



# Islamabad POST

Tuesday, May 10, 2022

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**EU's Michel forced to take cover during Russian air strike**

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**Sri Lankan PM quits after violent clashes**

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**Carlos Alcaraz beats Zverev for Madrid title**

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## Briefs

**Europeans are on Ukraine's side**

DNA

BRUSSELS: Russia's war against Ukraine has brought back to Europe the horrors of war, but it has reminded Europeans of who they are and united them in supporting Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression. According to Ukrainian, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said this on the occasion of Europe Day. The full text of her address was published on the website of the European Commission. "Today our continent encounters shadows of a past we thought we had long left behind."

**IHC extends stay against arrest**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday extended its order stopping the police from possible arrest of former information minister Chaudhry Fawad Hussain and adjourned the case till May 12. Chief Justice Athar Minallah, who heard the case, asked the petitioner's lawyer to firstly get instructions from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan whether he had trust in the courts or not, and whether he (Imran Khan) thought that the judiciary was not independent as he and his party had been constantly raising questions in that regard.

**Asif vows to defend state institutions**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif has expressed the resolve to defend the state institutions at all costs and nobody will be allowed to malign them. Speaking on the floor of the House, he said former PM Imran is using inappropriate language against the armed forces and other constitutional institutions, which is condemnable. He said the armed forces of Pakistan are the guarantors of country's security.

## Tirade against Army 'Imran trying to malign institutions'

PM Shehbaz Sharif says Imran Khan deliberately trying to divide the nation; could not be let to defame institutions



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has vowed to take legal action against PTI Chairman Imran Khan for his "anti-state" speech during a rally in Abbottabad held on Sunday. The premier on Sunday termed Imran's speech "a conspiracy against Pakistan". In a statement issued on PML-N's official Twitter account, the prime minister said those concocting a narrative against national institutions were the real "Mir Jaffars and Mir Sadiqs". Referring to Imran Khan's speech during a rally in Abbottabad, the premier said that the state of Pakistan, the Constitution, and national institutions were

**Zardari blasts Imran Khan for 'attacking' institutions**

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Former president and PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Monday lashed out at former prime minister Imran Khan for "attacking the state institutions" after being ousted from the government through a no-confidence vote. In a statement, Zardari condemned the speeches made by Imran and termed them a "vicious attempt" to avoid accountability. The PPP co-chair said Imran was afraid of the "corruption cases and foreign funding cases" against him, hence he had resorted to making the institutions "controversial to avoid punishment". The former president also alleged that the ousted premier along with inciting hatred against the institutions on social media was trying to provoke people's feelings through "fake conspiracy statements" in his rallies.

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## Imran vows to rid country of 'thugs' - dismisses allegations of defaming state institutions

STAFF REPORT



ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Imran Khan Monday termed his anti-government campaign a "jihad" and said it was not political, as he slammed the Sharifs for being a family of "liars". In his address to party workers, the ousted prime minister who is campaigning for PTI's Islamabad march claimed the government wants to arrest him but warned it that all "plans" against him would backfire. Khan said, "criminals" were sitting in the Parliament and wondered how would Pakistan progress if the "corrupt" people ruled the country. He claimed that India celebrated when the incumbent government came into power. "I have no properties outside, I will stay in Pakistan [...] I will never want something which damages my country," the PTI chairman said, slamming the government for "having an FIR registered" against him. Faisalabad police had last week registered a case against 150 people, including

Continued on Page 06

**Imran inciting public against institutions**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb has said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has done politics of anarchy and lawlessness his whole life, media reported on Monday. While talking to the media, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader further said that Imran Khan used to insult politicians of opponent parties when he was in government. The PML-N leader further accused former Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan stating that he is inciting people to stand against the state institutions.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar in a meeting with, Spanish Ambassador Manuel Duran. They discussed bilateral ties. - DNA

**President rejects PM's advice to remove governor**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi Monday strongly rejected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's advice to remove Governor Punjab Omar Sarfaraz Cheema from office. According to a statement from the President's Secretariat, President Alvi has conveyed to the prime minister that the Punjab governor cannot be removed without his approval. "Referring to clause 3 of Article 101 of the Constitution, he stated that 'the Governor shall hold office during the pleasure of the President,'" the statement read.

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**Friendship with China vital: PM**  
The Prime Minister expressed his resolve to effectively work over CPEC

SHUJAAT HAMZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reiterated his government's pledge that friendship with China will remain a key component of Pakistan's foreign policy. Speaking to a delegation of the Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE), the Prime Minister also assured that journalists would be provided with all possible protection against unwarranted actions, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. The PM, who took over last month, maintained that he was committed to expediting the work on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. The Prime Minister also expressed his resolve to effectively work over CPEC and Reko Diq projects for the national interest. The PM reaffirmed to maintain ties with all the friendly nations and other countries on the basis of mutual respect and mutual interests. He reiterated that the government had no intention to put any restriction on freedom of media and expression. Praising CPNE's role for the freedom of media, strengthening of democracy, and

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**FM Bilawal lauds strategic partnership with China**

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressed the High-Level Meeting of the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative (GDI), held in virtual format in New York Monday. In his video address, the Foreign Minister appreciated China's initiative to launch GDI and termed it a useful platform to accelerate and coordinate efforts for implementing the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Recalling the multiple crises posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and geo-political developments, with disproportionate and devastating impacts on the Global South, the Foreign Minister expressed

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**Omicron sub-variant case reported**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Health (NIH) has detected the first case of Omicron sub-variant BA.2.12.1 in Pakistan. According to NIH's spokesperson, this new sub-variant is causing increasing number of cases in different countries. He said that the best preventive measure "besides mask-wearing at crowded places, is COVID-19 vaccination." He added, "We strongly recommend getting vaccinated and all those due for booster must get the shots immediately." According to health experts, Omicron is a variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that was first discovered in Botswana on November 11, 2021 and designated a variant of concern by the WHO on November 26.

## ISIS Threat Morocco to host global coalition meeting on 11th

DNA

RABAT: Morocco will host on May 11th, 2022, the Ministerial Meeting of the Global Coalition to defeat ISIS, at the joint invitation of Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, Mr. Nasser Bourita, and U.S. Secretary of State, Mr. Antony Blinken. The Marrakech meeting is another step in the pursuit of international commitment and coordination in the fight against Daesh, with a particular focus on the African continent as well as the evolution of the terrorist threat in the Middle East and other regions. During this meeting, the

Coalition ministers will review the actions taken in terms of stabilization efforts in areas previously impacted by Daesh, in the field of strategic communication against the radicalization propaganda of this terrorist group and its affiliates, and the fight against foreign terrorist fighters. Just a few months ago, the Coalition announced the creation of the Africa Focus Group. This important step should be followed up at the Marrakech meeting with additional guidance and concrete responses to the rise of terrorism in Africa. As the host country of this meeting, and as co-chair of the "Africa Focus Group"

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## Fighting continues as Russia marks victory day

Ukraine's President, in his own Victory Day address, said his country would triumph over Russian forces; red color thrown at Russian ambassador in Poland

CENTRELINE REPORT

KYIV: Russian forces stormed the Azovstal steel plant in Ukraine's strategic port of Mariupol on Monday and stepped up missile strikes elsewhere, Ukrainian officials said, as President Vladimir Putin oversaw a parade of military firepower in Moscow. Putin marked the anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two by telling his armed forces they were fighting for their country. But he did not say how much longer their assault on Ukraine, now in its 11th week, would last or how it would end. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in his own Victory Day address, said his country would triumph over Russian forces. "On the Day of Victory over Nazism, we are fighting for a new victory. The road to it is difficult, but we have no doubt that we will win," he said in a video address to mark the deaths of more than eight million Ukrainians in World War Two. Ukrainian officials said heavy fighting was underway in the country's east, while four high-precision Onyx missiles fired from the Russian-controlled Crimea



KYIV: Vladimir Putin exhorted Russians to battle in a defiant Victory Day speech on Monday, but was silent about plans for any escalation in Ukraine, despite Western warnings he might use the event in Red Square to order a national mobilisation. In Ukraine, there was no let-up in fighting, with Kyiv describing a stepped-up Russian offensive in the east and a renewed push by Moscow to defeat the last Ukrainian troops holding out in a steelworks in ruined Mariupol. Monday's annual Victory Day celebration in Moscow - with the usual parade of ballistic missiles and tanks rumbling across the cobblestones - was easily the most closely watched of its kind since the 1945 defeat of the Nazis that it celebrates. Western capitals had openly speculated for weeks that Putin was driving his forces to try to achieve something he could describe as victory in time for the symbolic date - and with few gains so far, might instead announce a national call-up for war. In the end, he did neither, but repeated his assertions that Russian forces in Ukraine were again fighting Nazis. "You are fighting for the Motherland, for its future, so that no one forgets the lessons of World War Two. So that there is no place in the world for executioners, castigators and Nazis," he said from the tribune outside the Kremlin walls. - Agencies

peninsula had struck the Odesa area in southwestern Ukraine. The governor of Mykolaiiv, also in the southwest, said overnight strikes were very heavy. Azovstal, a vast complex of buildings and underground tunnels, is the last holdout for Ukrainian troops in Mariupol, whose capture would help link Russian-seized areas in southern and eastern Ukraine and cut Ukraine off from the Azov Sea. Putin has already declared victory in Mariupol but control of the steel plant would be a symbolic achievement on the 75th day of a war that has cost many Russian lives and isolated its economy, but failed to capture any major city. Putin had told his defence minister not to storm Azovstal to avoid loss of Russian lives but Ukraine's defence ministry said on Monday Russian forces backed by tanks and artillery were conducting "storming operations". Moscow has denied previous Ukrainian allegations of storming the complex, where civilians have also been sheltering. On Saturday Kyiv and Moscow said all the civilians had now been evacuated from the facility, but there are still people hoping to flee the wider city of Mariupol.

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# 272 start-ups graduated from NICs: Minister



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Syed Amin Ul Haque has said that 272 start-ups have graduated from Ignite's National Incubation Centres (NICs) with a total investment commitment of Rs 8 billion and cumulative revenue of Rs 3 billion, while these nascent companies have created more than 100 thousand new jobs in last 3 and half years. The Federal Minister stated this while speaking as Chief Guest on the occasion of "Acceleration Program for Women Entrepreneurs Showcase Event" here on Monday.

Under this Program, nine women entrepreneurs are set to leave for the USA on 10th of May 2022 for eight weeks. The Program was launched by The Indus Entrepreneurs Islamabad office (TiE Islamabad) in partnership with the US Embassy for Women Entrepreneurs which not only provides growth stage start-ups with necessary tools, coaching and mentoring, but it also provides its women entrepreneurs with access to global investors and venture capitalists. The core program revolves around networking, mentoring and investor engagements in leading US ecosystems like San Francisco, Austin, Seattle, Boston, Washington DC and New York.

Federal Minister for IT and Telecom further said that the MOITT and its Tech Innovation Arm Ignite has recently launched Pakistan's First National Investment Platform called PakImpact-invest. He said COVID-19 was a catalyst for the start-up landscape in Pakistan, which saw investments rise from \$65 million in 2020 to \$350 million in 2021. Extended lockdown and quarantines provided entrepreneurs the opportunity to create digital products with human impacts.

