



"I assure our Kashmiri brothers and sisters that Pakistan will continue to provide moral, political and diplomatic support to the people of occupied Kashmir until they get their right to self-determination"

President of Pakistan
Asif Ali Zardari

Chief of the Turkish General Staff General Metin Gurak commends Pakistan's efforts in fostering regional peace & stability

Both sides acknowledge the robust relationship b/w their nations & committed to expanding defense collaboration further



RAWALPINDI: General Metin Gurak, Chief of the Turkish General Staff, met with General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at the General Headquarters (GHQ) on Thursday.

According to the statement issued by ISPR, the discussion encompassed various topics of mutual interest, spanning defense, training, and initiatives aimed at bolstering regional peace and stability. Both sides acknowledged the robust relationship between their nations and committed to expanding defense collaboration further. COAS underscored the imperative of advancing existing military cooperation between their armed forces.

The visiting dignitary commended Pakistan's efforts in fostering regional peace and stability, as well as the Pakistan Army's role in combating terrorism.

Earlier, upon arrival at GHQ, the Chief of the General Staff of the Turkish Army paid respects at Yadgar-e-Shuhada by laying a floral wreath. A well-presented contingent of the Pakistan Army rendered a guard of honor to the esteemed visitor. PR

SC suspends ECP's re-polling order in PP-51

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday suspended the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) order for re-polling in 12 polling stations of PP-51 Chaman on April 21. The three-member SC bench headed by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and comprising Justice Ayesha Malik and Irfan Saadat Khan also ordered the ECP to issue a new schedule for re-polling in the area after 10 days. The court also served notices to the Attorney General for Pakistan and adjourned the case till April 23.

It may be mentioned that Awami National Party's candidate Asghar Khan had approached the apex court against the ECP's decision for re-polling in 12 polling stations of said constituency.

Iran-Pakistan ties strengthen amid economic and regional cooperation: Ambassador



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam on Thursday said that the strides made in enhancing economic, commercial, and cultural ties between the two nations.

Talking to a private news channel, he expressed optimism about furthering bilateral cooperation across various sectors.

Ambassador Moghadam said that although Pakistan-Iran relations have seen improvement in recent years, there remains significant untapped potential for deeper collaboration. He underscored the need to elevate the trade vol-

ume between the two countries from the current \$2.8 billion to a target range of \$10 to \$25 billion. Proposing the conversion of the Pakistan-Iran border into a commercial gateway, Ambassador Moghadam suggested expanding border markets and opening new crossing points to facilitate trade. Anticipating the upcoming visit of the Iranian President to Pakistan, he expressed hope that it would pave the way for overcoming obstacles hindering bilateral relations. Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline project held mutual benefits for both countries, he said, adding that he was hopeful that ongoing negotiations would bring positive results towards the completion of the project. He lauded Pakistan's vocal denouncement of the recent attack on the Iranian embassy in Syria, viewing it as a tangible expression of solidarity between the two nations. — VOM Report



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding Saudi Investment in Pakistan following the recent visit of Saudi Delegation.

Saudi Arabia has helped Pakistan in every difficult time: PM Shehbaz

Says he will personally review the progress regarding Saudi investment & will not accept any negligence in this regard

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has termed the recent visit of Saudi delegation as the beginning of a new era of Saudi investment and commercial and strategic partnership in Pakistan.

PM Shehbaz Sharif was chairing a high-level meeting in Islamabad on Thursday regarding Saudi Investment in Pakistan following the visit of Saudi Delegation, under the leadership of their Foreign Minister, to Pakistan.

Expressing gratitude to the Saudi Crown Prince, the Prime Minister said the beginning of a new era of Pak-Saudi investment and trade relations was possible due to his special attention. PM Shehbaz Sharif said he will personally review the progress regarding Saudi investment and will not accept any negligence in this regard.

PM Shehbaz Sharif lauded the efforts of the Federal Ministers, SIFC and officials concerned to turn the Saudi delegation's visit to Pakistan into a mutually beneficial partnership for both countries. The Prime Minister instructed to hire the services of world-renowned experts to complete international investment projects.

He said a delegation of well-known businessmen from Saudi Arabia is expected to arrive in Pakistan soon, which is a welcoming development.

EU Ambassador calls on PM Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the European Union Riina Kionka Thursday paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and discussed matters related to mutual concern.

The prime minister thanked the EU leaders for their congratulatory messages on his re-election and said he looked forward to working closely with the EU.

He said Pakistan enjoyed friendly and cordial ties with the EU and expressed satisfaction at the existing institutional mechanisms that were meeting regularly to exchange views on further strengthening cooperation. The prime minister appreciated, in particular, EU's continued support to Pakistan through the GSP Plus scheme, which has

now been renewed till 2027.

He also expressed Pakistan's interest in engaging constructively with the EU's Global Gateway Strategy through the European Investment Bank.

The prime minister sought EU's support in providing consultancy and expertise to help Pakistan carry out important reforms in various sectors.

