cable under the Black Sea. That will allow Azerbaijani green energy, at the volume

of 4 gigawatt, to be exported to Europe," he added. Azerbaijan has become an increasingly important energy partner for the EU in recent years, and it is currently exporting nearly 12 billion cubic meters of natural gas to European markets. Aliyev said they are working to further expand energy cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan, on the basis of a "strategic partnership" declaration, which was signed by the parties in 2022. "By 2027, our natural gas exports to EU should reach 20 billion cubic meters," the president told participants at the Petersberg Climate Dialogue meeting. "And we all understand that in this geopolitical situation, this is a sign of responsibility of Azerbaijan. We are largely investing in increasing our gas production because Europe needs more gas from new sources," he added.

German president backs two-state ME peace plan

German President said that Germany is agrees with Türkiye that a two-state solution is necessary for achieving lasting peace in the Middle East

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN : Germany agrees with Türkiye that a two-state solution is necessary for achieving lasting peace in the Middle East, said German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on Friday. "However, we agree with Türkiye that lasting peace in the Middle East will be possible through a two-state solution," he said. Describing his visit to Türkiye as constructive, Steinmeier said: "Every minute of my visit to Türkiye was

valuable." "For me, coming to Türkiye on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the beginning of our diplomatic relations was very significant," he added. Noting that both countries are NATO allies and G-20 members, Steinmeier stated: "As Türkiye and Germany, we are indispensable to each other; we need each other." Germany will remember quake victims in Türkiye Steinmeier said that he attended the National Sovereignty and Children's Day celebrations on April 23 in Türkiye's southeastern province Gaziantep. His visit to the container city set up for earthquake victims in the Nurdagi district left a lasting impression on him, he said. "Visiting the region one year after the earthquake was meaningful for me. It's heartening to see shelters being quickly prepared for the survivors and arrangements made for children to attend schools," he said. Expressing admiration for the reconstruction efforts

in the region, Steinmeier said: "As Germany, we will not forget the earthquake victims and will continue to support them." Steinmeier stated that efforts are underway to increase the number of consulate staff in Türkiye and expedite visa procedures for Turkish citizens. Steinmeier said he looks forward to Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attending Euro2024, which will be held in Germany and where the Turkish National Team will also compete.

Rwanda bill fuels migrant surge to Ireland: Micheal

LONDON : Ireland's Foreign Minister Micheal Martin said the UK's controversial Rwanda policy was already "impacting on Ireland," as many asylum seekers are pouring into the country from Northern Ireland over the fear of deportation. "Maybe that's the impact it was designed to have," Martin told the British daily Telegraph. His remarks came after Ireland's Justice Minister Helen McEntee on Thursday told a parliament scrutiny committee that more than 80% of recent asylum seekers in Ireland crossed into the country from the UK. Martin noted the policy was already "impacting on Ireland" as asylum seekers were "fearful" of staying in the UK due to the Rwanda Bill. The Rwanda Bill, seeking to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, has become law after it received royal assent on Thursday. One of the most controversial migration policies of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative government, the Rwanda plan has sparked international criticism and mass protests across the UK. The law will have to address concerns raised by the UK Supreme Court, which had ruled as unlawful the government's original plan to send asylum seekers to the East African country of Rwanda. It also compels judges to regard Rwanda as a safe country and gives Cabinet ministers the power to disregard parts of the Human Rights Act. In January 2023, Sunak said tackling small boats, carrying irregular migrants across the English Channel from France, was among the top five priorities of his government after more than 45,000 people reportedly used the route to enter the UK in 2022. —APP

EU commits \$73 million more for Gaza aid

BRUSSELS: The European Union on Friday said it was giving an extra 68 million euros (\$73 million) to provide desperately needed aid to Palestinians in Gaza. The territory has been devastated by more than six months of Israeli bombardment and ground operations after Hamas's October 7 attack, leaving the civilian population of two million people in need of humanitarian assistance to survive. "In light of the continued deterioration of the severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and the steady rise of needs on the ground, the (European) Commission is stepping up its funding to support Palestinians affected by the ongoing war," an EU statement said. "This support brings total EU humanitarian assistance to 193 million euros for Palestinians in need inside Gaza and across the region in 2024." The EU said the new aid would be focused on food deliveries, clean water, sanitation and shelters, and would be channelled through local partners on the ground. The United Nations has said Israel's operation has turned Gaza into a "humanitarian hellscape," amid fears of a looming famine. The EU and United States have demanded that Israel allows more aid into Gaza. The US military said on Thursday it had begun construction of a pier meant to boost deliveries to the territory. —APP