Syed Amin Ul Haque said that the government has allowed holding shares for start-ups to be outside Pakistan, thus helping to push foreign investments. 272 start-ups have graduated from Ignite's National Incubation Centres with a total investment commitment of Rs 8 billion and cumulative revenue of Rs 3 billion. These nascent companies have created more than 100 thousand new jobs and these numbers quantify the achievements of our 5 Incubators in a short span of time.

He said the gender gap in start-up funding is quiet prominent in the Pakistani ecosystem, when female led start-ups do raise funding, they predominantly raise angel and grant money.

According to 2018-19 deal flow figures, of the funding raised by female-led companies, 63% was via angel investment and 25% was from development programs, (donors/Grants).

One of the key challenges of our new technology-based start-ups in access to early stage and growth stage capital. "I am sure that this initiative will bridge the gap in an efficient manner. Furthermore, there is a dire need to increase the overall funnel of women-led companies, whether by encouraging incubators and accelerators to actively seek more female founders for their programs or providing more hands-on support to women-led companies at the early stages and improving their access to investors operating post-seed stage", said IT Minister.



LAHORE: President Habib Bank Muhammad Aurangzeb calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Finance Minister Miftah Ismail and CS Punjab were also present in the meeting. – DNA

## Chinese tech could initiate a revolution in Pakistan

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Pakistan could initiate a new industrial revolution with Chinese technologies and FDI from the oil rich friendly Arab and gulf states, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

He was encouraged with the visit of Prime Minister Mian Shabbaz Sharif to Saudi Arabia and arrival of a delegation from UAE to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan. He said that the present government has excellent relations simultaneously with Arab states and China. "The blend of Chinese technologies and FDI from Arab countries could open a new chapter of development", he said and hoped that this would help in immediate revival of stalled CPEC related projects in addition to enhancing exports to the

consumer-oriented markets of Arabian Peninsula. Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh was optimistic that the meetings of Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif with the Saudi monarch and rulers of Gulf States may pave a new way to overcome the economic challenges faced by Pakistan on an emergent basis. He particularly mentioned IT and other hi-tech sectors in which there was huge scope for cooperation through trilateral arrangements. He said that currently Pakistan is earning only 1.5 billion dollars from IT related exports whereas its estimated scope was around 15 billion dollars and we must focus on it. President FCCI reiterated his demand for regular consultation between the government and private sector on economy related issues and said that we could get immediate results from the newly formed Economic Advisory Council. "It would also pave the way for the implementation

of the charter of economy on a permanent basis", he concluded.

**FCCI president expresses grief over Khuzdar earthquake**

Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) has expressed deep sense of sorrow and grief over the colossal losses during the earthquake in Khuzdar Balochistan and torrential rains and floods in Afghanistan. He said that it was good luck that no losses of life were reported as hundreds of houses collapsed. He said that in Afghanistan 22 deaths have so far been reported and the Pakistan government has immediately dispatched relief goods to the flood-stricken districts of Afghanistan in addition to ensuring more cooperation from the Pakistani side. He hoped that other countries must also come forward and extend maximum relief to this country to avoid any human tragedy.

## Applications sought from paddy growers

FAISALABAD: The Agriculture Deptt has sought applications from paddy growers for registration of their experimental plots under the National Project of Enhancement of Paddy Production. Director Agriculture Ch Abdul Hameed said here Monday that interested farmers from Faisalabad, Jhang and Chiniot district could submit their applications by May 16.

## MNA Rashid Shafique released

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: Former Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed's nephew MNA Rashid Shafique on Monday was released from the district jail on bail. According to details, Sheikh Rashid Shafique, arrested in Masjid-e-Nabawi incident, has been released by the Fateh Jang court on a bond of Rs.100,000. Rashid Shafiq was greeted by a number of friends, lawyers and workers outside District Jail Attock, who greeted him by throwing flower petals.

## No shortage of flour in KP, says Atif Khan

STAFF REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Food Minister Atif Khan on Monday denied reports of any shortage of flour in the province and said that the masses should not fear as neither its prices would be raised nor a shortage would be created. According to food ministry, from 29 April until today, the KP markets have been provided with 707 trucks of flour that carried 11,127 metric tons of special fine and 4542 metric tons of special flour while they have also been supplied with 17,554 metric tons of locally-produced flour.

"There is a sufficient quantity of flour in the market," Atif khan said, adding people should not fear any shortage or hike in the prices of the commodity. "Some people are spreading rumours regarding a shortage

but masses should not pay heed to them," he said and directed food ministry officials to take stern action against those spreading rumours and involved in hoarding of the commodity. The details have emerged after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif made a unique announcement by saying that he will reduce the flour price even if he has to sell clothes during a public gathering in KP. While addressing a public gathering of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) in Bisham tehsil of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) Shingla district, PM Shehbaz Sharif vowed to reduce flour prices in the province. He directed the KP chief minister to continue free medical treatment and free medicine in all hospitals. The prime minister announced that he knew well how to reduce flour prices in the province. He directed the provincial government to make the reduction at its own expense.

## Local bodies elections in Karachi, Hyderabad on July 24

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Election Commission of Pakistan on Monday conveyed Sindh government that the local bodies elections in Karachi and Hyderabad would be held on July 24. Chief Election Commissioner Sindh Aijaz Chohan today met Chief Secretary Sindh Sohail Rajput and discussed matters related to local bodies elections and by-poll in NA-240, which fell vacant after death of MQM-P MNA Iqbal Muhammad Ali Khan. The by-election

in NA-240 will be held on June 16, the provincial election commissioner said.

"The first phase of local bodies election will be held on June 26 in Sukkur, Larkana, Shaheed Benazirabad, and Mirpurkhas," Aijaz Chohan said, adding that elections in second phase will be held in Karachi and Hyderabad on July 24. The chief secretary assured that cameras would be installed at highly sensitive polling stations. "All facilities will be provided to election commission besides ensuring security and other arrangements to them," he said.

## Dacoit killed, 3 injured in shootouts

FAISALABAD: An alleged dacoit was killed and three others were injured in two police encounters, here on Monday. A spokesperson for CPO Office Muneeb Ahsan said that four alleged criminals attacked a police party to get rele ased their accomplice, namely Mubashar, near Suzuki Motors in Madina Town police precincts. The police team retaliated the fire. As a result, the dacoit in police custody, Mubashar son of Shakoor of Sheikhpura, received bullet injuries and died instantly. However, other accused managed to flee the scene. The dead was wanted to police in ASI Hmid Naseer killing case. In another incident, six armed bandits opened fire on police team to get released their three accomplices – Husnain, Sajid and Asif – near Gokhulwala village on Millat Road in Millat Town police precincts. In retaliatory fire, all three accused were injured, who were later admitted to an area hospital. – APP

## Orange Line BRT buses to reach Karachi this week

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Transport Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has announced that a ship carrying 20 buses for Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit Service (BRTS) would reach Karachi port from China on May 11 (Wednesday). The announcement from Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Memon, who also holds the portfolio of transport, came during his visit to the site of the project. "Some 20 buses of Orange Line project are arriving at Karachi Port on May 11," he announced. Memon was briefed by officials about the pace of work to complete the long-awaited project. During his visit, the Sindh transport minister directed Sindh Mass Transit Authority to set up a camp office at the depot of Orange Line. The Sindh government has decided to make Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project operational within a month for Karachiites. The decision was taken in a session of Sindh Mass Transit Authority chaired by the provincial transport



minister Sharjeel Memon last week in which the concerned officials gave briefings on the mass transit projects. The Orange Line bus project was launched by former Sindh chief minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah in June 2016 to facilitate about 50,000 residents of Orangi Town. The Orange Line bus project will cover a distance of four kilometres from the Orangi Municipal Office to Matriculation Board Chowrangi. A total of 30 buses would run under this system. The project, which was dedicated to late philanthropist Abdul Sattar Edhi, was supposed to be completed within a year since its groundbreaking in 2016. Recently, the Sindh government announced the launch of two more new BRT lines in Karachi – Red Line and Yellow Line. Currently, Green Line BRT is operational in Karachi which was inaugurated by former prime minister Imran Khan on Dec. 25. The project was started by PML-N government and then prime minister Nawaz Sharif laid the foundation stone for bus project in 2016.



KARACHI: Turkish counsel general to Karachi meets Russian Consul General Andrey Fedorov who paid a courtesy visit to Turkish consulate. – DNA

## PTI decides to hold workers conventions in KP

Imran Khan has become more powerful and popular leader and people of KP would largely participate in his proposed march towards Islamabad

DNA

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tahrik e Insaf (PTI) here Friday decided to hold workers conventions at tehsils and districts level for mass mobilization. The decision has been taken during a high level meeting addressed by Chief Minister KP Mahmood Khan and Provincial President PTI, Pervez Khaatak. PTI Members National and Provincial Assemblies, Senators, LG representatives and office bearers from across the province attended. Consultations on matters related to upcoming public meetings and Islamabad march were held. Directives were issued to Parliamentarians, LG representatives and party office bearers for arrangements for public meetings and Islamabad march and

ensuring presence of all MNAs and MPAs at their constituencies by May 20 besides starting of political activities and mobilization of youth. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan said message of Imran Khan was being spread to streets and villages and all eyes on KP for success of his movement. He said KP was a strong hold of PTI and the lawmakers, LG representatives and office bearers' role was important in success of the rallies and Islamabad march. PTI KP President Pervez Khattak said that Imran Khan has started political struggle for Pakistan. He said Imran Khan has become more powerful and popular leader and people of KP would largely participate in his proposed march towards Islamabad. – APP

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### MAY

May 03 / Poland	National Day
May 06 / Bulgaria	Armed Forces Day
May 06 / UAE	Armed Forces Day
May 07 / Kazakhstan	Armed Forces Day
May 08 / Czech Republic	National Day
May 09 / European Union	National Day
May 17 / Norway	Constitution Day
May 21 / Hungary	Armed Forces Day
May 22 / Yemen Republic	Re-unification Day (National Day)
May 24 / Eritrea	National Day
May 25 / Lebanon	Liberation and Resistance Day
May 25 / Argentina	National Day
May 25 / Jordan	Independence Day
May 28 / Azerbaijan	Republic Day
May 28 / Ethiopia	National Day
May 31 / Brunei	Armed Forces Day



### Hotels & Restaurants

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Marriott.....	051-2826121
Monal.....	0334-5421812



### Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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Rawal Town.....	5773343

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# ICCI pays tribute to Mothers on annual day

Muhammad Shakeel Munir said that on this special day, we should give gifts to our mothers as having a mother in our life is a gift of GOD



### SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Mothers are the most precious asset in our lives and should be given utmost respect, regard & special care by everyone as they play a very important role in our lives and in grooming our personality. This was said by Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) while speaking as a Chief Guest at International Mother's Day celebrated by Islamabad

Founder Lions Club, Baser Daud, President, Islamabad Founder Lions Club presided over the ceremony. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President ICCI, Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI were the Guests of Honor. Sheikh Aamir Waheed former President ICCI, Muhammad Naveed Malik former Senior Vice President ICCI, Ashfaq Chatha & Saeed Bhatti former Vice Presidents ICCI, Engr. Azhar Ul Islam, Ch. Muhammad Ali, Naveed Satti, Dr. Afshan Malik, Shazia Rizwan, Safeena Shah, Nasira Ali, Nageena Khaleeq,

Nausheen Arshad, Saima Huma, Shumaila Siddiqui, Umar Sadiq, Malik Najeeb, Faizan Shehzad, Ch. Tahir, Raja Safer and others were present at the occasion.

