



# Daily SOON TIMES



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Monday  
1st April, 2024  
Page: 4 Rs: 21  
Vol: 4 Issue: 92  
Sargodha  
www.soontimes.pk



Simultaneously Publishing from Islamabad, Sargodha and Karachi

Sherry Rehman demands exemplary punishment for girl's killers

## PM reiterates resolve for social, economic uplift of minorities



Soon Times Correspondent  
LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday reaffirmed the resolve to work for the social uplift and integration of all the minorities in Pakistan. "I extend my heartfelt greetings to the Christian community of Pakistan and around the world, on the occasion of Easter," the prime minister said in a message.

## Punjab Assembly session summoned on opposition's requisition



Soon Times Correspondent  
LAHORE: The session of Punjab Assembly has been summoned on the requisition of opposition. As per the details, speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan has summoned the session for Monday April 1 at 11 am. A notification in this regard has already been issued by the speaker. Also Read: Punjab Assembly approves budget for financially ear 2023-24

## PIA suspends Hina Sani after her arrest in Canada in passport fraud case



RAWALPINDI (Web Desk) - Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has taken action against its flight attendant Hina Sani who was briefly held at Toronto Airport for carrying passports not issued to her for international travel. Hina Sani, a member of cabin crew, was arrested in Toronto on PIA Flight PK-789. Canadian immigration authorities confiscated multiple passports from her. The action was taken after Sani put the country's flag carrier in bad light due to several scandals. The crew member, along with two others from the same flight, was initially detained but later released after investigations. PIA management shortly suspended crew member and stated that further action would be taken based on the Canadian customs' investigation report. A PIA spokesperson told media that the airline was cooperating with Canadian authorities and that the suspended crew member would face additional departmental and legal actions based on the inquiry report. The crew members are expected to return to Pakistan over the weekend. PIA crew member brought a bad name to Pakistan as last month another air hostess Maryam Raza slipped away in Canada.

# 'Pakistan wants to join hands with US for global peace, security', Shehbaz tells Biden

Pakistan attaches high importance to its ties with US: PM Shehbaz.

Soon Times Correspondent  
Islamabad Responding to a letter of US President Joe Biden, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that Pakistan desires to work with the United States for the achievement of shared goals of global peace and stability as well as regional progress and prosperity. The premier also said that both countries have been working together on various significant initiatives in energy, climate change, agriculture, health and education sectors. PM Shehbaz said that Islamabad attached high importance to its ties with Washington. The cooperation between the two countries on energy sector and Green Alliance framework were welcoming, said the PM.

Earlier, the President Biden had addressed a letter to Premier Shehbaz in which he extended felicitation to the new government. He further emphasized upon the "enduring partnership" between the US and Pakistan. In the first diplomatic correspondence between the US and the new government in Pakistan, Biden had vowed that Washington would "continue to stand with Pakistan" in tackling the "most pressing global and regional challenges". The letter also held significance as Islamabad's ties with the White House were strained after the cipher saga and allegation levelled by the former ruling party — Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

Biden, in his letter, had written: "The enduring partnership between our nations remains critical to ensuring the security of our people — and people around the world — and the United States will continue to stand with Pakistan to tackle the most pressing global and regional challenges of our time. "That includes advancing our shared vision for a future of greater health security, economic growth, and access to education for all. "Through our US-Pakistan 'Green Alliance' framework, we will also continue to strengthen our climate resilience, support sustainable agriculture and water management, and assist with Pakistan's recovery from the devastating floods in 2022," he had added.



## Maryam vows to protect Christian community and their rights



Soon Times Correspondent  
SHEIKHUPURA Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Sunday pledged to protect the sanctity of Christian religious sites and uphold minority rights. Maryam conveyed this message on Easter at a ceremony in Sheikhupura, where she chose to celebrate the religious and cultural festival alongside the Christian community. Reflecting on her upbringing, she expressed pride in attending a convent school from the age of four until 10th grade. Maryam attributed her personal growth and

development not only to her parents but also to the nuns, sisters, and fathers at the Christian school who played a significant role in shaping her character. She credited her achievement as the first female chief minister of any province in the nation's history to her Christian teachers. The chief minister highlighted the importance of discipline and cleanliness instilled in her by the school, stating that it played a pivotal role in her life after her parents. She referenced the first verse of the Quran, emphasizing that Allah is the God of all worlds, underscoring the unity of humanity under the divine. Maryam shared that her father, Nawaz Sharif, had always emphasized the importance of minority rights, and she conveyed his greetings to the Christian community on Easter. She also expressed appreciation for the first Sikh minister and congratulated him on his appointment. The chief minister lauded the achievements and contributions of the Christian community, as well as individuals like Justice Cornelius for promoting the rule of law and fair justice, and Cecil Chaudhry (CC) for his service in the Pakistan Air Force.