Saudi could get first Miss Universe contestant this year

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia could have its first Miss Universe contestant this year, organisers said this week, after a fashion model and influencer claimed she had been selected. The Miss Universe Organization "is currently undergoing a rigorous vetting process qualifying a potential candidate to be awarded the Saudi Arabia franchise", Maria Jose Unda, the organisation's coordinator of international relations, said in a statement to AFP. "We'll have a decision on the National Director for Saudi Arabia very, very soon," she said, noting it was "possible" for Saudi Arabia to have a contestant in place before the next edition of the competition, scheduled for September in Mexico. Saudi more than doubles 2030 foreign tourism target: minister The statement came after Saudi model Romy al-Qahtani created a buzz online in late March when she posted to her hundreds of thousands of Instagram followers that she was "honoured" to represent Saudi Arabia at Miss Universe at the upcoming event. The post included pictures of Qahtani, a 27-year-old native of Riyadh, in a sequined dress holding the green Saudi flag. Less than a week later, Miss Universe issued a statement referring to Qahtani's post as "false and misleading" and saying no selection process had been carried out in the Gulf kingdom. —APP

London stocks hit new record peak on takeovers

DNA

LONDON : London's stock market fired its way to another record peak on Friday, with investors gripped by a series of eye-catching takeovers this week for listed UK companies. The British capital's benchmark FTSE 100 index jumped to 8,136.52 points, notching up a record high for the fourth session running in a hectic week for merger and acquisition activity which also buoyed eurozone indices. Cybersecurity firm Darktrace on Friday became the latest target, joining mining heavyweight Anglo American and music rights owner Hipgnosis Songs Fund on the takeover roster. Investors were awaiting the release of the US Federal Reserve's preferred gauge of inflation, the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) index, hoping for an idea about its plans for interest rates ahead of next week's policy meeting.



ISLAMABAD: Visitors showing interest in the 5 Sirius winners of the Arjumand Painting Award 2023. —Photo by Mudassar Raja

UN urges action on sexual violence in Sudan

WASHINGTON : The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) called on Friday for swift action against the scourge of sexual violence in the war-torn Sudan. "After one year of hostilities in Sudan, we are appealing for more international engagement to combat sexual violence against women and girls in the country," said Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Joyce Msuya in a joint statement. "These barbaric acts, which echo the horrors witnessed in Darfur two decades ago, must spur immediate action," the officials said. "As members of the Security Council meet this week for the annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence, we urge them to send an unequivocal message: Under international humanitarian law, civilians in Sudan must be protected and must never be subjected to acts of sexual violence, which constitute war crimes," the statement said. "Allegations of rape, forced marriages, sexual slavery, and trafficking of women and girls - especially in Khartoum, Darfur, and Kordofan - continue to be recorded," it added. The officials stressed that "the true scale of this crisis remains unseen, a result of severe underreporting due to stigma, fear of reprisals, and a lack of confidence in national institutions." The officials pointed out that "without increased political and financial support for the vital work of frontline responders - especially organizations led by women - access to life-saving services will only continue to shrink." "We must continue to shore up our support for the people of Sudan - critically by combating sexual violence in all its forms and ensuring that Sudanese frontline responders stay at the centre of those efforts," they added. —DNA

