

Daily

SOON TIMES



PTI nominates Shihbil Faraz to be opposition leader in Senate

Simultaneously Publishing from Islamabad, Sargodha and Karachi



President calls for reconciliation to end political polarisation

Addressing joint session, Zardari says fostering atmosphere of mutual respect must to overcome challenges



President Asif Ali Zardari being received by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, upon his arrival at Parliament House, Islamabad on April 18, 2024.

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday, while calling for turning over a new leaf and making a fresh start, emphasised the need for a meaningful dialogue, parliamentary consensus and fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and political reconciliation to do away with the polarisation and overcome the challenges pervading the country. This was President Zardari's inaugural address to the 16th National Assembly, where he had the distinction of addressing the joint session of parliament for the seventh time, as he has previously addressed the 13th National

Assembly for five times and the 14th National Assembly once. While addressing the joint sitting, President Zardari said, "In my considered view, it is time to turn a new page... The challenges we face are not impossible to overcome. They just require the fundamentals of meaningful dialogue, and parliamentary consensus... We can effectively tackle our challenges and foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and political reconciliation." Chaired by National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, the joint sitting was attended by members of the National Assembly and Senate while in the galleries were provincial chief ministers and parliamentarians,

diplomats as well as representatives of different political parties. During the president's address, lawmakers on the opposition benches, led by the PTI, staged protest against alleged 'election rigging', inflation and for the supremacy of the constitution, creating a ruckus. The president's address was in pursuance of Article 56 (3) of the Constitution which marked the beginning of the first parliamentary year, following the general elections on Feb 8. The president's address encompassed all of the major national and international matters and challenges from economy, poverty,

Faizabad agreement was shown to Abbas after signing, says Ahsan Iqbal

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD Former interior minister Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday revealed that the agreement with the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) regarding the Faizabad sit-in was shown to then prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi after signing by then ISI chief retired Lt Gen Faiz Hameed. It was stated by Ahsan in his statement to the Faizabad inquiry commission formed on the directions of the Supreme Court. According to Ahsan, Faiz Hameed "forced" his inclusion in the team which was negotiating with the TLP. When Abbasi was shown the agreement, he disapproved of it, the former minister added. He said Abbasi had objected to the condition of minister's resignation and inclusion of Faiz Hameed in the negotiations and agreement. Abbasi was told that the agreement had been signed now it's not possible to revoke it, he continued.



CM Maryam felicitates Sikh community on Baisakhi



Soon Times Correspondent KARTARPUR Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif extended warm greetings to the Sikh community, expressing joy at the celebration of the Baisakhi festival in Kartarpur. CM Maryam conveyed congratulations on behalf of herself and former PM Nawaz Sharif, highlighting the significance of the occasion. The CM expressed regret that Nawaz Sharif couldn't join her but highlighted her delight in welcoming Sikh pilgrims to Pakistan. She also underscored

Badar Shahbaz appointed PM's media coordinator



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday appointed Badar Shahbaz, a key member of the Pakistan Muslim League-N's media team, as his media coordinator. "The Prime Minister has been pleased to appoint Mr. Badar Shahbaz as Media Coordinator to Media Minister with immediate effect. The Prime Minister has further been pleased to desire that all relevant stakeholders shall extend full cooperation to the Coordinator in discharging the official business," according to a notification issued by the Cabinet Division.



Turkish top general calls on CJCSC Sahrir Shamshad Mirza

Soon Times Correspondent RAWALPINDI General Metin Gurak, Chief of the Turkish General Staff called on General Sahrir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi. During the meeting, matters related to enhancing the level and scope of bilateral military engagements and cooperation were discussed, said Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a statement on Thursday.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to forge deeper strategic ties. The visiting dignitary lauded the professionalism of the Pakistan armed forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism. Earlier, upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, a smartly turned-out tri-services contingent presented 'Guard of Honour' to the visiting dignitary.

IHC chief justice seeks report on delay in IGP's appointment

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has sought a report from the government on the appointment of the Islamabad IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq during hearing of a case asked Deputy Attorney General Syed Ahsan Raza why the Islamabad police chief had not been appointed so far. The IHC chief justice expressed his resentment and directed the deputy attorney general to ensure appointment of the IGP. The deputy attorney general replied that a notification of the appointment of the IGP had already been issued. The court inquired why the IGP was not assuming charge of his post. The chief justice sought a reply from the government within the two week. He said the court would issue an appropriate order.

Judges' letter: Islamabad High Court Bar moves Supreme Court for fair probe



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD The Islamabad High Court Bar Association on Thursday filed a constitutional petition in the Supreme Court seeking a transparent and fair investigation of the letter of six judges alleging interference in judicial affairs. The petitioner prayed the apex

court to take action against those found guilty of influencing the judiciary. The petition stated that the issue raised by the judges was of serious nature. "If the apex court deems it necessary, it should refer the matter to the Supreme Judicial Council for review," it demanded. The petitioner submitted that an independent judiciary was the protector of the Constitution and the sole source of justice. No compromise on the independence of the judiciary is acceptable in any circumstances.

