



# Daily SOON TIMES



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**Thursday**  
April 18, 2024  
Page: 4 Rs: 20  
Vol: 4 Issue: 110  
Sargodha  
www.soontimes.pk



**Will leave office if could not implement new roti price: Gandapur**

Simultaneously Publishing from Islamabad, Sargodha and Karachi

## PTI founder expresses concerns over Bahawalnagar incident: Gohar



Soon Times Correspondent  
RAWALPINDI  
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has said the AI Qadir Trust case is illegal and it will be proved that the case is politically motivated. Khan, while talking to media outside Adiala Jail, said the hearing of AI Qadir Trust case was held, but the media was not allowed to cover the hearing which was illegal and unconstitutional. He said the PTI founder expressed serious concerns over the Bahawalnagar incident. "There is a law of jungle when his house was trespassed, none sought apology," the PTI founder was quoted as saying. Gohar complained that the PTI's cases were not being set for hearing in the Supreme Court.



## Eight more ministers of Sindh cabinet sworn in

Soon Times Correspondent  
KARACHI  
Eight more ministers of the Sindh cabinet were sworn in on Wednesday. Governor Sindh Kamran Tori administered the oath at the General House Sindh. Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah was also present at the swearing-in ceremony. The newly sworn-in ministers include Jam Ikrumullah Dharjo, Makhdoom Mehboob uz Zaman, Riaz Shirazi, Dost Ali Rahmo, Shahid Salam Thaeem, Muhammad Ali Malkani, Shaheen Sher Ali, and Tariq Talpur. Makhdoom Mehboob uz Zaman is expected to get the revenue department, Muhammad Ali Malkani the universities department, Shaheena Sher Ali women's development, and Shahid Thaeem the labour ministry portfolios.



## President summons NA session on April 19

Soon Times Correspondent  
ISLAMABAD  
President Asif Ali Zardari has summoned the session of the National Assembly on Friday, April 19, 2024 at 10:30 am. The president summoned the session of National Assembly in exercise of the powers conferred by article 54(1) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In previous session, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, daughter of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and President Asif Ali Zardari, took oath as a member of the National Assembly. National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq administered the oath to Aseefa. During the session, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari provided headpieces to Aseefa Bhutto Zardari to reduce the noise disturbances as PTI MNAs raised slogans calling for the release of the PTI founder. Following Aseefa Zardari's swearing-in, PPP members also chanted slogans in support of the Bhutto family like 'jijee Bhutto'.

# No compromise on security of Chinese workers in Pakistan: PM Shahbaz Sharif

Says government would ensure all possible facilitation of the Chinese investors



Soon Times Correspondent  
ISLAMABAD  
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday assured that the government would make no compromise on the security of the Chinese workers in Pakistan. The prime minister, in a meeting with a delegation of Shanghai Electric Group led by Chairman Wu Lei, said that the government would ensure all possible facilitation of the Chinese investors to further expand the ongoing projects. He urged the Chinese firms to switch the power plants from imported to the local coal and increase their investment in the coal mining sector. In the meeting, the prime minister was briefed about the projects being executed by the Shanghai Electric Group. Citing cordial and time-tested ties with China, Prime Minister Shehbaz said that

Pakistan desired to further promote its friendly ties and strengthen economic partnership with the country. The Shanghai Electric Group was currently working on Thar Coal mine development and a 1320MW coal power project. It was told that Shanghai Electric Group was one of the biggest firms engaged under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan. The Thar Coal projects executed by the Group were annually saving around \$400 million. The meeting was attended by Chairman of Thar Coal Block 1 Power Generation Company Meng Donghai, Economic Affairs Minister Ahmad Khan Chema, Energy Minister Sardar Awan Khan Leghari, Petroleum Minister Dr. Masood Malik, Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Muhammad Jahanzeb and relevant senior officers.

## Tarar hopes May 9 cases will reach logical conclusion

Soon Times Correspondent  
ISLAMABAD  
Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday said the credibility of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his government had started producing results, adding that Saudi Arabia was interested in investing in different sectors. The world knew that the prime minister had always delivered and worked 24/7, he remarked and told a press conference after a federal cabinet meeting that the privatisation of PIA as well as airports would lead to positive results. However, the minister added that privatisation had nothing to do with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). When asked about the May 9 violence, the information minister said the government wanted to see those involved in attacking defence and sensitive installations punished. He regretted that those facing serious charges had obtained relief from courts, but hoped that the May 9 cases would soon reach logical conclusion. International financial institutions were projecting a marked decline in inflation, he noted and mentioned the recent positive reviews of Pakistan's economy at world level to argue his case.



