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UNHRC chief Volker Turk urges action to end Gaza crisis

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Faizabad inquiry commission gives clean hit to Faiz

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Rizwan close to surpass Kohli, Babar's record

Detailed News On Page-06

New dimensions in bilateral ties Saudi FM vows all-out support for Pakistan progress

Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was functioning like one window for fast-tracking foreign investment: foreign minister

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, who is in Islamabad on a two-day official visit, has reiterated that the kingdom will play its all-out role in the economic development of the country. "We will keep a follow on the constructive talks held between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia," the Saudi foreign minister said while addressing a joint presser along with Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Tuesday in Islamabad. Prince Faisal said the visit of a high-level Saudi delegation is a result of a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman during the former's visit to the kingdom. He said the Saudi delegation is visiting Pakistan on the direction of the Saudi crown prince. "Thank you very much for your welcome and hospitality in Pakistan," he added. The Saudi FM highlighted that there are various avenues to increase investment in Pakistan and added that important work in this regard will be done in the next few months. "We will work together

Islamabad, Riyadh need to expedite investments: PM

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said that Islamabad and Riyadh need to work closely to expedite the first phase of Saudi investments under the new arrangement. The premier made these comments as he met with a high-level Saudi delegation led by its Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, who are in Pakistan on an official visit. The two-day visit comes soon after PM Shehbaz visited Saudi Arabia, during which the kingdom had doubled down on its pledge to speed up the initial phase of their \$5 billion investment in Pakistan. Earlier this month, a Pakistani news channel reported that Saudi Arabia was expected to invest \$1 billion in the Reko Diq project. During the meeting today, PM Shehbaz expressed his deep appreciation for the leadership of KSA and conveyed his sincerest wishes to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. The prime minister also underscored the significance accorded by Pakistan to its longstanding fraternal, economic and strategic relations with Saudi Arabia. He said both countries had always

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ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Prince Faisal bin Farhan al-Saud, leading a high level delegation, called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. — DNA

Iran 'frees' Pakistanis onboard seized Israeli cargo ship

Development comes after Pakistani captive's family urge govt.

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Iranian government Tuesday allowed the two Pakistanis aboard an Israeli ship to return to Pakistan. According to the sources, Iran permitted the release of the Pakistani captives following efforts by the Foreign Office. They added that the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam assured the release of both Pakistanis, further sharing that the Iranian ambassador made the assurance in a meeting at the PO. "Iran has informed that Pakistani personnel are free to return home," the source said, adding that the captain of the ship has the power to disembark whenever his crew allows. At least two Pakistanis, among

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Amid soaring inflation Govt siphoning off people's hard-earned money: Omar Ayub

Unemployment and inflation are on the rise, said Omar Ayub. Insists PML-N-led federal govt is standing on "crutches"

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Hitting hard the PML-N-led government over soaring inflation, PTI Central General Secretary Omar Ayub Khan has said the incumbent rulers are siphoning off people's hard-earned money like pick-pockets. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad on Tuesday, Ayub, who is also the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, said: "Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is siphoning off money from people's pocket." He slammed the government for its "failure" in providing immediate relief to the inflation-hit masses and said: "Unemployment and inflation are on the rise in the country." In his force presser, the PTI leader also criticised the Maryam Nawaz-led Punjab government for its popular decision about reducing the price of roti (flat bread made in tandoor) to Rs16, saying that she did not know about the "economy". A day earlier, the Punjab government, as part of its

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Rana Sana 'turns down' key position in Punjab govt

The Punjab Cabinet will be expanded after the by-elections

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah has reportedly 'turned down' a key position in the Punjab government. The sources privy to the development said that the Punjab government led by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz offered Rana Sanaullah to join the cabinet as Advisor on Law and Parliamentary Affairs. The sources added that the former interior minister turned down the offer, maintaining that he would not accept

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Briefs

IHC dismisses Bushra Bibi's plea for shifting

Judged warned the petitioner to avoid politicking

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday dismissed Bushra Bibi's plea to shift her from Bangla to the Adiala Jail due to non following by the defence counsel. Justice Mian Gul Hassan Aurangzeb, who heard Bushra Bibi's plea, asked about the absence of defence counsel, observing that the court had already announced it would formally declare the decision after today's hearing. Expressing displeasure over the absence of the defence lawyer, he warned the petitioner to avoid politicking. Bushra Bibi would have been shifted to the Adiala Jail if the defence had won the case.

Women torture: cop reacted upon women refusal

DNA

LAHORE: Explaining the circumstances behind police official torturing the woman on Millat Express train, Pakistan Railways spokesperson Bahar Ali Raza on Tuesday said the woman was sitting on another passenger's seat and the cop subjected her to torture after trying real hard to remove her from there. "Then, police constable Mir Hasan begged the woman, identified as Maryam, for about 20-25 minutes to get up from the other passenger's seat, but she refused," he said. "All this information has been received from the passengers present there. What happened next is in the video," he said.

Threat to CPEC Afghanistan-based terrorists acting as proxies

Military warns of stern action against 'malicious propaganda targeting armed forces'



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir addressing the corps commanders conference. — DNA

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Expressing concerns over the malicious propaganda against armed forces during 25th Corps Commanders' Conference, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Tuesday vowed ensuring stern action against elements trying to drive a wedge between the nation and the security forces by levelling unfounded and baseless allegations.

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Need 2-3 years for structural reforms, says Finance Minister

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, attended the G-24 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meeting

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said that Pakistan needs two to three years to implement structural reforms prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Speaking at the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington, Aurangzeb said that Pakistan doesn't need more policy prescriptions as it knows what it needs to keep the economy steady which is implementation of reforms. "We have known the what and why not for years but for decades. I... It's time for us to actually start moving the execution of these aspects and why we're looking for a larger and extended program, so once we get into the execution we will need a two to three-year period to go through the structural reforms," said Aurangzeb. The finance minister is currently in the US to hold talks with the global lender for a new bailout package and attend the World Bank meetings.

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Electricity prices likely to go up again

This time, the CPPA has asked for an increase of Rs2.94 per unit

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The electricity prices in Pakistan are likely to see another hike as the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) has filed an application at the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) for an increase in power tariff. The application came days after the NEPRA notified a hike of Rs4.92 per unit in electricity prices. This time, the CPPA has asked for an increase of Rs2.94 per unit in fuel price adjustment charges for March 2024 bills. The NEPRA will set a date to conduct a hearing on the application

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Denmark to close its Iraq embassy

The diplomatic mission in Baghdad was formally opened in 2020

OSLO: Denmark will close down its embassy in Iraq on May 31, the Danish foreign ministry said in a statement on Tuesday. The diplomatic mission in Baghdad was formally opened in 2020 to support the Danish command over and contribution to the NATO Mission Iraq (NMI). The majority of the Danish military contribution has since been withdrawn. — Agencies

Nawaz Sharif election victory challenged

Yasmin alleges results manipulated in favour of Nawaz

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Dr Yasmin Rashid on Tuesday challenged Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif's victory in the NA-130 constituency during the February 8 nationwide polls in the election tribunal. Rashid filed a petition in the election tribunal against the former premier through her lawyers Ahmed Awais and Rana Mudassar. She stated in her petition that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) issued



the notification of Nawaz's victory in violation of the law. The politician from the Imran Khan-founded party had contested

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APRIL 2024

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YEAR IN REVIEW 2023

Walton Tobacco workers seek justice over factory closure

Factory spokesman says they are facing receiving threats of serious consequences from AJK administration

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The employees and workers of the Walton Tobacco Company have appealed the Chief Justice of Azad Kashmir to take notice of factory's illegal closure. The Chief Justice of Azad Kashmir to take notice of illegal closure of the factory by the administration demanding immediate de-closure of the premises as families of more than 400 workers are facing critical conditions due to workers being unemployed following the closure. The employees and workers urged the Chief Justice of Azad Kashmir for justice saying they were the victims of exploitation and were suffering due to the administration's illegal act. On the other hand, Spokesman Walton Tobacco Company Arif Zia said that they were

receiving threats of serious consequences from the administration of Azad Kashmir. He further said that Walton was the highest tax-paying company in Azad Kashmir, which pays 240 million rupees to the national exchequer every month. Addressing a press conference earlier this week, Arif Zia informed that his company was raided illegally, was subsequently sealed while all the products were seized. Leaders of factory workers Subhanul Ali and Umar Ahmed said that AJK government's indifferent attitude was disappointing as they did not follow the fine process. The government's action was biased and based on unfounded assumptions. They said that the factory owners were treated like thieves, which is discouraging for the highest taxpayers and would result in discouraging investor en-

tering AJK market. Arif Zia said that unemployment rate is increasing in Azad Kashmir due to these factors on part of Azad Kashmir government. Earlier, workers and employees of Walton Tobacco Company held a protest demonstration at Ramzanpuri Road outside the factory in Mirpur Chattrapatti, and demanded the administration to immediately de-closure the factory. They warned the administration to expanding the scope of their protest movement in order to win their jobs and normal life back to their families who were suffering. The workers said their families could not tolerate it because the factory was sealed during the holy month of Ramadan. Walton Tobacco Company spokesman Arif Zia said that the Azad Kashmir government should not crack down against sale of illegal cigarettes in the market.