Minister Mohsin Naqvi orders blockage of SIMs issued on invalid CNICs

NADRA head briefs the minister on roadmap. The minister earlier ordered crackdown on power thieves



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday directed the National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) to block mobile SIMs issued on invalid and expired identity cards. During his visit to the NADRA headquarters, the minister visited various departments and

instructed the authorities to set up offices across the country on the pattern of model police stations established in Punjab. He said that establishing model NADRA offices would improve service delivery and provide convenience to the public. NADRA Chairman Lt Gen Muhammad Munir Afसर welcomed the minister. Naqvi ordered to waive the fee of death

IHC restores Bushra Bibi's appeal for shifting to Adiala Jail from Bani Gala



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday restored Bushra Bibi's appeal for shifting from Bani Gala to Adiala Jail. A hearing was held on the request of former first lady Bushra Bibi to restore her appeal for shifting from Bani Gala sub-jail to Adiala. According to details, hearing was held in the Islamabad High Court on the request for restoration of the dismissed appeal related to transfer of the PTI founder's wife Bushra Bibi from sub-jail Bani

Gala to Adiala. Justice Miangul Haseeb Aurangzeb conducted hearing of the request for restoration of appeal. Usman Riaz Gill represented the former first lady while state counsel Abdul Rehman also appeared in court. During proceedings in court, the state counsel did not oppose restoration of the appeal. The court sought help on the next hearing date about requirements for a place to be declared sub-jail. The court also ordered authorities to make arrangements for medical examination of Bushra Bibi. The court then issued instructions for fixing the appeal on April 22 and adjourned the hearing. It should be noted that the Islamabad High Court had

Enemies of Pakistan are unable to digest investment in the country: Attaullah Tarar

The federal minister of Information said enmity with the state due to political opposition was inappropriate.

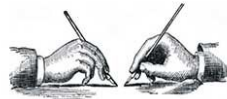
Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD Federal Information Minister Attaullah Tarar has said enemies of Pakistan are unable to digest the investment being made in the country by foreign countries. Federal Minister for Information Atta Tarar, while talking to media persons, said the attackers of May 9 were still attacking the national interests. "One who speaks against the national interest is an enemy of Pakistan. It is deplorable to prioritize own political interest and ego over the national interest," he said. He said Tehreek-e-Insaf first made a statement against the country's interest and then distanced itself from the same. It was the hallmark of PTI, he said. Tarar said PTI leader was already facing corruption cases. "Enemies of the state are unable to digest the investment in the country. May Allah guide them to right path. I wish they should speak for the interest of the country," said Tarar.



The federal minister of information said enmity with the state due to political opposition was inappropriate. "You can criticize us but criticism of Pakistan is intolerable. Our friendly countries are extending the hand of friendship and support for investment and cooperation to Pakistan," he said. Earlier, addressing a summit in Islamabad today, Attaullah Tarar said the government had unwavering commitment for technology enhancement and promote public-private partnership. He said the Special Investment Facilitation Council had been

dismissed the application for not pursuing the case by former first lady Bushra Bibi's lawyers Barrister Salman Safdar, Usman Riaz Gill and Khalid Yusuf Chaudhary who later submitted an application a day ago to restore the dismissed appeal. It was argued in the petition that there was a delay in reaching court due to traffic jam at Sarina Chowk check point. There was no deliberate delay in reaching court by the lawyers. They said if the petition was not revived, the petitioner would suffer irreparable loss. IHC Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb had expressed his anger at the no-show of lawyers in court. Justice Aurangzeb said if Bushra Bibi's lawyers had won this case, the former first lady would have gone to jail. The lawyers themselves did not want Bushra Bibi to go to jail.

established with the aim to attract foreign investment in the country. The minister said the establishment of Special Investment Facilitation Council was in the interest of the country and the government was providing all facilities to the investors. He said with the fifth largest country in the world, Pakistan has been blessed with a lot of natural resources and country's biggest resource was human resource.



Heavy Rains in UAE

Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan's Envoy to the United Arab Emirates acknowledged the collaborative efforts undertaken by the Pakistan Consulate General, Dubai in response to the recent rains. 'We have mobilized swiftly to address the needs of our fellow Pakistanis, with a particular focus on those stranded at Dubai airport. Led by Hussain Muhammad, Consul General and his dedicated team, we have been

on the ground, helping and supporting those in need. Our commitment to serving our community remains unwavering, and we stand ready to extend further aid as required. Together, we are stronger, and together, we will overcome any challenges that come our way", said Mr. Tirmizi. During his visit to Dubai airport today, Mr. Hussain Muhammad distributed food items, medicine, milk for children and other necessary items

among the Pakistani families waiting at the airport due to delayed flights. He also spoke to the concerned airlines authorities in view to expedite flights departures and mitigate issues confronted by stranded passengers, mostly en route to Karachi, Pakistan. "These are more than 60 passengers who will be departing via two different flights today", said the Consul General. A separate team of the Consulate General also paid a courtesy visit to Pakistani cricket

players Misbah-Ul-Haq, Abdur Razzaq, Umer Gul and Kamran Akmal waiting at Dubai airport due to delayed flight en route to Houston, USA. The Community Welfare Wing of Pakistan's Consulate General in Dubai coordinated with Social Centre Sharjah, and Pakistan Association Dubai for extending required assistance and support to Pakistani community members facing difficulties in access to daily commodities in some areas.

