

# Islamabad POST



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**Malaysia committed to promoting cooperation with Pakistan: envoy**

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**UK army chief lauds leadership of COAS Asim**

Detailed News On Page-08



**Misbah advises Babar Azam to set example**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Signals no retaliation

# Tehran plays down reported Israeli attacks

Iranian media and officials described a small number of explosions, which they said resulted from Iran's air defences hitting three drones over the city of Isfahan. Notably, they referred to the incident as an attack by "infiltrators"

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Explosions echoed the Iranian city of Isfahan on Friday in what sources described as an Israeli attack but Tehran played down the incident and indicated it had no plans for retaliation — a response that appeared gauged towards averting region-wide war. Israel had previously warned it would hit back after Iran fired hundreds of missiles and drones at Israel almost a week ago, in retaliation for a deadly strike — which Tehran blamed on its foe — that levelled Iran's consular annex at its embassy in Syria. While most of the Iranian strikes were intercepted, fears of a major regional spillover from Israel's Gaza offensive have since soared. The limited scale of the attack and Iran's muted response both appeared to signal a successful effort by worldwide diplomats who have been working round the clock to avert all-out war since the Iranian move last weekend. Iranian media and officials described a small number of explosions, which they said resulted from Iran's air defences hitting three drones over the city of Isfahan. Notably, they referred to the incident as an attack by "infiltrators", rather than by Israel, obviating the need for retaliation. A senior Iranian official told media there were no plans to respond against Israel for the incident. "The foreign source of the incident has not been confirmed. We have not received any external attack, and the discussion leans more towards infiltration than attack," the official said, Jonathan Lork, head of the Middle East security program at the Center for a New American Security, a US think tank, said Iran's response

Continued on Page 06

## Pakistan 'regrets' US veto on Palestine UN membership

She said the upcoming summit of the OIC would consider several proposals including those on Palestine, Jammu and Kashmir as well as Islamophobia

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has regretted the United States (US) decision to veto the draft resolution seeking Palestine's full membership of the United Nations (UN), as well as expressed its disappointment on the UN Security Council's inability to reach a consensus on the matter. "Pakistan is deeply disappointed by the result of last night's debate at the UNSC and its inability to reach a consensus and recommend Palestine's membership to UN General Assembly," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in her weekly press briefing on Friday. "We regret the US decision to veto the draft resolution granting full

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari conferring the award of Nishan-e-Imtiaz (Military) upon the Turkish Chief of General Staff, Republic of Turkey, General Metin Gurak, in recognition of his services in strengthening defence relations between Pakistan and Turkey, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. — DNA

## Kenyan army chief killed in plane crash

Nine other military personnel on board were also killed while two survived

AGENCIES

NAIROBI: Kenya's defence chief and nine other top brass died on Thursday in a military helicopter crash in a remote area of the country. Friday's crash, the country's deadliest military accident since 2010, occurred as the chief of staff, Gen. Francis Omondi Ogullo, the Chief of the Kenya Defence Forces (CDF), Gen. Ruto told reporters. "The helicopter was on a mission to transport an urgent meeting of the National Security Council after news of the accident emerged,"

Continued on Page 06

## Fin Minister commends WB's blueprint

WB's blueprint for Pakistan to become a High Middle-Income country by 2047

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue on Friday commended the World Bank's Thought Leadership and its insightful report titled "From Swimming in the Sand to High and Sustainable Growth", giving a clear roadmap for propelling Pakistan to a High Middle-Income country. He expressed these views while attending the "Roundtable on

Continued on Page 06

## Meets Turkish Chief of General Staff

# President emphasizes for strengthening Pak-Turk relations

He urged the need to increase bilateral cultural exchanges, particularly in the areas of literature and poetry, to bring the people of two brotherly countries further closer

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has called for enhancing road and railway connectivity between Pakistan and Turkey to further promote people-to-people contacts between the two brotherly countries. He said that overland transport was cost-effective, which would not only lead to increased interactions between the two nations but would also enhance bilateral economic ties. The President expressed these views while talking to the Turkish Chief of General Staff, General Metin Gurak, who along with his delegation, called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today.

## PM, UAE President discuss bilateral coop



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation with

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### No criticism on Pakistan allowed: Tarrar

PTI had damaged the country's interests, says Tarrar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarrar on Friday lambasted the Opposition benches for hurling criticism against the state and warned that no criticism against the country would be allowed. Speaking at Point of Order at the National Assembly, the Minister said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had damaged the country's interests through its concerted narrative of foreign conspiracy that allegedly resulted in the regime change and put a dent in the foreign policy of the country.

### Omar objects to oath-taking of MNAs

Cautious what he described as a blatant violation of constitutional principles

MEHTAB FIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Opposition in National Assembly raised objections to the oath-taking ceremony of new members of National Assembly (MNAs) in a tumultuous session on Friday. NA Speaker Sartar Ayaz Siddiq presided over the session which commenced 40 minutes late than the scheduled time and two MNAs-elect took oath.

### Holiday Notice

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

## President, PM condemn attack Japanese nationals escape suicide attack

Speaking to the media at the scene, CTD in-charge Raja Umar Khattab said that the Japanese nationals were travelling in a convoy of three cars

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI: Police said on Friday that five Japanese nationals were unhurt after their vehicle was targeted by a suicide bomber in Karachi's Landhi area. The suicide bomber was killed in the attack while an accomplice was gunned down by police, officials said. A private security guard accompanying the Japanese national died after succumbing to his injuries while two bystanders were also injured, officials added. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) East Asfar Mahesar told media that the incident took place near Marlaa Chowranghi in Landhi, adding that the five foreign nationals were travelling in a limousine. "All five Japanese remained safe," he said. "The Japanese national was on the way to Export Processing Zone from their residence in Zamama, Clifton," he said. Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) DIG Asif Ajaz Shakh told media that the Japanese nationals were

Continued on Page 06

## Govt rules out dialogue with terrorist outfits

Tarrar emphasizes any acts of terrorism will be met with a strong response

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly was informed on Friday that the federal government has no plan to hold any dialogue with the terrorist outfits. This was stated by Federal Law Minister Asim Nazir Tarrar in an editorial term while responding to a calling attention notice in the House. Responding to the notice, the federal

Continued on Page 06

## Pak-KSA defence collaboration Saudi Dy defence minister meets COAS, vows to solidify relations

COAS reaffirms army's continued support towards capacity building of Royal Saudi Land Forces



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Friday agreed to solidify efforts in defence collaboration, with the army chief reaffirming the army's continued support towards capacity building of Royal Saudi Land Forces, said a statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The assertion came during a meeting between Army Chief General Asim Munnir and the kingdom's Assistant Minister of Defence Major General Talal Bin Abdullah Al-Otaibi, who called on the army chief at

Continued on Page 06

### Summer Camp Season 7

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

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**RULES & REGULATIONS**  
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ISLAMABAD SERENA, Islamabad, THE LEADING HOTELS



# SDPI, Ethiopian embassy collaborate for green initiative

### Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri said the Ethiopian Ambassador is launching the leading Green Legacy Initiative in Pakistan that changed the flora and fauna of Ethiopia

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and the Embassy of Ethiopia on Friday forged collaboration to promote Green Legacy Initiative for green development, nature conservation and food security through afforestation in Pakistan. Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and the Embassy of Ethiopia jointly organized the seminar titled Ethio-Pakistan Fraternity Under The Green Legacy Initiative which is the flagship initiative of the government of Federal Republic of Ethiopia. In his opening remarks, Executive Director SDPI, Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri said the Ethiopian Ambassador is launching the leading Green Legacy Initiative in Pakistan that changed the flora and

fauna of Ethiopia and incurred great socio impacts in terms of environment creation and food security. He said the government of Ethiopia is sharing its success story with other developing countries facing climate crisis to achieve resilient against environment degradation. Dr Suleri underlined that unprecedented erratic rains in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) unveiled the dramatic impacts of climate change that demanded the humanity to revert to the mother nature to explore nature-based solutions. Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia in Pakistan, H.E. Jemal Bekor Abdu said the Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change for her efforts and wished her good luck for championing all efforts for mitigating adverse impacts of climate change. While presenting on the Green Legacy Initiative, the Ambassador underlined that it is a game changer initiative based on developing synergies in raising home-grown solutions and retrieving human-ecore connections transforming negative anthropogenic activities into positive tra-

jectory through afforestation. He informed that Ethiopia is aggressively taking up green development initiatives starting from its interlinked national determined contributions, halt on import of fossil fuel-based vehicles, net zero target by 2050, whereas it has started exporting its green legacy products to countries in Europe and Asia. Ambassador Abdu mentioned that the initiative is the brainchild of Abiy Ahmed, the Prime Minister of the FDR who came into power in 2018 and injected various policy reforms that make Ethiopia peaceful, stable, prosperous, eco-friendly resilient and greener. It has been formally launched at the Embassy in Pakistan in 2023, he added. Commenting on the initiative, he said it has four components of human-nature relationship, decreasing synergies and collaboration for one common goal, respect for humanity and political, economic, social and environmental wellbeing. He mentioned that the success of the initiative relied on mass media mobilization, community ownership and high level leadership to make it a success for all. "Based on the ecology of the particular country and region, the Initiative can be altered for suitable and convincing outcomes as Federal Republic of Ethiopia has also ensured its food security and nutrition from afforestation and all of its citizens are contributing their share in this regard," he added. Ambassador said the FDR Embassy is honored to collaborate with SDPI and the PPA's Coordinator on Climate Change and will commence the initiative from Punjab's meigs cities and then will start in South province. "We will need SDPI support in this regard and we are proud to announce Pakistan-Ethiopia fraternity under Green Legacy Initiative," he said. Prime Minister's Coordinator for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Ravina Khureshi Alam, via telephone addressed the seminar and extended her gratitude to the Ambassador H.E. Jemal Bekor Abdu and the government of Federal Republic of Ethiopia for developing between Pakistan and Ethiopia and the Africa region. He also commended the SDPI for its remarkable work in the areas of economy, climate change, green economy, and others. "We are ready to collaborate and work together to promote the Green Legacy Initiative."