Muhammad Shakeel Munir said that on this special day, we should give gifts to our mothers as having a mother in our life is a gift of GOD. He said that this Day provides us an opportunity to express love and gratitude towards mothers for everything they do for their children and families selflessly and for their countless sacrifices, which they

make for their children. He said that this Day is also an occasion to tell our mothers that we love them from the core of our hearts and we cannot compensate them for their love, support and importance in our lives. He said that Mothers are our most sincere and true confidants and reliable guides in our lives. He said that from giving birth to a child, taking care of their children to introducing them to society, mothers play multiple roles in our lives and are our first teachers, influencers, and sup-

porters. He emphasized that we as a society should take special care of our mothers throughout their lives and give them utmost respect for their countless sacrifices that they make for us. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President, Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI, Baser Daud President Islamabad Founder Lions Club, Sheikh Aamir Waheed, Muhammad Naveed Malik and others also spoke at the occasion and paid rich tributes to mothers for their countless sacrifices for children.

# Murree Tourism Police facilitating tourist solely, says Zainab Ayub

### KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: In-charge Murree Tourism Police Zainab Ayub on Monday said the establishment of tourism police was solely for tourism purposes to facilitate public that would help smooth functioning of police set-up. Talking in PTV programme, she said problems faced by tourist at Murree and its adjacent areas would be reduced significantly which were being reported in huge numbers from past

many years. In-charge Tourism Police said that we have set up different cells including harassment, missing and abduction of children, which would help in different other areas of the sector to identify problems. There will be a ladies specific desk also which will cater ladies faced problems only. She said there will be a team comprised on horse riding which would look up the problems in hilly terrain. She said it was a pilot project being launched in different phases of tourism

police, if it succeeded than would also be spread across the province which has the capacity in tourism sector. We will bridge the gap between public and police and will be people friendly in the sector and soon would launch an application in this regard where all sort of issue could easily be registered. All the vehicle we have, the In-charge said were fully equipped with latest medically technology and numbers of vehicles would also be increased in next phase the tourism department.

People of the area were cooperating delightedly after the establishment of tourism police because tourism is likely likened with livelihood of area, she said and adding that the more officials would be recruited with domicile of Murree area as they aware of every nook and corner of tourist spot. She said the police have its toll free number 1757 where any sort of help can be obtained and complain regarding over charging issues can be solved as it was the tourism police mandate.

# All-out efforts being made to protect citizens: IGP

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younas on Monday said all-out efforts were being made to protect lives and properties of the citizens in the Federal Capital. He made these remarks during the "Khuli Kacheri" (open court) which had become a main feature of the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police as a part of the community policing efforts. During the "Khuli Kacheri", which held here at the Central police office, the IGP listened to the issues of public as well as police officials and directed the officials concerned for their resolution on priority. On Monday, Ahsan also listened to the citizens and police officials' problems and marked their complaints to the officers concerned, besides passing directions for their resolutions in time.

# FIA arrests PTI worker for uploading fake pictures

ISLAMABAD: Thy Cyber Crime Wing of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested an alleged worker of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for uploading on social media fake immoral pictures of Ms. Maryam Nawaz, central leader of PML-N party. According to FIR, the accused Fayyazul Din son of Ishraqul Din resident of Sabz Ali Town Warsak road Peshawar is arrested by FIA for uploading of fake immoral pictures of PML(N) leader on his twitter account. The netizens has been booked under section 21, 24 of PECA (Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act) 2016 and 509 of PPC. - APP

# NA speaker announces 6-member panel of chairpersons

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Monday announced the panel of chairpersons to conduct proceedings of the House in the absence of speaker and deputy speaker. The speaker said the panel of chairpersons, including Chaudhry Mahmood Bashir, Syed Ghulam Mustafa, Shahida Akhtar Ali, Engineer Sabir Hussain Kaim Khani, Javaria Zafar Aheer and Riaz Fatyana would conduct proceedings in their absence. - APP

# Govt working to bring down flour price

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of National Food Security and Research in collaboration with provincial governments was working to form a mechanism to bring down the prices of flour to affordable prices, besides keeping the demand and supply of the commodity at smooth level in local markets across the country. The government was also taking measures for ensuring uninterrupted supply of wheat to flour mills across the country and strengthening vigilance to discourage smuggling, hoarding and extra profiteering, said Dr Imtiaz Ali Gopang, Food Security Commissioner in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research. Talking to media, he attributed the recent price hike of flour in local markets to increase in minimum support price of wheat from Rs1,800 per 40 kg to Rs 2,200 per 40 kg, besides the public sector's decision to stop releasing grains from its official stocks to local millers on controlled rates as the procurement campaign for current season was in progress. He said that the government was also providing wheat to flour

mills on subsidized rates in order to provide cheap flour during holy month, adding that during the procurement season releases from the public sector had stopped which was also another factor of price differential in local markets. However, he said that the government was working to form a mechanism to release wheat for local flour mills on subsidized rates to ensure provision of flour on affordable prices, besides keeping the supply at smooth level across the local markets in the country. He further informed that wheat stocks in the country during first week of current month (May) was recorded at 7.853 million tons as against the reserves of 4.866 million tons of the corresponding month of last year. Meanwhile, local wheat procurement reached to 5.990 million tons as against the procurement of 5.810 million tons of same period of last year, he said adding that carry forward stocks of grains in the country stood at 1.845 million tons as compared to the stocks of 731,033 tons of same period last year. - DNA

# Murree Tourism Police facilitating tourist solely, says Zainab Ayub

### KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: In-charge Murree Tourism Police Zainab Ayub on Monday said the establishment of tourism police was solely for tourism purposes to facilitate public that would help smooth functioning of police set-up. Talking in PTV programme, she said problems faced by tourist at Murree and its adjacent areas would be reduced significantly which were being reported in huge numbers from past

many years. In-charge Tourism Police said that we have set up different cells including harassment, missing and abduction of children, which would help in different other areas of the sector to identify problems. There will be a ladies specific desk also which will cater ladies faced problems only. She said there will be a team comprised on horse riding which would look up the problems in hilly terrain. She said it was a pilot project being launched in different phases of tourism

police, if it succeeded than would also be spread across the province which has the capacity in tourism sector. We will bridge the gap between public and police and will be people friendly in the sector and soon would launch an application in this regard where all sort of issue could easily be registered. All the vehicle we have, the In-charge said were fully equipped with latest medically technology and numbers of vehicles would also be increased in next phase the tourism department.

People of the area were cooperating delightedly after the establishment of tourism police because tourism is likely likened with livelihood of area, she said and adding that the more officials would be recruited with domicile of Murree area as they aware of every nook and corner of tourist spot. She said the police have its toll free number 1757 where any sort of help can be obtained and complain regarding over charging issues can be solved as it was the tourism police mandate.

# AIOU hosts CINUVU general assembly on May 11

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is hosting the third general assembly meeting of COMSTECH Islamic Network on Virtual Universities (CINUVU) on May 11 and 12. According to AIOU, Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum, who is also the president of the Executive Committee, CINUVU will chair this important meeting. Secretary General, CINUVU, Dr. Karim Najafi Barzegar, delegates from Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Indonesia, Chad (Afr-

ica), Gabon (Africa), Afghanistan, and Vice chancellors, rectors and seasoned academicians will also participate online in this event. The first General Assembly of CINUVU was held in Iran, second in Turkey and now AIOU is hosting the third meeting of General Assembly. University has completed the preparations for this historic event. This year, the focus of this general assembly will be on exploring new educational opportunities, especially in the field of skills-based training and virtual skills-enhancement workshops, identify challenges in the field of educational empowerment, strengthen specialized committees and define new missions. VC, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum said that this conference will be an important milestone in the promotion of education in Pakistan and other brotherly Islamic countries. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: A motorcyclist on the way driving past the smoke emits as rubbish was torched outside Islamabad Fruit and Vegetable market. APP

# AC directs to cover water storage points to avoid dengue

RAWALPINDI: Assistant Commissioner (AC) Cantt Nousheen Israr Monday asked the residents of the Rawalpindi Cantonment area to cover water storage points as they were a major source of breeding of dengue mosquitoes. During a visit to inspect the performance of anti-dengue surveillance teams, she said that many overhead water storage tanks in different areas of the cantonment lack covers, creating a breeding ground for dengue-carrying mosquitoes. The AC also visited the graveyards in her area and directed the teams to regularly monitor cemeteries and construction sites as they were the vulnerable places for dengue breeding. Nausheen urged the residents to keep their water tanks clean and not leave any place wet with stagnant water. Similarly, she advised the residents to adopt preventive measures and inform the department immediately if dengue larvae were found in their houses. The AC said the district administration, along with the health officials, was making all-out efforts to control the spread of dengue, but without people's active participation, no campaign could be made successful. - APP

# PKIC, Enertech Kuwait sign deal worth US\$ 750 mln

Yasser Malik, CEO Enertech Pakistan, emphasized that these projects would be critical to energy security and sustainability in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Kuwait Investment Company Private Limited (PKIC), a leading development financial institution in Pakistan, has entered into a strategic alliance agreement worth \$750 million with Enertech Holding Company KSC (Enertech), a subsidiary of Kuwait Investment Authority. The objective is to collaborate and jointly explore investment opportunities and business potential primarily within Pakistan. Embarking on this journey of alliance with this agreement, both

PKIC and Enertech have paved the way for future projects to support infrastructure development in Pakistan, said a news release issued here on Monday. In addition, this shall enable advancement in the digital and technology space in tandem with supporting financial inclusion and gender diversity. This alliance would not only bring foreign investment in Pakistan, but shall also support technology and knowledge spill over. The agreement was inked by Mohammad Al

Fares, Chairman PKIC and Abdullah Al Mutairi, CEO Enertech. Addressing the signing ceremony, Mohammad Al Fares, Chairman PKIC said: "PKIC has a firm desire to support all important sectors of the economy. The strategic alliance with Enertech, will help identify, invest and materialize viable investment opportunities in Pakistan where both PKIC and Enertech would benefit from individual capabilities and knowledge structure of each other." Speaking in the landmark initiative,

MD PKIC Mubashar Maqbool expressed his elation: "We have cemented this collaboration to support priority sectors of the economy including infrastructure, power, technology, housing and tourism with an objective to socially uplift the poor. This strategic alliance would also bring in much needed foreign investment into Pakistan". Yasser Malik, CEO Enertech Pakistan, emphasized that these projects would be critical to energy security and sustainability in Pakistan.

Previously, PKIC also collaborated with Meezan Bank Limited to design a Sukuk as a quasi-equity instrument to finance the local equity requirement of a 61-kilometer water pipeline to deliver water to coal plants, being developed by Enertech in Thar, Sindh. This transaction, structured for Enertech, received two prestigious awards including 'Pakistan Deal of the Year' and 'Most innovative Deal of the Year' by Islamic Finance News (IFN) based in Malaysia. - APP



## Briefs

## PM stresses simplified banking system

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday stressed for simplifying the process of the banking system and making it easier in order to facilitate consumers. The prime minister stated this in a meeting with Finance Minister Miftah Ismail, which was also attended by President Habib Bank Muhammad Aurangzeb, Chief Secretary Punjab, and other senior officials.

