

Daily SOON TIMES

Friday
April 26, 2024
Page: 4 Rs: 20
Vol: 4 Issue: 118
Islamabad

ABC Certified

Simultaneously Publishing from Islamabad, Sargodha & Karachi

Dar holds out olive branch to opposition



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday made an offer to the opposition to work together for the betterment of the country.

Speaking in the Senate, Leader of the House Dar, saying, "Let's work together to restore the sanctity of the house and resolve the country's issues."

Dar expressed regret over the lack of Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, questioning why elections did not take place there.

The Leader of the House further stated that conducting elections was the responsibility of the Election Commission, not the caretaker government. The PDM government provided the grant for the elections, expressing regret over the loss of PTI's electoral symbol. He added that the loss of PTI's electoral symbol was their own fault. He continued, saying, "When the Election Commission asked for elections to be held again, why weren't they conducted according to the law? I remember during the PTI government's tenure, a Member of Parliament was handcuffed and prosecuted on false charges of heroin possession."



Bushra Bibi was poisoned during Ramadan, says spox

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD

Mashal Yousafzai, spokesperson for Bushra Bibi, claimed that the former first lady's food was poisoned during Ramadan.

Talking to a private TV channel on Thursday, Yousafzai stated that it was learnt that the food of Bushra Bibi, wife of PTI founder, was poisoned during the last week of Ramadan. Two to three drops of toilet cleaner were mixed into Bushra Bibi's Iftar meal, she added.

"Since consuming the food, Bushra Bibi's health has deteriorated and continues to worsen," she added. Yousafzai said that before her arrest, the former first lady did not have any health issues such as high blood pressure or diabetes. Since her arrest, her health has deteriorated, indicating that something definitely happened, she added.

Yousafzai, who is also the adviser to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister, said that Bushra Bibi's medical tests were not conducted despite the court had been directing the authorities for three weeks. She questioned who was hindering the medical tests. Yousafzai mentioned that the court had ordered an endoscopy and blood tests.

Received no complaint of interference in judiciary since assuming charge as CJP: Faez Isa

Taking a strong stance against meddling in court's affairs by officials of intelligence agencies



Soon Times Correspondent KARACHI

Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Thursday said he had not received a single complaint from any high court judge about interference in judicial affairs since assuming the office.

The top judge was addressing Sindh High Court Bar Association (SHCBA). He said no one has reported any meddling in the judicial process to him, adding that all the incidents were taken place before the start of his tenure as CJP.

He categorically stated that interference in judiciary was not acceptable but at the same time set the record straight that he had not received any such complaint under his watch.

On March 25, six judges of the Islamabad High Court writing a letter to the Supreme Judicial Council regarding the "interference of intelligence agencies in judicial matters".

The letter was written by Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Justice Babar Sattar, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir and Justice Saman Raffat Imtiaz.

Later, the Supreme Court initiated suo motu proceedings on the IHC judges' letter and sought a proposal from the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC), the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), high courts and the federal government to address the issue.

"They should suggest what should be the institutional response and mechanism to address the issues like the ones raised in the letter [of IHC judges] and ensure that such issues do not arise in future and, if they do, to fix liability and proceed against those responsible," the top court said in its April 3 order in the suo motu case.

Pakistan rejects US human rights report as 'biased and politicised'



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has outrightly dismissed the 2023 Country Report on human rights practices recently released by the United States State Department. "The contents of the report are unjust, relying on inaccurate information and are disconnected from the realities on the ground," stated the foreign office on Thursday.

In a strongly worded statement, the foreign office criticised the annual practice of the US State Department in preparing such reports, labeling them as lacking objectivity and flawed in methodology. It accused these reports of applying a domestic social lens to judge human rights situations in other nations, driven by political biases.

The 2023 Human Rights Report from the US State Department, unveiled this week, accused Pakistan and India of intimidating or seeking reprisals against individuals beyond their borders, including activists, defenders, and journalists. Both nations were indicted for significant human rights violations such as arbitrary and extrajudicial killings, torture, inhumane treatment, and arbitrary arrests, with a lack of accountability contributing to widespread impunity.

Furthermore, the report alleged that successive Pakistani governments tacitly endorsed enforced disappearances, citing figures from the government's Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances. It noted that out of 9,967 reported missing-person cases since 2011, 7,714 were resolved while 2,253 remained pending.

The report also highlighted military trials of civilians accused of rioting on May 9, following the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan.

In response, the foreign office criticised the lack of objectivity in this year's report, asserting its politicisation of the international human rights agenda. It expressed deep concern over the report's oversight or downplaying of urgent human rights issues in places like Gaza and Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Supreme Court orders auction of Nasla Tower land, compensation for affected allottees

Soon Times Correspondent KARACHI

The Supreme Court issued orders on Thursday for the auction of the land where Nasla Tower once stood in Karachi and for compensation to be provided to the affected allottees.