## Heavy rain in Peshawar, suburbs continue

PESHAWAR : Heavy rains have continued in Peshawar and most of the province since last night. "Flood risk has increased in Dir, Swat, Chitral, Kohistan, Muzaffargarh, Gilgit-Baltistan, and local rivers of Kashmir and local rivers adjacent to the Kabul River," an official of the Meteorological Department said here Friday. He said in most districts of the province, rain has continued since last night, with cloudy weather in the southern districts. The official said, "The landslides are also a threat in Upper Khyber, Pakhtunkhwa, Murree, Galyat, Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan due to heavy rain." There was a risk of mudfall on mountainous areas due to rain, and during the last 24 hours, there was rain with wind and thunder in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The heaviest rainfall recorded in the province: Parachinar 9mm, Malam Jabba 6mm, Kaskul 55mm, Charal 61mm, Pataichai 54mm, Peshawar (Airport, City), Takhtbai 62, Rawallot 04, and Garli Dapatta 04mm. "Fear of damage to standing crops, strong wind, infrastructure, including electricity poles, solar panels, vehicles, etc, has increased due to heavy rain," said the official of the Department of Meteorology. He said, "There is a chance of strong wind, thunder showers with heavy rain at some places, and snowfall on mountains including Chitral, Dir, Swat, Abbottabad, Muzaffargarh."

## Collaborating for growth Islamabad to host LIIBS 7th edition on April 23, 24

MEHATB FIRZADA

ISLAMABAD : The 7th Edition of Pakistan's biggest corporate event, LEADERS IN ISLAMABAD BUSINESS SUMMIT 2024 (LIIBS), will take place on April 23 & 24, 2024, at a local hotel. Current under the theme of Collaborating for Growth, this summit brings together business leaders from across the country to discuss the challenges confronting the world and possible solutions. LIIBS provides a forum for consultative working, sharing of ideas and expertise, and for reiterating the need to work

together to achieve common goals, in the best interest of regional and global economies. The 7th Edition of LIIBS is jointly hosted by Natshull Group and Unity Foods Limited, in collaboration with GKCCI (Executive Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry), with Faysal Bank Limited as the Platinum partner, and IntraZama Pakistan as the strategic partner. Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, Chairman, Senate of Pakistan; Senator Muhammad Inayatullah Dar, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs; Prof. Abhinav Jigal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives; Senator Muhammad Awazgoh, Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue; Senator Dr. Musaeib Malik, Federal Minister for Petroleum & Water Resources; Senator Awas Ahmad Khan Leghari, Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) and Shauq Patana Khawaja, Minister of State for IT & Telecom, will grace the Summit with their presence alongside numerous distinguished speakers. Muhammad Aftab Ashraf, Founder & CEO, Natshull Group, the person credited with not only creating an event of the stature of LIIBS but also for successfully hosting 6 previous editions, will deliver the welcome address.

fauna of Ethiopia and incurred great socio impacts in terms of environment creation and food security. He said the government of Ethiopia is sharing its success story with other developing countries facing climate crisis to achieve resilient against environment

## Health minister outlines plan for healthcare reforms in Punjab

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Health and Emergency Services Khawaja Salman Rafique has outlined ambitious plans to overhaul the province's healthcare system. In a meeting with representatives of the National Centre for Healthcare Workers USA here on Friday, he emphasized the need for innovative solutions to revitalize healthcare infrastructure, particularly in transforming basic health units into fully functional hospitals. "We are committed to leveraging all available resources to elevate the standard of healthcare in Punjab," the minister stated. He highlighted upcoming initiatives, including extensive training for nursing staff to meet international standards and the enhancement of diagnostic capabilities to control diseases effectively. He also unveiled plans to introduce private hospitals through government-private partnerships, aiming to enhance accessibility and quality of care for the public. Moreover, he underscored the importance of leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare services to optimize patient outcomes. Chairman of the National Centre for Healthcare Workers USA, Shahab Tanzeem commended the minister's dedication to healthcare reform.—APP

## QAU announces scholarships for KP students

ISLAMABAD : Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) Islamabad has announced Chief Minister Educational Endowment Fund Scholarship Programme 2023-24 for the students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The applications are invited for the scholarships programme from the students of M.Phil/Ph.D. admitted in Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 (Semester Department) of Earth Sciences, Anthropology and Mathematics. According to the details, the students who are eligible for this programme are Sylester Pakhtunkhwa Degree holders only, and fulfilling admission criteria (Merit) or have valid offer of admission, in approved disciplines, in the Institution for M.Phil/Ph.D. Similarly, the candidates must have minimum 50% score in GRE/GAT (General or Subject) for M.Phil while 60% score in GRE/GAT (General or Subject for Ph.D). However, in case of non-availability of GRE/GAT, the students are asked to attach admission score certificate from department. The age must be less than 50 years on the last date of receipt of application as advertised by the Institution, while they must have 1st class academic career (min 1st division or CGPA of 3.0/4.0 or 3.7/5.0).—APP

ISSI hosts Int'l conference on Pakistan's geopolitical landscape

## ISSI hosts Int'l conference on Pakistan's geopolitical landscape

FASAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD : The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Pakistan Office will be co-hosting a two-day International Conference, titled "Pakistan in the Emerging Geopolitical Landscape," at ISSI on 24 April 2024. Building on the success of last year's International Conference - "Pakistan's Strategic Frontiers", this year's event will delve into the relationship between Pakistan's strategic position and the rapidly changing dynamics of West, Central and East Asia. The Conference agenda focuses on three key themes:

The first working session, titled "Unraveling Afghanistan's Shifting Landscape," will examine the evolving situation in Afghanistan, particularly its impact on Pakistan's security and foreign policy considerations. The second session, titled "From Dependency to Diversity: The Evolution of the Middle East," will analyze the changing environment within the Middle East and its influence on Pakistan's regional partnerships and economic interests. The third and final session, titled "Rising Non-Conventional Security Threats in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Middle East," will seek to address the growing challenges posed by non-traditional threats like cyberwarfare, pandemics, and climate change, emphasizing the necessity of regional collaboration to mitigate these threats. Through in-depth discussions and expert insights, the Conference aims to achieve a broad set of objectives. It will analyze the impact of the evolving regional landscape on Pakistan's foreign policy, security concerns, and economic opportunities. The Conference will also explore the changing nature of security threats and their implications for regional stability. Furthermore, the discussions will emphasize the importance of fostering regional connectivity and economic cooperation for sustainable development. Ultimately, the Conference seeks to generate valuable knowledge on how Pakistan can effectively navigate its changing regional environment by utilizing its diplomatic space, and promote economic development. By bringing together regional collaboration to mitigate these threats. Through in-depth discussions and expert insights, the Conference aims to achieve a broad set of objectives. It will analyze the impact of the evolving regional landscape on Pakistan's foreign policy, security concerns, and economic opportunities. The Conference will also explore the changing nature of security threats and their implications for regional stability. Furthermore, the discussions will emphasize the importance of fostering regional connectivity and economic cooperation for sustainable development. Ultimately, the Conference seeks to generate valuable knowledge on how Pakistan can effectively navigate its changing regional environment by utilizing its diplomatic space, and promote economic development.

## AJK: Heroes of the forest department must be appreciated

This report will provide a comprehensive overview of the department's contributions to the Green Pakistan program, showcasing the impact of their efforts in promoting environmental sustainability, preserving biodiversity, and enhancing the resilience of forested ecosystems

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

ISLAMABAD : The Forest Department of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has distinguished itself with remarkable achievements in the Green Pakistan program (GPP), showcasing exemplary performance that has earned widespread recognition and appreciation. This success can be attributed to the dedicated efforts of numerous individuals within the department, including Chief Conservator, Project Director,

Conservators, Divisional Forest Officers, Sub Divisional Forest Officers, Range Officers, Block Officers, Forest Guards, and Watchers. Despite facing challenges such as limited resources, funding shortages, and harsh weather conditions, these individuals have significantly enhanced the reputation of the Forest Department of AJK through their hard work and commitment. The Green Pakistan program (GPP) is a national initiative aimed at promoting environmental sustainability and combating deforestation

through afforestation and conservation efforts. The program's objectives align closely with global conservation goals, emphasizing the importance of preserving and expanding forested areas to mitigate climate change, protect biodiversity, and promote ecological balance. These individuals, collectively referred to as the "Heroes of the Forest Department of AJK," have demonstrated exceptional performance and dedication in their respective roles. Despite facing challenges such as limited funding, they have been able to achieve significant milestones and contribute positively to the goals of the Green Pakistan program. A detailed report highlighting the achievements of the Forest Department of AJK personnel is set to be published soon. This report will provide a comprehensive overview of the department's contributions to the Green Pakistan program, showcasing the impact of their efforts in promoting environmental sustainability, preserving biodiversity, and enhancing the resilience of forested ecosystems.

## SHAHMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) and USAID/Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) organized a training and registration session for women entrepreneurs of the province in Peshawar. The session was held at Serens Hotel Peshawar, where more than 60 businesses operated by women, particularly beauty salons were provided on the spot registration facility by KPRA. The USAID/Economic Recovery and Development Activity (ERDA) is financially and technically assisting women

entrepreneurs in businesses by providing them facility in getting equipment and training to run the businesses. Over 80 women-operated businesses were initially registered with KPRA as per Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sales Tax on Services Act 2022 to bring them into the tax net and 44 businesses were given grant agreement by USAID/ERDA at the occasion. Teams of KPRA were present at the occasion to assist the women in getting their National Tax Numbers (NTN) and getting their businesses registered with KPRA on the spot. The KPRA teams provided them with training on how to pay their monthly sales tax on services and file their monthly

sales tax returns with KPRA. Director General KPRA, Muzafar Iqbal was the chief guest at the occasion and she thanked USAID for arranging the session and assisting KPRA to bring the businesses under the tax net. She extended her full support to the participants and said, "All businesses associated with the services sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are required to be registered with KPRA as per KP Sales Tax on Services Act 2022, and KPRA team has registered most of the beauty parlors operating in the province and they are paying their monthly tax and playing their role in the development of the province."