The federal cabinet had decided to instruct the four provinces to ensure providing right wheat prices. Tarar, as harvesting has begun in the country and there are indications of a bumper crop which will help alleviating the food inflation. About the contradictions in the statements of PTI leaders, he said they were unable to create unified position even within their own party and added that they had no nothing to offer to the people. He reminded the rival party that their leader was in jail on corruption charges and said the planned anti-government movement would go anywhere. "What is their agenda," he asked about the opposition alliance. Describing the Pshin rally in Balochistan as flop show, he said the speeches delivered at the public gathering showed that "the company" won't last long.

## Fazl offers condolence to Ismail Haniyeh over death of his sons in Israeli strike



Soon Times Correspondent  
KARACHI  
JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman reached out to Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh via phone to offer condolences over the loss of his sons and grandsons in Israeli strike. Haniyeh also expressed grief and thanked Maulana Fazlur Rahman for advocating for Palestinians' rights at the international conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Haniyeh also expressed gratefulness to the workers of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Pakistan and the Pakistani people for their support to the oppressed people of Gaza. Also, on Maulana Fazlur Rahman's directives, Allama Rashid Mahmood Soomro met Ismail Haniyeh in Qatar, where he presented a letter of condolence from Maulana Fazlur Rahman, in turn.



Fazlur Rahman prayed for the elevated status of the martyrs and assured Haniyeh that the people of Pakistan stand in solidarity with their Palestinian brothers. The JUI-F head also expressed disappointment over the silence of the international community, particularly the Muslim Ummah, regarding the tragic deaths and injuries of thousands of Palestinians because of the Israeli assault.

# Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi promises zero-tolerance policy to curb overbilling, power theft



Soon Times Correspondent  
ISLAMABAD  
Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi says there is a zero-tolerance policy regarding overbilling by power distribution companies across the country. He emphasised that overbilling would not be tolerated under any circumstances. Naqvi has instructed the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to take stern action against any official found involved in overbilling.

In addition to combating overbilling, minister Naqvi has called for a swift crackdown on power theft. He has directed the FIA officers to demonstrate best performance in tackling overbilling and power theft cases. Condemning overbilling, the minister said it's a grave injustice to the public. He pledged to provide relief to the masses with an assurance that those involved in issuing inflated bills would be brought to justice.

The interior minister highlighted the importance of addressing power theft and said the FIA officers would take action against the corrupt across the country, especially in areas of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to effectively control power theft. Also Read: Electricity distribution companies are involved in overbilling Naqvi. A few days earlier, Naqvi revealed the figures about overbilling and promised to continue crackdown on power theft.

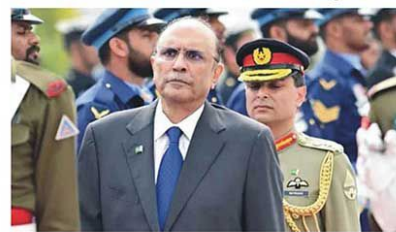
## Iranian envoy lauds Pakistan's defence capabilities



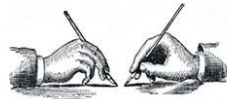
Soon Times Correspondent  
ISLAMABAD  
Ambassador of Iran Reza Amir Moghaddam called on Minister for Defence and Defence Production Khawaja Asif on Wednesday and lauded the defence capabilities of Pakistan. The defence minister said Pakistan and Iran enjoyed cordial and fraternal ties, nourished by centuries old religious and cultural affinities. A news release said Khawaja Asif reiterated Pakistan's stance on Palestine issue and highlighted early achievement of ceasefire in Gaza as well as resolution of Palestine issue. Underlining the importance of Joint Border Commission, the Minister said that Pakistan had taken all necessary measures in the domain of

border management and the joint efforts on the issue should continue in days ahead. On the occasion, the Iranian Ambassador appreciated Pakistan's defence capabilities and said the two countries had potential for further collaboration in the field of defence and energy cooperation. Both sides expressed satisfaction over the existing level of bilateral cooperation and committed to further it in areas of common interest, enhancing security, counterterrorism and regional economic connectivity. Related Topics

# President Zardari for strengthening economic, cultural ties with Turkiye



Soon Times Correspondent  
ISLAMABAD  
President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday called for further enhancing bilateral cooperation with Turkiye in the areas of trade, economy, education and culture. The president, talking to Ambassador of Turkiye in Pakistan Dr Mehmet Pacaci, who called on him, said that Turkish companies should benefit from the investment-friendly policies of the country and invest through the Pakistan Stock Exchange. Welcoming the ambassador, the president said that the people of Pakistan and Turkiye had historic and long-standing ties, adding that the two nations had always supported and stood by each other in difficult times. President Zardari stated that Pakistan could benefit from the Turkish development experience, especially in the area of infrastructure development. In order to promote regional connectivity, he suggested undertaking a joint feasibility study to establish a railway connection between the two brotherly countries. The president also underlined the need for increasing educational and cultural exchanges to further promote people-to-people contacts. He said that Pakistan looked forward to welcoming Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the 7th High Level Strategic Cooperation Council session in Pakistan.