The court's Karachi Registry had previously directed the relevant authorities to ensure compensation for nearly 44 affected families of the residential complex, which was demolished under a legal order in 2021. During Thursday's proceedings, the counsel for the affected allottees, advocate Shahab Sarki, informed the court that the owner of the residential complex, Abdul Qadir Katala, had passed away, and the affected families were still awaiting compensation.

The advocate-general, appearing before the court, stated that the commissioner had taken possession of the tower land and



submitted a report.

Upon this, the lawyer representing the affected families proposed that the plot adjoining the residential complex should also be sold to compensate the allottees.

Later, the court ordered the auction of the tower land and its adjacent plot. The court issued a notice to the Sindh Muslim Cooperative Society, instructing it to advertise the auction. The court instructed the affected families to provide original ownership evidence to the cooperative society.

Govt wants more women in police department: Maryam Nawaz



Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz says the government wants to increase the number of women in the police department.

Maryam, while addressing the passing-out parade ceremony at Chuhling Police Training College, said, "I salute you all. I am happy the first Sword of Honour has been awarded to a woman police officer. I am proud of you. I was waiting for this event since taking oath as chief minister, she said.

"When I wore the police uniform for the first time, I realised it is a big responsibility," said the chief minister and added she was happy to see 530 women passing out.

She said she was elated to see women police officers performing duties. She said there were 7,000 women police personnel serving in Punjab. "I want to increase women participation in Punjab police. Lady cops are superhuman. Women are soft hearted so they forgive."

"However, there should be no tenderness in your heart for the oppressor," said the chief minister and asked the lady police officers to take pity on the oppressed and hold the oppressor accountable for his misdeeds. "THERE IS NO REVENGE IN MY HEART" Maryam said there was no feelings of revenge in her heart. "If, being the chief minister, I decide something against someone, I do it with a heavy heart," she said.

Govt, Opp prepare power-sharing framework for NA committees

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD

The government and opposition on Thursday prepared a power-sharing formula for formation of National Assembly committees, after which the negotiations entered the final stage.

The government alliance will get chairmanship of 26 committees of the National Assembly while opposition will have chairmanship of 11 committees.

Similarly, the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee will be from the opposition and the chairman of the Kashmir Committee will be appointed from the government side.

The speaker will be the chairman of the National Assembly House Business Advisory Committee.

According to the framework, standing committees will have 13 members and Public Accounts Committee will have 16 members from the government alliance.

Likewise, Kashmir Committee will have 15 members while House Business Advisory will have 18 members from the coalition government.

The number of opposition members in the standing committees of the National Assembly, Public Accounts Committee and Kashmir Committee will be 7-7.

Apart from this, the chairman of 14 committees of the National Assembly will be from the Muslim League-N, while PPP will get chairmanship of eight committees.

MQM will get chairmanships of two committees, Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) and the Istekham-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) will get one chairmanship each.

10 committees will be chaired by independent members supported by PTI while one committee will be chaired by JUI.

Out of the 20 members of the standing committees, 14 members will be appointed from the government side and six from the opposition parties.

Each standing committee will have seven members from PML-N, four from PPP and one member each from PML-Q and MQM.



In the standing committee, five independent members of PTI and one member of JUI will be given membership as committee members.

Of the 23 members of the Public Accounts Committee, 16 MPs will be included from the government and seven from the opposition.

About 22 members of the Privileges Committee, 15 members will be included from the government and seven from the opposition side. Of 16 members in the government assurances committee, 11 will be from the government and five from the opposition.

SOON TIMES
Daily SOON TIMES
ISLAMABAD - SARGODHA - KARACHI
JOIN US!
As a CORRESPONDENT
CONTACT US
0321-888-1135
www.SoonTimes.pk



“Pakistan in the Emerging Geopolitical Landscape”