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

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

Hotels & Restaurants

- Serena Hotel...111 133 133
Marriott...061-2826121
Moral...0334-5421812
Turkish Airlines...8494949

Emergency

- Rescue (Police)...15
Bomb Disposal...15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/Islamabad...1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance...1122
Rescue Services...4451122
Motorway Police...9270601-20
Woman Police Stations/Islamabad...9225256
Rawalpindi...9270601-20

Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance...115
PIA Flight Info...114
PIA Cargo...928097-11
Railway Enquiry...117
Raway Exchange...9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi...5555489
CAA...9281982

Hospitals

- CMH...5611111
MH...561116
Cantt Hospitals...9270907-11
DHQ...5556311-4
RGH...9290301-7
Holy Family...9290322-7
PIMS...9281170-75
Psychiatric...9218300-49
Shifa International...9270601-20

Departments

- CTA...9221334-43
CMA...9208301-44
Met Office...9250960-6
RDA...5555884
TMA...5770886
Contentment Board...9270512-3

Water Tank

Islamabad...0321-5744180

Bolstering Trajectory of strategic relations with China

The seminar began with opening remarks by Ambassador Muhammad Haroon Shaukat (Retd), Director of Foreign Affairs at CASS who emphasised the importance of Pakistan-China ties within the evolving regional landscape

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), hosted a seminar titled "Bolstering the Trajectory of Pakistan's Strategic Ties with China to examine the dynamic partnership between the two countries and propose strategic recommendations to further solidify the Pakistan-China relationship.



The seminar began with opening remarks by Ambassador Muhammad Haroon Shaukat (Retd), Director of Foreign Affairs at CASS, Lahore, who emphasised the importance of Pakistan-China ties within the evolving regional landscape.

University, explored leveraging the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) beyond 2030 for sustainable economic growth and connectivity.

shared experiences and mutual trust. He hailed CPEC as a symbol of China's confidence in Pakistan and a key factor in the latter's progress.

ensuring the safety of Chinese personnel working in Pakistan. Moreover, the government was urged to promote usage of doing business and to address the external trade gap with China.

Business community is indebted to Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Business community of Islamabad is indebted to Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry for his unflinching support for the flourishing of its businesses.

but impressive ceremony held here at the Chamber office in honour of the office bearers of different Traders' Welfare Associations who have recently proceeded back after the performance of Umrah.

shoulder to shoulder with Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari owing to his visionary leadership which led to the resolution of most of its problems.

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Intermediate first annual exams 2024 start

RAWALPINDI: Intermediate first annual examinations 2024 under the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Rawalpindi started here on Friday. According to a BISE spokesman, all the arrangements for the examination had been completed and 135 examination centers were set up including 29 in Attock district, 30 in Chakwal, 32 in Talagang, 29 in Jhelum, 08 in Murree and 87 in Rawalpindi district.

Cigarette companies playing with regulations

ISLAMABAD: The concern about playing with rules and regulations for business and trade allegedly by cigarette companies has been rising with each passing day. The business community has sounded alarm as law-abiding companies have been bearing the brunt for those who come forward through unfair means.

Delegation of CUST students visits the Safe City Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Under the special directives of the Chief Police Officer (CPO) Safe City/Traffic, the Deputy Director Technical and DSP Telecommunications on Friday welcomed the delegation of CUST University at Safe City Islamabad. A public relations officer said that the delegation visits the command and control center, the data hub unit, modern technology-equipped cameras, and the police operations center hall. They were fully briefed about the procedures and advantages of this project.

High FED on cigarettes demonstrates positive impact

ISLAMABAD: The government's decision to raise the Federal Excise Duty (FED) on cigarettes has yielded a notable increase in revenue while simultaneously contributing to a reduction in cigarette consumption. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Yearbook 2023-24 substantiated the monetary development, according to which the share of cigarettes in the overall Federal Excise Duty (FED) collection has escalated to 40 percent.

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## Briefs

## Death anniversary of Ihtiaz Ali Taj

ISLAMABAD: The 54th death anniversary of famous Urdu writer and playwright Syed Ihtiaz Ali Taj was observed on Friday. He was born in Lahore on October 13, 1909, during his student days, his literary skill came to the fore as he translated and directed many English plays. He hosted the daily feature Pakistan Hamara Ha on Radio Pakistan and conducted popular radio programmes for several years. After studying in Lahore, he first worked in his father's publishing house, Dard-I-Shaht Punjab. In addition to his many translations of Shakespeare's plays into Urdu, he wrote A Midsummer Night's Dream as Sawan Rain Ka Sapna. He also wrote several plays himself, the most notable being Amarfaal and Chacha Chakka, which continue to be performed today. —APP

## Two more MNAs take oath

ISLAMABAD: Two more members, Sidat Ehsan and Zahoor Hussain Qureshi, on Friday, took oath as members of the National Assembly. The Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Arif Alvi administered the oath to the newly elected representatives. —APP

## ANF establishes rehabilitation center

RAWALPINDI: A rehabilitation center has been established at Baheti Road, Quetta for the treatment of drug addicts under the management of Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF). According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, a 45-bed rehabilitating center for the treatment of drug addicts has been made operational. The rehabilitation center would provide quality treatment facilities for drug addicts. The newly established center is equipped with modern facilities. Professional doctors, psychologists, social workers and paramedics have been deployed in the rehabilitation center. Drug addicts would be provided free treatment facilities for 45 days in the rehabilitation center. —DNA

## Food exports grew by 48.17% in 09 months

ISLAMABAD: Food group exports from the country during the first nine months of the current financial year (2023-24) increased by 48.17 per cent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July-March, 2023-24, food commodities valued at \$5,651 billion were exported as against the exports of \$3,814 billion in the same period of the last year, according to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. During the period under review, rice exports increased by 83.37 per cent and over 4,520 million tons of rice worth \$2,930 billion were exported as compared to the exports of 2,529 million tons valued at \$1,598 billion in the same period of last year, it added. Meanwhile, the exports of fruits grew by 17.34 per cent and vegetables by 42.79 per cent as 782,155 metric tons of fruits and 908,235 metric tons of vegetables valued at \$265,655 million and \$54,290 were exported during the period under review, the data revealed. Similarly, the exports of tobacco increased by 19.99 per cent and spices by 19.99 per cent respectively as 16,968 metric tons of tobacco worth \$61.375 million and 29,611 metric tons of spices valued at \$87,297 million were exported during nine months of the current financial year. The exports of oil seed and nuts grew by 131.69 per cent, whereas exports of sugar decreased by 74.63 per cent as compared to the exports of the same period of last year, it added. The country earned \$386,928 million by exporting about 93,508 metric tons of meat and most products as the exports of meat and meat preparations grew by 28.24 per cent during the period under review. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Emergency responders in Islamabad swiftly tackled a blaze that broke out in an oil tanker stationed at a filling station in the bustling Blue Area. Thanks to their prompt action, there were no casualties or property damage reported. — Photo Mudassar Raja

## Artificial Intelligence to empower youth

The advent of AI is expected to create million of new jobs globally, but it also raises concerns about job displacement

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: In the rapidly evolving landscape of the modern world, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning is not just a choice but a necessity to revolutionize economy by unlocking potential of the youth. For Pakistan, embracing the technology is of vital importance to prepare youth for the skilled jobs and positioning the country at par with the global counterparts to cope with modern-day challenges. The journey towards this transformation is not just about technological advancements; it is also about reshaping education, governance, and industry practices to unlock full potential of the nation. While the global community marches forward in the AI revolution, Pakistan finds itself lagging behind. Yet, the potential benefits are undeniable. Harnessing AI could enhance governance, promote transparency, and even improve safety through innovative solutions like advanced traffic monitoring systems. Moreover, forecasts predict a substantial growth in the AI software market, hinting at the vast economic opportunities awaiting those who embrace this technology. However,

the road to reaping these benefits is not without its challenges. The advent of AI is expected to create million of new jobs globally, but it also raises concerns about job displacement. To bridge this gap, the country must prioritize both adoption and upskilling initiatives. Government-industry-academia collaborations can play a pivotal role in developing a highly skilled AI-trained workforce within the next five years. This necessitates updating curricula and policies to equip students with the necessary skills to thrive in an AI-driven world. The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication's draft of the Artificial Intelligence Policy marks a pivotal milestone in this journey. By outlining a national strategy for AI adoption, the policy lays the groundwork for establishing an ecosystem conducive to innovation and growth. It aligns with global initiatives like the "AI for Good" initiative by the International Telecommunication Union and the Sustainable Development Goals set forth by the United Nations, emphasizing responsible AI deployment and equitable distribution of opportunities. The policy recognizes the importance of ethical considerations and data privacy in AI adoption. By inter-

weaving with existing frameworks like the Personal Data Protection Act and the Digital Pakistan Policy, it ensures that AI-driven progress is inclusive and respects individual rights. Experts from the diverse fields while talking to APP emphasized over the transformative potential of AI across various sectors. From modernizing industries and boosting productivity to addressing cybersecurity challenges, AI holds the key to unlocking new frontiers of growth and innovation. However, to fully realize these benefits, Pakistan must invest in research and development infrastructure and foster an environment conducive to innovation and collaboration. Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shazia Fatima (Ishaq), emphasized over embracing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning to modernize Pakistan's education system. She underscored the need to equip the youth with the skills necessary for the rapidly evolving job market, aligning them with global standards. She also highlighted the transformative potential of AI in establishing effective governance systems and enhancing transparency, citing examples such as safe city traffic monitoring systems. Dr. Abid Qayyum Suleri, Executive Director of SDPI, reflected on the era of un-

precedented information accessibility. He stressed the responsibility of ethical information use amidst the abundance of data. Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, Vice-Chancellor of AIQU, advocates for aligning Pakistan's response speed with the pace of AI transformation globally. He emphasized increased investment in the AI and ICT sectors to foster indigenization and economic growth while retaining indigenous talent. Brig. Muhammad Yasir, Senior Advisor Emeritus at SDPI, highlighted the role of AI in modernizing various sectors including industries, agriculture, and manufacturing. He underscored the importance of modernizing cyber security infrastructure to address emerging challenges and protect critical data. Dr. Mularram Khan, Director-General of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, discussed leveraging big data and trend analysis to enhance cyber security measures. He emphasized the importance of the cyber security strategy 2023-28 in addressing evolving threats. Mudassar Hussain, Vice-President of Jazz, called for a comprehensive approach to cyber security regulations, emphasizing the need to balance sustainability with innovation. Muhammad Aslam Hayat, Senior Policy Fellow at LRNE Asia, emphasized the role of

AI in enhancing cyber security and stressed the importance of regulatory frameworks that foster innovation and scalability. Dr. Yasir Ayaz, Chairperson of the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence at NIST, discussed the exponential growth of AI and its potential to create new jobs while displacing others. He underscored the importance of upskilling skills of the workforce to embrace this technological shift. Dr. Mehreen Akmal, Executive Director of N-CERT, highlighted the need for policymakers to regulate AI technologies effectively while ensuring security without stifling innovation. Dr. Faisal Nawaz, Deputy Director-General of Artificial Intelligence at the Ministry of Defense, underscored the importance of collaboration and long-term policies to effectively utilize AI. Zahir Syed, Director of Internal Governance at the Ministry of Information Technology, discussed the potential of the global AI market and emphasized the importance of government-industry-academia linkages in developing a skilled AI workforce. Dr. Hajar Ahmad, Dean of the Faculty of Sciences at ANU, stressed the importance of updating curricula to equip students with the skills needed to adapt to emerging technological trends.