## PTI made Aseefa Bhutto's victory as MNA controversial: Ghani



Soon Times Correspondent  
KARACHI Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Saeed Ghani accused the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of intentionally generating controversy surrounding Aseefa Bhutto's victory as MNA. Aseefa won the NA-207 seat after her father Asif Zardari had vacated it as he was elected as president. Talking to the media in Karachi, Ghani dismissed allegations that the PPP had abducted any of the MP seats. He asserted that such claims were baseless. Ghani highlighted that Asif Ali Zardari had previously secured a lead of 50,000 votes in the Nawab Shah constituency. According to Ghani, PTI will get nothing out of such accusations. He challenged the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) in Sindh to present Form 45 claiming victory. He said that the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) and JUI-F suffered defeats. Regarding Aseefa Bhutto, Ghani explained that no suitable candidates stood against her, as the nomination papers of Sher Muhammad Rind and his son were rejected. He said that if Aseefa Bhutto had contested, she would have gained more votes than Asif Zardari. Ghani further revealed that Ghulam Mustafa Rind failed to settle the dues issue with HESCO, prompting him to withdraw in favour of the PPP. Ghani condemned PTI's propaganda efforts to create controversies.



## PBC, HCBA Abbottabad support Tassaduq Jillani-led commission while PTI rejects

Soon Times Correspondent  
LAHORE-ISLAMABAD The Punjab Bar Council (PBC) and the Punjab Bar Council (HCBA) welcomed the commission led by former chief justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani, appointed to investigate allegations levelled by six judges of the Islamabad High Court (IHC). PBC Vice-Chairman Kamran Bashir Mughal expressed optimism that Justice Jilani would conduct an unbiased, fair, and free inquiry into the matter.

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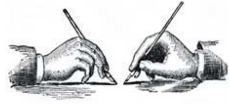
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Mahfil Shabeena at Faisal Masjid

Mahfil Shabeena would start at Faisal Masjid from Sunday organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony. According to the Ministry's Spokesperson Muhammad Umar Butt,

Mahfil Shabeena would continue for seven consecutive days from Isha prayer to midnight. He said Mahfil Shabeena would continue from 21st to 27th Ramazan in the last Ashra of sacred month.

The completion of the Holy Quran in Mahfil Shabeena would take place on the 27th night of Ramazan, he added. Umar Butt said the winners in the competition would serve as ambassadors for their

respective provinces in the Mahfil Shabeena, alongside the Huffaz of Dawah Academy, who would also be accorded the honor of reciting the Holy Quran during the event.

"Deteriorating economy of Pakistan and real facts"



Tariq Khan Yousafza

inflationary storm has unannounced. Two or three days later, the Pakistani currency decreased further in the interbank market. After that, at the end of the business, one American dollar was seen at the highest price of 303, that is, the value of the Pakistani rupee decreased by 63.0%. It has not decreased but continues to depreciate immediately after the appreciation of the rupee immediately after the standby agreement with the IMF. Although there was an impression that the rupee would stabilize due to the arrival of dollars in the country after the standby agreement, initially the price of one dollar decreased from 286 rupees to 275 rupees. The price of 303 rupees, while its price in the open market has reached 306, that is, the value of the rupee has decreased by more than seven percent in sixty days, while the Pakistani rupee has weakened by more than 23 percent in about eight months of this year. It is believed that the main reason for this is import payments, which is also reflected in the latest current account figures of \$80 million in July. Which has been negative again after being positive for four consecutive months. However, it should be kept in the context that the IMF demanded the Pakistani authorities to end the embargo as