ISLAMABAD: Prince Faisal bin Furhan Al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs KSA, accompanied by a delegation, met with General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS).— DNA

Dengue prevention action plan meeting held

ISLAMABAD: Provincial Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah on Tuesday chaired a meeting regarding prevention and action plan of dengue. Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah, brought together key stakeholders including Dr. Shahid Ali, Director General Health, Dr. Arshad Roghani, Director Public Health, DHO Swabi, DHO Charsadda, and representatives from WHO, UNICEF along with other implementing partners and relevant officials. Dr. Imshad Roghani, Director Public Health and Incharge Dengue Control Program, briefed the Health Minister on the Dengue Action Plan 2024. Health Minister was informed that Dengue advisory societies have already been issued to DHOs and MSs. Last year, the threat of Dengue persisted due to rains, and this year, expected rains necessitate timely action. The Dengue Action Plan has already been formulated and sent for formal approval to the Chief Secretary. Syed Qasim Ali Shah was informed that a multisectoral approach has been adopted to control Dengue this time as well. The plan includes timely disposal of Dengue larvae and further enhancement of public health services. Antigenic Disease Surveillance and Response System will monitor the Dengue outbreak timely. A Dengue Control Room will also be established under the Directorate General Health Services.—APP

IIUI ranked among top 51-100 in QS World subject rankings

The first time the university is placed in Physics at 601-640 across the world in the latest edition by the world's top most university rankings agency QS

ISLAMABAD: International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) has been named as one of the world's top universities and placed among 51-100 in the subjects of Theology, Divinity & Religious Studies and is placed at 351-400 in Mathematics across the world in the latest 2024 edition by the world's top most university rankings agency QS (Quacquarelli Symonds). In addition, for the first time the university is placed in Physics at 601-640 across the world in the latest edition by the world's top most university rankings agency QS. Earlier, IIUI was ranked 249th in QS Asia University Rankings 2024 as well as IIUI was placed at 89th position in QS Southern Asia University Rankings 2024 by QS. IIUI Rector, Dr. Samia Malik and President, Dr. Khalid Hussain Moini, while expressing gratitude for the achievement con-

gratulated the academic and administrative staff of the institution and hoped that they would remain committed to the university in the future by continuing their hard work so that the institution gets the top slot in all world rankings in the future. They specially appreciated the hard work of Director Quality Assurance Department (QAD) and his team. The recent positive results generated by IIUI are outcome of continued reforms and initiatives introduced by the university management that includes preparation of university's new strategic plan that also helped in glowing ex-act view of the university accomplishments on scientific basis. The university leadership believes that upcoming ranking will be much positive as new reforms and initiatives have entered into the advanced stages through various steps taken such as imple-

SACM pays surprise visit to TVC, checks attendance

DNA
PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Tordip paid a surprise visit to Government Technical and Vocational Centre, Gulbahar on Tuesday. During the visit he checked the register, electronic attendance of staff, went to 12 different departments to review teaching and training programmes. He also met with the teachers and students and held a detailed discussion with the Principal of the centre. Talking to the principal and other administrative and teaching staff at the centre, he emphasised on the implementation of various suggestions to make the centre financially stable and self-reliant while increasing the efficiency of the centre. The Special Assistant said that there is an urgent need to work on self-reliance proposals to financially stabilize the Vocational Centre of Gulbahar and the products produced here serve as samples for the market and make it able to produce its own resources for its own annual budget.

Minister urges top facilities to boost Mansehra tourism

Zahid Chanzab said that tourism police and motorcycles will be placed under the district administration at the tourist spots of Mansehra

PESHAWAR: Zahid Chanzab, Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture has said that the KP government will not transfer the officers and employees with excellent performance. However, he cautioned that those officials who failed to perform will be removed from office. Zahid Chanzab also reiterated the pledge of his government that it will be provided in Mansehra and the problems of the local population will be solved as soon as possible. He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting reporting provision of facilities to tourists at tourist places and renewing administrative functions in Mansehra in the forthcoming tourism season on Tuesday. Deputy Commissioner Mansehra Captain (P) Bilal Shahid Ray, DPO Mansehra Shahfaiz Gaudapour, DG Galipat Development Authority Shahzad Ali Khan, DC Radhan Development Authority Shubir Khan, DHO Health and officers of the concerned departments attended. On this occasion, the Advisor to Tourism and Culture, was thoroughly briefed regarding the tourist spots and the measures taken for the provision of tourism. Zahid Chanzab said that tourism police and motorcycles will be placed under the district administration at the tourist spots of Mansehra and provision of facilities to tourists will be ensured in any case. He issued the instructions that the tourism police must ensure patrolling of the tourist places in collaboration with the traffic police. He said that police should improve its attitude to attract maximum tourists in the region. He said that a peaceful environment in Mansehra especially in the tourist places would not only boost the tourism, business and sales but also investment in the tourism industry would be boosted up, that would naturally improve the economic conditions of the people here. He also asked the traffic and tourism police that vehicle challans should be minimized during the tourism season and no faces should be imposed on tourist vehicles without any major violation and facilities should be provided to tourists as much as possible. Zahid Chanzab further asked the highways of Khyber Development Authority to ensure the supply of litter bins and other machinery through the available funds of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Integrated

Rains may escalate breeding of dengue larvae; DC

KHALID HUSSAIN MOINI: The present spell of rains could escalate the breeding of dengue larvae, which needed immediate steps to tackle it. Deputy Commissioner Hassan Waqar Chغتوا said this while chairing a meeting to review anti-dengue arrangements here at his office. He directed the departments concerned to implement Anti-dengue SOPs in letter and spirit and create awareness among the people about the hazardous virus. Chغتوا directed the officials that after conducting indoor and outdoor surveillance, completely clear the areas affected by the dengue virus last year. The DC also asked the people to remove stagnant water in outdoor and household settings to stop mosquitoes from breeding after rain and submerged wa-



ISLAMABAD: A review meeting of the Fertilizer Review Committee held under the chairmanship of Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for M/O Industries & Production and M/O National Food Security & ARP.

Law and order situation to restore at any cost: Lanjar

Zia-ul-Hasan Lanjar said that anti dacoit operation by police, once started, will continue till all gangs and their members are eliminated

DNA
SUKKUR: Home Minister Sindh Zia-ul-Hasan Lanjar has said that the top priority of the Sindh government was to restore law and order situation at any cost in the province. During his visit to different districts Tuesday he said that the Police and Rangers were not only carrying out targeted operations in Karachi but also cracking down on street crimes. He said that anti dacoit operation by police, once started, will continue till all gangs and their mem-

No.3CF/4P/Adv./0003/EPADS/EC/Isld (Press) 2023-2024 dated 16-04-2024

PAKISTAN RAILWAYS
CARRIAGE FACTORY ISLAMABAD

INVITATION TO BIDS THROUGH EPADS

Managing Director Pakistan Railways Carriage Factory IJ Principal Road Sector I-114, Islamabad invites bids from the original manufacturers/authorized distributors/suppliers/Contractors etc. registered with Income Tax & Sales Tax Departments and who are on Active Taxpayers List of the Federal Board of Revenue having registered office for supply against following tenders in accordance with Single Stage-two Envelope bidding procedure as per rule 36 (b) of Public Procurement Rules-2004.

Sl	Tender/Bid Number	EPADS Tender Number	Description Of Material	Tender Closing Date and time	Tender Opening Date & Time
1.	3CF/4P/0826/2023	F-240453066	MS Pipe etc. = 06 items	02-05-2024 at 12:00 hrs	02-05-2024 at 12:30 hrs
2.	3CF/4P/0788-T/2023	F-240453067	Sealed Compressor = 01 item	02-05-2024 at 12:00 hrs	02-05-2024 at 12:30 hrs
3.	3CF/4P/0788-T/2023	F-240453068	SC 20 Broad Electric Connector, Condenser Fan Motor, Evaporator Fan etc. = 05 items	02-05-2024 at 12:00 hrs	02-05-2024 at 12:30 hrs
4.	3CF/4P/0788-V/2023	F-240453069	Combine 06 Row Evaporator, Fan Motor = 04 items	02-05-2024 at 12:00 hrs	02-05-2024 at 12:30 hrs
5.	3CF/4P/0797/2023	F-240453070	MS Welding Electrodes = 03 items	06-05-2024 at 12:30 hrs	06-05-2024 at 12:30 hrs
6.	3CF/4P/0843-B/2023	F-240453075	MS Channel etc. = 06 items	06-05-2024 at 12:00 hrs	06-05-2024 at 12:30 hrs
7.	3CF/4P/0824/2023	F-240453077	Repair/Replacement, Commissioning, testing and Successful Operation of BUTT SEAM WELDING MACHINE No.014 installed at Bay-G of CFI - 01 ARI	06-05-2024 at 12:00 hrs	06-05-2024 at 12:30 hrs

1. Bid only through E-Pak Acquisition and Disposal System (EPADS) will be entertained. (www.ppr.gov.pk) No bid other than EPADS will be accepted. Bid Security will be submitted before closing of tender physically in tender box in the Office of District Controller of Purchase, Pakistan Railways Carriage Factory, IJ Principal Road, I-114, Islamabad. Bidder will also upload the complete scanned copy of their bid in EPADS.

2. Bidding documents, containing detailed terms and conditions, can be downloaded from <https://e-procure.gov.pk> free of cost.

3. The bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in bidding documents, must be submitted on EPADS as per schedule mentioned in the table above.

4. Tenders are invited on DAP basis.

5. This advertisement is also available on following websites- (www.pakrail.gov.pk) (www.ppr.gov.pk)

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PID (I) 8100/23

National Days and Armed Forces Days

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

Hotels & Restaurants

- Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
- Marriott.....051-2826121
- Monal.....034-5421812
- Turkish Airlines.....8494949

Emergency

- Rescue (Police).....15
- Bomb Disposal.....15
- Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
- Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & 16
- Motorway Police.....9266044
- Motorway Police.....92760120
- Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
- Rawalpindi.....92760120

Enquiry

- Ethi Ambulance.....315
- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Enquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange.....9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi.....5554869
- CAA.....9281092

Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
- MH.....5611116
- Cant Hospital.....9270907-11
- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603966

Departments

- CDA.....9221334-43
- CDA.....9208301-04
- Met Office.....925360-6
- RDA.....5555864
- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif presenting a souvenir to H.E. Mr. Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan.—APP

CM Maryam reprimands MS Tehsil HQs Hospital Murree

The criticism came for Making Patients Wait in Long Queues

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif expressed indignation on seeing long queues of patients in OPD, when she suddenly reached Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Murree. She reprimanded the MS for making patients wait, and warned them, "Fix the hospital system, patients are dying." Chief Minister visited various departments and wards of the hospital including OPD, Emergency, Medical Ward, Gynecology and Nursery. She consoled a sick mother and her daughter, "Do not panic! Insha Allah will be fine." The Chief Minister expressed her love and compassion for a little child under

treatment there, and directed the doctor to provide him best treatment facilities. She also visited patients in the emergency ward one by one and prayed for their speedy recovery. Madam Chief Minister directed to ensure better care of patients in the Emergency. The Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif interacted with the patients and their families and inquired them about facilities in the hospital. She also inquired them about the provision of free medicines and medical tests in the hospital. She inspected the PCU center, and reviewed treatment facilities there. An elderly patient told Madam Chief Minister, "Medicines are being received, there is no problem." Madam Chief Minister on her return from the



hospital, posed for a picture and hugged a female security guard on her request. CM for improved hospital management system

on Tuesday and examined various departments of the hospital. The chief minister expressed anger on seeing the long cues of patients in the OPD. She reprimanded the hospital medical superintendent and directed for an improved OPD system to avoid long waiting for the visiting patients. Fix the hospital system, patients are dying, she warned. CM visited various departments and patients' wards of the hospital. While interacting with the women waiting in the queue, she inquired about any problems they were facing and assured them for early resolution of the issues. The chief minister inspected the medical facilities and interacted with under treatment patients in OPD. She also consoled the sick mother and

daughter, expressed her compassion to the little child and directed the doctor for the best treatment of them. The Chief Minister visited the patients in the emergency ward and prayed for their early recovery. She directed for better care of patients in the emergency department. The chief minister also interacted with patients' attendants and inquired about the provision of free medicines to the patients and medical tests facilities by the hospital. During the visit Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif also inspected the PCU center, reviewed the facilities in the medical ward, gynecology wards and children's nursery. The patients of the hospital expressed their joy during CM's visit and her conversation with them.