## Sustainable economic development

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb, on Wednesday said the government is committed to economic reform to sustainable economic development in the

country. The minister spoke at the JP Morgan Seminar on Pakistan's Economic Policy Outlook. He outlined three important reform areas of taxation, energy and privatization, said a press

release issued here. The minister highlighted positive economic indicators including strong performance of the agriculture sector, diminishing inflationary pressures, stable exchange

rate, declining trade deficit and strong remittances. He informed that the government was committed to entering into a larger and extended programme with the IMF.

### Technology and the Changing Food Industry



Alishbalfikhara

higher methane emissions, exacerbating climate change. Furthermore, the food industry often relies on conventional farming methods that involve the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, posing health risks to both farmers and consumers. These practices also contribute to environmental degradation, as the widespread use of pesticides has resulted in a decline in pollinators like bees which are essential for crop yields and maintaining biodiversity.

In response to the growing challenges in the food industry, food technology companies are adopting a range of innovative solutions to revolutionize the way we produce, distribute and consume food. Plant-based meat alternatives have gained popularity, offering consumers environmentally friendly options that mimic the taste and texture of traditional meats. Personalized nutrition services are catering to individual health needs by providing tailored dietary plans that optimize well-being. Vertical farming and urban agriculture technologies are transforming urban spaces into productive farmland, enabling the efficient cultivation of fresh, locally grown produce and reducing the carbon footprint associated with long-distance food transportation. Furthermore, efforts to combat food waste are leveraging technology to monitor and minimize waste across the entire supply chain, from farm to table. The integration of block chain technology is also playing a pivotal role in enhancing food traceability, allowing for greater transparency and safety in the food system. Such advancements are paving the way for a more sustainable and resilient food system. Using 3D printing technology, food production can be revolutionized by offering the ability to create customized shapes and textures. This innovative approach allows for the production of visually

appealing and intricate foods, such as 3D-printed chocolates and pastries, which can be designed with complex patterns and structures. Additionally, the technology can facilitate the use of alternative ingredients, such as insect-based foods, which offer a sustainable source of protein. By incorporating crickets, mealworms, and other insects into the production process, 3D printing can help reduce the consumption of traditional meat products and promote environmental benefits. This approach not only introduces novel culinary experiences but also supports sustainable and efficient food production practices for the future.

As the result, food technology holds immense potential to address the challenges faced by the food industry, offering innovative solutions that can transform the way we produce, distribute, and consume food. By embracing advancements such as vertical farming, precision agriculture and alternative protein sources, we can significantly improve efficiency, reduce waste and enhance resilience in our food systems. These technologies have the potential to contribute to a more sustainable and secure food supply for future generations, ensuring that resources are used more efficiently while minimizing the environmental impact. However, it is essential to consider the ethical implications of these technologies, including fair access to food, the treatment of workers and the potential for unintended consequences. Additionally, prioritizing consumer safety throughout the development and implementation of food technology is crucial, ensuring that new products and methods adhere to the highest standards of health and safety. By balancing innovation with ethical considerations and safety measures, we can leverage food technology to create a more sustainable and equitable food future.

As a prominent Russian opposition leader and anti-corruption activist, Alexei Navalny has gained international recognition for his outspoken criticism of the Russian government under President Vladimir Putin. He born on June 4, 1976 and grew up in Russia and initially pursued a legal career. However his experiences with corruption and injustice in the country led him to become a vocal advocate for political reform. Navalny's activism gained momentum in the late 2000s when he started blogging about corruption

in Russian politics. His blog which he called "LiveJournal," became widely popular for exposing the alleged financial misdeeds of Russian officials and oligarchs. Navalny's sharp wit and straightforward style resonated with many Russians who were disillusioned with the systemic corruption prevalent in their country.