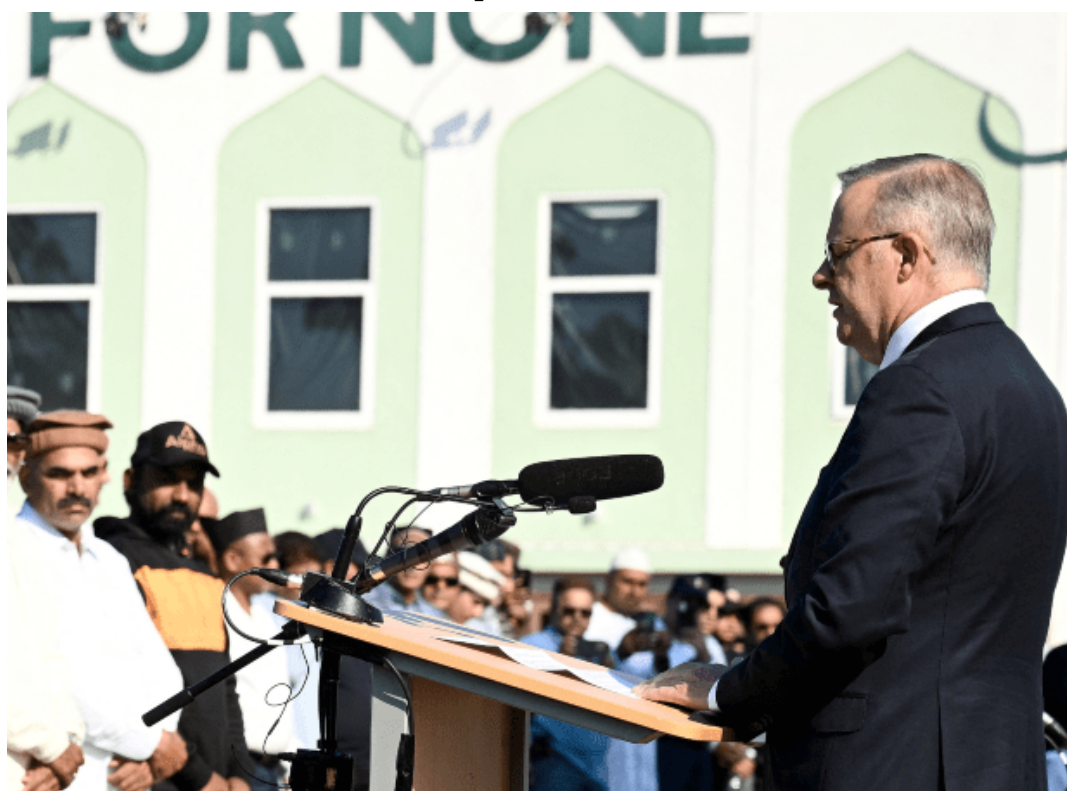
Pakistani guard killed in Sydney hailed as hero

"Running toward danger, to protect people he had never even met, without doubt, he helped save lives that day," Australian Prime Minister Albanese said. "Without question, Faraz Tahir died a hero."

DNA

SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese hailed as a hero Pakistani security guard Faraz Tahir, killed in Sydney while trying to stop a mass stabbing attack, in remarks delivered on Friday at a funeral attended by hundreds. Tahir, who would have turned 31 on Wednesday, was on the first day of his job when he became one of six killed this month during the stabbing spree at a busy mall in beachside Bondi. "Running toward danger, to protect people he had never even met, without doubt, he helped save lives that day," Albanese said. "Without question, Faraz Tahir died a hero." The ceremony was held before a crowd gathered outside the city's Baitul Huda mosque, under a banner that read "Love for all - hatred for none." Tahir arrived in Australia as a refugee from Pakistan, according to the Ahmadiyya Muslim community of Australia, to which he

belonged. Fellow security guard Muhammad Taha, injured while trying to stop the attacker, attended in a wheelchair after being released from hospital for the ceremony. He was the last to speak with Tahir as they ran towards the scene of the attack. "We were trying to save people at that time and his last words were 'Let's find out what's going on,' so we rushed towards that area," he said in comments reported by the Guardian newspaper. Tahir's brother, Mudassar Bashir, told reporters the two had spoken the evening before and promised to call the next day. They never spoke again. "Even until now, we couldn't believe that he's no more," he said at the funeral. "We are very proud of him because Islam, our religion, says that if you save even one human, you save all of humanity." Joel Cauchi, a 40-year-old who suffered mental health issues, killed five women and Tahir in the mall on April 13 before being shot dead by police.



Briefs

Shibli puts forward conditions for talks

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Opposition Leader in the Senate, Shibli Faraz on Friday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is ready for conditional talks with Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) led coalition government.

In an informal conversation with media, Shibli Faraz expressed his willingness to engage in dialogue with anyone including federal government for the betterment of Pakistan, but only if the government creates a conducive environment for talks.

He emphasized that political cases must be withdrawn, and the rule of law and constitution must be upheld, demanding the release of PTI founder Imran Khan, women, and political prisoners, however, he stressed that legal cases should be pursued if they are genuine. The PTI senator further added that the government must allow political freedom and stop political victimization.

The opposition leader said that PTI held intra-party elections for the third time, but objections were raised on the party polls again. He warned that political stability cannot be achieved in such environment. Faraz lamented that there are differences and conflicting views even within the Pakistan Muslim League (N).