PM Sharif directed to formulate a comprehensive strategy to effectively resolve the economic problems of the people. He also ordered special arrangements to ensure the supply of food items to the general public at cheaper rates. - DNA

## PM bans sugar export to stabilize price

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday banned the export of sugar to stabilize the stock and price of commodity in the country. The prime minister also ordered strict measures against the smuggling of sugar.

PM Shehbaz Sharif said it was important to first meet the needs of the people and stabilize the price of sugar in the country. He ordered strict action against hoarders and profiteers who were creating an artificial shortage of sugar. The prime minister also directed the agencies concerned to keep abreast of the effective implementation of his orders. He warned that in case of negligence, the relevant officers and staff would be held responsible. - APP

## Furniture exports witness 111.59 pc increase

ISLAMABAD: Furniture exports during the first nine months of fiscal year of 2021-22 grew up by 111.59 percent as compared to the exports of the commodity during the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July-March 2021-22, Furniture worth US \$7,141 were exported as compared to the exports of US \$ 3,375 during the same period of last year. According to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the exports of Jewellery increased by 53.26 percent, worth US \$ 10,034 as compared to exports of \$6,547 during the same period of last year. Meanwhile, Guar and Guar products exports also increased by 26.69 percent as the exports during current fiscal year recorded worth US \$32,650 as compared to the exports during the same period of last year which recorded US \$25,772. - APP

## Pharm. products exports witness increase

ISLAMABAD: Chemicals and Pharm. Products exports during the first nine months of fiscal year of 2021-22 grew up by 29.56 percent as compared to the exports of the commodity during the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July-March 2021-22, Chemicals and Pharm. Products worth US \$1,093,692 were exported as compared to the exports of US \$ 844,155 during the same period of last year. According to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the exports of Plastic Materials increased by 29.88 percent, worth US \$ 303,225 as compared to exports of \$233,458 during the same period of last year. Meanwhile, Other Chemicals exports also increased by 46.23 percent as the exports during current fiscal year recorded worth US \$598,938 as compared to the exports during the same period of last year which recorded US \$403,428. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Business delegation led by Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, former president Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) calling on Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani at Parliament House. - DNA

## Govt sets target to increase BISP Kafaalat outreach

ISLAMABAD: The present government has set a target to expand the outreach of Benazir Kafaalat Program up to eight million families till the month of June and then 10 million afterwards in order to reduce the impact of rising inflation on the poor families. Talking to APP, Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, ShaziaMarri said that the scope of Benazir Kafaalat program would be expanded soon. "Unfortunately the increased ratio of poverty, inflation and unemployment in the country has led to economic instability during last few years which require expansion of BISP to provide financial relief to the poor masses".

"The Program, serving seven million families now, will expand with its outreach up to eight million families till the month of June

however, we want to increase its coverage up to the 10 million families in future as per the poverty ratio and the economic indicators," she said. To a question on re-inclusion of the expelled BISP beneficiaries, the federal minister said it is very unfortunate that around 8, 20,000 beneficiaries were expelled from the BISP program in the year 2019 without any verification or investigation through giving an impression that they were ineligible and affluent. She said that many questions were raised at that time when these beneficiaries were expelled on the basis of unjustified filters but those responsible during the

previous government didn't respond. "I have decided after receiving briefing from the officials that those disqualified on the basis of unjustified filters including phone bill of up to Rs. 1000, making of urgent Passport and urgent CNIC, foreign travel etc. will be given a right to appeal", she said. It needed to understand that how a person can be declared ineligible if he has traveling abroad for performing Umrah through some lucky draw and made CNIC in urgency to apply for BISP. All such filters are not satisfactory and cannot determine the financial condition of the person. This decision of expelling BISP beneficiaries

was taken without verification, investigation or giving them right to register complaint which is injustice", she said. "We have inserted an appeal mechanism in the program and opened the 8171 SMS service to address the grievances of the disqualified beneficiaries, she told. ShaziaMarri said that the BISP is associated with the name of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto as it was her vision to support poor families through introducing a social protection intervention in the country. She said that the foundation of BISP, which was launched in the year 2008 and legalized in 2010, was strong enough that no one could change it. The BISP has collected the data of 34 million households while presently; more than seven million families are covered under this program, she expressed. - APP

## PR initiates special master level classes for staff

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has started special master level classes in railway engineering department in collaboration with Pak-Austria Fachhochschule Institute of Applied Sciences (PAFIST) to enhance the capacity of its engineers and technical staff. The special master level classes have been organized through the Pakistan Railways Training Academy Walton, Lahore, an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

The special cell for foreign training has also been set up at the Ministry of Railways, the official added.

"A policy for transfer of technology and indigenization of railway rolling stock manufacture in Pakistan Railways facilities is being pursued in closer collaboration side by side with undergoing procurements from the People's Republic of China," he added. To a question, the official said Pakistan Railways was trying to improve the punctuality of the trains.

He said outsourcing regime for passenger sector was being followed through Pakistan Railways Advisory & Consultancy Services (PRACS) to improve service delivery as per modern day requirements and to derive maximum revenue potential. - APP

## IHC orders PM to review Hanif Abbasi's appointment as SAPM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday ordered Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to review the appointment of PML-N leader Hanif Abbasi as his special assistant. IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah issued the directive while hearing a plea filed by former interior minister Sheikh Rashid, who has challenged Abbasi's appointment as a special assistant to the prime minister (SAPM). In the petition, Rasheed pointed out that Hanif Abbasi had been appointed the SAPM

through a notification dated April 27. "Both the notification and [the] appointment are illegal, unlawful, unconstitutional and violative of the principles of good governance and the rule of law," he said.

The AML chief noted that a first information report dated July 21, 2012 was registered against Abbasi in Rawalpindi under Sections 9(c), 14 and 15 of the Control of Narcotic Substances Act, 1997. He maintained that on April 11, 2019, the LHC only suspended Abbasi's sentence and not the conviction. The AML chief again highlighted these objections at today's hearing, saying that a convict had

been made an SAPM. The court issued notices to the respondents and directed the PM to review his decision of appointing Abbasi as his SAPM. The court then adjourned the hearing till May 17.

The PML-N leader was arrested just four days before the general elections in the country in 2018. A former MNA, Abbasi was to contest the 2018 general elections from NA-60 Rawalpindi. The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) registered a case against Abbasi and others in June 2012 under sections 9-C, 14 and 15 of the Control of Narcotic Substances (CNS) Act for misuse of 500kg of ephedrine.



ISLAMABAD: PM Adviser on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira in a group photo with journalist from Gilgit Baltistan. Journalist Shabbir Hussain is also seen in the picture, who has died recently. Mr. Kaira expressed grief and sorrow over the demise of Shabbir Hussain. - DNA

## Cyber security for financial institutions

AMINA YAQOUB

In this era where technology plays a vital role in every field and helps organizations and some people are using it for bad things or we can say for crimes. One of the biggest threat is cyber security for financial institutions. This type of financial cybercrime embraces stealing information about payment cards, extortion, frauds related to having access financial accounts, identity scam in order to apply financial products etc. Then some other threats are cloud based cyber-attacks, social engineering, supply chain attacks and ransomware. This not only harm the bank image or reputation but it also puts the customer under a lot of stress. Banks must establish a Cyber risk management plan that protects their network from any breach attempts and ensures financial security for their clients in order to prevent breaches. Cyber-attacks have grown in complexity, potential for disruption, and global reach in recent years. One major example from the recent past is the cyber-heist on Bangladesh Bank in 2016, which resulted in a loss of USD 81 million. Technology is becoming a fundamental aspect of financial institutions' business strategies and operations as they continue to use information technology to provide efficient and innovative services and products. As a result, it requires increased

investment in cybersecurity architecture as well as a strong regulatory and supervisory environment to ensure the seamless operation of payment and settlement systems and maintain public trust.

As the supervisor and regulator of the banking industry and payment systems, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has long been aware of the rising threat of cyber security risk and has been working closely with banks to ensure cyber readiness. In this context, the SBP has established the Framework for Risk Management in Financial Institutions' Outsourcing Arrangements, which addresses the risk posed by banks' reliance on third-party service providers. The SBP has issued a detailed set of instructions on cyber-attack prevention, according to which banks must continually improve their cyber security controls, processes, and procedures in order to predict, resist, detect, and respond to cyber-attacks.

Banks must include cyber security controls as part of their Information Technology Risk Management Policies, as well as proper Standard Operating Procedures, to protect themselves from potential cyber threats. To ensure the security of payment cards in the country, the SBP has published Payment Card Security Regulations to assist card service providers (CSPs) in developing a card security framework in accordance with worldwide best practices. To protect consumers against frauds like as skimming, the

regulations mandate all cards to be issued in accordance with the Euro pay, MasterCard, and Visa (EMV) standard starting June 30, 2018. SBP has released Regulations for the Security of Internet Banking, which require banks to build a comprehensive internet banking security framework in order to protect the growing number of customers who use internet banking channels.

To deal with these cyber security risk, Government of Pakistan should take more steps towards this issue some of them are taken i.e., The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act of 2016 increased the legal foundation for combating cybercrime. The legislation lays up a framework for investigating, prosecuting, and trying electronic crimes including cyber-attacks. On the institutional level, the Federal Investigation Agency has established a National Response Center for Cyber Crime (NR3C) to deal with technology-based crimes. Management of third-party risks (financial institutions should divide their networks to limit third-party access to vital assets, develop and assess information security for partners and other intermediaries, analyze and identify any network abnormalities, and include security best practices in service agreements to minimize such risks). There should be proper regular network assessment. Then another suggestion is there should be Employee training on cybersecurity (employees

should be taught how to spot phishing emails. Penetration testing could also be used to assess the financial institution's cybersecurity readiness. Employees who fall victim to phishing scams must be taken for additional training). Use of newer versions of software (financial institutions must guarantee that their software is updated whenever a new version is published. It's because each upgrade includes improved cybersecurity features that prevent hackers from gaining access to personal information. Cyberattacks on organizations are less likely when all devices are up to date).

The banking sector's cyber-security concerns require immediate action from the international community. Awareness among financial institution human resources and end-consumers of financial products must be improved as the first line of defense. Furthermore, authorities must work collaboratively alongside financial institutions to make sure that proper safeguards against cyber-attacks are in place. Because cyber-attacks are cross-border, international collaboration between nations, supervisory organizations, law enforcement agencies, and financial institutions is critical for managing and mitigating the risks associated with these cyberattacks.

The writer is student at Szabist (Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto institute of science and technology)

## Marriyum grieved over demise of Shabbir Hussain

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the demise of senior journalist Shabbir Hussain. In a condolence message, the minister prayed to the Almighty for the rest of the departed soul in the highest ranks of Jannah and grant of courage to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss. Marriyum sharing the grief of the bereaved family said services of Shabbir Hussain for journalism would never be forgotten. - APP

## Capital's air quality record healthy

ISLAMABAD: The federal capital has embraced record days of healthy air as the pollutants ratio was below permissible limits since the onset of the month of Ramadan that lead to decline in hazardous air pollutants causing air quality bad and health injurious. The air quality of the federal capital on Monday was also recorded healthy as hazardous air pollutants were below the permissible limits in the atmosphere due to reduced vehicular traffic as outbound Islootes have started returning from their hometowns after celebrating Eid.