## Pakistan, China to explore new avenues of cooperation

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan aims to explore bilateral relations and explore new avenues of economic cooperation with China through mutual ventures in the tea industry. The strategic move underscores both nations' commitment to fostering stronger diplomatic and economic bonds, leveraging cultural significance and economic potential of the tea trade, said Pakistan's ambassador to China, Khalid Hashmi, on Friday. During a tea seminar Ambassador of Pakistan to China Khalid Hashmi said that in both Pakistan and China, tea is not just a drink; it is a tradition, a ritual, and a way of life. From the tranquil tea gardens of China to the bustling streets of Pakistan, the aroma of freshly brewed tea evokes a sense of warmth and communal spirit that knows no boundaries. "As we celebrate the tea culture, it is hard to ignore the profound connections that tea weaves between our nations and traditions. The linguistic parallel between the Pakistani word "chai" and its Chinese counterpart "cha" signified our shared heritage, where tea transcends its mere beverage status to embody a symbol of hospitality, friendship, and unity," he added.

## ICP continues crackdown against smoke emitting vehicles

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) has intensified action against smoke emitting and pressure hating vehicles for the purpose of environmental protection. A public relations officer on Friday said that, following the special directions of the SSP Traffic, Mohammad Sharif Virk, the Islamabad capital police has intensified the crackdown against vehicles causing environmental pollution and rising pressure horns. In this regard all Zonal DSPs have been directed to take strict action against vehicles involved in polluting the environment. Mobile squads of Islamabad Capital Police have been formed to implement the campaign against the smoke-emitting vehicles. These squads patrol in various areas and important boulevards of the city and are directed to take legal action against those vehicles involved in noise and smoke pollution. —APP

## CDA urges residents: call helpline in rain emergencies

CDA's workforce and machinery are swiftly addressing water drainage on the roads

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has urged the citizens to approach helpline of the Authority in case of any emergency during the heavy rainfall in the federal capital. According to the spokesman of the Authority, the teams comprising of CDA, Municipal Corporation Islamabad (MCI) and district admin-

istrations are fully equipped to address all the complaints of the residents during the rainfall. He said the CDA's workforce and machinery are swiftly addressing water drainage on the roads. "All the supervisory staff and the machinery of the CDA are present in the field for call oversight," he added. The spokesman said that all the emergency response centers in Islamabad were operational which

was managed by the CDA. He said the CDA is strictly monitoring all the place including roads, nullahs and water passages in federal capital. The spokesman said special teams, consisting of personnel from the CDA, MCI, and district administration are also assigned to both sectoral and non-sectoral areas. He said the duties of relevant staffers in mountainous regions have been further intensified.

## Ambassador Jauhar Saleem lauds media role

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President of the Institute of Regional Studies, recently hosted a distinguished gathering of journalists bringing together a range of media representatives stationed in Islamabad. Held at the IRS premises, the event served as a Meet and Greet Session, underscoring the vital linkage between academia and the journalistic fraternity.



ISLAMABAD: Charge d' Affaires of Tajikistan Embassy presenting a book to Federal Minister Aleem Khan. —DNA

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## China's manufacturing industry

ON April 17, the Office of the US Trade Representative once again notified the "Section 301" side line targeting China's medicine, logistics and shipbuilding sectors. On the same day, the Biden administration also called for a significant increase in import tariffs on Chinese steel and aluminum products. These moves are another dangerous step by Washington dragging the US and China into an escalating trade war vortex, not only a misinterpretation or even distortion of China's manufacturing competitiveness but also a deviation from the fundamental principles of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This is the latest Section 301 investigation launched by the US against China. Although the current scope of the investigation is somewhat different from the past, the fundamental purpose remains the same: to misinterpret normal trade and investment activities as threats to US national security and corporate interests, and to blame China for its own industrial issues. Recently, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai claimed in a hearing that China's alleged unfair policies and practices "have devastated many working communities and industries" across the US, citing industries such as steel, aluminum, and electric vehicles as examples. However, according to the White House, imports of steel from China only account for 0.6 percent of total US steel demand, far less than countries like Canada and Mexico. Not to mention, due to high tariffs, Chinese electric vehicles have hardly entered the US market, so where does the claim of "devastating" come from? In the face of the numerous groundless accusations in the US application document, China, with frankness and integrity, naturally feels no trouble and will not shy away from its own rights and interests. The development journey of China's manufacturing industry is evident to the world, and it can be boldly stated that the development of China's industries is the result of enterprises' technological innovation and active participation in market competition. Right and wrong have their own clear distinctions regardless of how Washington tries to label China with various new and old accusations. It will not change the fact that the US is engaging in protectionism and unilateralism. The previous US administration's initiation of the Section 301 investigation against China and imposition of tariffs on China have been ruled by the WTO to have violated WTO rules and have faced opposition from numerous WTO members. This time will be no exception. At this juncture, Washington's sudden concentrated attacks on China's manufacturing industry are, in some extent, influenced by the factors of the US elections. The Biden administration probably hopes to win the votes of blue-collar workers in swing states by doing so. But looking beyond the surface, behind China's manufacturing industry becoming the "scapegoat" for Washington, there is a fundamental issue - the US has yet to truly face up to the development of China's manufacturing industry and economy. If Washington cannot have a clearer understanding of "Made in China," then the future of China-US economic and trade relations will inevitably encounter obstacles and challenges.

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## A message of steadfastness

CHILDREN running around amidst sounds of laughter while playing in the sand on the beach of Deir al-Balah in the company of their families, right next to the displacement tents, enjoying the beautiful sunny weather of Gaza Strip, despite the massive destruction and grave losses caused by the brutal Israeli aggression ongoing for 194 continuous days. Such a scene could not have been imagined or believed by those who led the aggression and sought to spread despair, frustration, and defeat in Gaza to push its people towards forced displacement. However, the people of Gaza sent them a message, saying, "The land is our land and the sea is our sea. Let Netanyahu and the criminal gang he leads go and drink the sea water. We will not leave." This scene of people enjoying the sea, which is a further example of the steadfastness of the people in Gaza, has prompted social media activists to circulate imagery showing scenes of splendor, life, and optimism of the people who faced all kinds of Israeli crimes by clinging to life and steadfastness. One of social media users commented, "Believe it or not," while many others reacted with great admiration and praise for the people who, despite the immense suffering they experienced, remained steadfast, resilient, and hopeful. The scene of Gazans enjoying the beach outraged the Israeli occupation settlers and officials alike. Under the hashtag "Absolute Victory", Israelis ridiculed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government as Palestinians swim and bathe on Gaza's beach while Israeli settlers are banned from entering coastal areas in the Gaza Enclaves. Journalist Almagor wrote in a post on X, "Absolute victory... This picture makes my body ache. While on Zikim Beach, our beach is occupied a closed military area and we the residents cannot approach it without military escort, on the other hand, the Gazans spend time on the beach and swim. It is as if there is no war." On Wednesday, the beach of the city of Deir al-Balah, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea in the middle of the Gaza Strip, witnessed the largest of hundreds of Palestinians wishing to flee the ongoing Israeli war that has been ongoing for more than 6 months. Imagery on social media showed Palestinians from various parts of the Gaza Strip under the sea, while others were swimming away from the Israeli war which turned the Strip into the most inflamed area in the world and deprived its people of enjoying the sea for months, according to Anadolu agency. Many children also appeared enjoying swimming and running on the beach, along with women and young men who looked in large numbers to the coastline near the tents of the displaced who were forced to flee from different areas within the Strip. The areas adjacent to the sea are the safest as they are almost the only left places not exposed to relentless Israeli bombardment. This prompted the displaced families to seek refuge on the coastline despite the cold weather. Yet, they got sometimes targeted by the Israeli occupation army. Meanwhile, Israeli army has continued its war on the Gaza Strip. It attacked, earlier on Wednesday, a school housing displaced people in the Nisi Camp, west of Gaza City, resulting in the martyrdom of four Palestinians, including two children, and injury of others.

# Growing Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict

Dr. Muahammad Akram Zaheer



China and Pakistan have collaboratively established an investigation team dedicated to scrutinizing recent attacks. In an effort to bolster Pakistan's anti-terrorism endeavors, China might consider expanding its investments to aid the financially strained Pakistani military in its costly counterterrorism operations. While previous attempts by Chinese authorities to establish security firms in Pakistan were politely declined, Beijing, perceiving the terrorism threat potentially surpassing...