soon as the standby agreement was signed. Since then, we have been facing heavy losses, while another reason for this is that interest rates have increased in the United States. Similarly, due to the rising international oil prices, the slowdown in the Chinese economy has led to an increase in oil exports to China. Decreasing demand is also leading to an increase in the value of the dollar. In retrospect, the policy of pursuing open market parity in the country was a major flaw, as it is difficult to maintain and hence it is seen that the open market is driving the formal i.e. interbank market. The inflation coming from the country can be estimated from the fact that the prices of petroleum products have already increased by forty rupees in a month. While the prices of smuggled oil from Iran in Balochistan are also thirty rupees per liter. The liter has increased, but Iranian petrol has nothing to do with the rise and fall of the rupee, but the most powerful people doing illegal business do not feel any fear. At this time, the need is that the rupee to maintain the value, due to which the storm of inflation can be stopped, the government should manage to increase the export as well as the increase in the import, because without this, the value of the rupee will continue to weaken.

Everyone is analyzing the declining economic situation of Pakistan in their own way, but what are the real facts? And what are the internal and external motivations that are causing the deterioration of the Pakistani economy. No member of the intellectual class can deny that if China is gradually becoming an economic champion, on the other hand, it is influencing all the affairs of the world in one way or another. The best example of this is that at the moment due to the slowdown in the Chinese economy, the dollar rate is increasing due to the oil demand in China, which has an impact on Pakistan as well. Due to the recent increase in the value of the dollar, a sharp increase in inflation is possible. When we saw the spurt in dollar demand in the light of the International Monetary Fund's guidance, where the rupee has continued to depreciate, the

World Water Week and Water threats in Pakistan



Kazim Laghari

Water is universally known as life. But negligence and ignorant attitude towards this blessing gift of God have been making it acute shortage and contamination. UN held a conference in Stockholm, Sweden, under the theme of World Water Week the previous week. The motto was Seeds of Change: Innovative Solutions for a water-wise world. In March this year, The United Nations general secretary Antonio Guterres also warned at the opening of the global body's first major meeting on water resources that the future of humanity's "lifeline", water, is under threat worldwide. He further said, "We have broken the water cycle, destroyed ecosystems, and contaminated ground waters", at the three-day summit in New York, in which some 6,500 participants were gathered including a dozen heads of state and government. Given such a grave threat of water depletion by the UN general secretary, the water's unusual use has not been ended. In some areas of the world, though the UN has underlined the world's full of emptiness, people are using intentionally water extraordinarily. For instance, more water has been reportedly wasted lavishly in washing vehicles, and houses without need, industries are also wasting water without recycling. etc Such a negligent attitude must be stopped to save water for the sack of life. Coming to Pakistan, the water's resources are in considerable amounts, yet some areas are affected by saltiness. Fortunately, the land of the country is blessed with enough water. But the worrying thing is that the water has become contaminated by the lack of attention of the people, and the waste of human beings and animals has been drained into the rivers and sea without recycling. And lack of proper knowledge of using biodiversity and artificial substances for the field to make enough yields has also caused depletion and contamination of the groundwater treasury. Sadly, where the people have become addicted to bypassing their moral duties and playing dangerously with natural resources, both the federal and provincial government's role is also not appreciable. Despite strict laws and rules given on water management and distribution and other natural resources, the implementation remains unseen. And the governments their concerned official departments are also seen as lenient to some extent on such grave

unlawfulness. A few years ago, the companies were given contracts in the Sindh province to explore the gas and petrol reservoirs across the province. Undoubtedly, it was a timely and better effort by the then governments to boost the country's frail economy and save the country from the heavy burden of importing for the energy sector, but the companies were not properly dictated or they evasively avoided the meeting some basic principles of careful exploring and saving the unearthed sweet water's treasury in the province. They spread the vires network around the place where they got clues about reservoirs, and they blasted bombs for the dig eventually, after some months nearby areas and villages, which have the only source of potable water unearthed water pumped by handpumps and electrical motors, water coming from handpumps and electrical motors became completely polluted and toxic. Many diseases erupted such as kidney, respiratory, and liver failures. Sadly, the villages near Taluka Hala, District Matiari, are suffering a lot of problems due to drinking toxic water and are compelled to drink that water because of not available any other source of potable water. Many times they have protested and asked the government's concerned departments but their hue and cry went unaddressed. It is extremely saddening to know that children are suffering bone and kidney diseases from that water as doctors suggested. Notwithstanding, the digitally rich global world and technologically super, such latest modalities have remained inaccessible for Pakistan specifically for its official departments. Not taking in developed countries but also in developing countries technology has prevailed in most of the official departments, and its expedient usage has made things easier. Many countries are taking advantage of using new technology by recycling the water and making it re-potable. The magical invention of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has caused widespread debates across the world, keeping its disadvantage aside, AI can be a helpful tool for preserving and recycling water in considerable amounts. If it is used in this manner to benefit human beings in various fields such as water preservation, health, agriculture, etc., it will