China seeks win-win for economic growth, carbon reduction

NANJING

Sun Tao, an environmentalist from Yangzhong in east China's Jiangsu Province, has made a conscious decision to charge his electric car at a parking lot near his home that offers green charging services. The 180-square-meter car park, part of a local microgrid project, is equipped with photovoltaic panels and energy storage facilities. The green electricity is primarily used to charge electric vehicles. "The project helps to facilitate charging new energy vehicles (NEVs) and reduce reliance on conventional energy,

further reducing carbon emissions." Sun said China has seen explosive growth in the NEV sector in recent years. It had ranked first in the world in NEV production and sales for nine consecutive years, with the number of NEVs in use surging to 20.41 million by 2023, according to official data. To serve the increasing number of electric cars, China has continued to expand its network of NEV charging facilities, which marked a growth of 65 percent year on year to reach nearly 8.6 million units by the end of 2023, according to China's National

Energy Administration Jiangsu has built the country's first smart electric vehicle charging and battery-swapping demonstration zone. With about 1,300 chargers, it can reduce the average monthly waiting time for charging by nearly 50 percent through intelligent algorithms, according to the State Grid Jiangsu Electric Power Co., Ltd. The advancement of the NEV sector, which is instrumental in reducing vehicle emissions, exemplifies China's ongoing commitment to a green transition. In recent years, the country has made vigorous efforts in green transition, injecting fresh

impetus into its economic trajectory while steadfastly pursuing its dual carbon goals of peaking carbon emissions by 2030 and reaching carbon neutrality by 2060. These efforts are sparking the development of an array of high-tech and green sectors, which are becoming new bright spots and drivers of the world's second-largest economy. China dominates the global NEV market with over 60 percent share. It also supplies 50 percent of the world's wind power equipment and 80 percent of global photovoltaic equipment. China's exports of the tech-intensive green trio -- lithium-ion batteries,

photovoltaic products, and NEVs -- amounted to 1.06 trillion yuan (about 149 billion U.S. dollars) last year, a robust increase of 29.9 percent year on year. According to the National Energy Administration, the country's total installed renewable energy capacity topped 1,516 GW at the end of last year, accounting for 51.9 percent of its total installed power generation capacity and contributing to nearly 40 percent of the global installed renewable energy capacity. This outcome is a result of years of extensive investment in green energy sources across the country, including in the major coal-

producing regions of Inner Mongolia and Shanxi. Inner Mongolia reported a new energy investment boom in 2023, boasting a remarkable 33 percent year-on-year growth, according to the regional energy department. The region's installed new energy capacity increased by more than 31 GW, a record high, to 92.6 GW, accounting for 45 percent of its total installed power generation capacity. Off the coast of the eastern city of Yangcheng more than 100 wind turbines, part of an offshore wind power project jointly developed by Electricite de France (EDF) and a Chinese company, stand tall.

UNIVERSITY OF SARGODHA, SARGODHA Pre-Qualification Notice

University of Sargodha invites Applications for Pre-qualification from the interested parties i.e. Individuals, Sole proprietors, Firms, Companies, Joint Ventures, etc. duly Registered with Income Tax/GST, relevant Government Bodies &/or Government Authorities having sufficient experience in operating of businesses relevant to Pharmaceutical Industry in order to offer the opportunity for Provision of Operations and Functionalizing on Commercial Basis of its "Pharmaceutical Industrial Unit" as per Joint Venture Model at University of Sargodha. The Pharmaceutical Industrial Unit comprises liquid syring section, oral dry suspension section, capsule section, tablet section, quality control lab, offices, miscellaneous labs, warehouse, etc. having total area of 743868sqm whereas the covered area is 140475sqm, at its Main Campus, University of Sargodha.

S. No.	Name of Components Project / Facility	Pre-Qualification Document Cost	Documents Issuance Date & Time	Documents Receiving and Opening Date & Time
01	Provision of operations of the "Pharmaceutical Industrial Unit", University of Sargodha on commercial basis as per Joint Venture Model at Main Campus, University of Sargodha.	Rs. 10,000/- (Ten Thousand Rupees Only)	Till May 15 th , 2024 (Wednesday), 12:00 Hours.	15 th of May, 2024 (Wednesday), 14:00 Hours in the Committee Room of Multi-Purpose Hall, University of Sargodha.