In 2011, Navalny played a crucial role in organizing and leading protests against alleged fraud in the parliamentary elections. He coined the term "party of crooks and thieves" to describe the ruling United Russia party and this phrase gained widespread use in public discourse. Despite facing arrests and harassment, he continued to challenge the government, using social media and online platforms to disseminate information and



Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaher

Opposition parties in Russia operate within a challenging political landscape dominated by the ruling United Russia party and President Vladimir Putin's administration. Despite attempts at pluralism, opposition parties often face significant obstacles such as limited media access, restrictive legislation on political activity and occasional harassment of activists. Prominent opposition figures like Alexei Navalny have garnered international attention for their anti-corruption campaigns and calls for political reform but they face substantial barriers to electoral success. Efforts to enact meaningful political reforms in Russia have been met with mixed

results with some limited measures introduced to enhance transparency and accountability in government. However, broader systemic changes remain elusive as the Kremlin maintains a tight grip on power and resists substantial shifts towards greater democratization. The future of opposition politics and political reforms in Russia hinges on complex dynamics between state controls societal demands for change and international pressure for respect of democratic norms.

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### Alexei Navalny's Journey in Russian Politics

rally support. In 2013, he ran for the position of Moscow mayor, finishing second in the election with a strong showing that surprised many observers. His victory was arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable. Navalny's most significant challenge to the Russian government came in 2020 when he was poisoned with a nerve agent known as Novichok. After falling seriously ill, he was airlifted to Germany for medical treatment. Subsequent investigations by independent laboratories confirmed the presence of Novichok in his system, leading to widespread condemnation and accusations against the Russian government. Navalny accused Putin of orchestrating the poisoning, an allegation that the Kremlin vehemently denied. Upon recovering from the poisoning, Navalny returned to Russia in January 2021, despite facing the imminent threat of arrest. He was promptly detained upon his arrival, sparking protests across the country. In February 2021, Navalny was sentenced to two and a half years in prison for violating the terms of his probation, a decision widely criticized as politically motivated.

However, his political ambitions were hindered by legal troubles. In 2014, he was convicted of embezzlement charges, which he and his supporters contended were politically motivated. The European Court of Human Rights later ruled that Navalny's conviction was arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable. Navalny's most significant challenge to the Russian government came in 2020 when he was poisoned with a nerve agent known as Novichok. After falling seriously ill, he was airlifted to Germany for medical treatment. Subsequent investigations by independent laboratories confirmed the presence of Novichok in his system, leading to widespread condemnation and accusations against the Russian government. Navalny accused Putin of orchestrating the poisoning, an allegation that the Kremlin vehemently denied. Upon recovering from the poisoning, Navalny returned to Russia in January 2021, despite a decision widely criticized as politically motivated.

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Due to critic of the Russian government he faced imprisonment and was sent to a prison in the Russian Arctic after being poisoned the year before. The circumstances surrounding his demise raise questions, as the cause of death was undisclosed, and the customary practice of handing over the body for burial to family members was not followed. This deviation from

the norm may stem from Russian President Vladimir Putin's desire to prevent a thorough examination of the body by doctors and to instill fear in the population. There are two potential motivations behind this unusual handling of Navalny's death. Firstly, Putin may be avoiding scrutiny into the taken by the Russian authorities raise suspicions. The narrative takes a geopolitical turn as Russia achieves success in Ukraine, with Putin hinting at potential further conquests in the west and north, as revealed in his interview with Tucker Carlson. Publicly making such threats poses a military risk, considering the United States is viewed as Putin's primary adversary. Putin seems to gauge a divided U.S. stance on Ukraine and a potential weariness of the ongoing conflict. Consequently, he may believe that by escalating Russia's ruthlessness, the U.S. could be swayed to abandon its support for Ukraine.

cause of death, and secondly, he might be attempting to intimidate and terrorize the public. While it's conceivable that Navalny died of natural causes, the peculiar actions taken by the Russian authorities raise suspicions. The narrative takes a geopolitical turn as Russia achieves success in Ukraine, with Putin hinting at potential further conquests in the west and north, as revealed in his interview with Tucker Carlson. Publicly making such threats poses a military risk, considering the United States is viewed as Putin's primary adversary. Putin seems to gauge a divided U.S. stance on Ukraine and a potential weariness of the ongoing conflict. Consequently, he may believe that by escalating Russia's ruthlessness, the U.S. could be swayed to abandon its support for Ukraine.

The current week presents two strategic moves for Putin: the capture of a significant Ukrainian city and the willingness to silence underscored the complexities of dissent in contemporary Russia, where opposition figures often face suppression, legal challenges, and in Navalny's case, even physical harm.

resort to Stalinist tactics, blaming the U.S. for compelling him into such actions, thereby undermining the U.S. position further. Putin's focus appears to be on the United States, and he aims to demonstrate his readiness for ruthless actions. This calculated move is deemed low-risk, as even if it fails, it maintains the status quo while sowing discord and destabilizing the U.S. stance. While speculative, these observations suggest that Putin has carefully considered his course of action. Despite the challenges and risks he faced, Alexei Navalny remained a symbol of opposition to the Russian regime, inspiring many Russians to question the status quo and demand political change. His activism and resilience underscored the complexities of dissent in contemporary Russia, where opposition figures often face suppression, legal challenges, and, in Navalny's case, even physical harm.