be praised and applied accordingly in a fruitful way. Regrettably, reporting on such a high scale of contaminated water being distributed to the masses via water lines, the governments have not even bothered to ask the concerned departments for such ineptitude and incapability. By drinking contaminated and toxic water many diasporas in the country have faced surges in fatal diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, dysentery, hepatitis A, etc. These lethal diseases have been affecting every age of people for a long time, even newly borne babies are not safe from these monsters. Sadly in remote areas of Sindh and Baluchistan province, people have to go far to get water for drinking, in the Thar desert of Sindh masses have to go for several kilometers only to fetch potable water because where they are living there the water is not available, rarely, if rain showers then they have muddy wells for storing rainwater, otherwise they have to follow the same cycle of a long journey for getting water. However, in the recent past, the report allegedly declared that the big cities some population of the country has been drinking contaminated water with a mix-up of feces. What else big fraud be with our innocent masses than this? Despite a grave warning by the UN general secretary, if the governments especially developing countries do not pay due heed, it will cause a huge crisis in the shape of ill masses and sick nation's coming youth with a lack of immune power and considerable abilities. The already climate-hit and inflation-hit country cannot afford to harvest such an intelligible generation. As water is an integral part of life, life cannot be survived without water and also life cannot be survived productively by drinking contaminated water with multiple harmful germs. This serious monster of water depletion and water contamination must be addressed timely. After all, this research and cautioned warning by the UN general secretary must be taken seriously, both governments ought to take stable and strict actions against the water management authorities.

Fostering Unity: Combating Sectarianism in Gilgit-Baltistan



Written by: Altaf Kumail

to respond resolutely to their adversaries' conspiracies. Unfortunately, recent days have witnessed an alarming situation in Gilgit-Baltistan, marked by concealed strife and sectarian biases, resulting in protests staged at every street corner due to hatred and enmity. Once again, the serene atmosphere of Gilgit-Baltistan is being disrupted by sectarian discord, aiming to disrupt the peaceful environment through sectarian unrest. Regrettably, a trend has begun where whenever peace and tranquility need to be established in the region, sectarian differences are inflamed to create divisions between Shia and Sunni, leading to the erosion of unity and solidarity, serving the interests and objectives of those who seek to capitalize on the situation. Gilgit-Baltistan is a region of strategic significance, attracting both external and internal opportunistic elements,

with their gaze fixed on personal gains, always seeking excuses to spread sectarian animosity among the populace. They believe that their sectarian divisions act as a safe haven, and these elements have indeed succeeded once again in fostering sectarian animosity. Now, to defeat these elements decisively, the conscious people of Gilgit-Baltistan need to embrace unity and inter-Muslim collaboration, keeping their religious and sectarian differences at bay, fortifying the bonds of unity, harmony, and brotherhood. This is vital because in this era of the internet and social media, situations like these can be manipulated by vested interests. Our region cannot endure the burden of further discord and divisions, necessitating the urgency of unity and agreement. The sole path to overcome all these issues and challenges lies in robust, organized, and steadfast unity and agreement.

History's pages make it clear that unity and agreement among nations play a pivotal role in their rise and fall, progress and decline, prosperity and adversity, well-being and misfortune, strength and weakness. Nations that hold onto the bonds of unity and agreement achieve success and triumph, while those that forsake mutual harmony and agreement, falling into internal disagreements, divisions, and mutual hatred, face the worst defeats, failures, and humiliation. For the preservation of any nation's existence, unity and agreement are imperative, enabling them

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Islamabad: President ICICI Ahsan Bakhtawari holding a meeting with Libyan Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Z.O.