Masood calls for Pak-US strategic coop

DNA

NORTH CAROLINA: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Masood Khan has called for strategic cooperation between Islamabad and Washington in various avenues of joint interest including defence. Emphasizing the enduring bond between the two countries, the ambassador during a speech at the "Ambassador Circle Series" summit hosted in the US said, "Pakistan's defence capabilities have to be built because the country has a rough neighbourhood and we hope that defence ties between Pakistan and the United States continue".

Khan stressed the importance of continued investment in both security and non-security realms between the two nations and underscored the persistent threat of terrorism, emphasizing its lethal nature not only to Pakistan and Afghanistan but also to the United States and its regional allies. "Pakistan and the United States should work for regional peace and stability through all diplomatic channels and tools," he said and stressed the need for increased trade and investment.

Another US official resigns over Gaza policy

WASHINGTON: United States State Department's spokesperson for the Middle East and North Africa, Hala Rharrit, has resigned in protest of America's policy on Gaza – at least the third high-profile resignation from the department, as pro-Palestinian demonstrations at university campuses across the country grow. Rharrit was also the Dubai Regional Media Hub's deputy director and joined the State Department almost two decades ago as a political and human rights officer, the department's website showed.

"I resigned April 2024 after 18 years of distinguished service in opposition to the United States' Gaza policy. Diplomacy, not arms. Be a force for peace and unity," Hala Rharrit wrote in a LinkedIn post, according to Al Arabiya. A State Department spokesperson, when asked about the resignation in Thursday's press briefing, said the department has channels for its workforce to share views when it disagrees with government policies. – Agencies



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Dawoodi Bohra community called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

Xi tells Blinken US, China should be 'partners, not rivals'

After meeting with Xi Jinping in Beijing, Antony Blinken says relations improving but rift remains over Ukraine war

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday told top US diplomat Antony Blinken that the world's two biggest economies should be "partners, not rivals", but that there were a "number of issues" to be resolved in their relations. Blinken, in China for the second time in less than a year, met leading Chinese politicians in Beijing. US officials said he would directly raise crucial areas of difference including Russia, Taiwan and trade. Meeting Blinken in Beijing's Great Hall of the People, Xi said the two countries had "made some positive progress" since he met with US President Joe Biden last year, according to state broadcaster CCTV. "The two countries should be partners, not rivals," Xi said. "There are still a number of issues that need to be resolved, and there is still room for further efforts," the Chinese leader added. "We hope the US can also take a positive view of China's development," he added. "When this fundamental problem is solved [...] relations can truly stabilise, get better, and move forward." Earlier, China's foreign minister Wang Yi warned Blinken that US pressure could trigger a "downward spiral", as the visiting diplomat raised concerns on issues including support for Russia.

Wang also warned that the question of self-ruled Taiwan was the "first red line" that must not be crossed in China-US relations. Blinken described his talks with Wang at the Diaoyutai state guesthouse – which lasted more than five and a half hours – as "extensive and constructive". The top US diplomat will speak to journalists later on Friday at the US embassy in Beijing. "Negative factors": China has been infuriated by Biden's pressure on the economic front – which is unlikely to ease during an election year – including a sweeping ban on semiconductor exports and efforts to wrest blockbuster video app TikTok away from its Chinese owners. Wang told Blinken that relations between the two countries were "beginning to stabilise", especially after Biden and Xi met in November near San Francisco. "But at the same time, the negative factors in the relationship are still increasing and building," Wang said. "China's legitimate development rights have been unreasonably suppressed and our core interests are facing challenges," he said, urging "respect for each other's core interests" "Should China and the United States keep in the right direction of moving forward with

stability, or return to a downward spiral? "This is a major question before our two countries and tests our sincerity and ability." **Hopes for progress:** US officials and experts believe that Xi's foremost priority is to manage headwinds in the Chinese economy and that, at least in the short term, he is looking to avoid flare-ups with the West. Blinken raised concern with Wang about China's support for Russia, which has rapidly rebuilt its military base two years into its invasion of Ukraine. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said. Russian President Vladimir Putin said this week he will visit China in May. As he opened the meeting with Wang, Blinken said China and the US should manage the relationship "responsibly" and added: "I hope we make some progress on the issues our presidents agreed" on at the California summit. The two countries should be as "clear as possible about the areas where we have differences – at the very least to avoid misunderstandings, to avoid miscalculations", Blinken said. "That really is a shared responsibility that we have not only for our own people, but for people around the world, given the impact that our relation-