Working Session I on the theme of “Unravelling Afghanistan’s Shifting Landscape” was moderated by Ms. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA. The speakers of the session included: Rangina Hamidi, Former Minister of Education of Afghanistan; Prof. Victoria C. Fontan, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, American University of Afghanistan, Qatar; Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq, Pakistan’s former Special Representative for Afghanistan; Dr. Ye Hailin, Professor and Vice Dean of the National Institute of International Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (NIIS, CASS); Dr. Foad Izadi, Associate Professor, Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran; and Dr. Bette Dam, Investigative Journalist, Author. The speakers of the session provided a comprehensive analysis of the evolving landscape in Afghanistan, emphasizing the long-term consequences of investing in militarized education. They highlighted the destructive impact of divisive politics, which has weakened the economy and polarized society in the region. The speakers also pointed the role of ethnic discord in Afghanistan, with ethnic faultlines

contributing to the complex on-ground situation. In particular, the speakers shed light on the challenging situation for women’s education in Afghanistan and emphasized the isolation and humanitarian crisis faced by the people of Afghanistan. They expressed optimism about Afghanistan’s potential, particularly its historic role as a transit route connecting East and West. To address Afghanistan’s issues, the speakers recommended a proactive approach and an inclusive strategy. They suggested regional dialogue and cooperation, border and refugee management, leveraging partnerships and engagement with locals, building the economic capacity of Afghanistan through connectivity, trade, and transit routes, and adopting a broader perspective on the Afghan issue. Lastly, the speakers concluded by recognizing the need for a nuanced understanding of the on-ground situation and the potential consequences of different policy interventions. The second working session titled, “From Dependency to Diversity: The Evolution of the Middle East” was moderated by Dr. Shabana Fayyaz, Chairperson and Associate Professor, Department of Defence and Strategic

Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Speakers of the session included: Dr. Ali Bakir, Assistant Professor Ibn Khaldun Center for Humanities and Social Sciences at Qatar University; Dr. Jahangir Karami, Member of the Scientific Council of IRAS and professor at the University of Tehran; Dr. Hanan AlHajeri, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Kuwait; Ambassador Riffat Masood, Pakistan’s former Ambassador to Iran; Dr. Mootamer Amin, Assistant Professor at The British University in Egypt; Adam Weinstein, Deputy Director Middle East Program, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, USA. Speakers emphasized that the current geopolitical landscape of the Middle East is marked by a multitude of dynamic shifts and evolving alliances. Amid efforts towards economic diversification in the region, there is a growing apprehension surrounding security arrangements, particularly in light of the United States’ strategic reorientation towards the Asia-Pacific region. This shift prompts a reassessment of power dynamics within the region, as traditional Western influence faces challenges

from the rising prominence of China. Recent events, such as the war in Gaza, underscore the waning trust in the U.S. and its Western allies, further highlighting the need for a thorough reevaluation of regional dynamics. Within this complex landscape, there is an increasing recognition of the importance of prioritizing economic development over immediate security concerns. Short-term solutions are seen as inadequate in addressing the deeper geopolitical challenges facing the region, necessitating a more nuanced and long-term approach. In the midst of these geopolitical shifts, Pakistan’s position becomes increasingly crucial for regional stability, particularly through its potential contributions to economic integration. Given its longstanding adherence to fundamental principles in foreign policy, Pakistan is well-placed to engage constructively with Middle Eastern countries. By prioritizing diplomacy and cooperation, Pakistan can play a proactive role in fostering stability and prosperity in the region. The third working session, titled “Rising Non-Conventional Security Threats in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Middle East”.

Malik Ahmed Khan Bhachar: A Towering Figure in Punjab Politics

Tariq Saeed Awan



Malik Ahmed Khan Bhachar, the current Opposition Leader in the Punjab Assembly, is a name synonymous with political acumen, leadership, and unwavering dedication to public service. With a rich family background and a political career spanning over two decades, Bhachar has established himself as a formidable force in Punjab’s political landscape. Family Background Born on April 19, 1968, in Wan Bhachran, Mianwali District, Punjab, Bhachar hails from a respected and influential family of landlords and politicians. His father, Malik Jahan Khan Bhachar, was a former Chairman of the District Council and a renowned peace maker and reconciler. His grandfather, Malik Muhammad Khan, founded the Shaheen Club, a prestigious horse club that has won numerous Neza Bazi competitions across Pakistan. Bhachar’s family has a long history of political and social service, with his father playing a crucial role in promoting peace and development in the region. This legacy has inspired Bhachar to follow in his footsteps and work towards creating a better future for his community. Political Career Bhachar’s political journey began in 2000 when he was elected as the Nazim (Mayor) of Union Council Muzaffar Pur Janubi. During his tenure, he worked tirelessly to improve local infrastructure, healthcare, and

education facilities, earning recognition and respect from his constituents. In 2013, he was elected as a Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) from his constituency, marking the beginning of his provincial political career. As an MPA, Bhachar played a crucial role in shaping policies and legislation related to local government, community development, and agriculture. His expertise and experience in these areas have been invaluable to the government. In 2018, he was re-elected as an MPA and appointed as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Local Government and Community Development Department. In this role, he supported the Minister in policy-making, legislative affairs, and oversight of the department’s activities. His contributions to the department’s initiatives have positively impacted the lives of millions of people in Punjab. Currently, Bhachar serves as the Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly, a position that has further cemented his reputation as a strong advocate for the rights of his constituents and a vocal critic of policies that harm