The EU Ambassador briefed the prime minister on various cooperation initiatives, including the ongoing dialogue on migration and mobility issues between the two sides, as well as facilitating European businesses operating in Pakistan.

Progress on resumption of flights from Pakistan to EU countries was also discussed.

The Prime Minister said more investment opportunities will be finalized during the upcoming visit to Saudi Arabia on the occasion of the World Economic Forum.

Highlighting the long-standing brotherly relations between the two countries, the Prime Minister said Saudi Arabia has helped Pakistan in every difficult time.

PM Shehbaz Sharif said the entire nation is grateful for the deep interest of His Highness Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown

Prince Muhammad bin Salman in promoting cooperation and partnership with Pakistan. He reiterated the resolve to take all possible measures for achieving the goal of national development and prosperity.

On the occasion, the meeting was informed that investment in the sectors of mining and minerals, agriculture, energy, information technology and infrastructure development was discussed in the bilateral talks between the two countries.

Mohsin Naqvi orders to block Sims issued on invalid CNIC



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday 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 all sectors and instructed the authorities to set up NADRA offices across the country on the pattern of model police stations established in Punjab. He said that establishing a model NADRA office will improve service delivery and provide convenience to the public. NADRA Chairman Lieutenant General Muhammad Munir Afsar welcomed Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on his arrival at NADRA Headquarters. During the meeting, the minister ordered to waive off the fee on the death certificates convenience of the public. The minister directed to ensure complete security of citizens' data. He said that Model offices of NADRA should be built to provide fast service to the public. APP

Pakistan, UK relations based on mutual respect: Speaker Ayaz Sadiq

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Thursday said that Pakistan attached great importance to its longstanding relations with the United Kingdom (UK) which were based on mutual respect and shared perceptions on broad range of regional and international issues. It is high time to further solidify this cordial bond through increased people-to-people interactions, enhanced parliamentary engagements, and bolstered economic ties for the mutual benefit of the two friendly countries, he expressed these views while talking to the British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott, who called on him. Highlighting the significance of parliamentary cooperation, Speaker Sadiq underscored that parliamentary diplomacy had historically played a pivotal role in strengthening bilateral relations.

He emphasized the continuous exchange and collaboration between the two parliaments through



parliamentary friendship groups and high-level exchanges as avenues to foster mutual learning and benefit from each other's experiences. In this regard, invitation would be extended to the Speaker of House of Commons for visit to Pakistan along with the parliamentarians.

Recognizing the significant contribution of the Pakistani diaspora, the speaker praised their involvement in the advancement and growth of both nations. He described overseas Pakistanis as a priceless asset to the country and vowed to take measures in partnership with relevant stakeholders to facilitate overseas Pakistanis.

Tarar for enhanced collaboration between public, private sector to ensure rapid economic development

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday stressed the need for enhanced collaboration between the public and private sectors to fast track the process of economic development of the country. Addressing the First Pakistan Semiconductor Summit, he said that the Special Investment Facilitation Council had been set up to attract investment in Pakistan and ensure 'ease of doing business'. He said it was main thrust of the government policy to encourage innovation



and investment in the country. He said that Pakistan, as the fifth largest democracy in the world, was endowed with great natural resources and its biggest resource was its human resource. "We are blessed with a huge population of

youth which constitutes 68 per cent of its population". That is a huge potential which we can offer to the world, he added. He said Pakistan was strategically located at the crossroads of the world which was a source of pride for

the nation. He said that the Government of Pakistan as a policy encouraged innovation and investment in the country which this summit was offering precisely — a collaboration between public and private sector. He said that the federal cabinet meeting on Wednesday had approved a public private partnership policy framework to eventually facilitate investment in the country. He said that the job of the government was not only to regulate but also facilitate investment. He said unfortunately sometimes governments forgot their primary responsibility as a facilitator which hampered the investment. He said that the government could fulfil this responsibility through collaboration between public and private sector and by ensuring 'ease of doing business'. He said that Pakistan has been producing 50,000

engineering graduates every year and it has the best engineering universities in the world. "Our engineering graduates are well placed globally but unfortunately we are not able to reap the benefits of the semiconductor industry. It is \$550 billion industry at this moment with the projection of \$1 Trillion by 2030." Tarar said that Pakistan had great potential to deploy its human resource in this industry. The minister said that he was proud to inform that Shehbaz Sharif during his stints as chief minister of the Punjab had attached great importance to vocational training and skill development. From day one, the priority of the PML-N was skill development of the youth. "The manifesto of the political party that I represent, highlights the importance of enhancing skills and plac-

ing importance on skill development, on setting up institutes where skills training is imparted to youth and this is the way forward", he remarked. Expressing gratitude to Founder and CEO of GS Micro-electronics (GSME) Farhat Jahangir, he said he had done a great job by organising this summit to bring public and private sectors together and bringing members of esteemed universities of Pakistan under one roof for optimum collaboration. He urged the luminaries from leading universities to come up with workable solutions and tangible proposals. He assured that the government would be on the forefront in these endeavours. Saying that several discussions have been held on semiconductor business, he expressed the optimism that it would be from chip designing to providing skill

development to enhancing research in development and planning. He said Pakistan had a lot of expertise in skill development as well as research and development, adding though research and development was one area with regard to chip designing, Pakistan could contribute immensely in this regard. "I hope one day we may develop some capacity towards manufacturing (semiconductors) after a few years", he said. However he said there was a need to set a direction, and set an objective and goal, adding experts in the summit who had spent decades in this field could guide the way forward. Thanking the forum for hosting the event, he hoped that collaboration in this sector would continue and Pakistan could be linked with the global economy. APP