# Zero tolerance policy for footpath encroachers should be ensured: Commissioner Sargodha



Soon Times Correspondent Sargodha: Commissioner and Administrator Municipal Corporation (MC) Sargodha, Muhammad Ajmal

Bhatti, suspended five officials for negligence in performing their official duties, while warning all building inspectors, rent inspectors and accountant to improve their

performance within a week to cover up their deficiencies. Those who are suspended include Tasawur, Zaid Akram, Mirza Tanveer, Muhammad Amir and

Sheikh Nauman. The Commissioner warned that if the situation persists, the accountant will also be surrendered. Commending the exemplary performance, he awarded appreciation certificates to two recovery officials and ordered the promotion of one of them. The Commissioner was chairing a performance review meeting of all branches of the MC in his conference room on Wednesday. In the meeting, the Chief Officer of MC presented details of the performance of each branch. He directed discontinuation of connections for users failing to pay water and sewage bills, enforcing

action against illegal constructions and connections, and filing of cases against them. He demanded performance report of each building inspector, clarifying that inspectors with deficient performance would also be surrendered. The Commissioner ordered to launch an operation against encroachments once again in full swing and instructed to set a timeline for the removal of cattle from the city. He said strict enforcement of zero tolerance policy against encroachments on footpaths should be ensured. Similarly, orders were issued for immediate removal of oblique and unauthorized advertising boards in

front of shops. He directed immediate stoppage of illegal wall chalking taking strict action against offenders. He also instructed for strict action against those who broke streets and sidewalks without permission. In the meeting, the Commissioner and Administrator directed to take a detailed review of rent recoveries from shops and various lease properties, instructing to take all possible measures to ensure 100% recovery. He said that a weekly meeting would be held to review the performance of MC officers including to determine the awarding of rewards and penalties.

# Citizen demand grant for repair of roads from CM Punjab

Soon Times Correspondent Nowshera Soon Sakser: Roads in various areas of the Soon Valley, especially Jaba to Nowshera and Nowshera to Uchhali, have become dilapidated, making it impossible for passengers to travel. A journey of a few minutes takes hours to complete due to this.

roads, drivers try to save their vehicles from potholes, causing damage to the vehicles, which worries the vehicle owners. Also, accidents have become a daily routine. Many people have lost their lives on the dilapidated roads of Soon Valley and many are forced to live with disabilities. The representatives of the

political and social organizations here have drawn the attention of the higher authorities to this aspect, but till now no one has paid attention to this aspect. The residents of Soon Valley have demanded from the Chief Minister of Punjab to provide a special grant for the construction and repair of the roads of Soon Valley.



Islamabad : Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Federal Cabinet on 17 April, 2024.

# IESCO Power Suspension Schedule for Today:

Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad:

According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance/Development Work is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned feeders/areas will be temporary suspended as per given schedule: On 18th April 2024. From 08:00 AM to 1:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Sohadrud Road, Ghori Garden, Khanna East, Sharifabad, Burma, Khanna Dak, Waheedabad Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Khanna II, Al Noor, Afandi Colony, Nust Road, Lakh Road, Radio Pak, Masryal Road, Japan Road Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Major Riaz, Lalazar, Jhawara, Dhamial-I, Gulshan Saeed, Lalkarti, Cantt, UC Lachan, Shah Jeevan, Quid-e-Azam Colony, Qasim

Base, Morgah, Fuji Foundation, Mohra Nagyal, Mehboob Shaheed, AOWHS, Wilayat Complex, X-Liar Colony, Pindi Board, Park View, Islamabad Feed Mill, Jhata Hatial, Basali, Pind Jatta, Lab-I & II, Reliance Weaving Mill, Industrial, Bhal, Jarrar Comp, New Kham, Old Rawat, New Rawat, CWO, Sparco, IST Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Basharat Feeder, Jhelum Circle, Pran Feeder, From 08:00 am to 05:00 pm, GSO Circle, Nimbai, Tatta Pani, Sehansa, City-II, Fatehpur, Cheruhi, City-I, Nar, Khoi Ratta feeders and surrounding area will remain closed. IESCO management apologizes to its esteemed customers for the power outage. If the work is completed ahead of time, the power supply can be restored even before the scheduled time.