The air quality data has been collected by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) that monitors air pollutants ratio for 24 hours based on three intervals of eight hours data collection from different locations. The hazardous air pollutant particulate matter of 2.5 microns (PM2.5) which was a lethal atmospheric contaminant remained 16.27 micro grammes per cubic meter on average which is below the NEQS of 35 micro grammes per cubic meter and denotes the air quality healthy. - APP

## AJK PM condoles senior journalist Shabbir's demise

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan on Monday expressed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family of senior journalist Shabbir Hussain who died of a heart attack while delivering a live beeper for news channel. In a statement issued here, the AJK Prime Minister said he was saddened to hear the news of the death of senior journalist Shabbir Hussain. He added that he was also sharing the grief of the family of the deceased in this hour of distress. "The services of late Shabbir Hussain in the field of journalism will always be remembered", said Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan. He also prayed for the complete forgiveness of the deceased and for the patience of the bereaved family. - APP

## Rupee sheds 90 paises against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Exchange rate of Pak Rupee weakened by 90 paises against the US Dollar in the inter-bank trading on Monday and closed at Rs 187.52 against the previous day's closing of Rs 186.62. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 187.5 and Rs 189 respectively. The price of Euro appreciated by 99 paises and closed at Rs 197.01 against the previous day's closing of Rs 196.02. The Japanese Yen lost one paisa to close at Rs 229.88. The exchange rates of Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal increased by 25 paises to close at Rs 51.05 and Rs 49.99 respectively. - APP



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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

## A new nuclear deal with Iran

SINCE the beginning of the Iran nuclear negotiations, we have been hearing US and Western warnings that time is running out on a deal. However, it's been a year of talks without the signing of a final agreement, and some of the terms of the 2015 deal have even approached their end without extension or renewal in sight. The Biden administration sought to appear completely different from the former Trump administration, which had withdrawn from the 2015 deal, but a return to an agreement with Iran turned out to be not as easy as it had imagined. To date, US and Western sources are talking about the possibility of a nuclear agreement taking place, but without specifying a time frame. All we know is that Iran's request to remove the Revolutionary Guards from the terrorist list is one of the final obstacles to achieving an agreement. Delisting the Revolutionary Guards as a terror group is facing opposition in the US, both from Republicans and Democrats, and we have witnessed harsh hearings of US officials regarding the Iranian file. "I believe the Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force to be a terrorist organization and I do not support them being delisted," US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley told the Senate Armed Services Committee. Despite European efforts, the US administration is reluctant as it fears removing the Revolutionary Guards from the terrorist list which could affect the results of upcoming midterm elections. Media leaks suggest that the Biden administration will not remove the Revolutionary Guards from the list. The US wants guarantees from Iran that it would not launch attacks in retaliation for the assassination of Qassem Soleimani. Iran rejects such guarantees at a time when the terrorist leader of the Iran-aligned Hezbollah is threatening to target Israel directly in retaliation for Israel's targeting of Iranian assets in Syria, and in other countries. It is clear that Iran is reading into US hesitation and European leniency regarding the nuclear file well, especially since a well-informed source has pointed out that the Europeans believe that there is no point in setting a time limit for the nuclear agreement. So far, nothing is clear about the Iranian nuclear file, and a source familiar with the progress of the negotiations told me that there is not only a lack of clarity in negotiations, there are also other concerns about Iran's covert operations. "None of the negotiating parties is ready to declare that the negotiations have collapsed because they will bear the consequences of announcing that," said the source. The danger in all of this lies in the lack of clarity about a file that could take us to the brink, whether an agreement is reached or not.



## US obliged to compensate Afghans

ALARMED by the critical humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, 14 UN human rights experts recently called on the United States to unblock \$7 billion in foreign assets of Da Afghanistan Bank to enable the unimpeded provision of humanitarian assistance to cover the basic needs of tens of millions of people in the country. In a statement released on Monday, they said they noted with regret the recent decision by the US administration to renew the blocking of Afghanistan central bank's foreign assets, and its reported intention to use part of it for other purposes within the US. US President Joe Biden signed an executive order on Feb 11 putting the assets at the disposal of his administration to be used as compensation for the families of the victims of the terrorist attacks against the US on Sept 11, 2001. The joint appeal of the UN human rights experts comes at a time when the growing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is putting at serious risk the lives of more than half of the country's population, particularly women and children. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has described the situation in the country as an "epic humanitarian crisis on the verge of a development catastrophe", and has called on the US to reassess any adopted unilateral measure and lift all obstacles in the provision of the necessary financial and humanitarian aid. The UN human rights experts estimate that the country has the highest number of people in emergency food insecurity in the world, with more than 23 million people in need of food assistance, and approximately 95 percent of the population enduring insufficient food consumption. Of particular concern is the vulnerability of more than 4 million internally displaced people, including people belonging to minorities and more than 3.5 million seeking refuge in neighboring countries. Not only should the US unconditionally return the assets of the Afghan people that it has illegally frozen, most of which is funds from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for the development of the country, it should also apologize to the Afghan people and compensate them for the damage and suffering it has caused over the 20 years of its military occupation of the country. After smashing the country and destroying the future of several generations, the US has not only walked away, but intends to take for itself the lifeline that the Afghan people depend on, which fully exposes the brutality and cruelty of the so-called rules-based international order the US is trying to peddle to the rest of the world.

# Can Indonesia's humanitarian Islam inspire a Hindu nationalist equivalent?

James Dorsey

Mr. Madhav's embrace of Humanitarian Islam and Nahdlatul Ulama's engagement hark back to notions of an Indianized civilizational sphere that encompassed South and Southeast Asia for nearly fifteen centuries before the arrival of China, Europe, and Islam in the region. In a gesture at a time when religious and cultural sites have been at the centre of disputes and conflict...

THERE'S a potential silver lining in Hindu nationalism's endorsement of Indonesia's Humanitarian Islam. That is if the approval produces a Hindu equivalent. At first glance, Hindu nationalist Ram Madhav's call on Indian Muslims to embrace one, if not the world's most moderate expression of Islam, seems patronising and out of step. Mr. Madhav is a member of the executive of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an almost century-old militant right-wing Hindu nationalist paramilitary volunteer organisation; former national secretary-general of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP); and a close associate of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In an essay published by Open, an Indian current affairs weekly, Mr. Madhav, widely viewed as a moderate among Hindu nationalists, called on Indian Muslims to adopt a moderate form of Islam propagated and practiced by Nahdlatul Ulama, the world and Indonesia's largest Muslim civil society movement. Nahdlatul Ulama advocates reform of what it calls "obsolete" and "problematic" elements of Islamic law,

including those that encourage segregation, discrimination, and/or violence towards anyone perceived to be a non-Muslim. Humanitarian Islam further recognises equal rights for Muslims and non-Muslims, unrestricted acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and inter-faith relations based on shared common values.

If adopted by Mr. Madhav's RSS and BJP, it would be an approach that would contribute to the restoration of a semblance of societal harmony in India and help halt the backsliding of the country's democracy. Several Nahdlatul Ulama-associated bodies welcomed Mr. Madhav's endorsement "as an opportunity to place humanitarianism at the heart of interaction between different faith groups – regardless of religion and across different sectors of society, ranging from mass organizations to governments – in order to promote peaceful coexistence and enshrine equal rights before the law." Mr. Madhav's essay appeared against the backdrop of mounting Hindu-Muslim communal violence that critics believe is fuelled by the BJP and RSS's anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies. Muslims account for 14 per cent of India's 1.4 billion population. Last week, the Delhi working-class neighbourhood of Jahangirpuri witnessed some of the latest incidents. Riots erupted when participants in a Hindu procession allegedly brandished weapons and chanted anti-Muslim slogans as they passed through predominantly Muslim areas. "There was chaos," said Sudarshan Prasad, a 71-year-old Hindu. I've always lived here in peace. This has not happened in the last 40 years." Days later, authorities imposed a curfew and cut off Internet connections in an area of Jodhpur, the capital of northern India's Rajasthan state, following altercations between the Hindu and Muslim communities. The crackdown occurred as Muslims celebrated Eid al-Fitr, the holiday at the end of Ramadan, and Hindus commemorated the festival of Parshuram Jayanti. At about the same time, tension was building in the state of Maharashtra, home to India's financial capital Mumbai, after Hindu leaders demanded that Muslims remove loudspeakers from their mosques because the call to prayer constitutes noise pollution. Bucking the trend, one Hindu village in the state gifted a loudspeaker to the mosque in a neighbouring Muslim hamlet as a gesture of harmony. In his essay, Mr. Madhav insisted that the RSS had distanced itself from "violent language and talk of annihilation of an entire community" that he termed "un-Hindu."

Even so, Mr. Madhav went on to say that "the Indian social leadership needs to stand up to the forces of hatred and violence by invoking peace, inclusive and a nation-first narrative. India's narrative of the decade should be 'it's the economy, stupid.' The onus lies on all of us." In an interview with the author, Mr. Madhav insisted that Hinduism was "very inclusive and very open." He asserted that no "ideological or philosophical movement that proclaims exclusivity" exists in Hinduism.

Mr. Madhav argued further that there was no difference between Hinduism and Hindutva, the Hindu nationalism of the BJP, and the RSS. However, he conceded that "when confronted with very hardline things like Wahhabi Islam, it created some kind of a reaction in some sections, possibly, but Hindutva is not about that. Hindutva is about core Hindu values." Mr. Madhav's reference to Wahhabism was to a Saudi-inspired austere, ultra-conservative, and supremacist interpretation of Islam. Mr. Madhav acknowledged that Hindu-Muslim tensions would undermine Indian efforts to ensure that the country witnesses the kind of transformative economic growth that China experienced in the 1980s.

Asserting that the leadership of Indian Muslims, the world's third-largest Muslim community and its biggest Muslim minority, adhered to Wahhabism, Mr. Madhav wrote that violent elements, whether "Muslim or Hindu, do not and should not represent our respective mainstream communities." Mr. Madhav suggested that the hijab, a head covering worn by a large number of non-Wahhabi Muslim women, signalled belief in Wahhabism's purported purpose of pitting Muslims against non-Muslims. "A more inclusive and humanitarian Islam on the lines of the one promoted by organisations like Nahdlatul Ulama... must be the way forward for them," Mr. Madhav wrote. Many of Nahdlatul Ulama's women activists and followers sport a hijab while embracing the concept of Humanitarian Islam. In the interview, Mr. Madhav suggested that his reference to the hijab was related to a dispute over the headress after the BJP-governed state of Karnataka banned it in schools because it violated the school uniform. A court later upheld the ban.