THE recent escalation of terrorist activities aimed at critical infrastructure and development ventures associated with the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) within Pakistan has plunged the innocent government into a precarious predicament. Already grappling with daunting economic woes and a deteriorating security environment, the Islamabad administration now confronts heightened apprehensions. Pakistan has borne the brunt of five major assaults, three of which specifically targeted Chinese ventures. The most recent incident claimed the lives of five Chinese engineers engaged in the Dasu hydropower project in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, a venture managed by the Power Construction Corporation of China which is also engaged in other pivotal hydroelectric schemes across Pakistan. In response to these assaults, Chinese enterprises have halted operations, precipitating substantial economic repercussions for Pakistan, including the displacement of approximately 2000 laborers from these project sites. Amidst the momentum of advancing the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with a focus on establishing special economic zones (SEZs) in Pakistan, recent assaults on Chinese interests have raised concerns. Against the backdrop of these attacks, the Pakistani leadership, both civilian and military, has reaffirmed their commitment to safeguarding Chinese nationals and CPEC initiatives, highlighting the perceived threat posed by external forces intent on undermining the strategic partnership between Pakistan and China. While suspicions have been cast on groups allegedly backed by the Indian intelligence agency R&AW for previous assaults, no specific entity has claimed responsibility for the recent incidents involving Chinese en-

gineers. Despite initial finger-pointing towards Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the group has disassociated itself from such actions, a move likely driven by the risk of damaging the TTP's ties with the Afghan Taliban, who maintain a significant relationship with China. Pakistan and China have collaboratively established an investigation team dedicated to scrutinizing recent attacks. In an effort to bolster Pakistan's anti-terrorism endeavors, China might consider expanding its investments to aid the financially strained Pakistani military in its costly counterterrorism operations. While previous attempts by Chinese authorities to establish security firms in Pakistan were politely declined, Beijing, perceiving the terrorism threat potentially surpassing Pakistan's capacity, may propose deploying Chinese security forces or establishing military bases within the country. Such a move would signify Pakistan's acknowledgment of its limitations in combating domestic terrorism and would challenge the military's self-proclaimed role as the nation's primary defender. Additionally, the deployment of Chinese forces in Pakistan would significantly impact its relations with the United States and raise concerns in New Delhi regarding Chinese influence in South Asia. Complicating matters further are Pakistan's initial findings suggesting that terrorists in recent attacks on Chinese national's utilized weaponry sourced from the United States via Afghanistan. Pakistan has long voiced concerns about bearing the brunt of heightened terrorism resulting from the flawed withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan. In recent times, the Pakistani civil-military establishment has subtly suggested that unless the United States intensifies its cooperation in counterterrorism efforts, Pakistan may increasingly turn to China for support. This plea from

Islamabad seems to have resonated in Washington, as evidenced by an unprecedented gesture: President Joe Biden personally reached out to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif through a letter, underscoring America's enduring commitment to collaboration with Pakistan. While an unexpected communication from the Biden administration serves to reaffirm the existing support from the US to Pakistan, it also carries a nuanced message, cautioning against the Pakistan Army's potential inclination to involve Chinese military presence in the region. The assessment of the terrorism situation in Pakistan, potentially surpassing the capacity of its military to handle, raises significant geopolitical concerns, particularly for Beijing, which has vested interests in regional stability. In response to this, there's a possibility that China may reconsider its previous offer to deploy security forces or establish military bases within Pakistan. Such a move would undoubtedly have far-reaching implications, not only for the security dynamics of the region but also for the broader geopolitical landscape. Both Washington and New Delhi would likely view this prospect with unease, given their respective strategic interests in the region. For Washington, the presence of Chinese military forces in Pakistan could further complicate its already complex relationship with Beijing, raising concerns about Chinese influence in South Asia. Similarly, for New Delhi, Chinese military presence in Pakistan would exacerbate existing tensions and potentially shift the balance of power in the region, posing a direct challenge to Indian interests. Consequently, the prospect of Chinese intervention in Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts represents a delicate and potentially destabilizing development that all major stakeholders would prefer to avoid.

# Dharna Commission Report: More Questions than Answers

Qamar Bashir



The commission was expected to inquire into why the TLP protestors were allowed to charge the police contingent, resulting in serious injuries to a hundred and seventy-three officers. It should have investigated who trained them to cut the wires of all relevant cameras installed within the jurisdiction of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, as well as the cables of CCTV cameras around the sit-in places, which were used to monitor their activities. Furthermore, the commission should have examined why the media provided unabated coverage...

THE recent leak of a few excerpts from the three-member dharna commission report has ignited widespread debate across all forms of media. Although the report itself has not been officially released, the leaked or released parts suggested the exoneration of former ISI Director General from charges related to motivating, abetting, funding, and supporting the Tehreek-e-Labbaik-Pakistan (TLP), and frong the entire responsibility of mismanagement of Dharna to the Civilian governments of Punjab and Centre. These select excerpts of the report have raised more questions than answers about the handling of the matter that was previously adjudicated by the Supreme Court of Pakistan in its landmark open judgment dated February 2019, authored by Supreme Court Judge Qazi Faez Isa. In the light of this judgment, the commission was required to give its findings on multiple terms of references, including dilating upon the past events which fomented the sit-in, the sit-in itself, and the aftermath of the sit-in. It was also tasked with identifying all characters, actors, facilitators, and those who took unfair decisions and those who executed them. The full report should have elaborated on the election of the introduction of the amendment in the Election Act 2017, which replaced the declaration from "I solemnly swear..." with "I believe...". It should have also investigated whether the bill was properly vetted by the relevant National Assembly or Senate Committees, and who were the end beneficiaries of this change. Furthermore, the report should have examined how and why the government and parliament succumbed to pressure from a specific group and decided to roll back the amendment on October 19, 2017 and why despite the roll back, the TLP, a newly formed political party, continued its protest. The commission was tasked with determining why TLP was allowed to occupy the "Paizabad interchange," which serves as the main entry-exit point to Islamabad and Rawalpindi, leading to the disruption of daily commuting for hundreds of thousands of vehicles. Specifically, the commission was to investigate why TLP demanded the removal of the Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, and subsequently called for the resignation of the government itself. The commission was also expected to examine the constraints, impediments, and compulsion faced by the government, which has the police, rangers, and the sixth largest army in the world at its disposal, to become hostage to TLP, an unknown entity at the time. It was to

inquire into why the government failed to enforce the law of the land and protect the fundamental rights of its citizens, allowing the mob to disrupt the functioning of the Supreme Court, preventing judges, litigants, deputy attorney generals, and counsels from attending court. Furthermore, the commission was to investigate why the government failed to protect the public's ability to commute, attend courts, schools, colleges, universities, and their places of work, as well as why it failed to ensure that patients, doctors, nurses, and ambulance could reach hospitals. The commission was also tasked with determining why the government was unable to prevent the spread of protests to other cities and towns, effectively leading to a nationwide lockdown. Lastly, the commission was to examine why relevant laws were not invoked when TLP was making false speeches and meeting disordered towards the Federal or Provincial Government, an offense of sedition punishable by imprisonment for life. The commission was expected to inquire into why the TLP protestors were allowed to charge the police contingent, resulting in serious injuries to a hundred and seventy-three officers. It should have investigated who trained them to cut the wires of all relevant cameras installed within the jurisdiction of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, as well as the cables of CCTV cameras around the sit-in places, which were used to monitor their activities. Furthermore, the commission should have examined why the media provided unabated coverage to TLP and allowed anyone with grievances against the government to join in. It should have looked into why relevant parties did not stop their leaders, such as Sheikh Rashid Ahmed (Chairman AMLI), Ijaz-ul-Haq (PMI-Z), PT Ustra Wajid, Islamabad, and Sheikh Hameed (PPP), from making inflammatory speeches. The commission should have also questioned why PEMRA did not act to reign in unscrupulous talk-show hosts who allegedly incited and provoked citizens, contributing to the rise of TLP from a lone-issue political party to a phenomenon. It should have investigated whether PEMRA took notice of covert censorship, such as advising self-censorship, suppressing independent viewpoints, broadcasting of TLP's hate mongering and abusive speeches, and the supply of food to protestors by some channels, as well as the stoppage and interruption of certain channels in entertainment and defense housing authority areas. Additionally, the commission should have explored why the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority did

not invoke the Electronic Crimes Act, 2016, to stop the dissemination of hate speech and terrorism through electronic means. Finally, the commission should have considered the theory that laid the government called the army in court of civil administration under Article 245 of the Constitution much earlier. TLP could have called off the sit-in, potentially saving the nation from mental, physical, and economic agonies. The report was also expected to delve into the unanimous view of all intelligence agencies that the actual purpose of TLP, which provoked religious sentiment, stoked hatred, resorted to violence, and destroyed property worth 163,932,000 rupees, bringing economic activities to a standstill and inflicting a per day loss of Rs 88,786,180,821 to the economy, was not out of love for our Holy Prophet (PBUH), but to maximize their political mileage by projecting themselves as defenders of the Muslim faith. It should have addressed whether it was lawful for the election commission to register TLP as a political party when it refused to provide sources of funding, allegedly from a foreign country in the Middle East, and was formed in a manner prejudicial to the sovereignty or integrity of Pakistan and had engaged in terrorism. The report should have also examined the inability of the ISI to discover the source of livelihood, place of work, address, funding of TLP leadership, their profiles, and bank accounts. It should have highlighted the inability of the Attorney General of Pakistan to quote laws/regulations governing the ISI, indicating that its mandate did not include in politics or media management, whereas the United Kingdom, the United States of America, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and Norway have clear laws governing their intelligence agencies and have disclosed their respective mandates. The report should have also addressed the question of cash being handed over to TLP's dharna participants by men in uniform. These are crucial questions that were not asked and raised by Supreme Court Judge Qazi Faez Isa in his landmark judgment. The full report of the commission must have examined all these points and provided its findings and recommendations. Until then, it is wise to refrain from focusing on only one or two terms of references, as they cannot reflect the full picture.

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



Briefs

Tehran plays down reported...

FROM PAGE 01 "seems to indicate that Iran is seeking to step down off the ledge, minimise the impact of the attack and perhaps walk back down the escalation ladder from here", Israeli said...



ISLAMABAD: People walking in clay mud arriving at PIMS hospital, which may cause any incident any time as needs to attention for concern authority. - Online

Govt rules out dialogue..

FROM PAGE 01 minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to take firm action against the terrorists, saying there is zero tolerance policy towards the terrorists and the federal government is extending full support to the provinces to deal with the menace.

President emphasizes..

FROM PAGE 01 Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Sahir Shamsud Mirza, and Ambassador of Turkey to Pakistan, Dr. Moham Pincir, also attended the meeting.

PM, UAE President..

FROM PAGE 01 His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), said during his visit to Islamabad.

Fin Minister commends..