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Pakistan's plastic paradox

ZAINAB NAEEM

“Only we humans make waste that nature can't digest,” says American oceanographer Charles Moore, who is famous for bringing the world's attention to the Great Garbage Patch – a vast expanse of the floating plastic debris in the North Pacific Ocean. This year's Earth Day's (April 22) theme 'Plastics versus Planet' resonates louder than ever, encouraging nations to confront the existential threat posed by plastic pollution. In Pakistan, with the highest percentage of mismanaged plastic waste (3.3 million tonnes) in South Asia, it is crucial to heed this call and commit to robust measures to tackle plastic pollution. Plastic waste is not just an eyesore; it is a grave threat to our ecosystem and health. From the depths of the Mariana Trench to the placenta of expectant mothers, microplastics pervade every corner of our planet, leaving no refuge untouched. The annual production of plastic is on an alarming trajectory, with projections indicating a staggering 500 million tonnes by 2050. Single-use plastics dominate this consumption, exacerbating the already dire situation. The climate crisis further amplifies the urgency of addressing plastic pollution, as highlighted by a recent report by GRID-Arendal-UNEP on the climate impacts of plastics. Plastics contribute substantially to greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for approximately 4.0 per cent of all global emissions annually. This impact spans every stage of the plastic lifecycle, from extraction to disposal, underscoring the critical need to manage plastic waste efficiently in the fight against climate change. Pakistan stands at the forefront of this crisis, generating a staggering 3.3 million tonnes of plastic waste annually. With inadequate infrastructure for waste collection, reuse, and recycling, much of this waste ends up in landfills, dumpsites, and water bodies, perpetuating a cycle of environmental degradation.

The consequences are dire, threatening not only our natural resources but also the wellbeing of present and future generations. The most prevalent single-use plastic waste polluting the environment, includes drinking bottles, bottle caps, food wrappers, grocery bags, lids, straws, stirrers, and foam takeout containers. Pakistan's most plastic waste ends up in landfills, dumping sites and water bodies, thus causing serious concerns to the environment and human health. This concentration has contributed to a surge in microplastic contamination in waterways, posing grave hazards to human and aquatic life. Rejected industrial fractions, urban solid waste, and agricultural residues emerge as primary sources of plastic pollution in Pakistan, perpetuating an environmental crisis with far-reaching consequences. Despite efforts through policies like the Single Use Plastic Prohibition Regulations 2023, challenges in enforcement persist, hindering the effectiveness of regulatory measures. The Punjab Plastic Strategy, though well-intentioned, requires reconsideration because rushing into policies like extended producer responsibility (EPR) within an impractical six-month timeframe may not yield the desired outcomes. This strategy mandates producers to establish a system for the collection of plastic waste generated by their products, accompanied by financial and physical liability. However, this compressed timeline may not offer an adequate opportunity for producers to develop a functional system, particularly given the requisite investment and infrastructure needs. While the SRO to ban single-use plastic bags in Islamabad is a step in the right direction, its efficacy in addressing alternatives to plastic bags and municipal solid waste pollution remains limited.

Besides the plastic waste management crisis, the lack of investments in recycling infrastructure poses a significant challenge in Pakistan. The recycling industry, heavily dependent on the informal sector and labour provided by Afghan migrants, faces considerable obstacles following the government's decision to repatriate Afghan refugees. With a considerable portion of plastic collection and recycling operations relying on Afghan waste pickers, the recycling sector has experienced a notable decline. The departure of Afghan labourers has also led to heightened labour costs, further straining the already fragile recycling industry. This interplay of factors has created a precarious situation, underscoring the interconnectedness of migration policies, labour dynamics, and environmental sustainability efforts.

Amidst these challenges, initiatives like the Living Indus Initiative offer a beacon of hope. One of the interventions proposed by the Living Indus Initiative is the establishment of 'zero plastic waste cities' within the Indus Basin which presents a tangible pathway towards sustainable urban development. This initiative aligns directly with Pakistan's commitment to the Global Plastic Action Plan (GPAP), which seeks to foster a circular economy for plastics. By leveraging multi-pronged approaches encompassing regulatory regimes, technological innovation, economic incentives, and institutional capacity-building, the Living Indus Initiative seeks to catalyze transformative change in plastic waste management in Pakistan. The plastic crisis in Pakistan is not insurmountable. Many developing countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Bolivia, and some neighbouring South Asian countries have successfully addressed their plastic waste challenges, offering valuable lessons for Pakistan. These efforts highlight the importance of eco-friendly packaging, education campaigns, incentivized engagement, and decentralized systems in tackling plastic waste and promoting the conversion of waste to resources globally. One of the primary reasons for extensive mismanagement of plastic waste in Pakistan stems from behavioural challenges. People tend to favour plastic products due to their easy availability and affordability. However, amidst these challenges lie opportunities for meaningful change. There are many approaches which can be adopted for effective strategies for plastic waste management. For example, deposit refund schemes, as exemplified in countries like Germany and the Netherlands, incentivize recycling by reimbursing consumers for returning plastic beverage bottles. A few decades ago, this scheme was practiced for returning glass bottles in Pakistan, however, it was discontinued when PET bottles became common.