# Alleged corruption in restructuring project worth 1 billion Rs

Soon Times Correspondent

Sargodha: About one billion rupees was spent on the restructuring and revamping of Civil Hospital Sargodha and other 80-year-old ruins and dilapidated buildings adjacent to it. This is a hotbed of bribery and looting worth crores of rupees. While the contractor

is not working as per the agreement. Substandard material is being used freely in restructuring and revamping work and no one is asking. The contractor or the employees of the building department are not even ready to give any kind of statement. While the citizens have demanded to take notice from the Chief Minister of Punjab.

# Video of cantt police constables taking bribery goes viral; DPO takes action

Soon Times Correspondent

Sargodha: DPO Sargodha Muhammad Faisal Kamran has taken immediate action on the matter of bribery video of cantt police constables going viral on social media. The police officers seen in the video have been arrested and legal proceedings

have been initiated. DPO says that zero tolerance policy will be adopted on complaints of corruption. Those who become a disgrace to the department have no place in the department. He added, while officials are encouraged for good deeds, strict action is also taken against illegal acts that cause such disrepute.

# Rupee likely to remain stable on hopes of new IMF deal

Soon Times Correspondent

KARACHI: The rupee is likely to remain stable in coming months owing to the prospects of a new deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for another bailout programme expected in June. The local currency, presently trading at 278 against the dollar, is likely to maintain itself between 290 and 301 against the greenback.

as opposed to the 38% who believed this to be true three months ago when asked to comment on the rupee-dollar parity by June 2024. Meanwhile, as opposed to the 2% of respondents who, in December 2023, expected the local currency to be in the same range by June this year, 23% now believe that the rupee might likely trade between 250 to 270 against the greenback. Although no formal discussions have yet taken place on the new IMF deal, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that Islamabad is expected to reach a staff-level agreement with the Washington-based lender for a new bailout package by the end of the fiscal year, stressing that the details of the new agreement would come under discussion in the spring meetings. Disclosing that he himself would lead a Pakistani delegation to the US capital around mid-April, the finance minister said that so far the IMF has been "very

receptive" to a "larger and longer programme." "A new tranche of loan is likely to be received from the IMF in a few days, however, we would need another programme," he said while addressing a session of the Special Investment Facilitation Council's (SIFC) apex committee attended by civil-military leadership. His remarks come as last week Islamabad and the Washington-based lender struck a staff-level agreement on the second and final review under the \$3 billion Stand-By Arrangement, paving the way for the release of the last tranche. However, the publication, citing reports, says that the Fund's executive board hasn't yet fixed any date for considering the completion of the second review and release of the third tranche of \$1.1 billion and is in fact expected to approve the disbursement by the end of April.

A poll conducted by Topline Research — which includes the input of various market players on macroeconomic and market variables — reflects a more bullish view of the stock market compared to the polls conducted few months ago. Stressing that no major fall is expected in the rupee, the brokerage firm said that 49% of the respondents in the poll expect the local currency to remain between the 290 to 310 range against the dollar by the end of the current year



HYDERABAD, PAKISTAN, MAR 31: Activists of Awami Workers Party (AWP) are holding protest rally for recovery of missing girl Priya Kumari, at Hyderabad press club on Sunday.

# Punjab CM and PPP Chairman extend Easter greetings to Christian community

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz expressed felicitations to the Christian community on the occasion of Easter, emphasizing the festival's message of kindness, empathy, forgiveness, and love. C M Maryam highlighted the constructive role played by the Christian community in Pakistan's creation and development, underscoring their importance as a peaceful minority. In her message, Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz emphasized Pakistan's commitment to diversity and inclusion, stating that the country is the homeland for all, without discrimination based on religion, caste, race, color, or values. She emphasized Easter's promotion of harmony, tolerance, and humanity, wishing for contentment, peace, and prosperity during the celebrations. Bilawal sent the message of diversity, harmony Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chairman of the



PPP extended his greetings to the Christian community globally on Easter. Bilawal praised their unwavering patriotism and acknowledging their efforts in education and health sectors. PPP's chairman highlighted the PPP's vision of inclusion and diversity by mentioning the election of Anthony Naved as Deputy Speaker of the Sindh Assembly and MPA Roma Mushtaq Matto. Bilawal Bhutto emphasized Easter as a symbol of mutual understanding and a new dawn, aligning with the principles of his predecessors, Shehbaz Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto, as well as the principles outlined in the 1973 constitution.