The terms and conditions / procedure are following:

- The Pre-qualification and further two stage, two envelop bidding procedure, shall be adopted; in accordance with Joint Venture, Policy and Guidelines, etc. notified by Government of the Punjab, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Department (Notification No. 153 of 2020) vide SOI(H-113)-6/2020 Dated 21-10-2020 (amended from time to time). The Pre-qualification documents will be issued by Secretary of the EOJ and RFP Committee, University of Sargodha, Sargodha upon written request on original letter-head of a Firm along with submission of the requisite fee (non-refundable / non-transferable) as mentioned above, against the project, in the shape of Bank Draft in favor of Treasurer, University of Sargodha, Sargodha.
- The Firm will be required to demonstrate / exhibit the necessary experience and resources, etc. to satisfy the Administration of the University regarding abilities of the Firm to comply with Pre-qualification for the Joint Venture as per the Pre-qualification documents.
- The aspirants must submit their complete profile(s) included but not limited to the Year of Establishment, Full Address, Partnership Deed (if applicable), etc. as per the Pre-qualification documents and Telephone Numbers of Person(s) duly authorized by the Firm with whom future correspondence could be made.
- Telegraphic / Telephonic / E-mail requests will not be entertained for issuance of the Pre-qualification documents.
- All the Firms will be bound for strict compliance of all the terms and conditions issued by University of Sargodha and other Govt. Authorities; time to time.
- Connivance / Negotiations during the process of Pre-qualification are strictly prohibited. If any Firm would have been found in such practice; the corresponding Firm will not be considered, at all.
- Particulars of the Firm including its assets, staff, etc. with verified ownership documents must be provided in the Profile as per the Pre-qualification documents.
- To substantiate the financial soundness of the firm; a certificate from a chartered accountant firm and copy of up-to-date balance-sheet must be furnished as per the Pre-qualification documents.
- Details of similar nature works, projects, businesses, etc. in hand and executed in the past, indicating project or business cost/volume and its scope of work, by any Govt. Semi Govt. or the Pre-qualification documents.
- Undertaking on judicial paper that the Firm was never black listed, by any Govt. Semi Govt. etc. organization must be furnished as per the Pre-qualification documents.
- Partnership deed / article of association in case of company / Limited Firm must also be provided.
- The aspiring parties i.e. Individuals, Sole Proprietors, Firms, Companies, Joint Ventures, etc. can seek any clarification during working hours before opening of the completed Pre-qualification Documents by contacting the Office of Secretary of the EOJ and RFP Committee, The Directorate of Planning & Development, University of Sargodha, at the below mentioned contact details.
- The Firm will be allowed only to produce the medical, etc. products for which the desired pharmaceutical licenses be the ownership of the Firm.
- If the Pre-qualification documents would not be opened on the date and the time given above due to any inevitable circumstances; the same will be opened on the next working day unless separate notification is issued in this regard.
- For correspondence and submission of Pre-qualification Document, use postal address "Secretary, The EOJ and RFP Committee, The Directorate of Planning & Development, University of Sargodha, Sargodha. Contact Numbers: 048-9230811-15 (Ext 860) & +9233-7700104. E-mail address: muhammad.asif@uos.edu.pk

Chairman, EOJ and RFP Committee
The Directorate of Planning & Development
University of Sargodha
Sargodha

IPL-3307

Indian Democracy at Risk

Taha Abdul Ahad

India, the world's largest democracy, will hold its General Election from April 19 to June 1, 2024. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is poised to secure a third consecutive victory for several compelling reasons. Firstly, recent actions such as Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's imprisonment for corruption and Rahul Gandhi's defamation conviction highlight challenges faced by

opposition leaders. Secondly, the BJP's involvement in the Electoral Bond Scam underscores its close ties with the business community, evident through tax exemptions for companies funding the party. Thirdly, press freedom has diminished under BJP governance, with media attention diverted from crucial socio-economic issues to divisive topics. Fourthly, the

BJP's adept marketing strategies, targeting voters of all ages through various media formats, deserve acknowledgment. Lastly, the BJP's Hindu ideology resonates with a significant voter base, leveraging sentiments surrounding religious and nationalistic issues. PM Modi adeptly capitalises on nationalist and religious sentiments, whether through the demolition

of the Babri Mosque to build the Ram Mandir or by exerting influence in the Maldives to bolster Lakshadweep's position. With all the major opposition party leaders in jail, strong connections with business giants, controlled digital and print media, strong media campaigns, and provoking nationalism and religiousness, Indian democracy seems to be endangered.



President Asif Ali Zardari addressing the Joint Session of the Parliament at the beginning of the Parliamentary year, in Islamabad on April 18, 2024.

UAJK to Host 42nd International Pakistan Congress of Zoology

Soon Times Correspondent MUZZAFFARABAD

The University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (UAJK) is gearing up for the forty-second (42nd) three-day Pakistan Congress of Zoology (International), scheduled to commence on the 23rd of this month at the scenic King Abdullah Campus of the university. Under the auspices of the Zoological Society of Pakistan, the congress is set to draw top scientists and researchers from around the world, hailing from countries such as the United States, Australia, Switzerland, Greece, China, Turkey, and beyond. With over 1000 participants anticipated, comprising scientists, faculty members, and scholars, the

congress promises a vibrant exchange of ideas, with more than 500 researchers slated to present their latest findings in the field of Zoology. Confirming their participation, Vice-Chancellors from esteemed institutions such as the University of Balistan, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Sindh, Preston University Karachi, Islamia College University Peshawar, University of Okara, Baba Gromnak University Faisalabad, Cholistan University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Federal Urdu University of Arts Sciences and Technology, among others, are set to grace the occasion. A joint meeting of heads of management committees, led

by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kaleem Abbasi, Registrar Meritorious Prof. Dr. Ghulam Murtaza, Chairperson Department of Zoology Prof. Dr. Nuzhat Shafi, Dean Sciences Prof. Dr. Khawaja Muhammad Rafique, Director Finance Prof. Dr. Khawaja Basharat, and Provost Hostels Dr. Rukhsana Said, among other administrative officers, meticulously finalized the arrangements for the congress. Highlighting the significance of this congress, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kaleem Abbasi expressed the University's pride in hosting such a prestigious event and underscored its commitment to ensuring its success. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad

Kaleem Abbasi reiterated the University's commitment to fostering excellence in education and research, not limited to zoology but encompassing all sciences and social sciences. Emphasizing the pivotal role of conferences, seminars, and debates in igniting research interests among students, he affirmed the University's dedication to providing a conducive environment for academic growth. The University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir extends a warm invitation to all delegates from around the world, assuring them of a meticulously organized and intellectually enriching experience at the 42nd World Pakistan Congress of Zoology.



The United States celebrates transformative achievements in KPK



Soon Times Correspondent
Peshawar.

In the spirit of collaboration as development partners, the U.S. government represented by Consul General Moore and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director Somvongsiri, alongside key partners, celebrated a series of transformative achievements in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) region. USAID will continue its commitment to improve lives and foster sustainable development in the region. Mission Director Somvongsiri lauded the remarkable achievements born out of its

strategic partnership with the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and fellow international donors. Ms. Somvongsiri remarked that, "USAID is committed to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Together, along with our international and local partners, we have laid the groundwork for a brighter future, and I am optimistic for what lies ahead. Our dedication to working hand in hand towards our shared goals and sustained impact remains stronger than ever." The United States, through USAID, has spearheaded transformative infrastructure projects, significantly bolstering the

province's energy capacity and connectivity. Landmark projects such as Gomal Zam Dam and Golen Gol Hydropower project, coupled with the augmentation of Tarbela dam, have added 253 megawatts to the national grid, marking a significant step towards energy self-sufficiency. The impact of USAID's efforts extends far beyond infrastructure, reaching over 18,000 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) thereby catalyzing economic stability and prosperity. More than 30,000 households have witnessed a doubling of their farm income. USAID's efforts in health and education have rehabilitated over 200 facilities and provided essential services to more than two million people. USAID significantly improved reading instruction for over 600,000 children, distributed more than three million books and awarded over 8,500 university scholarships. The rehabilitation and construction of hundreds of schools have broadened educational horizons for over one million students. USAID has also facilitated more than 130,000 women to obtain their national identity cards paving the way for their inclusion in voter lists. These efforts have not only transformed lives but also solidified a foundation for continued progress and prosperity in KP.

SNGPL disconnected 162 connections & imposed fine of Rs. 8.27 million in crackdown against gas pilferers

Soon Times Correspondent
Lahore.

During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad. It disconnected 162 connections and imposed fine of Rs. 8.27 million. In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 03 connections on the illegal use of gas. In Multan 12 connections were disconnected on illegal use while another 03 were disconnected on use of the compressor. The team also lodged 02 FIRs against

gas thieves. In Peshawar and Karak, the company disconnected 118 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas. It booked amount of Rs. 4.67 million against gas theft cases and lodged 14 FIRs. In Sahiwal team disconnected 02 connections on illegal use of gas. In Faisalabad, the team disconnected 03 connections for illegal use of gas and imposed a fine of Rs 0.08 millions against gas pilferers. The regional team of Bahawalpur disconnected 02 connections on illegal use of gas, 07 on the use of a compressor and booked an amount of Rs

0.35 million against gas theft cases. In Gujranwala, team disconnected 02 connections on illegal use of gas, 01 on the use of a compressor and imposed a fine of Rs. 0.46 million against gas theft cases. The regional team of Maradan disconnected 08 connections on illegal use of gas and imposed a fine of Rs 0.16 million against gas theft cases. In Sargodha, team disconnected 01 connection for illegal use of gas and imposed a fine of Rs. 2.55 million against gas pilferers.



Islamabad 18.04.2024: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq receiving British High Commissioner Ms. Jane Marriot at Parliament House.

X working with Pakistan govt to 'understand concerns' over ban

Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD

Social media platform X said on Thursday it would work with Pakistan government "to understand its concerns" after authorities insisted an ongoing two-month ban was based on security grounds.

The platform, formerly known as Twitter, has been rarely accessible since Feb 17, when jailed former prime minister's party called for protests following a government official's admission of vote manipulation in the February election.

"We continue to work with the Pakistani Government to understand their concerns," X's Global Government Affairs team posted, in their first comments since the site was disrupted.

The Interior Ministry on Wednesday said X was blocked on security grounds, according to a report submitted to the Islamabad High Court where one of several challenges to the ban is being heard.