The writer heads the SDPI's ecological sustainability and circular economy programme and is also associated with the UN Living Indus Initiative as a consultant on plastic pollution.



Dr Ayesha Razzaque

Daanish dilemma: beyond the fold

The thickness of a sheet of high-quality 250-300 grams per square meter matte printing paper is approximately one-third of a millimeter. If you fold it in half, it will become twice as thick. How tall do you estimate that stack will be if you fold that paper in half thirty times? As much as a phonebook, a car, or maybe a house? In fact, that folded stack will be 358 kilometers tall, approaching the altitude of the International Space Station orbiting 408 kilometers above us. Fold it another 10 times – 40 times in all – and the stack of folded paper becomes 366,504 kilometers tall, almost the distance from the Earth to the Moon (Earth-to-Moon distance: 384,400 kilometers).

The above is an illustrative example of how bad the human brain is at comprehending exponential and indeed nonlinear functions. It is also bad at numerical cognition. In their article, Lindsey Hasak and Elizabeth Y. Toomarian at Stanford University ('Brains are bad at big numbers, making it impossible to grasp what a million COVID-19 deaths really means', March 31, 2022) described how the human brain is built to compare quantities, not to count – we can easily recognize quantities of one, two, three and four but need to stop and count for quantities greater than that. One explanation that evolutionary biologists and anthropologists have offered is that 50,000-100,000 years ago in the African savanna, the human brain evolved to recognize the faces of one's tribe (among other tasks) which ranged in size from 50 to 300 members. This may explain why the suggested value of Dunbar's number, the number of stable relationships human beings can maintain, is estimated in the range of 150-250. That is why when we speak of 26 million out-of-school children,

174,096 public schools of which 52,000 are without electricity, 36,000 are without toilets, 36,000 are without boundary walls, and 35,000 are without drinking water, our brains simply put these figures in categories of 'big' and 'bigger' numbers. The scale of the challenges before us for both in-school and out-of-school children is incomprehensible, compounded further by the steady growth of our population.

Last month saw an announcement from the federal government that Daanish Schools, Shehbaz Sharif's pet project as chief minister of Punjab, will now be expanded to all provinces (excluding KP). Daanish schools are, of course, residential schools for children of the least privileged children in our society. Since 2010, there are currently 16 Daanish schools in operation in Punjab, with several more in various stages of development. Notably, when Daanish schools are established in a district, they are built in pairs, one for boys and one for girls. Today, a total of 11,000 children are attending Daanish schools in Punjab. Children going to these schools are also performing very well academically – in SSC, 90 per cent of students earned marks in the A+ grade range, 6.0 per cent in the A grade range, and in HSSC, 32 per cent of students earned marks in the A+ grade range and 38 per cent in the A grade range. Recent Daanish schools are being established at costs ranging from Rs1.1 to Rs3.4 billion. Building on this idea, the Punjab Daanish Schools and Centers of Excellence Authority has been selecting some existing schools for significant upgradation and redesignation as Center of Excellence (COE). These COEs have also been yielding better academic performance than is typical from public schools, but at a lower cost than Daanish schools. In addition to Daanish school students, another 17,000 students are enrolled in COEs – 28,000 students in all. Even put

together that is about one-thousandth of the number of students that are currently out of school, and it took us 14 years to do it. Before I go on, I want to clarify that I appreciate the fact that the government is spending on education and giving children who would otherwise probably never have had an opportunity for a good education and a shot at life, rather than shoveling it into the usual bonfire of subsidies and special interest groups. However, given the cost figures, it is abundantly clear that neither Daanish schools nor COEs are solutions to the education quality and infrastructure crisis of existing public schools or the out-of-school children crisis. To begin, the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) is getting its first Daanish school, and, to that end, a PC-1 is already in the works. The school will be established at an approved cost of Rs5 billion and the CDA has allocated 10 acres (80 kanals) of land for it. Let me try to explain why you should not accept that Rs5 billion figure as just another 'big' number and try to put it in context: In the current 2023-24 budget, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) was allocated a total of Rs16 billion for the recurrent budget to support the operations of all 450 schools in the ICT area, many of which suffer from the same lack of infrastructure as schools in the rest of the country (electricity, boundary walls, toilets, and drinking water, not to mention computers and Internet access). Alternatively, in the 2022-23 budget, the MoFEPT was allocated approximately Rs3 billion from the PSDP for development projects at schools in the ICT. Thus, we are about to spend the equivalent of one-third of the entire recurrent federal school budget, or approximately twice its typical development budget, on establishing a single school.