Tandoors/Nan-bais defy govt's Roti, Naan price reduction in ICT

ISLAMABAD: In response to this initiative of the Punjab government, the federal capital has also reduced the prices of bread and naan by fixing their prices at Rs 16 and Rs 20 respectively, however, Tandoor and Nanbais kept their prices while refusing to obey the government order. The district administration issued a notification fixing the prices of Roti and Naan at Rs 16 and Rs 20 for a standard serving size of 120 grams. Assistant Commissioners and Price Control National agents have been tasked with ensuring the enforcement of these new prices across Islamabad. In line with Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nazam Memon's instructions, Assistant Commissioner Secretariat Abdullah Khan convened a meeting with the Nanbais Association to discuss the implementation of the revised prices. Despite these efforts, Tandoors/Nanbais in the twin cities are standing firm on their prices, declining to reduce them as per the government's rates. Talking to APP, a citizen named Muhammad Tassam, a resident of the Sohan area lamented the lack of reduction in prices at local Tandoors and Nanbais, where Roti was still being sold at Rs 20 and Naan at Rs 25. Similarly, Shabber Hassan from the G-8 area, highlighted that despite the government's intervention, Tandoors and Nanbais in the Federal Capital were selling Roti at Rs 25 and Naan at Rs 30, placing a financial burden on the residents. When contacted by the Spokesman of ICT, Dr. Abdullah Tabassum, he assured that strict action would be taken against those violating the price regulations. He emphasized that Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates have been assigned specific tasks to ensure compliance with the new Roti and Naan prices in Islamabad.—DNA

UPU launches 1st comprehensive state of postal sector report

ISLAMABAD: The Universal Postal Union (UPU) has launched its first comprehensive state of the postal sector report, which identifies, for the first time, a clear causal link between countries' post development and national economic growth, particularly in times of economic shocks and crises. Comparing postal development scores with the growth in real GDP, the report finds a strong correlation between the levels of postal development and the intensity of post-pandemic economic recovery, meaning a well-functioning postal sector led to greater economic recovery after the global health crisis.—APP

NPO to organize two-day online workshop on 'Advance Excel'

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a two-day online workshop on "Advance Excel" from April 24 to 25. The workshop aimed at providing skills and knowledge which would al-

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ACT Alliance for action against tax evasion, smuggling

ISLAMABAD: The ACT Alliance, comprising 17 civil society organizations, on Tuesday urged the authorities concern to take concrete measures against tax evasion and smuggling which were badly impacting the national economy. In this regard, a meeting was convened by the ACT Alliance (Action and Counter Illicit Trade), during which the ACT Alliance's Chief Executive Mubashir Akram, provided an alarming overview of the escalating scale of tax evasion and smuggling within Pakistan, with a particular focus on the rice and lubricant, cigarettes, tea, real estate, and pharmaceutical sectors, said a news release.

Mubashir Akram outlined disturbing trends, emphasizing how illicit trade/smuggling drains Pakistan's economy. Citing a recent report from February, he said that Pakistan loses approximately Rs5.5 trillion (approximately \$21 billion) annually due to tax evasion, while illicit trading causes an additional loss of nearly Rs1 trillion (approximately \$3.77 billion) to the nation's exchequer. The figures highlighted a dire need for immediate and robust intervention to stem this economic bleed.

The following discussion expressed deep concerns, and there was a consensus on the critical impact of tax evasion and illicit trading practices on the national economy and the urgent need for comprehensive action.

The representatives expressed that the scale of these activities undermines legitimate businesses and deprives the government of significant revenue, which could otherwise be utilized for public welfare and development. The ACT Alliance, established in October 2016, has been at the forefront of combating illicit trade in Pakistan. It aims to address some of the country's most pressing economic challenges, including illicit trading, tax evasion, smuggling, and counterfeiting. Through its efforts, the Alliance seeks to cut the financial losses due to these illicit activities by at least 20 percent.—APP

Impact of industrial pollution on environment

RMISHA GHULAM

Industrial pollution is an important factor to contaminate the environment. It results in environmental degradation and imposes heavy costs on environment as well as on human health and safety. Textiles, cement, glass, plastic, sugar, tanning, petroleum are major polluting industries. Due to rapid economic development, environmental pollution has escalated over the last few decades. It is mainly due to manufacturing and industrial sectors, which is the backbone of a country's economy. Statistics show that about 50% of pollution is due to industries and manufacturing units. The biotic and abiotic factor of environment are severely affected due to industrial pollution. It also threatens the people's safety, their lives and wealth, causes many interrelated social problems. Industrial pollution causes many changes in the environment like energy patterns, radiation, chemical and physical constituents of the environment. These factors alter the water supply, which affect agriculture output directly or indirectly. Major industrial pollutants include chemical compounds, gravel, concrete, dirt, ammonia gas, nitrogen compounds, scrap metal, oil and heavy metals. It account for wide ranging environmental damage. It includes pollution (land, water and air), noise control, and waste disposal health and safety aspects. The gaseous pollutants include sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide. These pollutants discharge in large quantities from various industries. These are the primary source of environmental damage and may cause respiratory disorders in human. Due to urbanization and industrialization and increasing demand for energy, the burning of fossil fuels and waste product in industries intensify serious issue of air pollution. These air pollutants affect plant and humans or can acid rain, which depletes earth crust during the past decade. Pakistan is witnessing the serious issue of smog, particularly during winter. The increasing growth rate in industrial sectors releases more oxides of harmful gases which are the main cause of smog, and being breathing comfort respiratory disorders. Similarly all industrial sectors release waste (chemical or solid material) on open ground or water channel. These effluents are highly toxic organic chemicals, inorganic salts, heavy metals and mineral acid. When these effluents enter certain water bodies like river, lakes, oceans, the result is the pollution of water rendering it harmful and cause many environmental problems. Industrial pollution is the biggest contributor to land and soil pollution and it is increasing by 2% every year. It is typically caused by industrial activities and processing of heavy metals. The improper disposal of waste material is a serious threat to soil pollution. It affect soil properties, changes the pH of the soil and make the soil acidic or alkaline. Acidic or alkaline soil indirectly affects the decomposition process and the nutrients cycle, and create ecological imbalance. Due to industrial pollution various issues like global warming, ozone depletion, land pollution, natural resources degradation, rising sea level, poisoned air, and food contaminated with pesticides are serious threat regionally and globally. There is a great need to create mass awareness for environmental degradation and its implications. Self monitoring and reporting system can make the industry owner held accountable for systematic reporting and reporting of their environmental performances. It is important to implement such policies and practices that can preserve the environment from harmful hazards. Regulatory bodies must show their concern and response to the harmful impact of industrial sectors. They need to implement such control measures and practices that uncover the huge loss of the environment and society due to industrial pollution. It should make clear and apparent to industries and society that our aim must not be short term gain but a secure environment for the next generation.

Briefs

Pakistan has no future sans tax policy reforms

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Samina Fazil, the founder and President of the Islamabad Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IWCCI), said on Tuesday that Pakistan's future appears to be dimming if significant improvements to the country's tax policy are not implemented.

She went on to say that the harmful impacts of inflation and the sharp increase in energy prices can be ascribed to the failure of a large number of small and medium-sized businesses. As a result of the possibility that allowing sugar exports would lead to an increase in inflation, she urged that this practice be prohibited.

During her address to the business community, Samina Fazil stated that Pakistan could not continue to exist with the current tax system, dismally low revenue and irresponsible spending which results in continued borrowing. Therefore, the country needs short-term and long-term tax policy reforms while taxes on non-essential and luxury items should be increased.

The government must make tough decisions to fix economic problems and implement recommendations of lenders to come out of the current economic mess. However, she regretted that so far the efforts have been spared from the impact of the IMF wish list, and the whole burden has been placed on the masses, who are reeling under unprecedented inflation and unemployment.