FROM PAGE 01 implementing for Fiscal Results and Greater Impact, organized by the financial institution on the sidelines of the World Bank Group-IMF Spring Meetings in Washington DC.

Kenyan army chief..

FROM PAGE 01 said nine other "gallant military personnel" on board were also killed while two survived.

Misbah-ul-Haq advises Babar to set example as captain

Babar made his return as Pakistan's white-ball captain in the first T20I against NZ

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan captain Misbah-ul-Haq has recently offered advice to the recently reinstated captain Babar Azam. Babar Azam made his return as Pakistan's white-ball captain in the first T20I against New Zealand yesterday.



session was cancelled on Friday due to inclement weather in Rawalpindi. The visitors were supposed to train today ahead of the second T20I against Pakistan on Saturday.

Liverpool ousted as Leverkusen advances to Europa semis

REDS fall short against Atalanta despite early Salah goal LONDON: Liverpool crashed out of the Europa League after a 1-0 win against Atalanta that wasn't enough to overturn their quarterfinal deficit.

Alem Dar sets major umpiring record

ISLAMABAD: Renowned Pakistan-based umpire Alem Dar added another feather to his cap as he became the first umpire to officiate a One-Day International (ODI) match for 25 years.

T20 WC 2024: Will Rohit Sharma try to convince MS Dhoni?

NEW DELHI: India's captain Rohit Sharma opened up on the possibility of convincing the legendary MS Dhoni for the 2024 T20 World Cup as the mega event is nearing and teams are finalising their squads to have a shot at the elusive title.

Chief of the Naval Staff calls on President Zardari

Naval Chief briefed the President about the operational readiness of the Pakistan Navy in safeguarding the maritime interests of the country

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, called on President Asif Ali Zardari at Ayfrees-Safra today, and congratulated him on assuming the office of the President.



Pakistan 'regrets' US veto...

FROM PAGE 01 membership of the UN to Palestine," she added. Security Council blocked Pakistan's bid to become a full member of the UN due to a US veto on a wide-ranging resolution that would have recommended the granting of such status.

Saudi Dy defence minister...

FROM PAGE 01 GIJC in Rawalpindi. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest were discussed including defence production and military training.

Japanese nationals escape...

FROM PAGE 01 travelling in a van along with two security guards when a suicide bomber on a motorcycle hit them. All five Japanese nationals are safe.



Briefs

CIA chief: Ukraine could lose war without aid

WASHINGTON: The CIA chief warned that Ukraine could lose the war to Russia by the end of this year unless the United States sends more military aid. The grim warning by Bill Burns came as the US House of Representatives is scheduled to vote Saturday on a \$61 billion aid package for Ukraine that has been held up for months by Republican lawmakers allied with Donald Trump as he seeks reelection. The administration of President Joe Biden has been warning as it lobbied to send more ammunition and other materiel to Ukraine that the pro-Western US ally could lose territory to Russia's invasion forces unless it get more American help. But on Thursday, in a speech at the George W. Bush Center, Burns said the stakes are now much higher. "With the boost that would come from military assistance, both practically and psychologically, I think the Ukrainians are entirely capable of holding their own through 2024," Burns said. "Without supplemental assistance, the picture is a lot more dire," he added. "There is a very real risk that the Ukrainians could lose on the battlefield by the end of 2024, or at least part of a position where he could dictate the terms of a political settlement," he said, referring to Russia's president. Three killed, 20 injured in Russian strikes on southern Ukraine Burns did not specify what he meant by "lose" the war. —Agencies

ASEAN says concerned over escalating Myanmar violence

BANGKOK: Regional bloc ASEAN said it is "deeply concerned" about the recent upsurge in fighting in Myanmar, after fierce clashes over a key trading hub near the Thai border. The foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations urged "all parties for an immediate cessation of violence" in Myanmar, which has been riddled by conflict since the military seized power in a February 2021 coup. The ministers' statement issued late Thursday said ASEAN was "deeply concerned over the recent escalation of conflicts, including in the area of Myanmar". The military was last week forced to pull its troops out of positions in the valuable trading post after days of battling with the Karen National Union (KNU) — a long-established ethnic minority group — and other anti-junta fighters. It was the latest blow suffered by the junta, which has suffered a string of battlefield losses in recent months, with its analysts warning it is its most significant threat to date. —APP

Sudanese rue shattered dreams as war enters 2nd year

CAIRO: Omar Ushari still remembers the hope that gripped Khartoum after the uprising that overthrew dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019. Now after a year of war between rival generals, much of the Sudanese capital lies in ruins. The 48-year-old, then detained for his activism, celebrated behind bars when Bashir was toppled in a palace coup. In the heady days that followed, as the army promised a transition to elective civilian rule, Ushari was released, and set to work on his dream project: a literary cafe near the banks of the Nile. Named Rabeena, his cafe would become known as a safe haven for young intellectuals eager to take part in building a "better Sudan". But on April 15 last year, the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces went to war, and Ushari watched both his project and his dreams for the country "fade, bit by bit". For months, he heard raging street battles to visit Rabeena, "sit in the dark, take stock of what had been looted since my last visit, and reminisce". —APP

G7 urges "all parties" to prevent ME escalation

G7 has strongly condemned Iran for its attacks on Israel but also called on both parties to de-escalate amid reports of Israeli retaliation

NEWS DESK

ROME: G7 foreign ministers Friday urged "all parties" to "work to prevent further escalation" in the Middle East, following reports that Israel had carried out revenge strikes on Iran. "In light of reports of strikes on April 19th, we urge all parties to work to prevent further escalation. The G7 will continue to work to this end," the Group of Seven industrialised nations said in a statement. The ministers from Italy, the UK, US, France, Germany, Japan and Canada said they "demand that Iran and its affiliated groups cease their attacks". "We will hold the Iranian government accountable for its malicious and destabilising actions," they said after a meeting in the Italian island of Capri. The G7 said it was "ready to adopt further sanctions or take other measures, now and in response to further destabilising initiatives". Iran's state media reported explosions in the central province of Isfahan Friday, as US media quoted officials saying Israel had carried out retaliatory strikes on its airfield. Israel had previously warned it would hit back after Iran fired missiles and drones at Israel almost a week ago, in retaliation for a deadly

strike on Iran's embassy in Syria which Tehran blamed on its foe. Fears of a major regional spillover from the Gaza war have since soared. Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, who holds the G7 rotating presidency, told a press conference in Capri he "wanted a very clear message to come out of G7: the political goal of the G7 is de-escalation". "We invite all parties to work to avoid any escalation," he added. Earlier on G7 powers agreed to bolster Ukraine's air defences, their foreign ministers said on Friday after repeated Russian air strikes which have wrecked power infrastructure and killed hundreds. The Group of Seven major powers — Italy, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Britain, the United States and European Union representatives — has been fiercely critical of Russia's two-year long invasion of Ukraine. However, Kyiv has warned they need to dangle strategy if they want Ukraine to withstand increasingly destructive Russian air assaults. Russia denies targeting civilians during its air strikes and says the energy system is a legitimate target, but hundreds of civilians have been killed during air strikes. The G7 will "bolster Ukraine's air defence capabilities to save lives and protect critical infrastructure," the foreign ministers said, adding they would increase defence and security assis-

tance for Kyiv. "We are determined to continue to provide military, financial, political, humanitarian, economic, and development support to Ukraine and its people," they added. The G7 statement, coming at the end of a three-day meeting of the ministers in the southern Italian island of Capri, which had Ukraine and military clashes between Israel and Iran among its main topics. Earlier, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba — who was in Capri for the meeting — told reporters the G7 had identified specific steps to help boost Ukraine's air defence. He did not provide further details. Germany has already said it would hand over one Patriot missile battery. Following the summit, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Ukraine needed more resources immediately, and warned Beijing that China's relations with Europe would be harmed if it provided support for Russia's defence industry. "When it comes to Russia's defence industrial base, the primary contributor in this moment... is China," Blinken said. "If China pours on the sea land to work good relations with Europe and other countries, it can't, on the other hand, be fueling what is the biggest threat to European security since the end of the Cold War."

Lavrov says West trying to shift attention from Gaza

MOSCOW: The West is trying to distract attention from the situation in the Gaza Strip with allegations about Iran's nuclear ambitions, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Friday. "The desire and goal, it seems to me, is to switch the world community's attention from what is happening in the Gaza Strip, where a humanitarian disaster is unfolding and many special rapporteurs of the UN Human Rights Council are already talking about genocide," he said in an interview with three Russian radio stations. Lavrov emphasized that despite the International Atomic Energy Agency's confirmation that Iran possesses no nuclear weapons, the West persists in accusing Iran of their use. "Iran is the most inspected country of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," he emphasized. The foreign minister attributed the current escalation between Iran and Israel as well as the complexities in the Middle East, in terms of terrorism and extremism, to the lack of solution of the Palestinian problem. "The situation is very bad, we want an end to violence, a solution to humanitarian problems and, nevertheless, first of all, the Arabs should take the initiative, with the support of all reasonable forces, to take into their own hands the issue of creating a Palestinian state," he stressed. The minister noted that Moscow conveyed to Tel Aviv Tehran's unwillingness to further aggravate the situation. "There were telephone contacts between the leadership of Russia and Iran, our representatives and the Israelis. We have made it very clear in these conversations and conveyed to the Israelis that Iran does not want an escalation," he said. Israel is said to have launched early Friday an attack on a site in Iran, but officials have yet to confirm. Tehran said there was no damage and it shot down the drones over Isfahan. Tensions escalated after Iran's retaliatory strike on Israel after an attack against its diplomatic premises in Syria. —APP

Putin focusing on migration to destabilise Finland: Ursula

BRUSSELS: EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said Friday that Russia was using hybrid attacks on neighbouring Finland, using migrants to try to destabilise the country. The Nordic nation closed its eastern border in mid-December after nearly 1,000 migrants had arrived without a visa through its border crossings with Russia since August. The two neighbours share a 1,340-kilometre (830-mile) border and Helsinki has said the surge in asylum seekers has been orchestrated by Russia, a charge that Moscow has denied. "Since the hybrid attack launched by Belarus in November 2021 against Latvia, Finland and Lithuania, we all know how Putin and his allies instrumentalised migrants to test our defences and to try to destabilise us," von der Leyen told reporters on Friday. "Now, Putin is focusing on Finland." Belarus's 2021 orchestrated an influx of migrants to neighbouring Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, leading to a serious deterioration in relations between the European Union and Minsk. —APP