On the same day, the High Court of Sindh ordered the government to restore access to



social media platform X within a week. "The Sindh High Court has given the government one week to withdraw the letter, failing which, on the next date, they will pass appropriate orders," Moiz Jaferi, a lawyer challenging the ban, told AFP. The court's decision has yet to be published. "The court order gave the government one week to decide what it wants to do," lawyer Jibran Nasir, another petitioner, told AFP. High court orders apply provincially, but can act as a precedent for other top courts. Both the government and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) had for weeks refused to comment on the outages.



Punjab govt to launch Himmat, Nigheban cards. Who will be the beneficiaries?

Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE

The Punjab government has decided to launch Himmat Card for the disabled people and Nigheban Card for deserving people under the auspices of Baitul Maal. The provincial government has also decided to compile data of differently-abled persons.

The decisions were taken during a meeting held here on Thursday which was chaired by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. The chief minister was briefed on Social Welfare and Baitul Maal working. Digitisation of Baitul Maal was approved during the meeting. It was also decided that special people would be given loans under a new scheme and provided new wheelchairs. The chief

minister sought a report on necessary ramps and bathrooms in government buildings.

It was decided that persons with special needs would be given loans worth Rs100,000 to 200,000. Moreover, skill development centres in Lahore, Multan and Faisalabad would be made operational and similar centres would be made in other cities as well.

Arrest warrant for former chief minister GB issued

Soon Times Correspondent
GILGIT

Arrest warrant issued for former Chief Minister (CM) of Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Khalid Khurshid Khan in a fake degree case, Dunya News reported on Wednesday. According to the details, former chief minister Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khurshid was on bail in the fake degree case, but he did not appear in the court. Senior Civil Judge Hidayat Ali issued a bailable arrest warrant for the former chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan over his continuous absence.

Khalid Khurshid who also served as the president of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chapter in the Gilgit-Baltistan was charged with getting a lawyer's license from the Gilgit-Baltistan Bar Council by submitting a 'fictitious' University of London law degree and an affidavit to the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Islamabad to obtain an equivalency certificate.



He contested the GB elections from Astore and eventually went to become the chief minister. He was disqualified by Gilgit-Baltistan Court for possessing 'fake' degree and booked in the fraud case. The Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Court in July 2023 disqualified Khalid Khurshid Khan in a fake degree case as a three-member bench announced the verdict on a petition filed by a member of the GB Assembly Shahzad Agha against him.

The petitioner had argued that Khurshid's law degree was fake and he should be disqualified under Article 62 and 63. Khurshid claimed to have received a law degree from London but it could not be verified.

Khalid Khurshid had been in office since December 2020 and considered a close aide of PTI founder.

ZARAI TARAQIATI BANK LIMITED
HEAD OFFICE, ISLAMABAD

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR REGISTRATION/ENLISTMENT OF MANUFACTURERS/SUPPLIERS OF "THREE WHEELER LOADER RICKSHAWS"

Zarai Taraqati Bank Limited is a public sector specialized financial institution based Head Office at Islamabad and wide network of Regional Offices, Audit Zones and more than 500 branches across the country. For productivity enhancement through Farm Mechanization and easy access of Farmers to local market, the bank is lending "THREE WHEELER LOADER RIKSHAWS" to a large number of farmers in the country. In order to provide facility among farmers, Bank has launched the said item.

Therefore, all interested parties may visit bank website to www.ztbl.com.pk to read content of application form and agreement or may visit/Collect application form office of Head (Coordination & Compliance Unit), Assets & Logistics Department Room No 510, 5th Floor, Main Building, ZTBL, Head Office Islamabad. Interested firms/manufacturers may also download prescribed application form for registration from ZTBL Website and submit the same duly filled in completed alongwith a pay order of Rs. 1,000/- non-refundable in favor of ZTBL, Head office, Islamabad before 06-05-2024.

(ASIM INAYAT)
DEPARTMENTAL HEAD
ASSETS & LOGISTICS DEPARTMENT,
ZTBL, HEAD OFFICE ISLAMABAD.
Office No: 051-2002566, 252619

PH: 051-2002566

FinMin Aurangzeb, Donald Lu discuss Pakistan's reform agenda in high-level meeting

WASHINGTON.

Pakistan's reform agenda came under discussion during a high-level meeting between Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and United States State Department Assistant Secretary Donald Lu.

The two dignitaries explored broadening tax base, energy sector streamlining, and privatisation during the huddle at the World Bank headquarters in Washington. Ambassador Lu, flanked by State Department's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Horst in the meeting, reaffirmed Washington's commitment to bolster ties between the US and Pakistan.

Aurangzeb, who is currently in Washington to hold negotiations

with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new bailout package and attend World Bank meetings, has also been conducting meetings with top officials in the US on the sidelines. Aurangzeb and the US official focused on upgrading economic partnerships, with emphasis on alternate energy, agriculture, climate resilience and tech industry.

The Pakistani minister identified American investment opportunities in information technology, renewables, agriculture and minerals extraction. He also pledged close collaboration with the US International Development Finance Corporation and Exim Bank for mutual development.



Islamabad: PM's Coordinator on climate change & Environmental coordination Romina Khurshid Alam in a meeting with the Danish ambassador H.E. Jakob Linulf at her office on April 18, 2024.