Critical flaws within Pakistan's tax system have caused an estimated loss of \$657 billion during the last seven years in only one sector, which politicians dominate. Lashing out on the energy policy, the business leader said that Pakistan has one of the world's lowest per capita electricity consumption and the lowest outside of Sub-Saharan Africa. Pakistan is plunging further into the energy poverty zone due to the wrong policy of increasing energy prices very frequently. Despite rising urbanisation, the average consumption per electricity connection in Pakistan is at a 20-year low which is a real threat to prosperity. Pakistan's per capita income is dwindling and unemployment is rising. Still, the effective electricity tariff for use beyond 300 units is now comparable to the USA, already higher than the UAE, and inching closer to Singapore, which is unacceptable, she said. Samina Fazil said the country can only develop with the unending policy of so-called energy tariff rationalisation. She said that despite increasing tariffs, many DISCOs are involved in overbilling to the tune of billions of rupees.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of clouds hovering over the skies of Federal Capital.—APP

Al-Shifa Trust to build an eye hospital in Haveli Lakha

Briefing the media persons, the President of Al-Shifa Trust, Maj. Gen. (Retd) Rehmat Khan said a doctor had donated two acres of land to the trust close to the city

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Al-Shifa Trust will build a primary eye hospital in Haveli Lakha, Okara, with the intention of providing high-quality eye care services to the residents as well as people who come from the surrounding areas. In addition to the residents of Haveli Lakha and Deapalur, the facility will also serve the residents of Pakistan, Sahawal, and Bahawalnagar, which are neighbouring districts. Briefing the media persons, the President of Al-Shifa Trust, Maj. Gen. (Retd) Rehmat Khan said a doctor had donated two acres of land to the trust close to the city. The donor will also bear the construction cost, and the trust will provide



equipment and expertise and will be responsible for managing the facility. Rehmat Khan said this project would help the

people of South Punjab, but the magnitude of the problem demands a full-fledged eye hospital in Multan. He said that Haveli Lakha Hospital will be operational by the end of this year and that basic eye care hospitals are vital to eradicate blindness. On this occasion, the project director, Brig. (Retd) Arshad Mahmood shared the details of trust's expansion plan and informed that the extension block in Chakwal Eye Hospital will start functioning by next month. He added that a local family donated Rs 150 million to complete the new block at Chakwal Eye Hospital, which is highly commendable. The trust is also constructing a hospital in Gilgi-Balistan (GB), for which the government has allotted a piece of prime

land near Aga Khan Hospital, accessible to people. The hospital would be able to treat 150 OPD patients per day and conduct 50 surgeries daily, he added. The Barani Foundation Pakistan is helping to construct the first state-of-the-art hospital in the GB, costing around Rs 220 million. The foundation will bear half of its cost, while the trust will arrange the remaining costs through donations. He said we are also awaiting for a suitable piece of land from the provincial government to construct a hospital in Quetta. However, he added that we have already started serving the patients in Balochistan, and a series of camps are being organized. It may be mentioned that the Al-Shifa Trust provides quality eye care services to eighty percent of patients free of cost.

A research report on trend of US dollar in Pak, published

DNA

KARACHI: The value of US Dollar is highly likely to go through a downward cycle in the next few years considering the pressure from both fiscal and current account deficits and an anticipated combination of an expansionary monetary policy and restrictive fiscal policy in sight, according to a research report on the mid- and long-term trend of USD published by KTrade Securities, a stock and commodity brokerage in Pakistan.

The report, according to China Economic Net, giving a critical review of the dominance of USD in global foreign exchange and a technical analysis on the current international dynamics in trade, oil, and other geopolitical and economic factors shaping the value of USD in the long term, notes the absence of two key drivers of growth seen in the US in 2023: the unprecedented surge in the US fiscal deficit and the depletion of surplus savings. As a result, growth is projected to slow as consumption accelerates and business investment weakens, dragging down US economy. "This trend aligns with the estimations of broader market participants, who foresee the U.S. Dollar Index (DXY), a measure of the value of the U.S. dollar against a basket of five major currencies, declining to 96.95-2 by 2026-28F from its current level of 102.47," the report points out, noting that US direct and secondary sanctions implemented by the US administration increase the risks of holding assets or raising income in US dollars, central banks and policymakers look to diversify away from the US dollar for international financing. "The message is quite loud and clear," said Ali Farid Khwaja, Chairman of KTrade Securities in an interview with China Economic Net (CEN).

Pervez appointed adviser FPCCI industrial area

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Atif Iqbal Sheikh has appointed Sheikh Pervez Ahmed as Adviser to the President FPCCI on Industrial Development ICT for the year 2024-25. The appointment of Sheikh Pervez Ahmed was made in view of his vast experience in the field, a notification in this regard issued. Sheikh Pervez Ahmed newly appointed

Adviser To President FPCCI on Industrial Development ICT belongs to Chiniot Family and a Commerce Graduate B. Com (Hons) from University of Punjab. With extensive experience in the Cotton Business, he has been elected twice as the senior vice President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry. He will keep close liaison / coordination with the President FPCCI and the Secretary General of FPCCI for any assistance. The FPCCI president hoped that under the leadership of Sheikh

Death anniversary of Professor Pareshan Khattak observed

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The death anniversary of Pashto poet and writer Professor Pareshan Khattak was observed on Tuesday, Born on December 10, 1931 in Karak, his book, Pashtun Kon, is a worthy contribution to Pashto literature, which has clearly mentioned with evidence the origin of Peshans and is mentioned as a reference book all over the world. He was awarded Tangdus-Intiaz and Sitara-Intiaz for his literary and national services.—APP

Saudi delegation's visit heralds dawn of new era

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The ongoing visit of a high-profile Saudi delegation to Pakistan led by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan signifies the dawn of a new era in the relationship between the two nations, besides heralding the end to Pakistan's isolation. Pakistan is swiftly steering towards a brighter future on the global stage, marking

a significant shift towards enhanced international relations and leaving behind its former isolation, according to a press release. Under the leadership of Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, the delegation arrived in Islamabad on Monday to embark on a two-day journey, fostering deep-rooted connections across various sectors including diplomacy, industry, agriculture, and investment. This pivotal visit, orchestrated in response to a special directive from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, underscores the mutual commitment to strengthening economic and diplomatic bonds between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Engagements between the Saudi delegation and Pakistani officials, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, have paved the way for groundbreaking collaborations, with an initial announcement of a substantial \$5 billion investment marking just the beginning of a fruitful partnership.

Pak Eyes Clean Energy with Electrocatalytic Water Splitting

DR. MUHAMMAD SAGIR

Pakistan struggles with frequent power outages and load shedding due to insufficient generation capacity, transmission losses, and distribution inefficiencies. The country heavily depends on imported fossil fuels, such as oil and gas, for power generation, which exposes it to price volatility and geopolitical tensions. The production and distribution of energy in Pakistan are costly, leading to affordability issues for consumers and hindering industrial competitiveness. Rural and remote areas lack access to reliable electricity, hampering socioeconomic development and quality of life.

These challenges could be addressed by integrating new sources of energy into Pakistan's energy mix. Pakistan has significant untapped renewable energy potential, particularly in solar, wind, and hydroelectric power. Investing in these clean energy sources can diversify the energy mix, reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels, and mitigate the impact of energy shortages. Enhancing transmission and distribution infrastructure can help minimize energy losses and improve the reliability and efficiency of energy supply. This includes modernizing grid systems and investing in smart grid technologies to optimize energy distribution. Implementing energy efficiency measures in industries, buildings, and transportation can help reduce energy demand and lower overall energy costs. This includes adopting energy-efficient appliances, improving building insulation, and promoting public transportation and fuel-efficient vehicles. Building local capacity in renewable energy

technologies through training programs and knowledge sharing can help accelerate the adoption of new energy sources. Additionally, fostering technology transfer and collaboration with international partners can facilitate the deployment of innovative solutions in Pakistan. No doubt, the correlation between energy supply and economic growth is undeniable; hence, addressing this issue is paramount for Pakistan's development trajectory. To meet the projected growth targets, Pakistan aimed to significantly upscale its power production from 14,000 MW to 50,000 MW between 2019 and 2022. However, the heavy reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation, estimated to cost \$12 billion USD in 2007-08 and projected to soar to \$41 billion USD by 2022, poses multifaceted challenges. Beyond economic strain, the unchecked utilization of fossil fuels exacerbates global environmental crises, including greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, and environmental degradation, impacting Pakistan's vulnerable ecosystems and contributing to economic losses due to natural disasters. In response to these challenges, the scientific community has rallied around the quest for sustainable and renewable energy solutions. One such breakthrough avenue is electrocatalytic water splitting, a cutting-edge process poised to revolutionize renewable energy technologies. By leveraging catalysts composed of transition metals, metal oxides, or carbon-based compounds, electrocatalytic water splitting accelerates reaction kinetics, facilitating water electrolysis with enhanced efficiency and reduced energy thresholds. The allure of electrocatalytic water splitting lies not only in its capacity to generate

hydrogen as a clean and sustainable energy source but also in its versatility across various sectors. Hydrogen, often hailed as the "fuel of the future," offers a clean combustion alternative to fossil fuels, emitting only water as a byproduct. Despite its potential, the economic production of hydrogen remains a formidable challenge. Electrolysis of water emerges as a viable solution, offering efficient and environmentally benign hydrogen generation. Moreover, electrocatalytic water splitting holds promise for grid stability and energy storage integration with renewable sources like wind and solar power. By converting excess electricity during periods of low demand into hydrogen via water electrolysis, surplus energy can be stored and deployed during peak demand, bolstering grid resilience and reliability. Beyond energy production, electrocatalytic water splitting presents opportunities for resource conservation and environmental remediation. By harnessing renewable energy to drive water electrolysis, this technique diminishes reliance on finite fossil fuel reserves and fosters the synthesis of hydrogen from abundant water sources. Additionally, the oxygen byproduct finds applications in wastewater treatment, industrial processes, and medical treatments, contributing to a cleaner air and water. To unlock clean energy from electrocatalytic water splitting, Pakistan needs a multi-pronged approach. Researchers must develop efficient and affordable electrocatalysts, likely from abundant materials, while engineers design scalable and durable electrolys-

ers. Pairing these advancements with renewable energy sources like solar or wind is crucial. Additionally, integrating hydrogen production into the power grid and bringing down overall costs through strategic policies and incentives are essential. Collaboration between researchers, industry, and policymakers, along with public education on the benefits of clean hydrogen, can propel Pakistan towards a commercially viable electrocatalytic water splitting future. However, hurdles remain on the path to widespread adoption of electrocatalytic water splitting, including the development of cost-effective catalysts, integration with renewable energy mechanisms, and scaling production to meet industrial demands. Collaboration among researchers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders is imperative to surmount these challenges and propel this transformative technology towards commercial viability. The pursuit of innovative solutions, such as electrocatalytic water splitting, holds promise for revolutionizing renewable energy technologies. This cutting-edge process not only offers clean hydrogen generation but also presents opportunities for grid stability, energy storage, resource conservation, and environmental remediation. However, overcoming challenges related to cost, scalability, and integration requires concerted efforts from the scientific community, policymakers, and industry stakeholders. By embracing such advancements and fostering collaboration, Pakistan can chart a sustainable and resilient path towards energy security and economic prosperity.