# Delegation headed by Chief ECP visits Brazil

Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad:

A high-level delegation headed by Honorable Chief Election Commissioner of Pakistan Mr. Sikandar Sultan Raja, Provincial Election Commissioner (Punjab) Mr. Aijaz Anwar Chohan,

Director General (IT) Mr. Muhammad Khizer Aziz and Director Mr. Nadeem Zubair visited Brazil. The delegation visited Brazil to examine and carry out feasibility study of electoral process using Electronic Voting Machine (EVM).

# VEC recommended 10 pulses varieties in recent meeting at PARC

Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad: (PR&P, PARC) Variety Evaluation Committee (VEC) meeting of Pulses held at the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) concluded with the unanimous recommendation of ten high-yielding pulses varieties poised to revolutionize agriculture in Pakistan. Pakistan needs 1.56 million tons of pulses annually. We have become self-sufficient in mung production during 2021-22 which was 0.263 million tons against the total requirement of 0.180 million tons. Now the country is focusing on increasing the production of other pulse crops,

such as chickpea, lentil and mash bean. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department (FSC&RD), Ministry of National Food Security & Research (MNFS&R), as well as scientists from pulses research institutes across the country. Member Plant Sciences Division (PSD), PARC, Dr. Imtiaz Hussain presided over the VEC meeting. Dr. Muhammad Mansoor, National Coordinator Food Legumes, PARC, Islamabad presented 10 candidate varieties before the committee. After detailed deliberations, VEC recommended 10 pulses varieties that included 05 chickpea and 01 mung bean

variety of NIAB Faisalabad, 01 lentil and 01 mung bean variety of Pulses Research Program, NARC, Islamabad, 01 mung bean variety by Pulses Research Institute, AARI Faisalabad and a mung bean variety of NIFA, Peshawar. This achievement is due to the consistent backup support by PSDP, Pulses Project "Promoting Research for Productivity Enhancement in Pulses" to its research components throughout the country. The Chairman VEC was of the view that as the pulses gene pool has widened, therefore, all pulses scientists across the country are urged to focus on strengthening the pulses foundation seed production.



# USAID Launches \$10 Million Climate Financing Initiative in Pakistan

Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Pakistan launched the Pakistan Climate Financing Activity, an up to \$10 million, four-year endeavor aimed at bolstering sustainability and climate resilience in Pakistan yesterday. Funded through USAID, this initiative underscores the steadfast commitment of the U.S. government to foster responsible stewardship of natural resources and combat the climate crisis. It represents a significant stride towards fulfilling the objectives outlined in the U.S.-Pakistan "Green Alliance" framework. The USAID Pakistan Climate Financing Activity will help facilitate Pakistan's transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy. At the launch event held in Islamabad, notable attendees included representatives from the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, representatives from the provincial departments of the Government of Pakistan, as well as representatives from the private sector, development partners, decision-makers from Pakistan's financial sector and academia. Addressing the audience, USAID Deputy Mission Director Maura O'Brien emphasized, "The USAID Pakistan Climate Financing

Activity will support innovative projects tailored to Pakistan's context, scaling up efforts to build climate resilience. Through evidence-based solutions, this activity aims to advance Pakistan's capacity to respond to climate change effectively. I am confident that the Pakistan Climate Financing Activity will bridge gaps and fulfill existing needs and ultimately advance Pakistan's capacity to respond to climate change effectively." Echoing USAID's sentiments, coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change Rumena Khurshid stated, "The Government of Pakistan warmly welcomes this initiative from the United States, aimed at bolstering our nation's climate resilience, mitigation, and adaptation efforts. While Pakistan has made strides in fostering an innovative climate landscape, financial constraints remain a significant impediment. This activity will serve as a catalyst for concerted action, bringing together government, private sector, environmental experts and development partners to tackle the challenges posed by climate change." The USAID Pakistan Climate Financing Activity aligns with USAID's global flagship initiative to enhance climate investment in vulnerable and emerging markets.

# Dignitaries attend Malik Shakeel Awan's cousin's wedding



Soon Times Correspondent Bagga Sheikhan: On the occasion of Malik Shakeel Awan's (Correspondent Daily Soon Times) cousin's wedding, important personalities attended. On the occasion

of the marriage of Malik Shakeel Awan and Malik Rasheed's cousin Malik Hassan Ayub, Pir Ghulam Shah Sahib Chhabhar Sharif (Chakwal), Malik Saeedur Rehman (Teacher Morgah), Muhammad Amir

Sheikhan), Malik Amir (Bagga Sheikhan), Chaudhry Ayub (Kotla), Chaudhry Imran (Kotla), Sheikh Asim, Chaudhry Saddam (Bagga Sheikhan) and Malik Shan (Sialkot) among others participated.