the interests of the people. International Engagements Bhachar has also represented Pakistan on the international stage. In 2014, he visited the United Kingdom and Scotland as part of a government delegation to learn about delimitation, local government, and community development. This experience has broadened his perspective and equipped him with knowledge and ideas to improve governance and public services in Pakistan. Conclusion Malik Ahmed Khan Bhachar is a leader who has dedicated his life to public service and community development. His political career, spanning over two decades, is a testament to his commitment to improving the lives of his constituents and promoting peace and understanding in the region. As the current Opposition Leader in the Punjab Assembly, he remains a strong advocate for the rights of his constituents and a vocal critic of policies that harm the interests of the people. Through his leadership and vision, Bhachar continues to inspire and influence the political landscape of Punjab, working towards a brighter future for the people of Pakistan. His legacy, built on the foundations of his family’s history and his own political career, will undoubtedly shape the course of Punjab’s political history for generations to come.

A Complex Alignment in the Middle East



Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer

The unexpected attack on Israel by Hamas caused concern about a potential escalation of the Gaza conflict into a regional war. The U.S. commitment to the Middle East has raised worries in Turkey and Iran. Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) views unconditional U.S. support for Israel as an obstacle to de-escalation efforts, while Iran sees the United States as Israel’s partner in the Gaza civilian massacre. Both countries fear that increased U.S. presence in the Middle East could harm their regional interests. Despite differing approaches to Hamas, both Ankara and Tehran have connections to the group. Turkey, unlike its Western allies, does not label Hamas as a terrorist organization. President Tayyab Erdoğan sees Hamas as part of the Palestinian resistance, aligning with Turkey’s policy to defend the Palestinian cause. However, Turkey has distanced itself from Arab Islamists, including Hamas, since 2020, aiming to improve relations with Arab states and Israel.

In contrast, Iran provides political, economic, and military support to Hamas. Tehran seeks to capitalize on the changing regional dynamics and growing anti-Israel sentiment in the Muslim world. Iranian Foreign Minister

Husein Amir expressed Iran’s readiness to play a role in the release of civilian hostages held by Hamas, aligning with Turkey and Qatar. Amid the Gaza conflict, Iranian and Turkish leaders held talks for dialogue and coordination. However, the limits of Turkey’s influence on Israel and its ineffective attempts to mediate hostage negotiations with Hamas have become apparent. Hamas carried out a violent and unexpected attack on Israel on October 7, causing disruption in the Middle East. The United States responded by sending two aircraft carriers to the eastern Mediterranean, fearing an escalation of the Gaza conflict into a regional war. To reinforce defenses, 900 additional U.S. troops were deployed to the U.S.

Central Command area of operations due to increased attacks by Iran-linked militias in the region. The renewed U.S. commitment to the Middle East has raised concerns in Turkey and Iran. Turkey’s leadership sees

unconditional U.S. support for Israel as a hindrance to de-escalation efforts, while Iran views the United States as Israel’s “undeniable partner” in the Gaza civilian casualties. Both Ankara and Tehran fear that a strong American presence in the Middle East will negatively impact their regional interests. The Gaza conflict has the potential to bring Turkey and Iran closer due to their shared objections to the U.S.-led regional and global order. However, there are limits to a lasting alliance between the two countries.

Both Turkey and Iran have ties to Hamas, but of different natures. Turkey does not consider Hamas a terrorist organization and supports it as part of its policy to defend the Palestinian cause. However, since 2020, Turkey has distanced itself from Arab Islamists, including Hamas, to improve relations with Arab states and Israel. On the other hand, Iran provides political, economic,

Pakistan Agricultural Research Council NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

The National Agricultural Research Center (NARC) Islamabad, invites Sealed tenders on item rate basis from reputed firms having five years, experience in relevant works (Green/Glass Houses) and duly registered with Pakistan Engineering Council in Category C-4 or above for the following work at National Agricultural Research Centre, Park Road, Islamabad:

Description of Work	Tender Document Cost Rs.	Earnest Money	Completion Period
Upgradation of Intelligent Glass House	Rs. 10,000/- (Non-refundable)	2% of the Bid Cost in the form of Pay Order or Bank Draft in favour of NARC Islamabad	Six (06) Calendar Months

The bidder may submit the written application along with Certificate of Registration of firm with PEC in Category C-4 or above having codes BC-01, ME-01, ME-06, EE-02, EE-04 & CE-10, Registration with Income Tax and Sales Tax Department, details of relevant work experience (work order & completion order) carried out during last five years, an undertaking that the firm has no litigation or black-listed by any Department/Client and upon payment of a non-refundable fee as mentioned above and Tender document will be issued to interested eligible firms who will submit all above mentioned valid documents for pre-qualification and will fulfill the criteria.