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Broken minds, broken hearts

THE connection between mental health and warfare is profound, affecting those directly involved in conflict zones and those observing from afar. In the case of Israel's brutal and long military offensive in Gaza, where innocent civilians are often caught in the crossfire, the impact on mental health can be devastating. A 2022 report by Save the Children, a London-based international non-governmental organisation that promotes children's rights, reveals troubling insights into the effects of war and displacement on Palestinian children. The study, titled 'Trapped: The impact of 15 years of blockade on the mental health of Gaza's children', details the detrimental effects of the blockade imposed on Gaza since 2007 and finds that the psychosocial well-being of children and their caregivers in Gaza has declined dramatically. Lifting the blockade would not only ease the stress on these children, but resources would still be required to build back their ability to cope with the long-term effects of the trauma. A paper in the World Psychiatry journal titled 'Mental health consequences of war: a brief review of research findings' notes that 'Wars have had an important part in psychiatric history in a number of ways. It was the psychological impact of the world wars in the form of shell shock that supported the effectiveness of psychological interventions during the first half of the 20th century.' Shell shock has come to be known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and is just one of the several psychological disorders that affect people living in conflict areas. In Gaza, for example, people are constantly exposed to the wailing of sirens and explosions. At any minute, families might have to flee. They may witness violence or have their homes destroyed. This constant fight-or-flight situation causes elevated levels of stress hormones such as cortisol, which have deleterious effects on decision-making, anxiety, depression, and chronic stress are common diagnoses among those exposed to war. Death is one of the most traumatic events a person goes through, and the war in Gaza has brought new deaths daily. The collective trauma of losing loved ones and witnessing widespread destruction can lead to complicated grief and emotional distress. A 2019 study on the Bosnian war found that 'The cumulative effect of war trauma on mental distress persisted more than a decade after war and displacement.' Victoria Uruwundula, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, described her 'invisible disease' to the BBC in 2021. 'It triggers panic attacks that can come at any time and which leave me struggling to breathe. I am usually covered in a thin layer of cold sweat when they subside, as if I fight to get back to my 'normal' self.' The current campaign is not the first time many Gaza residents have been subjected to war. Some who went through such events as the Great March of Return or the 2008-2009 or 2014 Gaza war developed coping strategies, but many with PTSD will be triggered by the renewal of violence. The ongoing war in Gaza has all but annihilated the healthcare system. Hospitals have been reduced to rubble, and medical supplies blockaded at the very time when demand for mental health services is at its highest.



Smaller South Asian states

WHEN it comes to South Asian geopolitics, international attention often focuses on China-India tensions or potential conflicts between nuclear-armed Pakistan and India. Smaller states such as Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh also make headlines, but often for domestic developments such as election results, financial difficulties, or economic aspirations. But in 2024, these smaller South Asian states have been working to re-align their strategic regional relationships in the presence of powerful India and China, a sign of progress in their respective foreign policies that deserves greater coverage. Each of the three states are pursuing new strategies based on practical considerations which are in line with their own domestic priorities. Sri Lanka for example underwent a complete economic meltdown in 2019, which was characterised by a notable contrast: foreign exchange reserves, severe shortage of medical supplies and soaring prices of basic commodities. The crisis resulted in nationwide protests and the eventual ousting of the Rajapaksa brothers' administration. Under new President Ranil Wickremesinghe however, Colombo last year managed to approve a \$2.9 billion bailout package from the International Monetary Fund, which was actively facilitated and backed by India. Under new President Ranil Wickremesinghe however, Colombo last year managed to approve a \$2.9 billion bailout package from the International Monetary Fund, which was actively facilitated and backed by India. Sri Lanka's re-engagement in 2024 with two regional powers marks a notable contrast to previous years under former Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's government. Rajapaksa was known to sidestep India's concerns about the post-Lanka Tamil Tiger Eelam environment in Sri Lanka, which New Delhi alleged was characterised by the administration's heavy-handed approach towards ethnic Sri Lankan Tamils. The issue is also key for the tiny Kingdom of Bhutan which is exercising its strategic autonomy between China and India. Following its fourth parliamentary elections in January 2024, Thimphu has adopted a more nuanced approach when reaching out to its neighbours, dealing with both sides despite not having diplomatic relations with China. Border disputes between the two sides dating back to 1970 has not prevented Bhutan from kickstarting negotiations with China to resolve tensions, while also acknowledging that Beijing's economic rise can benefit Bhutan financially. Bhutanese Foreign Minister Tandi Dorji and his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi for example, spearheaded efforts to diffuse border tensions through planned demarcation of boundaries in 2023. The 25th round of talks between the two sides are the first in seven years and indicates that Bhutan seeks amicable ties as well as peace with China. While India has been mildly sceptical of rapprochement between Thimphu and Beijing, strong relations between the three sides with a workable peace framework acts in New Delhi's favour. This is because Bhutan has a stake in keeping the peace between the two groups for its own security. This improvement in relations with China benefits Bhutan and helps it hedge itself against potential escalations between Beijing and New Delhi, while maintaining an independent foreign policy anchored in neutrality and a focus on economic integration.

Punjab: Marching towards a welfare society

Abdul Rashid Shakir



Pakistan to seek additional IMF climate financing as well: Provision of free quality medicines in government hospitals, and the proposed free delivery of medicines at patients' doorsteps are other remarkable initiatives of the Government for the improvement of healthcare system in Punjab. There is no denying the fact that secure environment, stable Government, continuity of economic policies, rapid transportation, easy communication and ease of doing business invoke investors' confidence in the viability of any business venture, that may guarantee socio-economic uplift of the society

THE provision of credible social protection, quality education, universal healthcare and enabling environment for economic growth are among the hallmarks of a welfare society. Punjab Government, under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, is striving hard to ensure the availability of these basic needs of a decent living. The installation of high-end safety cameras in 21 major cities of the province is a move to ensure better maintenance of law & order and crime surveillance, in order to provide people a safe and peaceful living environment. The establishment of Special Speedy Trial Courts in Punjab, and an attempt to end a culture of lying and false accusations through a proposed amendment in the defamation law are major Government steps to provide a sense of social security to people, especially the netizens. The construction of one lakh housing units for the low income people across Punjab is a step to instill a sense of social protection in the struggling classes. Venus is leaking, probe makes stunning discovery around Earth's twin: School education reforms in Punjab is very close to the Chief Minister's heart, who has chaired multiple marathon meetings to devise a workable reforms package for ensuring free and better education to the students of around 49000 public sector schools across Punjab. This includes optimum utilization of educational infrastructure and outsourcing of some 13000 non-performing or ghost schools in the province to the private sector to enhance their productivity and utility for the local students. A plan to start providing tetra pack flavored milk to up to class 5 students of public sector schools to stem stunting and malnutrition in the younger lot, along with the establishment of computer labs and libraries in government schools are commendable Government interventions for the development of quality human resources in the province. The provision of 20,000 motorbikes to students on interest-free easy monthly installments is another educa-

tion-friendly initiative of the Government. Anger as WhatsApp lowers age limit to 13 in UK, EU: Health sector reforms under 'Healthy Punjab Programme' is an endeavor to provide state-of-the-art healthcare facilities to people in Punjab. The upgradation of 2500 Basic Health Units (BHUs) and 300 Rural Health Centers (RHCs) across Punjab is a step in the right direction. Punjab's first proposed public sector Muhammad Nawaz Sharif Cancer Hospital in Lahore, Nawaz Sharif Cardiology Hospital in Sargodha, 32 field hospitals to provide healthcare facilities in remote areas, and a program of 200 Clinics on the wheels for the provision of treatment facilities to slum dwellers in the province are remarkable initiatives of the Government that will no doubt revolutionize healthcare system in the province. Additionally, Madam Chief Minister is also focused on building three medical cities in South, Central and North Punjab. The proposed launch of Air ambulance service in Punjab and the start of Rescue 1122 ambulance service on motorways are no doubt historic initiatives of the Government to ensure timely treatment of patients in case of any untoward accident in far-flung areas of the province. Pakistan to seek additional IMF climate financing as well: Provision of free quality medicines in government hospitals, and the proposed free delivery of medicines at patients' doorsteps are other remarkable initiatives of the Government for the improvement of healthcare system in Punjab. There is no denying the fact that secure environment, stable Government, continuity of economic policies, rapid transportation, easy communication and ease of doing business invoke investors' confidence in the viability of any business venture, that may guarantee socio-economic uplift of the society. Keeping this thing in mind, Punjab Government fully subscribes to the decisions of Strategic Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), a platform that provides a whole-of-the-Government response to ensure ease of doing business to

attract investors, both local and foreign. Undoubtedly, the construction, repair and rehabilitation of around 600 roads, 5 expressways and 3 motorways in Punjab under 'Sarkein Bahal...Punjab Khushal Programme' reflects the Government's commitment to provide an enabling environment to the business community to spur economic growth in the province. Shehbaz vows to check power theft, Nepra seeks tariff hikes amid reduced consumption: Moreover, the provision of province-wide mega solid waste management system and the improvement of water supply and drainage system under 'Suthra Punjab (Clean Punjab),' the construction and repair of all major and minor roads of Lahore, pavement of streets, installation of tuff tiles, and restoration of 222,000 street lights across Lahore under 'Naya Daur...Saaf Lahore (New Era...Clean Lahore)' initiative, and the direction to make all water filtration plants of Lahore functional at the earliest are major steps for providing enabling environment for the socio-economic development of people in Punjab. A proposed plan to launch a massive crackdown against electricity theft, hoarding and smuggling in the province through district level task forces and 600 dedicated Police teams is a milestone initiative to ensure stable supply of affordable electricity for the businesses to grow. A plan to provide interest-free loans to small farmers for buying farm inputs like seeds, fertilizer and pesticides, under the best-ever farmer cards, is another move to provide economic security to small farmers against unforeseen climate-induced weather shocks. Iran says MSC Aries vessel seized for 'violating maritime laws': To wrap up, we can hope that, with the newly-elected Government at the helm of affairs, the continuity of economic policies, a prerequisite of socio-economic development, can fairly be expected. It will, in turn, guarantee peace, stability, welfare and prosperity of the nation and people alike. Email: arshakir.cmo@gmail.com

Iran's historic strikes humiliate 'Israel', change regional equation

Julia Kassem

The sight of Iranian drones and missiles firing from Iranian territory 2000 kilometers to occupied Palestine, flying over the Israeli Knesset and al-Aqsa Mosque, sending a clear message on the extent and reach of the capabilities of its older, much slower weapons, left the Israeli occupation to only imagine what kind of damage Fatah missiles could inflict, which can reach the occupying entity from Iran in a matter of minutes. Despite Israelis reporting in occupation entity and US media that 99% of missiles were intercepted - giving...