I welcome the government spending (much) more than is typical on a school that delivers results, but I am also mindful of the enormous opportunity cost of this development spending. I will be happy to see a Daanish school established in the capital but then I also expect the government to make the same haste in finding the funds needed to at least add missing basic infrastructure to existing schools in the ICT it is responsible for.

Time and again, governments have exhibited a pattern when faced with a difficult, large-scale problem: Set up a new parallel system and ignore or sweep problems of the existing system under the rug instead of addressing the governance issues that are at the root, to the benefit of the existing system. In the same way, many of the powers and functions listed in the Punjab Daanish Schools and COEs Authority Act 2010 mirror those of the Punjab Education Department.

The ICT Daanish school, like existing Daanish schools in Punjab, will probably succeed in its goals and transform the lives of a few hundred students every year. But, at this cost, speed, and scale, Daanish schools will not solve the problems of existing public schools. Daanish schools are currently serving 28,000 students which does not address the education emergency at any meaningful scale (30,000,000 children in public schools, 25,500,000 in private schools, plus another 26,000,000 out-of-schools, each about 1,000 times greater than the population of Daanish/COE schools) that federal and provincial governments are so fond of proclaiming but whose redressal none have been willing to fund.

Putting out-of-school children into schools and giving the ones already in schools an efficacious education is our multi-decade moonshot, and we won't achieve it by folding a piece of paper 40 times.

The writer (she/her) has a PhD in Education.

Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect The Asian Telegraph's point-of-view

Today in History

History of Pakistan



Bhutto's efforts undermined and dismantled the private-sector and conservative approach to political power in the country's political setup. In 1974 Bhutto succumbed to increasing pressure from religious parties and encouraged Parliament to declare adherents of Ahmadiyya to be non-Muslims. Relations with the United States deteriorated as Pakistan normalised relations with the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc, North Korea, China, and the Arab world. With Soviet technical assistance the country's first

steel mill was established in Karachi, which proved to be a crucial step in industrialising the economy. Alarmed by India's surprise nuclear test in 1974, Bhutto accelerated Pakistan's atomic bomb project. [125] This crash project led to a secret sub-critical testings, Kirana-I and Test Kahuta, in 1983. Relations with India soured and Bhutto sponsored aggressive measures against India at the United Nations. These openly targeted the Indian nuclear programme. From 1976 to 1977, Bhutto was in diplomatic conflict with the United

States, which worked covertly to damage the credibility of Bhutto in Pakistan. Bhutto, with his scientist colleague Aziz Ahmed, thwarted US attempts to infiltrate the atomic bomb programme. In 1976, during a secret mission, Henry Kissinger threatened Bhutto and his colleagues. In response Bhutto aggressively campaigned for efforts to speed up the atomic project. In early 1976 Bhutto's socialist alliance collapsed, forcing his left-wing allies to form an alliance with right-wing conservatives and

Islamists to challenge the power of the PPP. The Islamists started a Nizam-e-Mustafa movement [126] which demanded the establishment of an Islamic state in the country and the removal of immorality from society. In an effort to meet the demands of Islamists Bhutto banned the drinking and selling of wine by Muslims, nightclubs and horse racing. [127] In 1977 general elections were held in which the Peoples Party were victorious.

To be continued....

Showbiz

Leonardo DiCaprio is going to play Frank Sinatra's biopic?

Leonardo DiCaprio and Martin Scorsese have earlier collaborated in six movie projects since 2002

Leonardo DiCaprio is going to play Frank Sinatra in a new biopic directed by his longtime friend and director Martin Scorsese. The Titanic star, who last collaborated with Martin for 2023's Killers of the Flower Moon, will now portray Frank alongside Jennifer Lawrence as the singer's second wife, Ava Gardner per DailyMail. Leonardo and Jennifer previously worked together in 2021 movie, Don't Look Up. According to Variety, Martin has advanced plans for the biopic despite not having the support of the Sinatra family. Frank's daughter Tina, whose mother



Nancy Barbato was Sinatra's first wife before he left her for Ava, controls the icon's estate and holds the key to a potential biopic. The outlet reported that the upcoming project is garnering "interest from major studios and streamers" while Sony is said to be the frontrunner to acquire the upcoming movie. For the unversed, Leonardo and Martin have earlier appeared together in six feature movies including Gangs of New York (2002), The Aviator (2004), The Departed (2006), Shutter Island (2010), The Wolf of Wall Street (2013), The Audition (2015) and Killers of the Flower Moon (2023).

Tech

WhatsApp unveils 'Recent Active Contacts' for speedy calls

WhatsApp is set to release a new feature marking recent active online contacts for easier and speedy conversation initiation. The Meta-owned messaging application is likely to reveal this novel feature aimed at streamlining user interaction.