Team Canada goes for cool factor in Paris Games kit



TORONTO

Team Canada unveiled the kit athletes will wear at this year's Paris Olympics on Tuesday, a high-tech design focusing on thermal comfort while paying homage to the country's indigenous heritage. In designing their first Summer Games collection, Lululemon (LULUO) said it leaned heavily on product testing and feedback from 19 Canadian Olympic and Paralympic athletes across 14 different sports, including gold medal hopes such as tennis player Leylah Fernandez, decathlete Damian Warner and swimmer Summer McIntosh. Top of athletes' concerns was having outfits that work well in the Paris heat and humidity followed by fit and function. The Games are set to run from July 26 to Aug. 11.

"For the most part they really love the designs we created for them," Sun Cho, Lululemon's chief product officer, told Reuters. "The story telling behind the designs we created is very authentic and intentional."



England fast bowler Archer fears another 'stop-start' year

LONDON

England fast bowler Jofra Archer has warned he may struggle to cope with yet more injury woe, saying: "I don't know if I'll have another stop-start year like this."

Archer, who signed a two-year central contract with England in October, last played a Test in February 2021. His career has since been blighted by injuries and the 29-year-old Sussex quick missed the whole of last year's home season with a stress fracture in his right elbow.

But Archer, who rose to prominence in 2019 when he bowled the Super Over as England beat New Zealand in the 50-over World Cup final, is on the comeback trail, with hopes of featuring in June's T20 World Cup in the United States and his native Caribbean.



Burkina Faso expels three French diplomats accused of 'subversive activities'

Web Desk

Burkina Faso has expelled three French diplomats for "subversive activities", according to a foreign ministry note seen by FRANCE 24.

The three were declared "persona non grata" and told to leave the country within 48 hours, the foreign ministry said in a note dated Tuesday that was sent to the French embassy.

Since coming to power in a September 2022 coup, the junta has distanced the West African nation from France, which ruled the country until 1960. It has notably cancelled a 1961 military accord between the two countries. The French ambassador was recalled after the coup and is set to return to Ouagadougou, the Burkina capital. On December 1, four French officials were arrested, charged and imprisoned in Ouagadougou, according to a French source.

The Burkina authorities said they were intelligence agents but the French source said they were IT support staff. The four are now under house arrest, according to Burkina security sources.

In December 2022, Ouagadougou expelled two French nationals working for a Burkina Faso company for alleged espionage. France has ended anti-jihadist military missions in Mali and Burkina Faso and more recently began to withdraw forces from Niger — all three countries where juntas are now ruling after coups.

Burkina Faso has increasingly turned to Russia, Mali and Niger for security assistance.



Pakistan name squad led by Shaheen Afridi for New Zealand T20I series

Negotiations between Israel and Hamas to secure a truce in Gaza and release of hostages have stalled

DOHA

Negotiations between Israel and Hamas to secure a truce in Gaza and a release of hostages have stalled, Qatar's prime minister

"We are going through a sensitive stage with some stalling, and we are trying as much as possible to address this stalling," Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani told a news conference with Romanian Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu.

Qatar, with the United States and Egypt, has been engaged in weeks of behind-the-scenes talks to secure a truce in Gaza and the release of Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

Negotiators are trying to "move forward and put an end to the suffering that the people in Gaza are experiencing and returning the hostages", Sheikh Mohammed said.

The mediators had hoped to secure a ceasefire before the start of Ramadan, but progress repeatedly faltered without any cessation of hostilities in the Muslim holy month which ended last week.

Instead, fears have grown of the months-long war in Gaza spilling over into a regional conflict after Iran's first-ever direct attack on its arch-foe Israel this weekend.

The Qatari premier said Doha had "warned from the beginning of this war against the expansion of the circle of conflict, and today we see conflicts on different fronts".

"We constantly call on the international community to assume its responsibilities and stop this war," he added, saying people of Gaza faced "siege and starvation" with humanitarian aid being used as a "tool for political blackmail".

The war began when Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel that resulted in about 1,170 deaths, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Israeli official figures.

UNRWA chief warns man-made famine tightening grip across Gaza

UNITED NATIONS

A man-made famine is "tightening its grip" across the Gaza Strip, the head of the United Nations Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA warned on Wednesday as he accused Israel of blocking aid deliveries and seeking to end UNRWA's activities in the enclave.

"Today, an insidious campaign to end UNRWA's operations is underway, with serious implications for international peace and security," UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini told the 15-member UN Security Council.

The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) provides education, health and aid to millions of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Since war erupted six months ago between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, top UN officials have described UNRWA as the backbone of aid operations.

"Across Gaza, a man-made famine is tightening its grip," Lazzarini said. "In the north, infants and young children have begun to die of malnutrition and dehydration. Across the border, food and clean water wait. But UNRWA is denied permission to deliver this aid and save lives."



Widow of Russia's Alexei Navalny hires bodyguard after hammer attack on activist



LONDON

Yulia Navalnaya, the widow of Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny, said in an interview with Time magazine published on Wednesday that she had hired a bodyguard following a hammer attack on a senior ally of her late husband.