FOR days, the invincible West was thrust to the edge of its seats in anticipation of a sure-fire retaliation from Tehran following the April 1 attack on its embassy in Syria. Nobody knew when the attack would happen or where with US and Israeli officials anticipating the retaliation in terror amid the Zionist entity's act of clear aggression, as Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah confirmed in his firm stance to be "sure that the Iranian response to the Israeli targeting of its embassy in Damascus is coming." Before any shots were fired, Iran had already shaken the Israeli occupation entity to its core. Immediately after the April 1 embassy bombing, Israeli settlers took to shelter and Israeli GPS systems were jammed, plunging the entity into a complete frenzy. On April 5, 28 of 'Tel Aviv's' legations worldwide were closed, occupation soldiers were barred from taking leave, and both the occupying entity and the US stayed on high alert. This panic continued for another week as the US issued its second notice on April 12 that it believed Iran was to retaliate within 24-48 hours. On the evening of April 12, in response to the Israeli aggression on different arcs in South Lebanon, Hezbollah - which has been engaging Israeli forces on the border with occupied Palestine since October 8, 2023 - fired a barrage of 50 rockets to soften up the Iron Dome anti-air systems. Earlier in the day, on April 13, Iran apprehended an 'Israeli'-linked ship in the Horn of Arab, an action which also sent a message to the US that it would easily be able to close the strait on its aircraft carriers in the outbreak of war between Iran and 'Israel'. By around midnight in Iran, the Islamic Republic had launched Operation True Promise. 200 Iranian drones, as per the IOF, flew toward the Zionist entity, immediately overwhelming three layers of anti-air systems. While these drones were older and less advanced, they did the job of overwhelming both American and Israeli air defense systems, keeping them busy as the next wave of about 150 missiles came through.

Iran struck 'Nezirim' and 'Ramon' air bases in 'Neger' with several missiles exceeding their expectations in hitting their targets. Iran bombed the site of Israeli F-35 jets, which humbled the Iranian Embassy in Syria, killing 7 Iranian Generals, including IRGC General Mohammad Reza Zahedi. It is only now that American media is pointing the facts of at least 9 Iranian missiles hitting their targets at the air base, with one American official reporting that 5 ballistic missiles hit the 'Nezirim' Air Base, causing damage to a C-130 military transport plane, a runway - visible via satellite imagery released by the Israeli occupation to only imagine what kind of damage Fatah missiles could inflict, which can reach the occupying entity from Iran in a matter of minutes. Despite Israelis reporting in occupation entity and US media that 99% of missiles were intercepted - giving inflated numbers on projectiles the 'Resistance' intentionally wanted to engage Israeli anti-air systems anyway, the interceptions during that one night alone cost over \$1.3 billion. On the flipside, Iran's retaliation cost it \$35 million - just 2.7% of what it had cost the Zionist entity, which expended 67% of its American budget that night alone. While Iran used its cheaper stockpiles as both bait and missiles to carry out the main mission, 'Israel', on the other hand, couldn't shield its occupation bases from these missiles, despite the presence of US-made AN/TTP-2 advanced missile detection radar system in the 'Neger'. In the aftermath of the attack, the US immediately told 'Israel' that it would not back it in a potential retaliation - a shocking development that highlighted the increased contradictions between US aims to prevent regional war

and unconditional support to 'Israel'. The US also said it won't respond, for the time being, unable to deal with facing any further consequences of its deeply unpopular policies at home and on the world stage. Ironically, 'Israel's' initial April 1 provocation, designed to pull the US into a war against Iran, ended up with the deterrence power in Iran's hands. Iran was exercising its right to respond to the targeting of its diplomatic territory - enshrined under Article 51 of the UN charter, undertaken after nearly two weeks of UNSC inaction to 'Israel's' overt violation of the Geneva Convention. Yet, Iran's accomplishment is that it brought a decision-making in the bounds of international legality in gaining the upper hand in deterrence capability while increasing the internal contradictions between the US and 'Israel'. The Zionist entity, sustaining catastrophic financial losses and losing the unconditional support of its main backer, can no longer confidently be sure it can carry out compensation for its losses in Gaza by invoking a regional war with Washington's blessing and backing. The night of April 14 showed not only 'Israel', but America those consequences. Moreover, Iran's one night of controlled retaliation is bound to give the Palestinian Resistance positive leverage in its negotiations. Ahead of the Rafah invasion is thanks to Iran's power to deter 'Israel' not only from striking the Islamic Republic once more but also from moving forth with the final step of its failed ground operation. Netanyahu, who fled and hid immediately following the commencement of the attacks, couldn't even face a sample of the Iranian confrontation he'd spent years trying to instigate. If October 7 broke the occupation's barriers, security, and confidence on the ground, then on April 14, the Zionist entity's grandeur became shattered in the air.

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Islamabad, Riyadh need to expedite...

FROM PAGE 01 stood together at all times. While recalling his warm and productive meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Islamabad...

Need 2-3 years for structural...

FROM PAGE 01 Aurangzeb said that if Pakistan - which has entered 24 programs with the IMF - doesn't go through the structural reforms...

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Nawaz Sharif...

FROM PAGE 01 the general elections 2024 from the NA-130 (Lahore XIV) constituency which she lost against the PML-N's top leader who secured 171,024 votes...

Naqvi optimistic: seeking best window for PSL

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi said that It will be difficult to hold the event in February-March next year

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

LAHORE: The chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Mohsin Naqvi expressed optimism about finding the "best possible window" for the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 10 next year...



The cricket governing body has recently bought a multi-storied building adjacent to the iconic Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore for PKR 4 billion. The multi-storied building will be renovated and transformed into a sector-star hotel to accommodate international as well as local players...

Rizwan close to surpass Kohli, Babar Azam's record

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan's wicket-keeper batter Mohammad Rizwan is close to breaking a significant T20I record, currently held by teammate Babar Azam and Indian star batter Virat Kohli...

in his next two innings to become the fastest to reach the milestone. He has scored 2,981 runs in 78 innings so far. Meanwhile, Babar Azam is closing in on Virat Kohli's record for the most runs in T20I cricket...

4000-run mark in T20I cricket. For the unversed, Pakistan will host New Zealand for a five-match T20I series, scheduled to run from April 18. Rawalpindi's Pindi Cricket Stadium will host the opening three T20Is between Pakistan and New Zealand on 18, 20 and 21 April...



However, Rizwan needs only 19 runs to become the fastest to reach the milestone.

Cummins, Nat Sciver named as Wisden's Leading Cricketers

SYDNEY: Australian captain Pat Cummins has been named the leading men's cricketer in the world by Wisden Almanack, while England's Nat Sciver-Bruent was named the leading women's cricketer on Tuesday...

"In 2023, no other seamer in world cricket took more than his 42 Test wickets," Wisden Cricketers' Almanack has been published continually on an annual basis since its first edition in 1864. Meanwhile, Nat Sciver-Bruent was named the leading women's cricketer in the world after three ODI hundreds in five Ashes innings...

Sabalenka gears up for clay season amid difficult time

PARIS: Aryna Sabalenka is looking forward to her Stuttgart opener as the world number two gears up for clay season ahead of the French Open, which starts next month. The Australian Open champion has been going through a difficult time after the apparent suicide of her former boyfriend, Konstantin Koltsov...

Paris 2024 Olympics torch lit in ancient Olympia

"In these difficult times we are living through, with wars and conflicts on rise, people are fed up with all the hate, aggression and negative news they are facing day in and day out," International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach said in his speech...

PARIS: Greek actress Mary Mino, playing the role of high priestess, lights the flame during the Olympic Flame lighting ceremony for the Paris 2024 Olympics. The Paris 2024 Olympic Games torch was lit in ancient Olympia in a traditional ceremony on Tuesday ahead of the scheduled start of the event on July 26. The role of high priestess was played by Greek actress Mary Mino, who lit the torch using a backup flame instead of a parabolic mirror that is normally used, due to cloudy skies...

Rana Sana 'turns down' key...

FROM PAGE 01 any position in the provincial government. "Rana Sanaullah has asked for time in consultation with his wife, but he is not willing to take any position in the Punjab government," the sources said. The Punjab Cabinet will be expected to announce the by-elections. In the February 8 general elections, the former interior minister suffered a defeat from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independent candidate Dr. Nisar Jutt with a lead of over 19,000 votes in the constituency. Earlier it was reported that after his defeat in the elections from Faisalabad, the PML-N had decided to induct him into the Punjab cabinet with a major role.

National Women's One-Day Tournament set to start today

The six regional sides competing in the event, which carries a total prize money of PKR 2.245 million, are Karachi, Lahore, Multan, Peshawar, Quetta, and Rawalpindi

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The expanded and revamped National Women's One-Day Tournament is set to kick off on Wednesday in Faisalabad. Until last season, the 45-over competition was contested by three sides - Blasters, Challengers, and Dynamis - under the Pakistan Cup Women's Cricket Tournament banner. This year, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in its continued endeavour, support and promotion of women's cricket, has included six regional sides in the competition. The National Women's One-Day Tournament will be played in a double-league 50-over format, guaranteeing each side, at least 10, matches. The six regional sides competing in the event, which carries a total prize money of PKR 2.245 million, are Karachi, Lahore, Multan, Peshawar, Quetta, and Rawalpindi. The top two sides after 30 league matches will progress to the final on 11 May, with the winning side lifting the silverware and collecting a PKR one million cheque. The venues for this important event are Jeddah Club Cricket Ground, Iqbal Stadium, and Bohranwali Cricket Ground, with Saad Ajmal Academy Ground as the reserve venue. Omama Sahal will captain the Karachi Region, Lahore will be led by Kaynat Hafeez, while Saadia Malik will lead Quetta, Hina Bilal will lead Multan, while Gull Rukh and Mahnoor Aftab will captain Peshawar and Rawalpindi, respectively. Fixtures for Wednesday: Quetta vs. Rawalpindi, Jeddah Cricket Club Ground; Karachi vs. Multan, Iqbal Stadium; Peshawar vs. Lahore, Bohranwali Cricket Ground. Fixtures for Friday: Quetta vs. Peshawar, Iqbal Stadium; Lahore vs. Karachi, Jeddah Cricket Ground; Rawalpindi vs. Multan, Bohranwali Cricket Ground.