This upcoming addition, found during beta testing, aims to highlight recent online contacts so that users can effortlessly initiate conversations with those they have recently engaged with. This new functionality marks yet another step in WhatsApp's ongoing quest to enhance user experience and boost security measures as reportedly observed in beta trials by WABetaInfo.

WhatsApp introduces recent active contacts. The feature is expected to help users with a convenient means of connecting with friends, family, and colleagues who are presently active or have been online recently. This option will show a selected list of recent active contacts unlike presenting a comprehensive roster of online contacts.



This list is expected to assist users when users are seeking to start a call, affording valuable details about who is currently available for communication. The Mount View-based platform's decision to introduce this feature is in line with its broader commitment to optimise its platform for more efficient, timely and speedy communication. Additionally, the Meta app seeks to facilitate enhanced communication experiences, enabling users to seamlessly reach out whenever they are available by prompting users to engage with contacts who have recently been active.

Health

This vampire-like bacteria sucks out blood from humans

Serum present in human blood attracts this bacteria

Deadly bacteria, such as E Coli, have been observed to "sniff out" and swim towards human blood in order to feed on it, a phenomenon that has been dubbed "bacterial vampirism" by scientists. The serum – the liquid portion of blood that provides nutrients the bacteria may consume – is what attracts the bacteria, according to research led by Washington State University. The study, which was written in the journal eLife, gives researchers a better understanding of blood infection mechanisms

and may also lead to more effective treatment strategies. "Bacteria infecting the bloodstream can be lethal," stated Professor Arden Baylink of the university's College of Veterinary Medicine.

It was discovered that certain bacteria that typically cause bloodstream infections are able to detect a chemical in human blood and will actively seek out the chemical, according to Metro UK. In addition to E Coli, which can induce fever, cramping in the stomach, and diarrhoea,

other bacteria that have been reported to exhibit "bacterial vampirism" include Salmonella enterica and Citrobacter koseri, which can cause meningitis and brain abscesses.

For those suffering from inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), these bacteria are the main cause of death. Patients frequently have bleeding in the intestines, which can serve as a gateway for germs to enter the bloodstream and cause more widespread and potentially fatal infections.



Mushahid launches Pakistan's first think tank on Africa



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's first think tank on Africa, Pakistan-Africa Institute for Development & Research (PAIDAR) was launched at a well attended event at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) here on Thursday. The think tank is the brain child of Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, introduced the aims and objectives of this new initiative as the founding President of PAIDAR. The think tank was launched at a Seminar hosted by the ISSI with the theme: "Reviving the Bandung spirit of Afro-Asian solidarity: Pakistan-Africa relations". The guests included a number of ambassadors, especially from African countries as well as scholars, students, dignitaries and think tanks, a news release said. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed noted the launch of PAIDAR coincides with the 69th anniversary of the Bandung conference of Asian and African nations held on April 18, 1955 in Indonesia in which Pakistan participated along with China as well as countries from Africa. He termed Africa as the pivotal player in the resurgence of the Global South with 54 members of the African Union. Referring to Pakistan-Africa relations, Senator Mushahid Hussain said that Pakistan's ties with Africa predate the creation of Pakistan as the Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Founder of Pakistan visited Egypt in 1946 to forge friendly ties with this key African country. He said in the 1950s, it was Pakistan which gave full support to liberation movements of African countries like Tunisia, Morocco, Libya and Eritrea, even providing diplomatic passports to prominent freedom fighters from these countries. In the 1970s, Pakistan supported the liberation struggles of South Africa and Zimbabwe with financial and military support. Pakistan also provided scholarships for students and technical and administrative assistance to the newly independent countries of Africa including Tanzania, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya and Uganda and today there is also a large Pakistani Diaspora in different countries of Africa.



ISLAMABAD: General Metin Gürak, Chief of General Staff, Turkish Armed Forces, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff during his visit to Air Headquarters.



Washington DC: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, met with Pakistan Staff Association of World Bank-IMF.

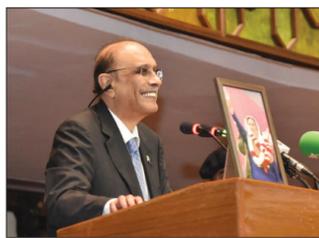
President emphasizes the need for fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect & political reconciliation

Says we are deeply concerned over the tidal wave of indiscriminate killings of innocent Palestinians

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has emphasized the need for fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and political reconciliation by embracing the vision of great leaders including Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. He said that Pakistan believes that terrorism is a shared concern that requires collective efforts. "I assure our Kashmiri brothers and sisters that Pakistan will continue to provide moral, political and diplomatic support to the people of occupied Kashmir until they get their right to self-determination" President Asif Ali Zardari said.