## Paris Olympics flame to be lit in its Greek birthplace



**OLYMPIA (Greece)**  
Nearly 100 days before the 2024 Paris Games open, the Olympic flame will be lit in ancient Olympia Tuesday for a torch relay stretching from the Acropolis to French Polynesia. For the first time since events for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and 2022 Beijing Winter Games had to be toned down due to the Covid-19 pandemic, spectators will be able to attend the torch relay events. Some 600 dignitaries are expected at the ceremony on Tuesday, headed by Greek President Katerina Sakellariopoulou and International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach.

The ritual will see actresses in the role of ancient priestesses coaxing the Olympic flame into life with the help of a parabolic polished mirror in Olympia, southwestern Greece, where the Games were born in 776 BC. American mezzo soprano Joyce DiDonato is to deliver the Olympic anthem.

## Lemma powers to Boston Marathon win, Obiri repeats as women's champ



**BOSTON**  
Ethiopia's Sisay Lemma attacked early and held on for a dominant victory in the Boston Marathon, gaining the redemption he sought after failing to finish last year. Lemma seized control in the opening miles and built a lead of more than two minutes by the halfway mark on the way to victory in 2:06:17.

By the time those chasing could make any inroads on his lead it was too late and Lemma finished 41sec ahead of compatriot Mohamed Esa -- who surged late to grab second ahead of Kenyan Evans. Obset, who was denied a third straight Boston title, Lemma's entry wire-to-wire victory was a marked contrast to the late push Kenyan Hellen Obiri delivered to win her second straight women's title in 2:22:37.

In a race that saw 19 women clustered in a leading group at the halfway point, Obiri and compatriots Sharon Lokedi and Edna Kiplagat finally separated themselves in the final three miles.

## IMF calls for fiscal restraint in year with most elections ever



**WASHINGTON**  
The International Monetary Fund urged countries on Wednesday to rein in fiscal spending and rebuild their buffers but said that could prove difficult in the world's biggest-ever election year.

A record 88 countries, home to more than half of the world's population, have held or are holding national elections in 2024, the IMF said, noting that governments tend to spend more and tax less during election years. "The most acute risk to public finances arises from the record number of elections being held in 2024, which has led to it being dubbed the 'Great Election Year,'" the IMF said in its new Fiscal Monitor publication. The United States will hold its presidential election in November, while voters in India will begin voting later this month. Taiwan, Portugal, Russia, and Turkey have already held elections. The IMF said budget overruns were often linked in election years, a risk amplified by increased demand for social spending. It said deficits in election years tended to exceed forecasts by 0.4 percentage points of GDP, compared to non-election years.



## Israel will defend itself, Netanyahu says, as West calls for restraint

**Netanyahu's office said he thanked David Cameron and Annalena Baerbock for their support, while telling them:**

**JERUSALEM CAIRO**  
Israel will make its own decisions about how to defend itself, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Wednesday, as Western countries pleaded for restraint in responding to a volley of attacks from Iran. The United States, European Union and G7 group of industrialised nations all announced plans to consider tighter sanctions on Iran, seen as aimed at mollifying Israel and persuading it to rein in its retaliation for the first ever direct Iranian strikes after decades of confrontation by proxy.

Netanyahu met the German and British foreign ministers, who both travelled to Israel as part of a coordinated push to keep confrontation between Israel and Iran from escalating into a regional conflict fuelled by the Gaza war. Netanyahu's office said he thanked David Cameron and Annalena Baerbock for their support, while telling them: "I want to make it clear - we will make our own decisions, and the State of Israel will do everything necessary to defend itself." Earlier, Cameron said it was now apparent Israel planned to retaliate for the Iranian missile and drone strikes, which Tehran launched on Saturday in response to a presumed Israeli airstrike that killed military officers at its embassy in Syria. Baerbock said escalation "would serve no one, not Israel's security, not the many dozens of hostages still in the hands of Hamas, not the suffering population of Gaza, not the many people in Iran who are themselves suffering under the regime, and not the third countries in the region who simply want to live in peace."

More than six months into the Gaza war between Israel and the Iran-backed Palestinian militant group Hamas that has seen flare-ups across the Middle East, diplomats are searching for a way to avert direct battle between Israel and Iran. The Iranian missiles and drones launched on Saturday were mostly shot down by Israel and its allies and caused no deaths. But Israel says it must retaliate to preserve the credibility of its deterrents. Iran says it considers the matter closed but will retaliate again if Israel does.