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Afghanistan-based terrorists...

FROM PAGE 01

Armed Forces of Pakistan," the forum noted. "We will not allow such efforts to succeed and as per the law and constitution, stern action will be ensured," the forum vowed. The army's top brass reiterated resolve to provide full support to the government towards achieving sustainable socio-economic growth in the country including wholehearted assistance in countering the illegal spectrum, particularly smuggling, hoarding, electricity theft and safe repatriation of all illegal foreigners. The army chief appreciated the untiring efforts of Pakistan Army and LEAs in successfully thwarting several terrorist attacks and neutralising key terrorist commanders during ongoing counterterrorism operations. He directed commanders to proactively clear any space for terrorists, the InterServices Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. The latter in the same month, the chairman was presented with the plan to upgrade three major stadiums, followed by the upgradation of other venues. "Our three main venues - Lahore, Karachi and Rawalpindi - will be upgraded before the Champions Trophy. We will upgrade other venues later as well, once these three are done. Our stadiums will be state-of-the-art once they have been renovated," said Chairman PCB. Later in the same month, the chairman was presented with the plan to upgrade three major stadiums by NESPAK (National Engineering Services of Pakistan) officials.

Govt siphoning off people...

FROM PAGE 01

efforts to provide relief to inflation-stricken people, reduced the price of roti to Rs16 and reduced the price of BREAD across the province, amid nanbanis' concerns. They are of the view that they are ready to sell roti at the government's rate. The provided subsidy. Backing the nanbanis', the PTI leader, while referring to price of wheat flour, said that roti and naan cannot be sold at the government's rate. The federal government standing on "crutches" brought a sumam of inflation in the country, he alleged. Moving on to the alleged rigging in the by-polls, Ayub accused the Punjab's corrupt administration of election manipulation. "In the by-elections, it was said that Form 45 should not be given to anyone," he added. Polling stations were being changed to benefit the ruling party in Punjab, the PTI leader alleged. "Pakistan cannot afford rigging," he warned.

Rana Sana 'turns down' key...

FROM PAGE 01

any position in the provincial government. "Rana Sanaullah has asked for time in consultation with his wife, but he is not willing to take any position in the Punjab government," the sources said. The Punjab Cabinet will be expected to announce the by-elections. In the February 8 general elections, the former interior minister suffered a defeat from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independent candidate Dr. Nisar Jutt with a lead of over 19,000 votes in the constituency. Earlier it was reported that after his defeat in the elections from Faisalabad, the PML-N had decided to induct him into the Punjab cabinet with a major role.

Iran 'frees' Pakistanis onboard...

FROM PAGE 01

The 25-member crew, were on board the cargo ship seized by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) - the elite force that lost seven members, including two generals, in the Syria strike near the Strait of Hormuz on Sunday. The development came after the family of one of the Pakistani nationals onboard the Israeli-bound container ship asked the government of Pakistan for help. Muhammad Adnan Aziz - the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Panjshir-flagged MSC Arica - was on the ship seized by Iran's forces, along with another Pakistani.

Briefs

Boeing says testing of 787 proves aircraft is safe

NEW YORK: Boeing defended its safety practices Monday, tooting aircraft testing protocols as it grinds for a tough congressional hearing featuring critics of the embattled aviation giant. "Boeing is confident in the safety and durability of the 787 and 777," the company said in a PowerPoint presentation accompanying a media briefing with two senior engineers, who summarized exhaustive testing procedures to refute whistleblower allegations that some 1,400 Boeing planes suffer from significant safety issues. Wednesday's Senate hearing is scheduled to include testimony from Boeing engineer Sam Salehpour, who went public last week with sweeping charges alleging Boeing's safety practices are deficient and that the company retaliated against him for speaking out. The hearing, titled Examining Boeing's Broken Safety Culture: First-hand Accounts, comes as regulators and politicians escalate scrutiny of Boeing in the wake of a near-disastrous January 5 Alaska Airlines flight on a 737 MAX that made an emergency landing after a panel of the fuselage blew out in mid-flight. Salehpour's charges include allegations that the 787 Dreamliner contains gaps between parts well above company standards, a dynamic that could ultimately cause a premature fatigue failure without any warning, creating unsafe conditions "with potential for catastrophic accidents," according to an official complaint to the Federal Aviation Administration released by Salehpour's attorneys. Steve Chidholm, chief engineer for Boeing Mechanical and Structural Engineering, told reporters gathered at a Charleston, South Carolina factory and on a webcast, that "there was zero fatigue" found in testing.—DNA

Sydney church stabbing a 'terrorist' act

SYDNEY: Australian police on Tuesday said a brutal live-streamed knife attack at a church service in Sydney was a religiously motivated "terrorist" act, as they urged calm from the angered local community. A prominent bishop was among those being treated for "non-life threatening injuries" after the attack on Monday evening at an Assyrian Christian church in the west of Sydney. "After consideration of all the material, I declared that it was a terrorist incident," New South Wales police commissioner Karen Webb told a news conference. Webb said the attack was deemed an act of religiously motivated "extremism" that intimidated the public — both parishioners at the church and people following the live-streamed service online. The suspect was "known to the police" but was not on any terrorist watch list, Webb said. Police responding to the incident soon found themselves under attack by angry people outside the church, she said.—APP

Indonesian coffee takes lead in Egyptian market

JAKARTA: Indonesia has become Egypt's main source of coffee, authorities said on Tuesday, as annual exports reached nearly 893 million, or about 43 percent of the market. Indonesia is the world's fourth-largest coffee producer and Asia's second-biggest. In 2023, the Southeast Asian nation exported around 270,000 metric tons of the commodity worth almost \$916 million, according to the Central Statistics Agency. Egypt was the second-biggest export destination for Indonesian coffee, just behind the US, accounting for about 5.2 percent of the country's total coffee exports. "Indonesian coffee has successfully dominated the Egyptian market. Total export value reached \$92.96 million, making Indonesia the biggest coffee-exporting country to Egypt in 2023," Indonesian Ambassador in Cairo Lutfi Raff said in a statement.—APP



WASHINGTON: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb spoke at the Atlantic Council on the "Opportunities and Challenges for the Pakistani Economy through 2024 and Beyond"—DNA

Marcos refuses to expand US military base access

Beijing accused the Philippines of providing American forces with staging grounds, which could be used to undermine its security

NEWS DESK
MANILA: The Philippine president said that his administration has no plan to give the United States access to more Philippine military bases and stressed that the American military's presence in several camps and sites so far was sparked by China's aggressive actions in the disputed South China Sea. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who took office in 2022, allowed American forces and weapons access to four additional Philippine military bases, bringing to nine the number of sites where US troops can rotate indefinitely under a 2014 agreement. The Biden administration has been strengthening other security alliances in the region to better counter China, a move that

dovetails with Philippine efforts to shore up its external defense, especially in the South China Sea. Marcos' decision last year to allow the Philippines to provide American forces with staging grounds, which could be used to undermine its security. "The Philippines has no plans to create any more bases or give access to any more bases," Marcos said, without elaborating in response to a question during a forum with Manila-based foreign correspondents. Asked if he was concerned that allowing the US military access to Philippine bases had provoked Chinese actions in the South China Sea, Marcos said the presence of US troops was in response to China's moves.



"These are reactions to what has happened in the South China Sea, to the aggressive actions that we have had to deal with," he said, mentioning Chinese coast guard vessels using water cannons and lasers to deter Philippine ships from the area. Beijing claims as its own. He also mentioned collisions, blocking of Filipino fishermen and sea barriers to block ships from Scarborough Shoal,

which lies in the Philippine economic zone. Under Marcos, the Philippines has adopted a strategy of publicizing the incidents by allowing journalists to board its patrol ships to witness China's assertive actions. "It is crucial that the media continue to expose these actions that not only threaten the peace and stability of the region but also undermine the rule-based order that has underpinned global development and prosperity over the previous century," Marcos said. China has blamed the Philippines for sparking the confrontations by intruding into what it says were Chinese territorial waters and reneging on an alleged agreement to pull away an old Philippine navy ship, which now serves as Manila's territorial outpost in the disputed Second Thomas Shoal. Marcos said he

was not aware of any such deal, and added that he considers the deal rescinded — if it ever existed. Last week, President Joe Biden renewed Washington's "ironclad" commitment to defend Pacific allies in a summit with Marcos and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the White House. He reiterated that the US is obligated to defend the Philippines if its forces, aircraft or ships come under an armed attack. Asked when the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty between the US and the Philippines could be invoked amid territorial hostilities between China and the Philippines, Marcos cited Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin as saying that could happen "if any Filipino serviceman is killed on an attack from any foreign power."

IAEA warns of risk from Ukraine nuclear plant attacks

UNITED NATIONS: Russia and Ukraine on Monday traded blame before the United Nations Security Council for the attacks on Europe's largest nuclear power plant, which the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency said have put the world "dangerously close to a nuclear incident." Without attributing blame, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said his agency has been able to confirm three attacks against the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant since April 7. "These reckless attacks must cease immediately," he told the Security Council. "Though fortunately, they have not led to a radiological incident this time, they significantly increase the risk... where nuclear safety is already compromised. The remote-controlled nature of the drones that have attacked the plant means that it is impossible to definitively determine who launched them. Grossi told reporters after the meeting. "In order to say something like that, we must have proof," he said. "These attacks have been performed with a multitude of drones." Zaporizhzhia sits in Russian-controlled territory in southeastern Ukraine and has six nuclear reactors. Fears of a nuclear catastrophe have been at the forefront since Russian troops occupied the plant shortly after invading in February 2022. Continued fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces — as well as the tense supply situation at the plant — have raised the specter of a disaster. Ukraine and its allies on Monday again blamed Russia for dangers at the site, with the United States saying, "Russia does not care about these risks." "If it did, it would not continue to forcibly control the plant," US deputy ambassador Robert Wood told the Security Council, which met at the initiative of the US and Slovenia. Russia, for its part, said Ukraine was to blame for the attacks. "The IAEA's report does not pinpoint which side is behind the attacks," Russia's UN Ambassador Vasily Nebenza said.—Agencies

UNHRC chief urges action to end Gaza crisis

UNHRC chief Volker Turk said that resolving the catastrophic situation of civilians in Gaza must remain a priority