"In India, there is no restriction for the hijab. In marketplaces, private gatherings, public moments, everywhere, those who want to wear a hijab will wear it. Only when you insist that even in going to a school, I have to violate the school discipline because this is my religion's mandate, I call that Wahhabi influence,"

Mr. Madhav said. In 2020, Mr. Madhav first met with senior Nahdlatul Ulama leaders on the sidelines of an executive committee meeting of the conservative Centrist Democratic International (CDI), the world's largest alliance of political parties, hosted in the Javan city of Jogjakarta by the Indonesian movement's political party, National Awakening Party (PKB). Mr. Madhav attended the CDI meeting as an observer. Some European and American officials privately hope that increased engagement with India in response to the war in Ukraine and big power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific will strengthen the hand of the more moderate wing of the BJP and the RSS.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has invited Mr. Modi to attend a summit in June of the Group of 7 (G-7) in the Bavarian Alps. The G-7 groups Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain, and the United States. Mr. Madhav's embrace of Humanitarian Islam and Nahdlatul Ulama's engagement hark back to notions of an Indianized civilizational sphere that encompassed South and Southeast Asia for nearly fifteen centuries before the arrival of China, Europe, and Islam in the region. In a gesture at a time when religious and cultural sites have been at the centre of disputes and conflict in India and elsewhere, Indonesia agreed in February to open Prambanan Temple and Borobudur Temple in Java to worship by Hindus and Buddhists. The sites had been mainly closed for decades for worship. In the interview, Mr. Madhav said he wished to avoid "loaded phrases" like an Indosphere stretching across Asia's parts. However, "I would say that Eastern civilizations (and) Eastern religions all share the same civilizational value system." Mr. Madhav referenced Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, and "an Islam with an Eastern value system like Indonesian Islam." Mr. Madhav suggested that "maybe we all can stand up and talk about these values... commit ourselves to those values including respect for pluralism, inclusivity, and commitment to the nation-state idea, (and) patriotism... If something can be worked out jointly, we would be definitely happy to do that."

— Dr. James M. Dorsey is an award-winning journalist and scholar, a Senior Fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute and Adjunct Senior Fellow at Nanyang Technological University's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, and the author of the syndicated column and blog, *The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer*.

## The West's double standard is not an accusation; it is a reality

Osama Al-Sharif

Prince Turki's comments speak for tens of millions of Arabs and hundreds of millions of Muslims. He also speaks for millions of activists around the world who document Israeli crimes that go without punishment. The West is guilty not only of applying double standards, but of complicity in Israeli crimes. The former Saudi envoy to Washington underlined his position by saying this: "There is no sign whatsoever that appeasing Israel is going to change their attitude

RUSSIA'S war against Ukraine has polarized the world. The reason for Moscow's invasion of its neighbor notwithstanding, the wide rift has little to do with condemning the Kremlin's illegal attempt to take over territories of a sovereign state. Few countries support Russian President Vladimir Putin's latest aggression. The reality is that Moscow's war is illegal, constitutes a violation of the UN charter and could trigger a wider conflict. Reasons for the global divide are many; a good number of countries do not wish to be forced into taking sides in what has turned into a confrontation between the West, led by the US, and emerging global powers, namely Russia, China and India. At stake for Washington is the end of almost three decades as the sole global superpower. On its watch, the world witnessed illegal wars and unauthorized invasions of sovereign states, mainly by the US itself. And yet there was no reckoning for Washington – no sanctions, no boycotts and no indictments at the International Criminal Court. This is why many activists on social media platforms have cried foul. The term more often used is "double standards" and the case they pointed to was Israel's decades-old occupation of Palestinian lands and the West's reaction to it. While many leaders avoided referencing Israel's occupation as a clear case of double standards, some did. It was courageous of former Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki Al-Faisal to call for sanctions against Israel while accusing the West openly of applying double standards in responding to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. In an exclusive interview with Arab News last week, Prince Turki said that he could not see the difference between Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian lands. "Aggression is aggression, whether it is committed by Russia or by Israel, and yet there has been no such effort to sanction Israel," he said.

Comparisons between the two cases, as well as the 2003 US invasion of Iraq on fabricated claims and without UN approval, have been rife. The West's reaction to Russia's attack has been unprecedented in modern history. Never before has the West imposed such tough sanctions on any country for breaching international laws. And yet the West, more often than not, turns its back when Israel, an occupying force under UN resolutions, violates international conventions on a daily basis. To accuse the West of applying double standards is to be on the right side of history. Russia is accused of committing crimes in Ukraine, yet not a day passes without Israel committing all sorts of crimes against Palestinians. Not once has Israel been held accountable for its crimes. Not once has a Western country imposed sanctions against Israel. And not once has the West taken concrete steps to implement a UN resolution related to Israel's occupation.

Prince Turki's comments speak for tens of millions of Arabs and hundreds of millions of Muslims. He also speaks for millions of activists around the world who document Israeli crimes that go without punishment. The West is guilty not only of applying double standards, but of complicity in Israeli crimes. The former Saudi envoy to Washington underlined his position by saying this: "There is no sign whatsoever that appeasing Israel is going to change their attitude. The Palestinian people are still occupied, they are still being imprisoned willy-nilly by the Israeli government. Attacks and assassinations of Palestinian individuals take place almost on a daily basis." The West's complicity is not limited to governments and pro-Israel politicians. There is a shameful attempt to cover up and deny audiences the truth about what is happening in Palestine by the Western mainstream media. News about Israeli crimes is rarely reported and when it is, there is a deliberate attempt to white-

wash the Israeli image and dehumanize the Palestinians. The decades-old occupation is often described as a "conflict" between Israel and the Palestinians. Israel is almost never portrayed as the aggressor. The killing of Palestinians in cold blood is almost never reported. While Western governments recognize the West Bank settlements as illegal, no action is taken when Israel approves plans to build more colonies on confiscated Palestinian lands.

And when entire civilian neighborhoods are leveled in the besieged Gaza Strip by Israeli F-16s on live TV, the West shies away from condemning what is clearly a war crime. Meanwhile, Russia is automatically and instantly accused of committing alleged war crimes in Ukraine – and Washington, which is not a member of the International Criminal Court, calls for an immediate investigation. Not once did Washington, London or Paris call for an independent investigation of Israeli war crimes. Recently, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said that the West Bank is disputed territory. If it was Putin who said this about Ukraine, he would have immediately been denounced by the US and its Western allies. The war in Ukraine has exposed the hypocrisy of the West and its adoption of double standards when dealing with the plight of the Palestinians as well as other victimized nations such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. While the majority of Arabs see the war as an aggression by Russia, they make the distinction that the West's reaction is based on ideology rather than long-held principles. Israel's aggression toward the Palestinians is ongoing and has been for decades. While the West was quick to impose sanctions on Russia, Israel is getting away with murder, land theft and an attempt to erase the right of millions of Palestinians to self-determination. Double standards applied by the West are not an accusation, they are a reality.

— Courtesy: Arab News



## Briefs

## West Indies announce ODI squad for Pakistan tour

DNA

KARACHI: West Indies Cricket Board has announced 15-men ODI squad for Netherlands and Pakistan tour. The newly appointed captain Nicholas Pooran will be on his first assignment with the team that includes Shai Hope (Vice Captain), Nkrumah Bonner, Shamrah Brooks, Keacy Carty, Akeal Hosein, Alzarri Joseph, Brandon King, Shermion Lewis, Kyle Mayers, Anderson Phillip, Rovman Powell, Jayden Seales, Romario Shepherd, Hayden Walsh Jr.

West Indies will play three ODIs on May 31, June 4 and 8 against Netherlands in Amstelveen. Later on, they will travel to Pakistan to play three ODIs on June 8, 10, 12. Initially, the tour is planned to take place in Rawalpindi but due to political situation, it might be moved to some other city. Reportedly, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has started working on a backup plan.

## 'Imran trying...

FROM PAGE 01

challenged today, therefore, legal action will be taken against the PTI chairman. The premier, in the statement, further added that Imran Khan is not conspiring in politics, but he is hatching a conspiracy against Pakistan. "Pakistan cannot be sacrificed on the basis of the ego, arrogance, and lies of one person. First, Imran Niazi conspired to drown Pakistan's economy and now he is trying to trigger a civil war," the statement said. "The government will crush Imran Niazi's conspiracy to cause a civil war in the country". The prime minister added that "Imran Niazi is the Mir Jafar and Mir Sadiq of today who wanted Pakistan to face the same fate as Libya and Iraq." He further said that Imran was "biting the same hand that fed him". "The 220 million people of Pakistan, the Constitution, and the national institutions are not slaves to one person's ego. Imran Niazi wants to enslave the masses, but we will not allow him to become the Hitler of Pakistan," the statement said.

## Zardari blasts...

FROM PAGE 01

Zardari said Pakistan regressed during the four-year rule of PTI, adding that the rhetoric being used by Imran "threatened" national security. "The Pakistan Army is not only the protector of Pakistan's borders but the protection of the Constitution and democracy is also its responsibility," the former president claimed. He added Imran was conspiring to divide the military, adding that the former premier also wanted to trample the Constitution through his actions. "Imran Khan calls others traitors yet he himself is playing the role of Mir Jafar and Mir Sadiq by indulging in actions that would put the security of the country at stake," he said, adding that Imran will pay for his actions.

## Fighting continues...

FROM PAGE 01

"There's lots of people still in Mariupol who want to leave but can't," evacuated Viktoriya Andreyeva, a 34-year-old history teacher, said in the Ukrainian-controlled city of Zaporizhzhia, about 230 km (140 miles) northwest of Mariupol. Just before the troops and tanks paraded in Moscow's Red Square, Russian satellite television menus were altered to show viewers in the Russian capital messages condemning the war in Ukraine. "The TV and the authorities are lying. No to war," screenshots obtained by Reuters showed before they disappeared. Russian forces have devastated villages, towns and cities and driven nearly six million Ukrainians to flee since they invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24.

## Erdogan calls EU to 'write a new story for itself'

Turkey has the longest history with the union and the longest negotiation process. The country signed an association agreement with the EU's predecessor in 1964, the EEC, which is usually regarded as a first step to eventually becoming a candidate

## FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: It is about time the European Union adopts a different stance with the ongoing war in Ukraine, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a message issued on the occasion of Europe Day on Monday. "It is high time that the EU, which has drifted apart from its founding values and has come under the influence of short-term policies of some member-states, starts writing a new story for itself amid the Ukraine War," the president said. "This tragedy, which is taking place before the eyes of the whole world, is in a way a warning," Erdogan said, adding that Europe needs solidarity, cooperation and a visionary and brave perspective, similar to the one in 1950. As a strong partner, a candi-

date-state and a NATO ally, Turkey makes a substantial contribution to Europe in overcoming current challenges, Erdogan said. "The negative effects of war in Ukraine, which has reached global dimensions, have reassessed the strategic importance of Turkey for the EU," the president said. Highlighting the importance of focusing on mutual interests rather than differences, Erdogan said enhancing Turkey-EU relations in all fields will benefit both sides. "Turkey's EU accession process, which the country has maintained with patience and determination despite all obstacles, should be encouraged with a constructive stance," the president said, adding that it is a "necessity" for the bloc's future, reputation and reliability. Erdogan noted that Europe

## Macron says he favors changes to EU treaties

BRUSSELS: French President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday he was "in favor" of changing EU treaties, a goal being pushed by the European Parliament. Speaking in Strasbourg, France at the closing ceremony of the Conference on the Future of Europe at the European Parliament, Macron said he agrees with the idea of looking into possible changes to the EU's founding agreement and will propose discussing the topic next month's EU leaders' summit. "We will have to reform our texts, it is obvious," said Macron, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency until July 1, when the Czech Republic takes over. "One of the ways of this reform is the convening of a convention for the revision of the treaties. It is a proposal from the European Parliament, and I approve of it," Macron added. But at least 10 EU countries on Monday are set to publish a document criticizing the outcome of the Conference on the Future of Europe and its European Parliament-backed aspirations to change the EU treaties, according to Politico.eu. The conference is an initiative of the European Parliament and the European Commission to launch a debate with citizens on the mid- and long-term future of the EU and necessary reforms. — Agencies

Day, which marked the creation of a more unified Europe after the Schuman Declaration of 1950, has been celebrated in Turkey since 1999, as he highlighted the importance of the declaration, saying that it ensured European countries come together following a destructive war for the sake of peace, security, development and prosperity. The president continued by saying that European countries have started to move away from the bloc's founding values, mostly under the influence of countries' short-term policies. However, the war in Ukraine has turned a new page. "This tragedy, which is taking place before the eyes of the whole world, is in a way a warning," Erdogan said, adding that Europe needs solidarity, cooperation and a visionary and brave perspective, similar to

the one in 1950. The president also said he congratulates Europe Day, hoping that it leads to further peace, solidarity and welfare in the region. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said Turkey continues to follow a constructive policy in all fields to further enhance cooperation and dialogue within the scope of its EU accession process. In a message issued on the occasion of May 9 Europe Day, the foreign minister said the war in Ukraine has shown how difficult it is to protect and preserve peace. "The tragedy in Ukraine, which is happening in the middle of Europe in the 21st century and which has brought us back to Europe in the 1940s, is a warning sign for all of us," Çavuşoğlu said, adding that it will be a turning point for the future of Europe.