This was stated by President Asif Ali Zardari while addressing the joint session of the parliament held on the occasion of the start of the new parliamentary year. The session was chaired by National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. Chairman Senate Makhdoom Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani was also present on the occasion. Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Ms Aseefa



Bhutto Zardari, Leader of the Opposition Omar Ayub Khan and other leaders of the political parties were also present during the joint session of the parliament. President Asif Ali Zardari expressed the confidence this will also help to effectively tackle all the challenges which are not impossible to overcome. The President emphasized meaningful dialogues, parliamentary consensus and time-bound implementation of rigorous reforms to take the country forward. Sharing his vision for future, President Asif Ali Zardari urged the political leadership to prioritize the specific needs of marginalized community and under develop areas, under

scoring the need to move forward on the path of inclusive growth.

The President said Pakistan needs to revitalize its economy. He said our primary objective should be to attract foreign direct investment. He urged the government intensified its efforts in implementation comprehensive ease of doing business reforms and simplifying regulations to provide an enabling environment to both domestic and foreign investors.

He commended the establishment of Special Investment Facilitation Council to attract investment in key sectors of the economy, describing it as a step in the right direction. President Asif Zardari said "as we embark upon the 1st Parliamentary year, let me extend my heartfelt congratulations to all honourable members of Parliament on their election to this august House. I would also like to compliment the Prime Minister, and both federal and provincial governments on their election victories, and assumption of their responsibilities. Let me also take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude to all Parliamentarians and provincial assembly members for their trust and confidence in electing me for a second time as the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

PML-N persistently advocates for engaging dialogue: Khawaja Asif

ISLAMABAD: Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said on Thursday that all political parties have to play their role to get Pakistan out of the existing crisis. Talking to a private news channel, he said that the opposition ought to fulfill its constitutional role rather than inciting turmoil through nationwide disruptions. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has been repeatedly invited to participate in dialogue to uplift the country, but they have not responded favorably, he added. Current government is committed to bring the country out of economic quagmire, he added.

Govt chalks out concrete road-map for reforms in power sector: Awais Leghari

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Division Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari on Thursday said that on the directives of Prime Minister, a concrete road-map had been chalked out bring comprehensive reforms in country's power sector to control power pilferage, over-billing and circular debt.

Addressing a pressing conference, he said after assuming charge of the ministry, short comings of the power sectors were reviewed to address chronic issues permanently.

The government was committed to bringing improvement in the energy sector, he added.

He reiterated that no leniency would be given to the power pilferers irrespective of their status and position adding that over-billing would also not be tolerated at any cost.

Solid strategy had also been devised to eliminate menace of power theft in the country, he said.

The minister said lower-middle class had been suffering from the power theft and we had to rectify existing shortcomings in the power system.

He went on to say that accumulative loss of power distribution companies (DISCOs) would surge to Rs 560 billion by June. Electricity units worth over Rs 300 billion were consumed by the power pilferers, he added. He said it was the need to hour to deal such power pilferers and officials involved in this illegal practices strictly. The country could not afford such misappropriation of billions of rupees to the economy, he added. He vowed not sparing even higher officials such as XENS, SDOs, Chief Engineers involved in patronage of power pilferage.

He claimed that around 20 per cent officials of power sector were involved in this dirty practice. Awais said that all CEOs had already been directed to remove 'kunda' before April 23 failing which strict action would be taken against the responsible officials. The minister appreciated the support of Interior ministry and FIA for supporting the DISCOs to eliminate power theft. Replying to a question, he said that solar panels having 6800 megawatts capacity were imported in current year adding that mostly the people were shifting on off grid. APP

Romina for climate diplomacy to address environmental degradation challenges

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam Thursday emphasized on climate diplomacy to address the climate challenges including global warming, melting of glaciers, urban deforestation, heat waves, endangered rare species and carbon credits. She stated this in a meeting with Danish Ambassador Jakob Linulf who called on her here, a news release said. The both sides agreed on closer collaboration, knowledge sharing and designing of joint activities on climate change. The coordinator underscored the equitable distribution of funds to developing countries for fighting against the climate crisis. "It is now or never to deal with climate crisis to save our future generations which will otherwise suffer heavily if attention is not paid at this point of time," she underlined. Romina stressed upon regionwise solutions of



climate as few countries had drought issues while others had flooding challenges. The Danish ambassador while extending his felicitations to PM's coordinator on assuming responsibility on such an important subject applauded the proactive role and her vision to address the climate challenges. The coordinator thanked the ambassador for extending help to Pakistan during 2022 floods. The both sides reiterated their resolve to deepen cooperation on climate change. Romina expressed her gratitude for visiting and also extended invitation to her Danish counter-part to formalize the cooperation on climate.

Chief of the Turkish General Staff General Metin Gürak calls on CJCS General Sahir Shamshad Mirza

Both sides reaffirm their commitment to forge deeper strategic ties

RAWALPINDI: General Metin Gürak, Chief of the Turkish General Staff called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi on Thursday. According to the statement issued by ISPR, during the meeting, matters related to enhancing the level and scope of bilateral military engagements and cooperation were discussed. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to forge deeper strategic ties. The dignity 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. PR

Ahsan Iqbal directs Passport Authority & NADRA to ensure smooth operations & maximum cooperation towards the people

Says people's politics & governance is the vision of govt

NAROWAL: Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhry, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives inaugurated Passport Processing Counter at Shakargarh NADRA Centre. The facility will be a relief to more than half a million people as it will cater to all identity related needs of citizens in that area.