Brazil's Lula recognizes 2 more Indigenous lands

BRASILIA: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva officially recognized two more Indigenous territories on Thursday, but said he decided not to sign off on four others because they still need to be cleared by people currently occupying them. The recognition grants the territories legal protection as reservations to be defended against incursions by illegal loggers, gold miners and cattle ranchers. Lula, who pledged to legalize as many reservations as possible, signed in Brazil the recognition of the Aldeia Velha and Cacique Fontoura lands, which are located in the states of Bahia and Mato Grosso, respectively. The leftist leader has so far recognized 19 Indigenous territories since he took office in January 2023 in his third non-consecutive term. Lula said at an event that he had received from his justice minister the sign-off of six Indigenous territories ready to be recognized, but opted to postpone the legalization of the other four. "We decided to sign off on only two," Lula said, adding that the other four territories are currently occupied by illegal loggers or socially vulnerable people, and the government wants them to leave peacefully. He said some state governors had asked him to postpone time to resolve the issue, and acknowledged his decision might have frustrated some Indigenous people. "I need to be careful, and choose those people other alternatives," he said. —APP

Three Filipinos dead in UAE floods: officials

DUBAI: Three workers from the Philippines have died in flooding in Dubai — the first confirmed deaths from the floods in the city — and the man died in Sharjah, media officials from the department told AFP. The incidents bring the death toll to at least four after a 70-year-old man was swept away in his vehicle in Ras Al Khaimah, one of the emirates (Gulf state's seven members). "The two fatalities died due to suffocation inside their vehicles during the flooding," said the migrant workers department statement issued on Thursday. The third victim died due to major injuries sustained from an accident when his vehicle fell into a sinkhole at the height of the flooding in Ras Al Khaimah. In UAE and Bahrain on Tuesday after suffering flash floods and landslides in Oman, where at least 21 people died, according to official media, including several schoolchildren. Middle East financial center Dubai was particularly badly hit by the rain, the heaviest since the city began 75 years ago. Dubai airport, the world's busiest for international travellers, has cancelled more than 1,000 flights and remains badly flooded and littered with abandoned cars on Friday. Inbound flights would be limited until the water subsides to disruptions, a Dubai Airports spokesperson said on Friday. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan, Yerzhan Kistafin meeting with Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at Parliament House. —DNA

President Erdogan decries US opposition to Palestine UN bid

ANKARA: Speaking to reporters on Friday, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan lamented the United States' pro-Israel stance in Palestine's bid for United Nations membership. "Everyone stood with Palestine. Unfortunately, the United States sided with Israel," Erdogan said in Istanbul, adding that they did not expect anything "different" from the United States anyway. The US vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution on Thursday demanding Palestine's full membership in the United Nations. The membership was blocked with a vote of 12 in favor and two abstentions, including the UK and Switzerland. Palestine was accepted as an observer state of the U.N. General Assembly in 2012, allowing its envoy to participate in debates and U.N. organizations but without a vote. States are admitted to membership in the U.N. by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council, according to the U.N. Charter. A council resolution needs at least nine votes in favor and no vetoes by the permanent members — the US, Britain, France, Russia or China — to pass. Erdogan also commented on tensions between Israel and Turkey's neighbor Iran, in light of a reported Israeli attack targeting Iran early Friday. "At the moment, Israel is saying something and Iran says something else. We don't hear any reasonable statement (from either side)," Erdogan said. Shortly before Erdogan's remarks, the Foreign Ministry called upon Israel and Iran to avoid escalation of the conflict in the region. Earlier this week, Erdogan renewed his commitment to the Palestinian cause and announced he would host the Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh over the weekend. "By killing over 14,000 innocent children in Gaza, Israel has already outdone Nazi leader Adolf Hitler," Erdogan told his ruling Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) parliamentary meeting in Ankara on Wednesday. He once again hit out at the "unconditional support from the West" for Israel, which he said was helping Israel "carry out massacres that went down shamefully in human history, both in Gaza, West Bank."

FPCCI supports innovation Pakistan customs implements Live system against misinvoicing

Mr. Atif Ikrum Sheikh appreciated the efforts of customs; and, especially Directorate of Valuation, Karachi for creating a conducive environment for trade and industry

DNA

KARACHI: Mr. Atif Ikrum Sheikh, President FPCCI, has appreciated that Pakistan Customs held a high-profile and interactive orientation session on "Implementation of Linking International Value (LIVE) System under Innovation Framework to Control Misinvoicing" on Friday. The session was hosted by FPCCI at its head office at the Federation House and was attended by prominent trade and industry personalities. Mr. Atif Ikrum Sheikh appreciated the efforts of customs; and, especially Directorate of Valuation, Karachi for creating a conducive environment for trade and industry under the leadership of Member Customs Operations, Dr. Fareed Iqbal Qureshi. Member Customs Operations addressed the audience over zoom in detail regarding the main features and benefits of the LIVE System. He said that since its launch, LIVE System has been acting as a safeguard against mis-invoicing in the form of under-invoicing and over-invoicing. He thanked the audience that the transparent and dynamic nature of LIVE system will not only protect trade and industry, but will also go on to create an atmosphere of predictability that is a cornerstone of every flourishing economy. Mr. Fayaz Rasool Malik, the Director of the Directorate General of Customs Valuation, Karachi conducted the orientation session on the LIVE system; which was developed and deployed in December 2022 under the Prime Minister's Strategic Road Map. He started by explaining that the innovation framework under which LIVE system has developed and improved is standing on the bold vision of the leadership of the Department; high standards for work of the workforce; belief in organization's ability and agile management.

QY Research is a leading global market research and consulting company that offers exhaustive information, inter alia, about prices of commodities, licenses covered by QY Research, for instance, are Paper, Packing Boards and Replacement Auto. Mr. Anam Paracha, VP FPCCI, hoped that, as a result of the aforementioned rigorous exercise, YRs shall be replaced with PVs in case of imports worth Rs. 850 Billion. This will not only optimize realization of revenues, but will also minimize trade/valuation disputes and ensure regulatory benefits by expediting of clearances and trade facilitation. The presentation ended on demonstration of LIVE system. It was followed by question & answer session and a vote of thanks from the host with re-assurance of support for Customs in implementation of initiatives critical for country's trade, industry and economic prosperity.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE Hamad Obaid AlZaabi in a meeting with Federal Minister for Petroleum, Musadik Malik. —DNA

Sunak plans tougher rules for UK sick leave

LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will look at tightening the rules for long-term sick leave in a bid to reverse a rise in the number of Britons who have permanently dropped out of the workforce. Labour force participation among working-age Britons is its lowest since 2015, due to a rise in long-term illness and a greater number of students, in contrast to other large industrial nations which have seen increases, particularly since 2020. Sunak, in excerpts of a speech due later on Friday, said the rising number of people not working due to mental health conditions was a particular concern. "We need to be more ambitious about helping people back to work and more honest about the risk of over-medicalising the everyday problems of worries and fears," he said. Some 6.4 million Britons aged 16 to 64 — 22% of that age group — are either working nor unemployed, up from 8.55 million just before the pandemic, according to official data. Of those, 2.8 million are long-term sick and 208,000 are temporarily ill. Last year Britain's budget watchdog said a quarter of people who were off work due to long-term sickness were waiting for medical treatment, although it added that cutting waiting lists to their 2015 level would mean only 25,000 back into work. Over half of the long-term sick reported suffering from "depression, bad nerves or anxiety", although many said it was a secondary condition alongside their main health problem. Sunak's office said medical services were too willing to issue repeat notes supporting extended sick leave, rather than advising how a person could get back to work, paving the way for people to move on to long-term sickness benefits. Sunak said he wanted to test shifting the responsibility for assessment from family doctors to healthcare workers tasked with providing "an objective assessment of someone's ability to work and the tailored support they need to do so". —APP



Briefs

Turkish Chief of the General Staff visits NHQ

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Turkish Chief of the General Staff, General Mevlut Gökçek visited National Headquarters Islamabad and called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf. Upon arrival at Naval Headquarters, the dignitary was received by Chief of the Naval Staff. Later, General Mevlut Gökçek called on Chief of the Naval Staff in his office, where matters of mutual interests, regional maritime security environment and bilateral naval collaborations were discussed. Various avenues of cooperation including training, exchange of visits and conduct of bilateral naval exercises between the two Navies were also focused. The Naval Chief highlighted Pakistan Navy's initiatives to ensure maritime security and peace in the region through Regional Maritime Security Patrols. The visiting dignitary acknowledged Pakistan Navy's efforts and commitments in support of collaborative maritime security in the region. The recent visit of Turkish Chief of the General Staff will further augment and expand defence ties between the two brotherly countries in general and the defence forces in particular.

PPP will not join government: Bilawal

DN A

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto has firmly declared that the decision not to join the current government is irrevocable. Speaking at the media at the Parliament House, he emphasised that despite talks of reconciliation during the joint session of Parliament by the President, the opposition remains disinterested in parliamentary alliances. The PPP chairman criticised the opposition for prioritising personal gains over the welfare of the people, condemning any behaviour such as abuse and whistling in the House as uncivilised. Commending the Sindh Police for their efforts in thwarting a terrorist incident in Karachi, the former foreign minister expressed concern over the trend of terrorist organisations operating within Pakistan with support from abroad. He attributed the current rise in terrorism to the policies implemented by the former PTI government.

Dasti, Iqbal's NA membership suspended

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Friday suspended the membership of two legislators belonging to the Opposition for the remaining of the current session over the use of uncivilised language, causing ruckus and hurling threats during President Asif Zardari's address to the joint session of the Parliament. During the proceedings on Friday, membership of Jamshed Dasti and Muhammad Iqbal Khan was suspended with Federal Minister Ataul-Ul-Karar saying the Opposition has anchoring wrong traditions in the House. The membership of both the legislators suspended under clauses 21 and 23 of Parliament (Joint Sitting) Rules 1973. During president's speech to the joint sitting of the parliament on Thursday afternoon, both Jamshed Dasti and Iqbal Khan staged noisy protest and used threatening language near the speaker's dais. They also blew whistles and chanted objectionable slogans violating sanctity of the house with their unpleasant behavior. They also violated rule 30 of Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business.