# 'Precious asset of Pakistan': President, PM felicitate Christian community on Easter

Soon Times Correspondent

Islamabad President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday felicitated the Christian community on the occasion Easter and acknowledged the community members' contributions for development of Pakistan. The Christian community is celebrating the Easter on Sunday (today) with special prayer ceremonies being arranged in different churches across the country. In his message, President Zardari said that the Constitution of Pakistan guaranteed constitutional rights to all religious communities. He said that all the communities enjoyed religious, political, social and economic rights in Pakistan. "The Christian community is a precious asset of Pakistan," the President Secretariat Press Wing said,

adding that Easter was an occasion that brought a message of hope, affection and prosperity. Appreciating the Christian community's contributions for the national progress, he further observed, "The Christian community has always played their role in the progress and prosperity of the country." Zardari reaffirmed that Pakistan was committed to protection of the rights of all communities and would ensure all steps for their prosperity. For the country's progress and prosperity, entire nation including minorities would have to collectively work together, he added. Separately, in his message on the occasion, PM Shehbaz extended greetings to the Christian community of Pakistan and around the world. "Much more than festivity and celebration, Easter is an occasion to reinforce and reflect on the values of love, tolerance and forgiveness as espoused by

Prophet Isa (AS) and is a reminder to bring these in our daily lives to create harmony and peace in today's strife and conflict-ridden world," he said. He lauded the contributions of Christian community in struggle for the creation of Pakistan and its socio-economic development. He said he believed that they would continue to play their proactive role in the progress and stability of Pakistan. "While we celebrate diversity of faiths as a source of strength and enrichment in our nation, let us join hands towards building a society that is tolerant and cohesive and together defeat the forces of discord that are trying to cause harm to the fabric of our society. "We reaffirm our resolve to work for the social uplift and integration of all our minorities in Pakistan," he said wishing the Christian community a happy and peaceful Easter.



PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN, MAR 31: Activists of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are holding protest demonstration for release of Imran Khan, Former Prime Minister, at Peshawar press club

# Tribal feuds cause lawlessness in upper Sindh districts: Murad Ali Shah

Soon Times Correspondent

KANDHIKOT: Sindh's Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has said that tribal feuds have caused lawlessness in upper Sindh districts of Kashmore, Ghotki, Jacobabad and Sukkur. Talking to media here, chief minister Shah said that the government will end these disputes and it will also get support from the tribal chiefs in this respect. Murad Ali Shah said that the situation was already bad, it worsens during the interim government. "What improvement made by the caretaker government in the law and order during its six months," he questioned. "We will soon restore peace in the area with assistance from the police, rangers and the



military," chief minister said. He said, in previous term his government had requested to the federal government for provision of military arms and equipment. "I don't understand how these bandits getting military arms and equipment," he said. "We have appointed provincial home minister to tackle and improve the law and order," he added.





## Collins looks to crown late-career revival against Rybakina



MIAMI Danielle Collins is saving the best for last. Having announced in January that she will retire from the sport at the end of this season, the 30-year-old American has reached her first WTA 1000 Series final and will meet Elena Rybakina. Outside of a run to the final of the 2022 Australian Open, which she lost to Ash Barty, this is Collins' best performance in an elite level event and the Floridian, ranked 53rd in the world, is loving every minute of it.

"To have made the finals, first finals of a 1000 level in my home state during my last season, this is just, like, great," she said after defeating Russian Ekaterina Alexandrova in the semi-final.

"The memories made this week on and off the court, I'm just over the moon." The question inevitably arises as to whether Collins, having indicated her departure from the tour, is now benefiting from a more relaxed approach to the game with the pressure off.

## Aussie Green fires sizzling 61 for early LPGA lead in Arizona



LOS ANGELES Australia's Hannah Green went under the weather on top of the world Friday, rolling off six straight birdies to cap an 11-under-par 61 to grab the clubhouse lead at the LPGA Ford Championship in Arizona.

"I wasn't really feeling that great overnight. Kind of have a bit of a runny nose and sore throat, so wasn't expecting that much, which is maybe a good thing," said Green, who is going on to flip the script at Seville Golf and Country Club, where she's in search of her second title of the month.