ship has," he said. Biden, who recently spoke by telephone with Xi, faces a tough re-election fight in November against his predecessor Donald Trump, who has cast China as an enemy and vowed a hard line. The Biden administration has highlighted wins achieved by its diplomacy with China including what officials say is the first crackdown in years by Beijing on producers of precursor chemicals to fentanyl, the painkiller behind an addiction epidemic in the US. But while open to cooperation, Biden has increased pressure on China beyond Trump in some areas. In the latest move, the US Congress, with Biden's support, voted to force the divestment of TikTok from Chinese company ByteDance or risk a ban in the United States. US officials allege security and privacy concerns over the app, which has taken off among US teenagers. ByteDance denies the allegations and has insisted it has no intention of selling. But he insisted the US would stand up for its interests. He said he had been "extremely clear" in his meeting with Xi about Washington's concerns over Chinese supplies to the Russian arms industry, and added: "We'll have to see what actions follow from that." – Agencies

UNODC, Pakistan join hands to combat smuggling of migrants

"This regional cooperation workshop constitutes a veritable part of our desire to benefit from the perspectives, expertise, as well as cooperation of our regional and int'l partners

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) are hosting a regional conference in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the European Union (EU) to discuss the challenges of smuggling migrants on 26-27 April at the Marriott Hotel Islamabad. Migrant smuggling is a crime with high profits and a low risk of punishment for the criminals involved. Smugglers sell illegal and dangerous services to desperate people and are often part of a well-organized, multinational network. International cooperation is vital to combat this crime. "This regional cooperation workshop constitutes a veritable part of our desire to benefit from the perspectives, expertise, as well as cooperation of our regional and international partners. The international

community needs a "comprehensive approach" that helps safe, orderly and regular migration on the one hand, while addressing the negative impacts of irregular migration on the other" said Mr. Syrus-Sajjad Qazi, the Foreign Secretary. "Recent incidents, including the tragic event where 350 Pakistanis were on board a packed trawler that capsized off southern Greece on 14 June 2023, are a stark reminder of the urgent need for increased collaboration among nations to effectively address this complex crime," said Jeremy Milsom, UNODC Representative in Pakistan. The conference, held as part of the PROTECT: Improving Migration Management and Migrant Protection in Selected Silk Route Countries project, funded by the European Union, and implemented in the framework of the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT), will explore mechanisms to improve information-sharing between countries and emphasize victim-centered approaches to combat migrant smuggling. The Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Pakistan, Mr. Philipp Gross, highlighted: "The importance of regional cooperation cannot be overstated in addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by human trafficking and smuggling of migrants.

Pakistan reaffirms its commitment to SCO



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Defence & Defence Production Khawaja Muhammad Asif is leading the Pakistan delegation to Kazakhstan for the annual meeting of the Defence Ministers of member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The meeting reviewed the regional security issues, including the defence cooperation initiatives, a news release said. The Defence Minister also held meetings with the defence ministers of the friendly countries of the SCO to discuss issues of bilateral defence cooperation. Various areas of mutual interest including respective regional security, counter terrorism, Afghanistan situation and review of national security priorities, extremist threats, border management and maritime security were also deliberated upon. Minister of Defence

stated that Pakistan is deeply concerned about the escalating situation in Gaza. Pakistan has consistently advocated for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian question anchored in international law and in line with relevant United Nations resolutions. He also said that Pakistan reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the SCO platform. "I would reiterate that Pakistan takes great pride in our partnership with SCO and are fully committed to further deepening and expanding this association", said the Minister for Defence while addressing the forum. During the gathering, a significant protocol was signed, underscoring the collective commitment of all SCO members towards fostering peace and cooperation in the region. – DNA

Reduction in crime rate top priority, says Naqvi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: After Punjab, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has said that reducing the crime rate in Islamabad is a top priority. Talking to media after visiting Public Facilitation Center in the federal capital on Friday, Mohsin Naqvi said that if crime can be brought down by 30 percent in Punjab, then it can be brought down in Islamabad as well.

The Interior Minister said that IG Islamabad does not sleep or let anyone sleep. "I am the son-in-law of a martyr, the families of martyrs are the first priority and all their problems will be solved," he added.

Mohsin Naqvi said, overbidding problem is also included in the priorities, the more electricity you use, the more the bill will come.