Firms may acquire the tender documents from the office of the undersigned on any working day (Monday to Friday) during office hours. The tenders will be received in the office of undersigned before 15-05-2024 and submit the tender up to 11:00 hours on 15-05-2024, and will be opened on the same date at 11:30 hours in the presence of bidders/representatives, who will attend tender opening meeting. No tender would be issued on the day of opening of bids.

NARC reserves the right to accept any or reject all bids as per PPRA rules

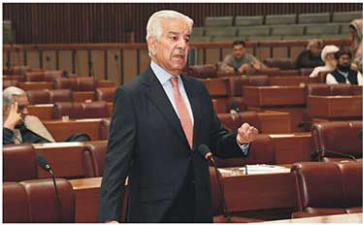
Director
(Works & Estate Management NARC, Islamabad)
Ph: 051- 9255057/ Ext. 9073-3441-3442



Islamabad 25.04.2024: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq planting a sapling of Magnolia Grandiflora in front of Parliament House.



Khawaja Asif hopeful about Iran Pakistan gas pipeline completion despite US warning



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD
Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has expressed hope that the obstacles in the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project will be removed and it will be completed. The minister, in conversation with Geo News, maintained that regional stakeholders must gather on a common

platform to protect their interests in light of the turmoil and unrest being faced by countries in the region, and an increased intervention of big powers such as the European and western nations through proxies, particularly in the context of Israel.

Asif, in this regard, termed the "successful visit" of Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi a "great development". The Iranian president's visit was a landmark moment, especially with regard to the pipeline project, which has remained stalled in the wake of geopolitical issues and international sanctions.

The minister's statement comes at a significant time when the United States has, on multiple occasions over this week, hinted towards the "potential risk of sanctions" in light of the business deals — particularly the execution of the gas pipeline project — between Iran and Pakistan following President Raisi's crucial visit.

The senior cabinet member lamented the hypocritical and discriminatory attitude as well as the lack of principles of Western nations with respect to the acts committed by Israel in comparison to other countries around the world. Asif underscored that terrorism is a common problem for Iran and Pakistan, and needs to be controlled.

The federal minister said both the brotherly countries will fight terrorism together. It does not matter if anyone is hurt by the visit of the Iranian president, he added.



Karachi: Deputy Governor Rotary International District 3271 and Chairman Award Committee Shaikh Intiaz Hussain meeting With District Governor Muhammad Hanif Khan in connection with the 3-day HOPECON Conference 2024 organized by Rotary International District.

Action is being taken against illegal encroachments: Cheema

Soon Times Correspondent Sargodha:

In addition to unnecessary encroachment on the highways and vendors, a thorough action has been taken against unnecessary and illegal rickshaw stands. Various types of stalls are causing accidents in all the markets and especially on the main roads. Teams are being formed for their elimination along with the relevant institutions. These views were expressed by District Traffic Incharge Mohammad Yusuf Cheema. City Traffic Incharge Ghazanfar Ali and Education Traffic Incharge Sajid Mehmood. They said that in the vicinity of

the city, there are stalls, carts and hawkers standing on the main roads, from where people park their cars on the road and buy, which is causing accidents. Letters have been formally written to the concerned institutions to eliminate them. Similarly, the owners of various private schools, colleges and plazas have also been asked to allocate space for parking in their respective institutions. Regular action is being taken against the institutions which have parking on the roads. The directives of Chief Minister Punjab and IG Punjab are being implemented.

SNGPL disconnected 654 connections & imposed Rs. 21.8 million fine

Soon Times Correspondent

ISLAMABAD
Lahore: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad. It disconnected 654 connections and imposed fine of Rs. 21.8 million. In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 04 connections on illegal use of gas and imposed a fine of Rs. 0.10 million against gas pilferers. In Multan team disconnected 07

connections on illegal use of gas and 05 on use of compressor. In Peshawar, the company disconnected 84 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and booked an amount of Rs. 2.93 million against gas theft cases. In Sahiwal, team disconnected 02 connections due to the illegal use of gas. In Faisalabad, the team disconnected 02 connections for illegal use of gas and imposed a fine of Rs. 0.05 million against gas pilfers. The regional team of Mardan disconnected 08

connections on illegal use of gas and imposed a fine of Rs. 0.19 million. In Bahawalpur, the team disconnected 02 connections on the illegal use of gas and 08 on the use of a compressor. The regional team of Sheikhupura disconnected 418 connections on illegal use of gas, 114 on the use of compressors, imposed a fine of Rs. 18.60 million against gas theft cases and lodged 19 FIRs against gas pilferers.