## Atletico Madrid edge past weakened Real Madrid



DNA

MADRID: Atletico Madrid won a La Liga derby against Real Madrid for the first time in six years on Sunday as a 1-0 victory left Diego Simeone's side on the cusp of securing Champions League qualification. Yannick Carrasco's first-half penalty proved enough at the Wanda Metropolitano against a heavily weakened Real Madrid, who took the chance to rotate after their incredible Champions League comeback against Manchester City on Wednesday. With Karim Benzema, Luka Modric and Thibaut Courtois among those on the bench for the already-crowned champions, Atletico took advantage,

even if they missed a string of chances that made the contest far more uncomfortable than it needed to be. Atletico sit fourth, six points clear of Real Betis in fifth, with three games left to play. Their better head-to-head record over Betis means they will be guaranteed to finish in the top four if Betis fail to win away at Valencia on Tuesday. If Betis beat Valencia, Atletico can make sure of their spot themselves by winning away at Elche on Wednesday. "It is very important to qualify and we have to get one more win in three games to achieve it," said Atletico captain Koke. "If we work like this, we'll get there." Sevilla's place also looks almost sealed after a 1-1 draw away at Villarreal earlier on Sunday gave them a seven-point cushion over Betis.

## Heading in right direction on clay: Emma Raducanu

LONDON: US Open champion Emma Raducanu has little experience on clay at the elite level but the 19-year-old says she is heading in the right direction on the surface ahead of the French Open starting later this month. Raducanu has had mixed results following her maiden Grand Slam title at last year's US Open but has had an encouraging run in the clay-court season where she reached the Stuttgart quarter-finals and Madrid last-16. She has been figuring out how to adapt to the surface without the help of a full-time coach after splitting with Torben Beltz last month, and the Briton has taken a liking to the independence of coaching herself. "I'd describe myself as a loner," Raducanu, who faces Bianca Andreescu in the Italian Open first round this week, told reporters. "For the past year ... I've had a lot of people around me a lot and very often. To be on my own is interesting because I'm kind of finding out a lot about myself, understanding what I need and what I don't need." Raducanu played her first professional match on clay in the Billie Jean King Cup qualifiers last month and said she has been learning about the surface as she plays. — Agencies

## Carlos Alcaraz topples Zverev for Madrid title

"Watching Rafa lift this trophy gave me a lot of power to work hard for this moment," Alcaraz added. "It is a great moment for me. It is the first tournament I watched, so lifting the trophy today is so emotional"

## WEB DESK

MADRID: Carlos Alcaraz made history once again Sunday at the Mutua Madrid Open, dispatching World No. 3 Alexander Zverev 6-3, 6-1 to capture his second ATP Masters 1000 title of the season. The Spaniard lit up the Manolo Santana Stadium with his variety of shots and athleticism as he overpowered Zverev with his relentless hitting to earn a seventh straight Top 10 win and Tour-leading fourth title of the year. "It feels great to be able to beat these players. To beat two of the best players in history and then Zverev, the World No. 3. He is a great player. I would say this is the best week of my life," Alcaraz said in his on-court interview. "I am 19 years old, which I think is the key to be able to play long and tough matches in a row. I am feeling

great physically."

Alcaraz, who did not face a break point in a dominant performance against the German, will rise to second in the Pepperstone ATP Race To Turin on Monday as he aims to make his debut at the prestigious Nitto ATP Finals in November. "Watching Rafa lift this trophy gave me a lot of power to work hard for this moment," Alcaraz added. "It is a great moment for me. It is the first tournament I watched, so lifting the trophy today is so emotional." With his 62-minute victory, the 19-year-old is the second-youngest player to win two Masters 1000 titles, after triumphing in Miami in March. Rafael Nadal captured crowns in Monte Carlo and Rome in 2005 when he was 18. In a dream week on home soil, the seventh seed also became the first player to eliminate Nadal and



Novak Djokovic at the same clay-court event. It is the first time since David Nalbandian in Madrid in 2007 that a player has defeated three top four stars at a Masters 1000 event. Nalbandian beat Djokovic,

Nadal and Roger Federer in the Spanish capital when the tournament was played on hard. Alcaraz battled past countryman Nadal in two hours and 28 minutes, before he edged World No. 1 Djokovic in a three-hour, 36-minute marathon to reach the final. The 19-year-old also took a heavy fall against Nadal in their quarter-final meeting as he rolled his ankle, but showed no signs of it against Zverev in his shortest match of the week. "I want to congratulate Carlitos. Right now you are the best player in the world," Zverev said during the trophy ceremony. "It is great for tennis that we have such a new superstar that is going to win so many Grand Slams, that is going to be World No. 1 and I think is going to win this tournament many more times." Just 12 months ago, Alcaraz was ranked at No. 120 in the Pepper-

stone ATP Rankings when he made his Madrid debut. However, after soaring to five tour-level titles since, he will climb to a career-high No. 6 in the Pepperstone ATP Rankings on Monday. Alongside Masters 1000 titles in Miami and Madrid, the 2021 Intesa Sanpaolo Next Gen ATP Finals champion has trophies in Umag, Rio de Janeiro and Barcelona in the past year, meaning he is the youngest five-time titlist on Tour since Nadal clinched seven crowns by 19 in 2004-05. Alcaraz, who has won his past 10 matches, has yet to lose an ATP Tour final. In a dominant first-set performance, Alcaraz successfully targeted Zverev's forehand with his power from the baseline. The 19-year-old consistently turned defence into attack with his agility, gaining the crucial break in the sixth game before serving well to lead.

## President rejects PM's advice...

FROM PAGE 01

The Shehbaz-led government had last week sent a summary to the president for the removal of Cheema and nominated Baligh-ur-Rehman for the office of governor. Incumbent Governor Cheema has been causing problems for the PML-N in Punjab ever since he was given the post by Imran Khan during his last days in power. The governor had triggered a constitutional crisis after he was refused to administer the oath to Chief Minister Punjab Hamza Shehbaz. Hamza was finally sworn in after the Lahore High Court ordered NA Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf to administer the oath to Hamza.

## Imran vows to...

FROM PAGE 01

former prime minister Khan, for allegedly harassing and stopping Pakistani pilgrims from performing their rituals at Masjid-e-Nabawi (PBUH) earlier this week. But Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah clarified last Tuesday that the government did not have a first information report (FIR) registered against the PTI chairman. Moving on, the PTI chairman said his party only wanted one thing: early elections — which has been the PTI's demand after their ousted as it has refused to accept the new government. Khan told his workers that he would give the call to Islamabad after May 20 and asked the workers who could not join him in the federal capital to protest in their respective cities once the march begins.

## Morocco to host...

FROM PAGE 01

under the Coalition, this meeting confirms the leading role of Morocco at the regional and international levels in the fight against terrorism and support for peace, security and stability in Africa. It is also a strong testimony of the Coalition for Morocco, as a credible partner and provider of regional peace and security, which has notably co-chaired the Global Counterterrorism Forum for three consecutive terms, which hosts the United Nations Office for Counterterrorism and Training in Africa and which was the country of the Continent to have organized, in June 2018, the meeting of the Political Directors of the Global Coalition against Daesh, dedicated to the terrorist threat in Africa.

## Friendship with China...

FROM PAGE 01

evolution of democratic institutions in the country, the PM said that the government was keen to engage constructively with CPNE and other media representative bodies for the protection of the rights of journalists and promotion of responsible journalism in the country. The PM mentioned that the government was taking all possible measures to ensure power generation and its supply, so that public woes could be addressed. During the meeting, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb, Secretary Information Shaha Shahid, Principal Information Officer Mobashir Hasan and other officials were present.

## FM Bilawal lauds...

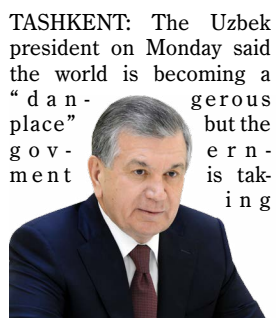
FROM PAGE 01

deep concern over the reversal of progress in the implementation of SDGs. He urged the GDI Group of Friends to address the challenges faced by the developing world and support emergency actions to increase cooperation in public health and vaccine equity, ensure food security, enhance energy production, promote global green economy, stimulate trade and industrialization, and eliminate the digital divide. The Foreign Minister, noting that the multiple crises have enlarged the gap in financing for development, called upon the international community to mobilize adequate resources for SDGs and fulfil the commitment of providing at least \$100 billion annually in climate finance.