WEB DESK
WASHINGTON: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk is calling for fresh efforts by "all states with influence" to ease the "horrific" conditions in Gaza and the West Bank. "Resolving the catastrophic situation of civilians in Gaza must remain a priority," Turk's spokeswoman said, while also adding that violence in the West Bank is a matter of grave concern. "Israel continues to obstruct the import and distribution of aid supplies in the Gaza Strip, which is a violation of international law," the statement said. Turk demanded the release of the hostages taken from Israel in October 2023, a ceasefire in Gaza, and unfettered access for all humanitarian aid workers in order to alleviate the plight of the civilian population in

the Palestinian territory. The UN Human Rights Office had received reports that the Israeli military had attacked at least eight mosques last week during the celebrations marking the end of Ramadan. "Places of worship are protected under the laws of war," Turk's spokeswoman said in the statement. In the occupied West Bank, Palestinians are coming under frequent attack by mobs of Israeli settlers, who are often supported by the military. After the killing of a 14-year-old Israeli boy from a settler family, four Palestinians, including a child, were killed in acts of revenge. "Israel, as the occupying power, must take all measures in its power to restore and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety in the occupied West Bank," the statement said. According to information received by the UN Hu-

man Rights Office, armed settlers and Israeli forces entered a number of towns and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety in the occupied West Bank. This obligation includes protecting Palestinians from settler attacks, and ending unlawful use of force against Palestinians by the IDF. The Israeli Security Forces must immediately end their active participation in and support for settler attacks on Palestinians. Israeli authorities must instead prevent further attacks, including by bringing those responsible to account. These reasonably suspected of criminal acts, including murder or other unlawful killings, must be brought to justice through a judicial process that complies with international human rights standards, following a prompt, impartial, independent, effective and transparent investigation.

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Ukraine 'ran out' of missiles to defend key plant: Zelenskyy

Zelenskyy's warning came as overnight storms put further strain on Ukraine's fragile energy system

FOREIGN DESK
KYIV: Russia was able to destroy a key power plant serving four regions as without power supply," Ukraine's energy ministry said Tuesday. Earlier on Tuesday, Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz in "just peace" for Ukraine German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said he hoped Berlin and Beijing could help achieve a "real peace" in Ukraine as he met President Xi Jinping in the Chinese capital. Meeting with Xi at Beijing's Diaoyutai State Guesthouse on Tuesday, Scholz told the Chinese leader he hoped to discuss "how we can contribute more to a just peace in Ukraine," Scholz told Xi that "the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine and Russia's armament have a very significant negative impact on security in Europe," according to a recording provided by the chancellor's office. "They directly affect our core interests," he told Xi, adding

they "damage the entire international order because they violate a principle of the United Nations Charter." Meanwhile, Russia deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Gromov said that a Russian man for allegedly orchestrating an attack on a former Ukrainian security officer who defected shortly before Russia's Ukraine offensive, the security service said. Vasily Prokhorov, the latest ex-Ukrainian official to be apparently targeted in Russia, was wounded last week in a car bomb near Moscow, where he relocated in 2019, citing "ideological" reasons. Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) said they had detained a man born in 1983 who was working for Ukraine's security services and planted an explosive device under Prokhorov's car. He arrived in Russia in March this year. Russia, received papers for a radio-controlled explosive device, assembled the explo-

sive device and after carrying out reconnaissance in the area of the address of the ex-SBU employee, carried out the car bombing," it said in a statement. US House of Representatives on Monday voted on long-delayed Ukraine aid package US House Speaker Mike Johnson said that his Republican-controlled chamber would vote this week on separately introduced bills for Ukraine and Israel after stalling for months over pressure from his party's right wing. Johnson, leading a narrow Republican majority in the House, has refused to allow a vote in his chamber on the so-called security supplemental, despite urgency pleas from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other American allies. "We won't be voting on the Senate supplemental in its current form," Johnson told reporters Monday evening, "but we will vote on each of these measures separately in four different pieces." He said that votes on

the separate bills could occur by Friday evening, but that members would be allowed to offer amendments, which would likely drag out the process. Johnson had previously opposed a standalone vote on Ukraine aid, demanding first that Democratic President Joe Biden crack down on illegal border crossings. Ukraine nuclear plant aid bills for Ukraine and Israel after stalling for months over pressure from his party's right wing. Johnson, leading a narrow Republican majority in the House, has refused to allow a vote in his chamber on the so-called security supplemental, despite urgency pleas from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other American allies. "We won't be voting on the Senate supplemental in its current form," Johnson told reporters Monday evening, "but we will vote on each of these measures separately in four different pieces." He said that votes on

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Indonesia landslide death toll rises to 20

JAKARTA: Indonesian authorities said they have ended a search and rescue operation after a landslide in central Indonesia that left 20 people dead. Heavy rainfall triggered landslides that struck two villages in the Tana Toraja regency in the South Sulawesi province on Saturday evening. Rescuers had been searching for two last missing persons whose bodies were found (the victims) not far apart. Because the victims were a mother and child, local search and rescue agency head Mexiana Bekabali said in a statement Monday. With the discovery of the final two victims, the search and rescue operation was concluded, with rescuers "returned to their respective units," Bekabali added. Authorities had previously said 19 people were dead and two missing, but put the final toll at 20. At least 15 killed in Indonesia landslide: disaster agency Indonesia is prone to landslides during the rainy season and the problem has been aggravated in some places by deforestation, with prolonged torrential rain causing flooding in some areas of the archipelago nation.—Agencies

Int'l conference for Sudan calls for ceasefire

ATHENS: A conference was held in Paris that called for an immediate cease-fire in Sudan. The meeting, organized by foreign intervention in the country's civil war. Participants of the International Humanitarian Law Conference for Sudan and its Neighbors, which included representatives from Western and Arab states, said they are committed to working for the tragic effects of the escalation of the conflict imposed on the Sudanese people and neighboring countries. The parties to the conflict in a joint declaration after the event ended, expressing concern over the violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Sudan, the declaration called on the warring parties to immediately cease hostilities and "facilitate unimpeded access to civilian populations in need of humanitarian aid." Also calling on all foreign actors to cease providing armed support or material to the warring parties, it added: "We call on all regional and international actors to fully support a consolidated Sudan peace initiative, building from the Jeddah platform, the African Union and IGAD-led initiative and the mechanism of the neighboring countries, and we agree to continue to enhance ongoing coordination." Delivering the closing speech of the conference, French President Emmanuel Macron announced a 2 billion (\$2.1 billion) aid pledge from the international community for Sudan.—Agencies

Nigeria recovers \$28.8M linked to suspended minister

LAGOS: Nigeria's anti-corruption commission announced Monday that it recovered \$28.8 million from the suspended minister of poverty alleviation, who is currently being investigated for fraud. Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) spokesperson Dele Oyoade said the probe of suspended Minister of Poverty Alleviation and Humanitarian Affairs Betty Edu uncovered a "web of fraudulent practice." "So far, \$2.7 billion naira (\$28.4 million) has been recovered during the investigation into the activities of the suspended minister and ministry officials," Oyoade disclosed. He said the commission is equally investigating commercial banks in the country involved in the fraud as the probe continues. Edu and some top government officials were suspended by President Bola Tinubu in January. The diversion of funds meant for aid to the poor into private accounts.—APP

Briefs

Asad, Fazl talk to deepen ties

ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Asad Qaiser reached out to Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (JUI) chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman via phone...

China economy grows faster than expected

BEIJING: China's economy made a stronger-than-expected start to the year, even as the crisis in its property sector deepened...

CM Maryam grants Rs 10 Lac for singer

LAHORE: On special direction of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, provincial health minister Khuram Khan Nazir reached the house of famous singer Ghulam Abbas...

Pakistan, KSA resolve to build strong partnership

The two sides discussed the regional dynamics and recent developments in the Middle East and called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and end to the Israeli atrocities in Gaza



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of the Kingdoms of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, along with his delegation, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) on Tuesday reiterated their resolve to build a strong partnership and further promote economic cooperation...

challenges being faced by Muslim Ummah. The Saudi foreign minister was accompanied by a high-powered delegation, comprising the Minister of Water and Agriculture, the Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources...

progress of KSA. The president lauded the courageous and visionary leadership of Crown Prince and Prime Minister of KSA Muhammad Bin Salman and the remarkable progress being made under the Vision 2030...

tourism, information technology, communications and agriculture. Saudi Arabia is aiding the development of trade relations with Pakistan through the Gulf Cooperation Council...

Bogus cases against Imran exposing system, says Gandapur

MEHTEAB FIRZADA

RAWALPINDI: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister and PTI leader Ali Amin Gandapur said on Tuesday that cases against PTI founder were fake and this system was being exposed day by day...

Oil tanker association halts fuel supply to twin cities, northern areas

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Oil Tanker Association ceased on Tuesday the supply of fuel to the twin cities and upper parts of the country...

Faizabad inquiry commission 'exonerates' Gen Faiz Hamid

Commission blames ex-Punjab govt for Faizabad sit-in. It finds no connection of any govt official with protest

MEHTEAB FIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Former Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) director general, Lieutenant General (ret'd) Faiz Hamid has been exonerated by the inquiry commission established to investigate the Faizabad dharna case...

were alleged of distributing money among participants of the sit-in protest in the federal capital. At the time of the protest, Hamid was heading ISI's counter-intelligence wing and held the rank of a major general...

Israeli forces must halt 'active participation' in settler attacks: UN

'Israel needs to be shown that its actions have costs'

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: Mounir Akram, Pakistan's permanent representative to the UN, called on the international community to act together, saying Israel's activities should not go unpunished and should be shown to have costs...

unprecedented disregard for global consensus by a single nation, adding that Israel even ignores its 'friends'. Akram stressed the urgency for the international community to convince extremist leaders in Israel to halt the massacre in Gaza...

the United Nations rights office, told reporters in Geneva. Israel is still imposing "unlawful" restrictions on humanitarian relief for Gaza, the UN rights office said on Tuesday...

NEWS DESK

GENEVA: The UN voiced grave concern Tuesday over escalating violence in the West Bank, demanding that Israeli security forces "immedi-



Summer Camp Season 7 advertisement. Includes a table of packages and activities, rules and regulations, and contact information for Islamabad Serena Hotel.