FBR mulling options to penalise unregistered traders



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD:

With the registration of only over 105 retailers in the ongoing Tajir Dost Scheme, the FBR is mulling over different options to abolish the Non-Active Taxpayer List (Non-ATL) and slap exorbitant rate of 10-15% for selling to unregistered retailers. The FBR is deliberating upon different options for making businesses non-registered unviable instead of chasing 3.6 million retailers in the country.

It can only be done through drastic administrative measures. Hence, options are under

consideration to come up with the imposition of a highly exorbitant rate on the sale of goods at the stage of wholesalers/distributors in the range of 10 to 15% along with submission of Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs) for all buyers of goods in bulk. If this scheme of things gets approved at the political level, retailers without coming into the tax net will not be able to run their businesses as commercially viable.

"The FBR is making plans to float an idea before the Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb and if he grants his nod, the FBR can propose changes in the tax laws on the eve of the upcoming

budget 2024-25," top official sources confirmed while talking to The News here on Wednesday.

Registration for the ongoing Tajir Dost Scheme will end on April 30, 2024.

Under Section 236G of Income Tax Law, there is an advance withholding tax of 0.1% on sales to distributors, dealers and wholesalers who are under the Active Taxpayer List (ATL) and there is 0.5% on non-ATL.

Under Section 236H, there is an advance tax on sales to retailers; there is an advance tax of 0.5% on ATL retailers and 1% tax on non-ATL retailers.

Now it is under consideration to keep withholding tax at the same rates for ATL on sale to distributors, dealers and wholesalers while tax on non-ATL might be slapped in the range of 10 to 15%.

The same will be applied under Section 236H where the ATL taxpayers' rate will remain the same while for non-ATL, the rate is proposed to be jacked up to 10 to 15%.

Official data of the FBR shows that around 0.5 million dealers, distributors, wholesalers and retailers exist under both provisions of tax laws in the shape of ATL and non-ATL.

Now it is also proposed that the CNICs requirement might be made mandatory for all manufacturers and throughout the supply chain so that the unregistered could be penalised with a higher rate of advance withholding tax.



Chairman Sohrahb Goth Town Lala Abdul Rahim is inspecting the steps taken To restore the sewerage system in Ahsanabad.

Magsaysay was the most prominent world leader of his time: CM Sindh

Soon Times Correspondent Karachi:

Chief Minister Sindh addressed the ceremony in honor of the guests from the Philippines. He welcomed the guests including all the guests from the Philippines. He said, the late President of the Philippines Mr. Ramon del Fierro Magsaysay was the most prominent world leader of his time. We congratulate on founding the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation. We consider this prestigious public service award as the Nobel Prize of Asia. It is a great mission to hold this award ceremony every year for the last 65 years, he added. This award is given to individuals and organizations serving humanity. Today we are

launching the book "Greatness of Spirit: Stories of Love, Courage and Service". Among the 348 Ramon Magsaysay awardees are 13 awardees from Pakistan who are the pride of our nation. I appreciate Citizen Foundation's journey from five schools to nearly 2000 schools. All the schools are continuing their journey in the slums across the country. Happily, TCF students are qualifying for admission to the prestigious universities. Quality education for underprivileged students has made a huge impact on our society. The Sindh government has signed an agreement with TCF to build 500 schools in five better districts of Sindh. The partnership with TCF is part of a positive journey for a sustainable change.



Ms. Kanni Wignaraja, United Nations Assistant Secretary General (ASG), Asia, and the Pacific, calls on the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Mr. Ahad Khan Cheema on 24th April 2024.

IMF executive board to discuss 'approval of \$1.1bn funding for Pakistan on April 29'

Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad

The executive board of the International Monetary Fund will meet on April 29 to discuss the approval of \$1.1 billion funding for Pakistan.

The funding is the second and last tranche of a \$3 billion Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with the IMF, which it secured last summer to avert a sovereign default and which runs out this month.

The South Asian nation is seeking a new long-term, larger IMF loan. Pakistan's



Finance Minister, Muhammad Aurangzeb, has said Islamabad could secure a staff-level agreement on the new program by early July.

Islamabad says it is seeking a loan over at least three years to help macroeconomic stability and execute a long-due and painful structural reforms, though Aurangzeb has declined to detail what size of programme the country seeks. Islamabad is yet to make a formal request.