He further said that Shahbaz Sharif is like an elder brother and I always had a good relationship with him, said Mohsin Naqvi.

He said the news regarding his relationship with the Prime Minister is baseless and those who are desirous of his bad relations with the PM will be disappointed.

Mohsin Naqvi said that work has been started for the establishment of forensic laboratory and a prison in the federal capital. He said police stations of the capital will be transformed within three to four months. He said a criteria will be put in place for the registration of FIRs. He said the Safe City project will be further upgraded.

US to withdraw troops from African states

WASHINGTON: Washington will fully withdraw its troops from Niger and is also relocating military personnel stationed in Chad, as it considers other options for continuing America's counterterrorism mission in the Sahel region, the Pentagon announced on Thursday.

The move comes in response to demands from the military governments of both African nations that US forces discontinue operations there. Last month, Niger's new leadership terminated a security agreement with the US, declaring as unwelcome the presence of 1,000 American troops stationed in the West African country.

Chad, which shares a border with Niger, has also reportedly questioned whether an existing agreement covered US troops deployed at the only American air base in the Central African nation.

Pentagon press secretary Major General Pat Ryder told reporters on Thursday that Washington will "reposition" the approximately 100-strong contingent stationed in Chad.

"This is a temporary step as part of the ongoing review of our security cooperation, which will resume after Chad's May 6th presidential election," Ryder said. – Agencies

Iran, China discuss military co-op

ASTANA: Iran and China's defense chiefs discussed ways to enhance military cooperation, also conferring on regional issues. Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani met with his Chinese counterpart Dong Jun on the sidelines of the 21st meeting of SCO Defense Ministers in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Friday.

Ashtiani hailed China's stance on the ongoing developments in the region and its condemnation of Israel's terrorist airstrike against Iran's diplomatic premise in the Syrian capital of Damascus earlier this month. It is necessary for Iran and China to boost cooperation and convergence to solve security issues in the region and across the world, the Iranian defense chief said. On April 1, the Israeli regime carried out terrorist airstrikes on the consular section of Iran's embassy in the Syrian capital, which killed two generals of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi and General Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, as well as five of their accompanying officers. – Agencies

Student protests continue at 44 US universities

Gaza health ministry said that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli bombardments and shooting attacks, which started on October 7, climbed to 34,356 martyrs

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Thousands of students continued their protests in dozens of US universities, rejecting the Israeli genocide in the Gaza Strip, and demanding an end to the war and the US support for it. Protests have popped up in about 44 US universities and colleges despite police arrest campaigns against students and organizers who support them. The American students movement in support of the Palestinian people is expanding from Los Angeles to New York, passing through Austin, Boston, Chicago, and Atlanta, where demonstrations and protests were organized at a number of world prestigious universities such as Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Princeton. The students were able to set up more tent encampments in many universities to deliver their message to local communities and decision-makers in Washington about the need for immediate intervention

Hamas 'committed' to captive release

Egypt sending ceasefire delegation to Israel

FOREIGN DESK

GAZA: The Palestinian resistance group Hamas said it has agreed to reach an agreement with Israel if its conditions, including that of a lasting ceasefire in Gaza, are met, Arab media reported on Friday. Khalil al-Hayya, a member of the Hamas' political bureau, affirmed, "Hamas is serious about releasing Israeli captives within the framework of an agreement" that stresses the liberation of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli

jails. At least 17 countries, including Israel's closest ally the United States, issued on Wednesday an appeal for Hamas to release captives as a crucial step towards resolving the crisis in Gaza. "We call for the immediate release of all hostages held by Hamas in Gaza now for over 200 days," the leaders of the 17 countries said. Besides the US, the countries include Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Thailand and the United Kingdom.

to stop the war and support Palestinian rights. The students are seeking to put pressure on the US administration to withdraw investments from Israel and the companies supporting it. They are calling as well for boycotting Israeli universities complicit in the genocide against the Palestinian people. Professors as well as students were arrested by the police from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, during a demonstration in solidarity with the Gaza Strip, amid assaults, rubber bullets, and tear gas. Video clips showed the police arresting and assaulting the head of the Philosophy Department, Noelle McAfee, and Professor of Economics, Carolyn Fohlin, at Emory University, after they participated in a protest demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and an end to the US support for Israel. The scenes show the police treating Fohlin violently at the university, throwing her to the ground before arresting her, while she was telling them that she was a professor at the university.