A hammer-wielding assailant attacked Leonid Volkov, a Navalny aide, outside his home in Vilnius, Lithuania, in March, breaking his arm and pounding his leg with a series of blows.

Lithuania's counter-intelligence service accused Russia's intelligence services of being

behind the attack. The Kremlin declined to comment but said people should respect and listen to President Vladimir Putin rather than be afraid of him.

Yulia Navalnaya, who lives outside Russia and has said she will take up her husband's battle against Putin, said the incident had prompted her to increase her personal security measures.

"We have thought about some new security protocols. To be honest, I don't really like to go around with a bodyguard," Navalnaya, who was speaking in Vilnius, told Time.

"Alexei and I never had security, and I think I inherited some of that courage, that cavalier attitude from Alexei. But when you're too cavalier, you can make a wrong move. So, for now, my colleagues have asked me to go around with a bodyguard."



Britain's contentious plan to send some migrants to Rwanda hits a hurdle in Parliament

LONDON

A law that will enable Britain to send some asylum-seekers on a one-way trip to Rwanda suffered a setback on Wednesday after Parliament's upper chamber pressed its attempt to amend the contentious legislation.

The House of Lords inserted amendments into the Safety of Rwanda Bill, sending it back to the lower House of Commons in a process known as parliamentary ping-pong.

The government had hoped members of the Lords would stop blocking the bill on Wednesday, relenting to the parliamentary rule that the unelected Lords ultimately can't overrule the elected Commons.

The Lords' resistance underlines the strength of opposition in the upper house, where the governing Conservative Party does not have a majority.

The bill is still overwhelmingly likely to become law, but the latest move delays its passage, likely until next week.

The legislation will pave the way for deportation flights to take off — though opponents plan new legal challenges that could keep them grounded.

The Rwanda plan is key to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's pledge to "stop the boats" bringing unauthorized migrants to the U.K. across the English Channel, and Sunak has repeatedly said the first

Thousands evacuated as Indonesia volcano erupts, causes tsunami threat



MANADO

Indonesian rescuers raced to evacuate thousands of people Thursday after a volcano erupted five times, forcing authorities to close a nearby airport and issue a warning about falling debris that could cause a tsunami.

The crater of Mount Ruang flamed with lava against a backdrop of lightning bolts overnight after erupting four times on Wednesday, forcing authorities to raise its alert level to the highest of a four-tiered system.

The volcano in Indonesia's outermost region was still billowing a column of smoke on Thursday morning, prompting authorities to shut the nearest international airport in Manado city on Sulawesi island for 24 hours.

Authorities said they were rushing to evacuate 11,000 residents from the nearby area that included the remote island of Tagulandang, home to around 20,000 people. Some residents were already trying to flee in a panic, according to officials.

"Last night people evacuated on their own but without direction due to the volcano's eruption and materials in the form of small rocks that fell, so the people scattered to find evacuation routes," Jandry Pasendang, an official from the local search and rescue agency, said in a statement Thursday.

He said 20 staff were helping evacuate residents along the coastline near the volcano on rubber boats.

He called for more boats and equipment so his team could "carry out evacuation for people in the coast or near the coast facing the volcano."

Tourists and residents were warned to remain outside a six-kilometre exclusion zone.

Reuters' Mohammed Salem wins 2024 World Press Photo of the Year award

AMSTERDAM

Reuters photographer Mohammed Salem won the prestigious 2024 World Press Photo of the Year award on Thursday for his image of a Palestinian woman cradling the body of her five-year-old niece in the Gaza Strip.

The picture was taken on Oct. 17, 2023, at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, where families were searching for relatives killed during Israeli bombing of the Palestinian enclave.

Salem's winning image portrays Inas Abu Maamar, 36, sobbing while holding Saly's sheet-clad body in the hospital morgue. "Mohammed received the news of his WPP award with humility, saying that this is not a photo to celebrate but that it appreciates its recognition and the opportunity to publish it to a wider audience," Reuters' Global Editor for Pictures and Video, Rickey Rogers, said at a ceremony in Amsterdam.

"He hopes with this award that the world will become even more conscious of the human impact of war, especially on children," Rogers said standing in front of the photo at the Nieuwe Kerk in the Dutch capital. Announcing its annual awards, the



Amsterdam-based World Press Photo Foundation said it was important to recognise the dangers facing journalists covering conflicts.

It said 99 journalists and media employees had been killed covering the war between Israel and Hamas since the Palestinian militant group attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7 and Israel responded by launching a military offensive in Gaza.

"The work of press and documentary photographers around the world is often done at high risk," said Joumana El Zein Khoury, the organisation's executive director. "This past year, the death toll in

Gaza pushed the number of journalists killed to a near-record high. It is important to recognise the trauma they have experienced to show the world the humanitarian impact of the war."

Salem, a Palestinian aged 39, has worked for Reuters since 2003. He also won an award in the 2010 World Press Photo competition. The jury said Salem's 2024 winning image was "composed with care and respect, offering at once a metaphorical and literal glimpse into an unimaginable loss."

"I felt the picture sums up the broader sense of what was happening in the Gaza Strip," Salem said when the image was first published in November.