IOC Refugees Olympic Team to be announced on May 2



(Reuters) - Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy are among the golfers expected to be given equity in PGA Tour Enterprises as a thank you for sticking with the Tour instead of jumping to rival LIV Golf, the Telegraph reported on Wednesday.

Woods will receive a \$100 million and McIlroy a \$50 million stake in the newly-formed enterprise for not taking lucrative offers from the Saudi-backed LIV as merger negotiations between the two circuits continue to drag on.

A substantial portion of current PGA Tour members will be rewarded with equity in the new for-profit entity, according to a memo sent out in February by commissioner Jay Monahan and seen by Reuters. PGA Tour Enterprises is majority owned by the Tour and bolstered by a \$1.5 billion investment by Strategic Sports Group, a consortium of sports team owners, the memo said.

The program will reward top performing members and legends who helped build the modern PGA Tour, the memo said.

Woods, McIlroy to receive loyalty payouts from PGA Tour, report says



(Reuters) - Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy are among the golfers expected to be given equity in PGA Tour Enterprises as a thank you for sticking with the Tour instead of jumping to rival LIV Golf, the Telegraph reported on Wednesday.

Woods will receive a \$100 million and McIlroy a \$50 million stake in the newly-formed enterprise for not taking lucrative offers from the Saudi-backed LIV as merger negotiations between the two circuits continue to drag on.

A substantial portion of current PGA Tour members will be rewarded with equity in the new for-profit entity, according to a memo sent out in February by commissioner Jay Monahan and seen by Reuters. PGA Tour Enterprises is majority owned by the Tour and bolstered by a \$1.5 billion investment by Strategic Sports Group, a consortium.

Mohsin Naqvi reconstitutes women's selection committee



LAHORE - Mohsin Naqvi, Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board, has reconstituted the national women's selection committee, expanding it to seven members.

This decision follows the disappointing performance of the Pakistan women's team against the West Indies women, resulting in a 3-0 loss in the three-ODI series.

The retained members from the previous panel include Asmavia Iqbal and Marina Iqbal. Joining them are Abdul Razaq and Assad Sharif (both members of the men's national selection committee) and former international player, Batool Fatima. In line with the men's national selection committee make-up, the coach and captain will also be part of the national women's selection committee.

The immediate task of the new selection committee will be to choose the Pakistan women's team for the upcoming tour of England, where they are scheduled to play three T20Is and three ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 fixtures from 11 to 29 May. Despite the recent 3-0 loss to the West Indies, Pakistan currently holds the fifth position in the 10-team ICC Women's Championship 2022-25. The top five teams from this championship, along with hosts India, will directly qualify for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025.



Israeli strikes in Rafah kill at least 5 as ship comes under attack in the Gulf of Aden

Colleges turn to police to quell pro-Palestinian protests ahead of graduation ceremonies

NEW YORK

Web Desk
Palestinian hospital officials said Israeli airstrikes on the southern city of Rafah in the Gaza Strip killed at least five people.

More than half of the territory's population of 2.3 million have sought refuge in Rafah, where Israel has conducted near-daily raids as it prepares for an offensive in the city. In central Gaza, four people were killed in Israeli tank shelling.

A ship traveling in the Gulf of Aden came under attack Thursday, officials said, the latest assault likely carried out by Yemen's Houthi rebels over the Israel-Hamas war.

Meanwhile, a top Hamas political official told The Associated Press that the Islamic militant group is willing to agree to a truce of five years or more with Israel.

The Israel-Hamas war was sparked by the unprecedented Oct. 7 raid into southern Israel in which militants killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250 hostages. Israel says the militants are still holding around 100 hostages and the remains of more than 30 others.

The war has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, around two-thirds of them children and women.

Colleges turn to police to quell pro-Palestinian protests ahead of graduation ceremonies

— Ship comes under attack off coast of Yemen as Houthi rebel campaign appears to gain new speed

— US colleges turn to police to quell pro-Palestinian protests as commencement ceremonies near

— EU military officer says a frigate has destroyed a drone launched from Yemen's Houthi-held areas

— Hamas official says group would lay down its weapons if a two-state solution is implemented

'Europe could die,' Macron warns, as he calls for stronger defences

PARIS

President Emmanuel Macron appealed on Thursday for stronger, more integrated European defences and said the continent must not become a vassal of the United States, as he outlined his vision for a more assertive European Union on the global stage.

With just three years left of his second and final term in office, and having lost his parliamentary majority in 2022, Macron, 46, wants to show his critics that he retains the energy and fresh thinking that helped propel him into the presidency in 2017 and that he has not become a lame duck leader.

"There is a risk our Europe could die. We are not equipped to face the risks," Macron said in his speech at the Sorbonne University in Paris, warning that military, economic, trade and other pressures could weaken and fragment the 27-nation EU.