"I missed a short putt on the first and I was like, 'Oh, OK, that's fine. I really took advantage of the shorter holes we had. I also holed a couple really long putts... Just had a really nice morning." Green, who rattled in a 30-foot birdie to win the HSBC Women's World Championship in Singapore by one stroke earlier this month, hit 16 of 18 greens in regulation and needed just 25 putts as she built a 36-hole total of 14-under 130.

## Lebanon's precarious sectarian balance tipping amid Hezbollah-Israeli war



BEIRUT As the Lebanese Christian village of Rmeish marks its first Easter since the Gaza war erupted, residents say a parallel confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel is dragging them into a conflict they did not choose. Like many Christians elsewhere in southern Lebanon, residents are angry and fearful their homes could be caught in the cross-fire and their families forced to flee — permanently — from their ancestral villages near the Lebanon-Israel border.

Earlier this week, a Rmeish resident confronted a group of armed men trying to launch rockets at Israel from within the village. Some villagers rang church bells to sound the alarm, and the armed men moved off to fire rockets from another neighbourhood, according to mayor Milad al-Alam and Rmeish residents.

"What we've been saying for the last six months is: among our own homes, keep us neutral. Any strike in return would have moved off to fire rockets from another neighbourhood, according to mayor Milad al-Alam and Rmeish residents.



## An Israeli airstrike on a hospital tent camp in Gaza kills 2 Palestinians

The cease-fire talks resumed in Cairo on Sunday, with little expectation of any breakthrough.

Web Desk

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip

An Israeli airstrike hit a tent camp inside a hospital in central Gaza on Sunday, killing two Palestinians and wounding another 15.

The strike hit one of several tents in the courtyard of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah, where thousands of people have been sheltering for months after fleeing their homes elsewhere in the war-ravaged territory.

Journalists were working from tents nearby, and an Associated Press reporter witnessed the strike and aftermath. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

Tens of thousands of people have sought shelter in Gaza's hospitals since the start of the war, viewing them as relatively safe from airstrikes. Israeli accuses Hamas and other militants of operating in and around medical facilities, and troops have raided a number of hospitals.

Israeli troops have been raiding Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest, for nearly two weeks and say they have fought heavy battles with militants in and around the medical compound. The military says it has killed scores of fighters, including senior Hamas operatives. Palestinian families who fled from the area, including many who had already been displaced earlier in the war, say they were ordered to march south by Israeli soldiers after days of heavy fighting.

Only a third of Gaza's hospitals are even partially functioning, even as Israeli strikes kill and wound scores of people every day. Doctors say they are often forced to treat patients on hospital floors because all the beds are taken, and to operate without anaesthetic and other crucial medical supplies. An international team of doctors who had recently visited Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, where Sunday's strike occurred, said they were horrified by the war's gruesome impact on Palestinian children.

## Babar picked 'unanimously' to lead Pakistan in white-ball cricket again

Sports Desk

LAHORE

Babar Azam was named on Sunday captain of men's cricket team after almost five months when he relinquished charge due to poor performance of the Green Shirts in world and Asia cups.

According to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announcement, Babar would lead the One-day and Twenty20 squads.

A PCB post on the social media platform X, said: "Babar Azam appointed as white-ball captain."

The post mentioned that the decision was made following a "unanimous recommendation" from the PCB's selection committee and its chairman Mohsin Naqvi.

The PCB also shared a video clip from a meeting between Babar and Naqvi. It may be recalled that Babar stepped down from the team's leadership in November last year, after which the PCB appointed Shaheen Afridi as the T20 captain and Shan Masood as the Test skipper. Babar has represented Pakistan in 52 Tests, 117 ODIs and 109 T20Is. Under his leadership, Pakistan won 42 of 71 T20 matches and faced defeat in 23.



## West Indies women's squad announced for tour To Pakistan



ST. JOHN'S, Antigua (Web Desk) — The Cricket West Indies (CWI) Women's Selection Panel has announced the 15-member squad for the tour to Pakistan in April-May. The eight-match series comprises three (5) T20 Internationals (T20Is) and three

(3) One Day Internationals (ODIs). Kate Wilmore was rewarded with her call-up to the senior team for the first time, having displayed commendable performances with her right-arm medium pace, during the

recently concluded CG United Women's Super50 Cup and T20 Blaze tournaments. Qiana Joseph and Chedean Nation who also had credible performances were recalled to the team, having missed out on the last tour to Australia in 2023.