Eid-UI-Fitr Open House celebrations

Malaysia committed to promoting cooperation with Pakistan: envoy

Ambassador Azhar Mazlan underscored the importance of cultural understanding and mutual respect in strengthening bilateral ties



ABID RAZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Ambassador Mohammad Azhar Mazlan and spouse, Madam Anisla Aman Azhar hosted an Eid-UI-Fitr Open House at the Malaysian High Commission. The invited guests represented a cross-section of the society from the diplomatic corps, senior

government officials, Pakistani captains of industry, friends of the media as well as the Malaysian diaspora were among those present to celebrate the joyous occasion of Eid-UI-Fitr. Donning their national costumes, the host-hostess with her team and families at the High Commission welcomed the guests with renowned Malaysian Hospitality. The guests were served with a delightful array of traditional Malaysian and Pakistani cuisines such as steaming, mutton

curry, rasgulla, satay with peanut sauce and traditional flat cookies. Such a gathering reflects the true spirit of friendship and peaceful coexistence amongst nations especially with the host nation, Pakistan. Addressing the gathering, Ambassador Azhar underscored the importance of cultural understanding and mutual respect in strengthening bilateral ties, emphasising the commonalities and traditions that bind the people of Malaysia and Pakistan.

In his remarks, Ambassador Azhar expressed gratitude to the guests for joining in the celebration and reiterated Malaysia's commitment to advancing cooperation with Pakistan in various fields, including trade, investment, education, and tourism, among others. Considering the candid remarks and feedback from those present, the gathering was a success, exemplifying the strong brotherly ties and cooperation between Malaysia and Pakistan.

Former law minister says ISI chief asked him to resign

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Zahid Hamid, former federal law minister, said Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) director general Lieutenant General (retd) Pao Hamid met him during the Faizabad sit-in and asked him to resign from his ministerial post. According to the ex-minister, junior officers of the ISI Lahore came to his home to take his resignation on November 26, 2019. The minister's statement was mentioned in the report of the Faizabad Sit-in Commission before whom he appeared before as part of the inquiry. The probe commission was constituted on the Supreme Court's orders following the case pertaining to the 2017 sit-in protest at Faizabad led by former Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) chief Khadim Hussain Rizvi. Zahid, who lost his ministry due to the Faizabad sit-in, told the commission that he had two meetings with the ISI during the sit-in. The first was held with two persons in the Law Ministry, whose names were not known to him. He said that they were perhaps colonel-level officers. Zahid said that they wanted to know about his plans, following which he told them about following the instructions of then prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and the leadership of his party - Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. He

said Hamid, who at the time of the sit-in was heading the ISI's counter intelligence wing and held the rank of a major general, met him for the second time and asked if he could consider resigning for a short time to end the crisis. He said they thought that if he went on vacation for some time, the TLP people might be satisfied with that too. He told the former spy master that he had already offered his resignation to the prime minister, but he was not ready to accept it. The prime minister told Zahid not to take any pressure, adding that he would dissolve the government and would not allow his minister to resign. He further said that unfortunately, when the police action failed, he realised the only alternative would be the intervention of the army, which would not be good. In this situation, he once again asked the leadership to accept his resignation, and the PN reluctantly agreed to his resignation, and he was informed about it by the then-chief minister of Punjab, Shehbaz Sharif. Zahid noted that on the night of November 26, 2017, junior officers of the ISI came to his residence in Lahore and requested him to announce his resignation so that the Faizabad Interchange could get cleared for traffic in the morning. After consulting the chief minister of Punjab over the phone, he agreed to release news of his resignation before submitting it to the premier.

UK army chief lauds leadership of COAS Asim

DNA

LONDON: United Kingdom's Chief of General Staff General Sir Patrick Sanders on Friday lauded the leadership of Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir and recognised the "honesty and integrity" of the officers of the Pakistan Armed Forces. The British army chief spoke about the Pakistani military as the chief guest at a luncheon hosted at the Army and Navy Club in London in honour of close to 50 senior British military men and women who were invited and screened in Pakistan Army's Command and Staff College in the last 50 years. According to the Pakistan High Commission in London, Gen Sanders stated that there was no comparison between Pakistan's military profession, fitness and expertise. He also termed Pakistan as 'UK Army's' foremost priority in various avenues of Defence Association and Defence Collaboration during his tenure. The

British army officer also spoke about the trips he had undertaken to Pakistan and regretted that his upcoming visit to Pakistan would be the last in the uniform. As per the press release, in his address the British general spoke at length on the significance of Pakistan as an extremely vital country situated exactly at the centre of the East and the West. "Pakistan army is battle-hardened and known for its ability to defend the country as well as providing vital help to the partner countries," stated Gen Sanders. The event was attended by multiple decorated British military officers who appreciated the professionalism and versatility of the Pakistani Army. Notable British military officers who attended the event included Lieutenant General Sir Alastair Irwin (1986 graduate), Lieutenant General Anthony Palmer (1981 graduate), Brigadier Nick Thompson (1971 graduate), Brigadier Tony Barry (1970 graduate), and Major General Seamus Kerr (1985 graduate). As per the High Commission, the event was organised to cherish the "indelible memories" of the British officers' stay in Quetta, Pakistan High Commission's Army and Air Adviser Colonel Taimur Rabbat, who conducted the event, spoke about the achievements of the college and informed the audience of the value that college holds for the training and grooming of officers from 1965 onwards. During the event, speakers were also presented to the chief guest and other notables by spouse of the Pakistani high commissioner.

India begins voting in general election as Modi seeks 3rd term

It ends on June 1 and votes will be counted on June 4. On Friday, in the largest of the seven phases, 166 million voters in 102 constituencies across 21 states and territories will vote

NEW DELHI: India began voting on Friday in the world's largest election as Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeks a historic third term in office on the back of growth, inflation, his personal popularity and Hindu nationalism. The vote pits Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) against an alliance of two dozen opposition parties which is challenging him with promises of increased affirmative action, more handouts and what they say is the need to some domestic institutions from Modi's dictatorial rule. The gigantic exercise involving almost one billion voters will be spread over seven phases across the world's most populous country at the peak of summer. It ends on June 1 and votes will be counted on June 4. On Friday, in the largest of the seven phases, 166 million voters in 102 constituencies across 21 states and territories will vote, including in Tamil Nadu in the south, Arunachal Pradesh on the Himalayan frontier with China, and the most populous Uttar Pradesh in the north. Voters began lining up outside polling stations much before they opened at 7:30 a.m. (03:30 GMT) amid tight security, including senior citizens who needed help to reach the booths. "Modi will come back to power, because apart from the religious push, his other work, including on safety and security is good," said Abhishek Saitar, 32, a Muslim voter in Uttar Pradesh's Katra, about 100 km (60 miles) from Delhi. Mohammed Siddiqui, a 60-year-old driver and father of eight,

said unemployment was the main issue for him as none of his children have regular jobs. Hindu nationalism is not an issue in this election, "because even the Hindus are affected by a lack of jobs", he said. Surveys suggest BJP will easily win a majority even though voters have serious concerns about unemployment, inflation and rural distress in the world's fastest growing major economy, with the spotlight being on whether BJP can improve on its 2019 victory and by how much. "In the next five years, we will take our nation into the top three economies of the world, launch a final and decisive assault against poverty, open up newer avenues of growth... unveil the next generation of reforms, and take a number of people's decisions and actions," Modi wrote in the BJP's election manifesto. The manifesto and the theme of the BJP campaign is titled "Modi Ki Guarantee" or Modi's guarantee to fulfill promises made to voters, underlining the unusual leader-centric, presidential-style pitch in a parliamentary system. "I urge all those voting... to exercise their franchise in record numbers," Modi posted on X, minutes before polling began. "I particularly call upon the young and first time voters to vote in large numbers. After all, every vote counts and every vote matters," he said. If he wins, Modi will be only the second Indian prime minister to be elected three times in a row, after post-independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru. Modi says that his first two terms were appetizers and the main course will be served in the third term. BJP hoardings across towns and cities highlight a range of achievements in his two terms, including India's historic landing on the moon's south pole and fighting corruption to top voters. Hindu nationalism is a key theme in the government as the BJP are accused by critics of discriminating against or targeting India's 200 million minority Muslims to please their hardline Hindu base - charges both deny. - Agencies

Paris police deployed over threat to Iran consulate

FOREIGN DESK

PARIS: Armed police have been deployed in the centre of Paris following reports of a threat to the Iranian consulate. French media said a witness had seen a suspicious man entering the consulate in the Rue Frenel not far from the Eiffel Tower. Sources told French TV that the man appeared to be carrying a grenade or explosive vest. He was arrested by police shortly after 14:45 (12:45 GMT). BFMTV reported, some time after the incident began. Pictures from the scene showed police from France's elite BRI intervention brigade surrounding the area. Neighbouring streets in the city's 16th district in the centre were cordoned off. While the nature of the threat was not clear, Paris prefect ordered BRI police to rush to the scene.

Govt to launch joint operation in Katcha area

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi decided on Friday to launch a joint operation in the riverine areas to combat the lawlessness and gangs of dacoits who use the region to conduct criminal activities. The decision came during a meeting of the National Action Plan Implementation Review Committee held at the National Counter-Terrorism Authority (NACTA) headquarters. The meeting, presided over by Naqvi, was attended by the federal interior secretary, head of NACTA, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) director-general (DG), as well as inspectors general (IG) and home secretaries of Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P). The national coordinator of NACTA and various intelligence agencies personnel were also present during the high-level meeting. The meeting also focused on providing new technology to the police forces to better their performance and the participants reviewed security measures for Chinese citizens. The IG of each province further provided a comprehensive briefing on the security protocols in place for the safety of Chinese nationals. The interior minister, emphasising the paramount importance of safeguarding Chinese citizens, directed all security agencies, including the police to "ensure 100% adherence to standard operating procedure (SOP)". The minister warned that any negligence would not be tolerated in this regard. "Strict disciplinary action will be taken for negligence in implementation," added Naqvi.

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