Macron said Russia must not be allowed to win in Ukraine, and he called for a boost in Europe's cybersecurity capacity, closer defences ties with post-Brexit Britain, and the creation of a European academy to train high-ranking military personnel.

"There is no defence without a defence industry... we've had decades of under-investment," he said, adding that Europeans should give preference to buying European military equipment.



US House Speaker Johnson heckled and booed at Columbia, center of Gaza protests



NEW YORK/LOS ANGELES

Columbia University students heckled US House Speaker Mike Johnson on Wednesday as he visited the flashpoint of nationwide student demonstrations over Israel's war in Gaza, as the school extended negotiations to end a protest encampment.

Johnson's visit to the Manhattan campus, which he said was meant to support Jewish students intimidated by some anti-Israeli demonstrators, took place shortly after the university extended a deadline by four hours to Friday morning to reach an agreement to remove an encampment that has come to symbolize the campus protest movement.

Some of the campus protests taking place coast to coast were met with shows of force from law enforcement.

In Texas on Wednesday, state highway patrol troopers in riot gear and police on horseback broke up a protest at the University of Texas in Austin.

The Texas Department of Public Safety posted on X that 34 people



Another ex-State Department official alleges Israeli military gets 'special treatment' on abuses

WASHINGTON

Web Desk
A former senior U.S. official who until recently helped oversee human-rights compliance by foreign militaries receiving American military assistance said Wednesday that he repeatedly observed Israel receiving "special treatment" from U.S. officials when it came to scrutiny of allegations of Israeli military abuses of Palestinian civilians.

The allegation comes as the Biden administration faces intense pressure over its ally's treatment of Palestinian civilians during Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza. And matters because of who said it: Charles O. Blaha. Before leaving the post in August, he was a director of a State Department security and human rights office closely involved in helping ensure that foreign militaries receiving American military aid follow U.S. and international humanitarian and human rights laws.

Blaha said his departure from the State Department after decades of service was not related to the U.S.-Israeli security relationship. He is the second senior State official involved in that relationship to assert that when it comes to Israel, the U.S. is reluctant to enforce laws requiring foreign militaries receiving American aid

"In my experience, Israel gets special treatment that no other country gets," Blaha said. "And there is undue deference, in many cases, given" to Israeli officials' side of things when the U.S. asks questions about allegations of Israeli wrongdoing against Palestinians, he added.

He spoke to reporters at an event where he and other members of an unofficial, self-formed panel of former senior U.S. civilian and military officials released a report pointing to civilian deaths in specific airstrikes in Gaza. They said there was "compelling and credible" evidence that Israeli forces had acted illegally.

Blaha's comments echoed those of another State Department official and panel member, Josh Paul. Paul resigned as a director overseeing arms transfers to other countries' militaries in October in protest of the U.S. supplying arms to Israel amid its war in Gaza.

Asked about the allegations from the two, a State Department spokesman, Vedant Patel, said "there is no double standard, and there is no special treatment."

Israeli officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Israel consistently says it follows all laws in its use of U.S. military aid, investigates allegations against its security forces and holds offenders accountable.

Third man is detained in a major bribery case that involves Russia's deputy defense minister

NEW YORK

A third man has been detained in a bribery case involving one of Russia's most senior defense officials, Moscow's court service said Thursday.

It said businessman Alexander Fomin is suspected of paying bribes to Deputy Defense Minister Timur Ivanov, who was detained on Wednesday, as well as Ivanov's associate, Sergei Borodin. All of the men are to remain in custody until at least June 23.

It is rare for such a high-ranking official to be accused of a crime in Russia. Ivanov, an ally of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, was jailed pending an investigation and trial on charges of bribery, court officials said in a statement. He was in charge of military construction projects and was previously accused of living a lavish lifestyle in anti-corruption investigations conducted by the team of late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. His uncle, who sparked the decision to charge him with bribery.

Ivanov, 48, was sanctioned by both the United States and European Union in 2022 after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. President Putin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said Wednesday that the construction projects that were overseen by Ivanov will continue.

Moscow's court service said Fomin and Borodin contributed to Ivanov receiving a "particularly large bribe" — an offense punishable by up to 15 years in prison. As part of the case against Fomin and the deputy minister, the courts service added that Fomin did not pay for goods, work and services related to repairing and reconstructing buildings.

Russian state news agency, Tass reported Wednesday that a Moscow businessman whose company is involved in construction gave testimony which incriminated the deputy defense minister. Tass did not name the individual who gave the evidence, but public records and Russian newspapers say that Alexander Fomin owns half of the company, called Olimpstroy.