On the occasion of inauguration of Passport facility, Ahsan Iqbal stressed that ensuring key public service facilities to the people is the priority agenda of the government and part of his vision for his people. Ahsan Iqbal directed Passport Authority and NADRA to ensure smooth operations and maximum cooperation towards the people. The passport facility was a long standing demand of the people of Shakargarh as many work and study overseas from the area. Residents of Shakargarh gathered in large numbers to thank Ahsan Iqbal for coming through on his promise within 60 days post election.

Ahsan Iqbal noted that people's politics and governance is the vision of government.

Ahsan Iqbal remarked that within a few days of forming government under the Prime Minister-ship of Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif there are visible signs of restoration of confidence in socio-economic landscape of Pakistan. Moreover, he said that our international isolation is coming to an end as Saudia Arabia and other countries have shown significant interest in investing in Pakistan across different sectors. Ahsan Iqbal termed the visit of Saudi Delegation led by Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia with the promise of significant FDI as pivotal to Pakistan's future and lauded Prime Minister's vision for making the visit a success. SABAH



ZAFARWAL: Minister Ahsan Iqbal was briefed by officials of NADRA Centre in Zafarwal, Punjab regarding the progress of the new centre. It will soon be opened for public as a one-stop solution for their identity needs.

CM has decided to take important steps to launch environmentally friendly initiatives on the eve of Earth Day 2024

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif has decided to take important steps to launch environmentally friendly initiatives on the eve of Earth Day 2024. The celebration of Earth Day will be widespread across divisions and districts throughout Punjab, signifying the commencement of the "No to Plastic" campaign. As part of this initiative, the CM has endorsed a comprehensive ban on plastic bag usage, effective from June 5. During a review meeting on environment-friendly initiatives led by CM Punjab, Senior Minister Mairryum Aurangzeb highlighted the campaign's objective: to enhance

public awareness regarding the severe health risks associated with plastic pollution. She stressed the urgency of banning the production, distribution and usage of polythene bags, citing their detrimental environmental impact and contribution to respiratory ailments and other life-threatening conditions. It was resolved that department heads and deputy commissioners would ensure strict enforcement of the plastic bag ban within their offices and jurisdictions. Additionally, educational institutions will conduct special lectures and workshops to educate the public about the health hazards of plastic.

China's Global Development Initiative a 'clear framework' for achieving SDGs: Pakistan

UNITED NATIONS: The Global Development Initiative (GDI), launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping in the wake of the Covid crisis, has institutionalized the cooperation required for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a shared future of peace and prosperity for all mankind, Pakistan Ambassador Munir Akram has said. "China has not only institutionalized the cooperation but also set up the institutions on funding for project development as well as the consultative mechanisms that are required to achieve our goals," he told a high-level meeting of the Group of Friends of the GDI, at UN headquarters in New York on Wednesday. In this context, Ambassador Akram called GDI a clear framework to achieve SDGs.



The Pakistani envoy expressed the hope that China, having lifted more than 700 million people out of poverty, can offer its invaluable experience, lessons, and support to other developing countries to reduce poverty and realize their development objectives. Referring to the GDI as "an example of action," Ambassador Akram highlighted China's institutionalized cooperation and establishment of institutions for funding project development, as well as consultative mechanisms necessary for goal achievement. Speaking on cooperation with China, Ambassador Akram emphasized how the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) enabled Pakistan to overcome its energy and infrastructure deficits. He expressed confidence that under the framework of the GDI, this cooperation would extend to

many developing countries, aiding progress towards the SDGs. At this pivotal juncture in global efforts toward achieving the SDGs, Ambassador Akram underscored the critical importance of addressing two key issues: financing and project development. He said that without adequate financing, aspirations for sustainable development would remain elusive. Pakistan is actively engaged in securing concrete commitments at the Summit of the Future, including endorsement of the Secretary-General's \$500 billion stimulus proposal, fulfillment of the ODA commitment of 0.7% of GNI, re-channeling of at least \$200 billion of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) for the SDGs, recapitalization of the MDBs, improved lending terms by MDBs, incorporation of vulnerability criteria for concessional finance allocation, and massive scaling up of climate finance to meet COP-28 goals, he said.

Ambassador Akram highlighted the paramount importance of international finance in achieving these goals and advancing the 8 priority areas identified under the GDI. He emphasized the significance of viable projects in translating finance into actionable development and sought assistance for developing countries in preparing pipelines of viable projects across the GDI's 8 priority areas. Demonstrating Pakistan's commitment to continued cooperation with China and other members of the Group of Friends, Ambassador Akram expressed aspirations for SDG implementation and a shared future of peace and prosperity for all mankind. The high-level meeting of the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative (GDI) was attended by representatives from member countries of the GDI, ambassadors and delegates to the United Nations, officials from relevant UN agencies including UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis, and other stakeholders involved in global development efforts. APP