## Al Qadir Trust case is illegal, fabricated for revenge: PTI chief



**RAWALPINDI**  
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has said the Al Qadir Trust case is illegal and it will be proved that the case is politically motivated and made for score settling. Khan, while talking to media outside Adiala Jail, said the hearing of Al Qadir Trust case was held but the media was not allowed in the hearing which was illegal and unconstitutional. He said the PTI founder expressed serious concerns about the Ishakwalangari incident. "There is a law of jungle when his house was trespassed, none sought apology," the PTI founder was quoted as saying. Khan complained that the PTI's cases were not being set for hearing in the Supreme Court.

## Israel and Hamas indicate no deal is imminent after Biden signals Gaza cease-fire could be close



**COLOMBO**  
Sri Lanka will consult with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to assess if the latest proposals discussed with bondholders were within the parameters of its bailout programme, the country's finance ministry said on Wednesday. The South Asian island nation on Tuesday rejected international bondholders' proposal to restructure more than \$12 billion

in debt, putting at risk critical IMF support and delaying its efforts to resolve a debt crisis. "Following these consultations, we hope to continue discussions with the bondholders to reach common ground ahead of the IMF board consideration of the second review of Sri Lanka's EFF (extended fund facility) programme," state finance minister Shehan Semsanghe said in a statement. The island nation defaulted on its foreign debt in May 2022 and kicked off negotiations with bilateral creditors several months later, eventually securing an agreement in principle with China, India, and the Paris Club last November.



## UN falls short of billion-dollar pledge to tackle Ethiopia's hunger crisis

**Web Desk**  
More than 21 million people need urgent aid in Ethiopia, where a food crisis is deepening. Organisers said ahead of the conference they did not expect to raise the full amount by Tuesday, but rather to begin closing the gap between needs and funding. "We understand this is just the beginning, and we hope for continued and increased support throughout the year," UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya said in a statement. Twenty countries made new pledges, with Ethiopia's top donor -- the United States -- saying it had pledged an additional \$145 million. Britain, which co-hosted Tuesday's conference, pledged over \$117 million, while the European Union said that with member states it had pledged more than \$131 million. Funding gap Ethiopians are facing ongoing internal conflicts amid economic and climate shocks and an increasingly dire food and malnutrition crisis. The UN has said over \$3 billion is needed this year alone, including to assist some four million internally displaced people. But before Tuesday's event, that rescue plan was less than 5 percent funded. "The gap remains very wide... We have really to act before it is too late," Shiferaw Teklemariam, commissioner of the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission, told reporters in Geneva before the start of the conference. The UN said an initial billion-dollar sum was needed for an urgent aid response through the end of June. It is also needed to prepare for the so-called "lean season" from July to September when around 11 million people are projected to be critically food insecure. "Very fragile" "The humanitarian situation in Ethiopia is critical -- but there is a window to act right now to break the downward spiral," the UN's humanitarian agency OCHA said. Britain's Deputy Foreign Minister Andrew Mitchell said the situation was "extremely worrying", but added the international community, working closely with the Ethiopian government, was "in a position to head it off". Washington also stressed the need for rapid action. "We have millions and millions of people in Ethiopia facing very severe food insecurity," USAID deputy administrator Isobel Coleman said ahead of the conference, warning that "the humanitarian situation in the country remains very, very fragile."

## Indonesia's likely next president Made 4-star general despite links to alleged human rights abuses



**Tbilisi**  
Georgian lawmakers gave the first green light Wednesday to a controversial "foreign influence" law that has sparked mass street protests over concerns it would undermine Thbilisi's European aspirations. The bill, which 83 ruling Georgian Dream party MPs backed after its first reading, has been criticised as mirroring a repressive Russian law on "foreign agents" used there to silence dissent. Opposition deputies boycotted the vote, and on Monday and Tuesday night thousands took to the streets to protest the draft law. In chaotic scenes past midnight, Georgian riot police chased demonstrators in the labyrinth of narrow streets near parliament, beating them and making arrests, an AFP journalist saw. Several local media outlets said police had attacked their journalists. Another protest is scheduled for Wednesday evening. Further away from the EU If adopted, the bill would require any independent NGO and media organisation receiving more than 20

percent of funding from abroad to register as an "organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power". The proposed measure has sparked a backlash both inside Georgia and in the West. A similar bill targeting "foreign agents" was dropped last year after mass protests outside the parliament building in Thbilisi, during which police used tear gas and water cannon against demonstrators. The turmoil comes ahead of crucial parliamentary elections in October, seen as a key democratic test for the Black Sea country.