Lead Selector for Women's cricket Ann Browne-John said, "The upcoming series against is extremely important for the team as they return to international competition after almost six months, the last series being against Australia. Apart from the three ODI, the team will get some much-needed T20 matches as they prepare to participate in the T20 World Cup later this year."

## France to send old armoured vehicles, new missiles to Ukraine

PARIS

France will deliver hundreds of old armoured vehicles and new surface-to-air missiles to Ukraine in its war against Russia, French Defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu said on Sunday.

In an interview with La Tribune Dimanche, Lecornu said that President Emmanuel Macron, following talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, had asked him to prepare a new aid package, which will include old but still functional French equipment.

"The Ukrainian army needs to defend a very long front line, which requires armoured vehicles, this is absolutely crucial for troop mobility and is part of the Ukrainian request," he said.

He said France was looking at providing hundreds of VAB (Vehicule de l'Avant Blindé) front-line troop carriers in 2024 and La 2025. France's army is gradually replacing its thousands of VB70s, which first went into operation in the late 1970s, with a new multi-role troop carrier. Lecornu added that France was also preparing to release a new batch of Aster 30 surface-to-air missiles for the SAMPT system provided to Kyiv. The Aster 30 can intercept warplanes, drones and cruise missiles within a range of 120 km.



"Ukraine has an urgent need for better ground-air defence... Russia is intensifying its strikes, in particular on civilians and civil infrastructure," he said. Lecornu said he had asked government defence procurement agency DGA (Direction Generale de l'Armement) to make proposals to accelerate production of Aster missiles, manufactured by European group MBDA. Aster missiles are also being used in the Red Sea, where French frigates defend maritime traffic against attacks from Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen, he said. Lecornu said last week a decree was published giving the ministry powers to boost stock levels and prioritise contracts.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL INCL



## India opposition unites over pre-election arrest, blames PM Modi

NEW DELHI

Indian opposition parties united on Sunday to protest against the arrest of a prominent leader weeks before a national election, accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party of rigging the vote and harassing them with large tax demands.

"Narendra Modi is trying match-fixing in this election," Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi told a New Delhi rally as the crowd chanted "Shame!"

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, a staunch Modi critic, anti-corruption crusader and a high-profile leader of the 27-member "INDIA" opposition bloc, was arrested on March 21 for alleged graft over granting liquor licenses, less than a month before voting starts in a general election widely expected to solidify Modi's mandate with a rare third term.

Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party says the case is fabricated and politically motivated. Modi's government and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) deny political interference and say law enforcement agencies are doing their job.

"If the BJP wins this match-fixing election and changes the constitution, it will light the country on fire," said Gandhi, whose party ruled India for more than two-thirds of the time since independence in 1947 but has struggled since Modi swept to power a decade ago. "This is not an ordinary election. This election is to save the country, protect our constitution."

## The Trump camp assails Biden for declaring Easter Sunday as Transgender Day of Visibility



WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden is facing criticism from Donald Trump's campaign and religious conservatives for proclaiming March 31 — which corresponds with Easter Sunday this year — as "Transgender Day of Visibility."

The Democratic president issued the proclamation on Friday, calling on "all Americans to join us in lifting up the lives and voices of transgender people throughout our Nation and to work toward eliminating violence and discrimination based on gender identity."

But in 2024, the March 31 designation overlaps with Easter, one of Christianity's holiest celebrations. Trump's campaign accused Biden, a Roman Catholic, of being insensitive to religion, and fellow Republicans piled on.

"We call on Joe Biden's failing campaign and White House to issue an apology to the millions of Catholics and Christians across America who believe tomorrow is for one celebration only — the resurrection of Jesus Christ," said Karoline Leavitt, the Trump campaign's press secretary. She assailed what she called the Biden administration's "years-long assault on the Christian faith."

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said on social media that the "Biden White House has betrayed the central tenet of Easter" and called the decision "outrageous and abhorrent."

White House spokesperson Andrew Bates said the Republicans criticizing Biden "are seeking to divide and weaken our country with cruel, hateful and dishonest rhetoric."

"As a Christian who celebrates Easter with family, President Biden stands for bringing people together and upholding the dignity and freedoms of every American," Bates said. "President Biden will never abuse his faith for political purposes or for profit."