## Briefs

**World becoming more dangerous place**



TASHKENT: The Uzbek president on Monday said the world is becoming a "dangerous place" but the government is taking measures to reduce the impact on the people. "Today the world is becoming more dangerous. It's being tested every minute... With our hard work and solidarity, God willing, we will pass these tests," Shavkat Mirziyoyev told a ceremony at the Victory Park in the capital Tashkent to mark the Day of Remembrance and Honor on May 9, according to a statement by the presidency. He hailed the Uzbek people's heroism and contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II. "We remember the memory of our heroic ancestors and bow before their courage. Their multifaceted way of life, dedicated to peace and freedom, is a great legacy for future generations that will not burn or drown," he said. State officials and members of the armed forces also attended the ceremony. - DNA

measures to reduce the impact on the people. "Today the world is becoming more dangerous. It's being tested every minute... With our hard work and solidarity, God willing, we will pass these tests," Shavkat Mirziyoyev told a ceremony at the Victory Park in the capital Tashkent to mark the Day of Remembrance and Honor on May 9, according to a statement by the presidency. He hailed the Uzbek people's heroism and contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II. "We remember the memory of our heroic ancestors and bow before their courage. Their multifaceted way of life, dedicated to peace and freedom, is a great legacy for future generations that will not burn or drown," he said. State officials and members of the armed forces also attended the ceremony. - DNA

**Indonesia's economy grows 5.01 pct**

JAKARTA: Despite turbulence in global economic prices, Indonesia recorded an economic growth of 5.01 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of this year, compared to 5.02 percent it recorded during the fourth quarter of 2021, the country's Central Agency of Statistics announced on Monday. The growth was in line with the prediction made by Indonesia's Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani Indrawati that the country's economy would grow on average 5 percent year-on-year. "The economic growth during the first three months of this year was contributed by the growth of people's activities as restrictions continue to be waived, and by the low-based effect in the first quarter of 2021," the agency head Margo Yuwono told a press conference. He added that the growth was mainly supported by a recovery in household consumption, investment and exports in global commodities such as coal, palm oil and nickel. "Household consumption has improved, and people spend more money on traveling," he said. - APP

**Georgia condemns election in S Ossetia**

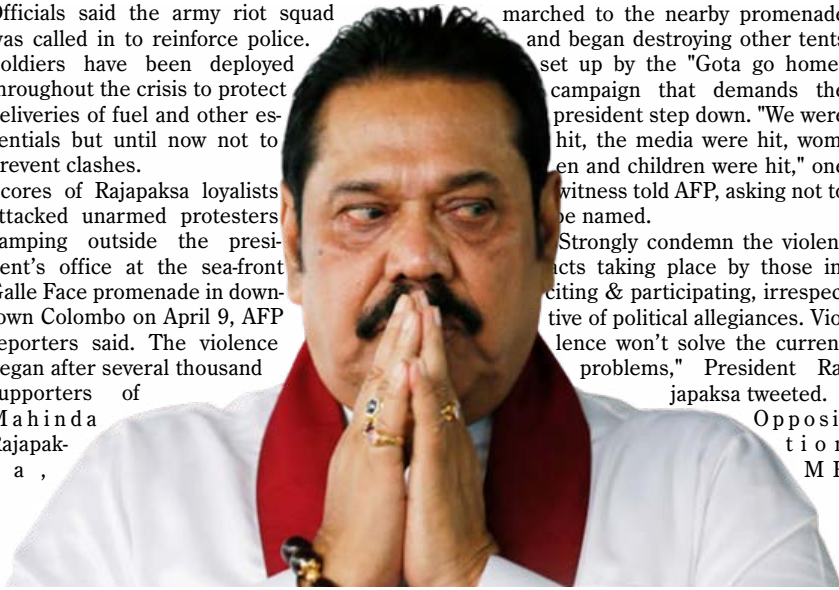
ANKARA: Georgia has condemned the second round of the "so-called" presidential election held in its breakaway region of South Ossetia on Sunday. In a statement on Monday, the Foreign Ministry called the election an "illegal action that contradicts the fundamental principles and norms of international law and blatantly violates Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders." "Under the Russian occupation and effective control any so-called election will not have legal consequences," the statement added. Tbilisi fought a five-day war with Russia in 2008, and lost control of both the regions, which were later recognized as independent states by Moscow. The ministry said hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees, who were forced to migrate due to ethnic cleansing in breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, are still prevented from returning home. "Fundamental rights and freedoms of people on the ground are blatantly violated," the statement said. Georgia also called on Russia to respect Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and implement its international obligations. - APP

# Sri Lanka PM resigns amid economic crisis

AGENCIES

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on Monday offered his resignation amid the island nation's worst economic crisis since independence that has led to widespread protests, a government official said. Rajapaksa's spokesman Rohan Weliwita said the 76-year-old sent his letter of resignation to his younger brother, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, clearing the way for a "new unity government." "I am resigning with immediate effect so that you will be able to appoint an all-party government to guide the country out of the current economic crisis," the prime minister said in the letter, seen by AFP. The country's largest opposition party had said before the clashes that it would not join any government helmed by a member of the Rajapaksa clan. The resignation of the prime minister automatically means the cabinet stands dissolved. On Monday the biggest clashes since the start of the crisis erupted in Colombo when supporters of the Rajapaksa family went on the rampage, AFP reporters at the scene said. Police fired tear gas and water cannon and declared an immediate curfew in Colombo which was later widened to include the entire South Asian island nation of 22 million people. At least 78 injured people were

hospitalised, Colombo National Hospital spokesman Pushpa Soysa told AFP. Officials said the army riot squad was called in to reinforce police. Soldiers have been deployed throughout the crisis to protect deliveries of fuel and other essentials but until now not to prevent clashes. Scores of Rajapaksa loyalists attacked unarmed protesters camping outside the president's office at the sea-front Galle Face promenade in downtown Colombo on April 9, AFP reporters said. The violence began after several thousand supporters of Mahinda Rajapaksa,



brought in buses from rural areas, poured out of his nearby official residence. Rajapaksa had addressed some 3,000 supporters at his house and pledged he would "protect the interests of the nation." The supporters then initially pulled down tents of protesters in front of the prime minister's Temple

Trees residence and torched anti-government banners and placards. They then marched to the nearby promenade and began destroying other tents set up by the "Gota go home" campaign that demands the president step down. "We were hit, the media were hit, women and children were hit," one witness told AFP, asking not to be named. Strongly condemn the violent acts taking place by those inciting & participating, irrespective of political allegiances. Violence won't solve the current problems," President Rajapaksa tweeted.

Opposition MP Sajith Premadasa tried to move into the area after the clashes, but he came under attack from a mob and his security staff bundled him into a car and drove off. "The President should accept the responsibility for this violence instigated by the Prime Minister!," opposition MP Eran Wickra-

maratne tweeted. "You cannot chase us from standing with our people." The US ambassador to Sri Lanka condemned "the violence against peaceful protestors today, and call on the government to conduct a full investigation, including the arrest & prosecution of anyone who incited violence." "Our sympathies are with those injured today and we urge calm and restraint across the island," Julie Chung tweeted. The violence was the worst since police shot dead one protestor and wounded 24 others blockading a railway line and a highway between Colombo with the central city of Kandy on April 19. On Friday, the government imposed a state of emergency granting the military sweeping powers to arrest and detain people after trade unions brought the country to a virtual standstill. The defence ministry said in a statement Sunday that anti-government demonstrators were behaving in a "provocative and threatening manner" and disrupting essential services. President Rajapaksa has not been seen in public since tens of thousands attempted to storm his private residence in Colombo on March 31. Sri Lanka's crisis began after the coronavirus pandemic hammered vital income from tourism and remittances. This left it starved of foreign currency needed to pay off its debt and forcing the government to ban the imports of many goods.

## Voter turnout of Lebanon diaspora reaches 60%

BEIRUT: The turnout of Lebanese diaspora ahead of Lebanon's parliamentary elections reached 60%, according to the country's foreign ministry on Monday. Ministry official Hadi Hashem said between 128,000 and 130,000 expatriates in 58 countries cast their votes out of 225,000 eligible Lebanese voters worldwide. "The turnout of expatriates reached around 60%, which is a very good percentage," he told a press conference in the capital Beirut. On Sunday, thousands of Lebanese living in 48 countries voted in the country's parliamentary elections. A similar vote was held last week in 10 countries. It was the second time in Lebanon's history to allow Lebanese abroad to cast their votes. The first was in 2018. Lebanon's parliamentary elections are scheduled to be held on May 15. A total of 103 lists made up of 718 candidates are competing in the polls to win a seat in the 128-member parliament. The Lebanese elections are taking place as Lebanon has been grappling with a severe economic crisis since late 2019, including a massive currency depreciation as well as fuel and medical shortages. - DNA

## KSA cuts oil prices to Asia more than 50%

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia cut oil prices for buyers in Asia as coronavirus lockdowns in China weigh on demand, countering uncertainty around Russia's supplies as the Ukraine war drags on. Aramco is expected to cut the official selling price (OSP) for flagship Arab Light crude to Asia in June by more than 50 percent. The state-controlled company dropped its key Arab Light crude grade for next month's shipments to Asia to \$4.40 a barrel above the benchmark it uses, from \$9.35 in May. Saudi Arabia raised its prices to record levels in the past two months after crude futures surged above \$100 a barrel when Russia invaded Ukraine. Russian flows have already fallen and may drop further as the European Union moves closer to formally sanctioning energy supplies from the country. While the war has tightened the global oil market, Beijing's Covid Zero strategy has led to China's largest demand shock since the early days of the pandemic. Saudi Arabia sends more than 60 percent of its crude exports to Asia, with China, Japan, South Korea and India being the biggest buyers. Oil prices rose nearly 1.5% on Friday, posting a second straight weekly increase. Brent futures rose \$1.49, or 1.3 percent, to settle at \$112.39 per barrel. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude climbed \$1.51, or 1.4 percent, to end at \$109.77 a barrel. For the week, WTI gained about 5%, while Brent nearly 4% after the EU set out an embargo on Russian oil as part of its toughest yet package of sanctions over the conflict in Ukraine. - Agencies

## China holds air, naval drills around Taiwan

BEIJING: China on Monday revealed its military forces held military drills across the Taiwan Strait between Friday and Sunday. A brief statement by the country's Defense Ministry said the naval, air and conventional missile forces of the Chinese People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theater Command held drills in seas and airspace to the east and southwest of Taiwan from May 6 to 8. The ministry said the exercises aimed "to test and improve the joint operations capability of multiple services and arms." The latest military drills come amid heightened air activity by Chinese forces around self-ruled Taiwan, which Beijing considers its "breakaway province." Taipei, however, insists on its independence since 1949. Tensions between Beijing and Taipei have escalated since last October when China celebrated its founding anniversary, and in the days that followed, numerous Chinese warplanes flew into the ADIZ. - APP

**Bitcoin dives below \$33K**

ANKARA: The price of Bitcoin dove below \$33,000 on Monday, marking its lowest in almost 10 months, as the major selloff in global markets has continued to affect cryptocurrencies negatively. Bitcoin saw its price sinking to \$32,650 at 1058GMT, according to data on Binance, the world's largest cryptocurrency market by trade volume. This marked the lowest level for Bitcoin since July 23, 2021 when it fell to as low as \$32,040. Bitcoin, the world's biggest crypto by market cap, had lost more than half of its value last year, sinking to \$29,303 on July 20. The current market selloff came after the US Federal Reserve announced a 50-basis-point rate hike last week and signaled more for coming meetings. The Fed's hawkish stance and aggressive monetary tightening have since led to pessimism among investors and a panic selling environment in global markets. - APP



ISLAMABAD: World Bank Vice President presents souvenir to Economic Affairs Minister Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. - DNA

# Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia vow to increase people to people contact

NEWS DESK

BAKU: President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has received a delegation led by Attorney General of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Sheikh Saud bin Abdullah Al-Mujib. Emphasizing the successful cooperation between the two countries in various fields, the President hailed the high level of political relations. Recalling with satisfaction his visits to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, President Ilham Aliyev said that the hospitality shown during those visits had once again demonstrated the fraternal relations existing between the two countries' peoples. The President stressed that Azerbaijan had special respect for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia because the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was one of a handful of countries in the world that had not established any diplomatic relations with Armenia. The reason was that Azerbaijani lands were under occupation. President Ilham Aliyev noted that Azerbaijan highly appreciated this



position. The head of state said that the liberation of lands as a result of the 44-day war had exposed Armenian savagery and the destruction by Armenians of everything in the liberated lands, including 65 of the 67 mosques. Indicating that the opportunities for cooperation in the economic sphere, including energy, had been expanded since the restoration of the country's territorial integrity, President Ilham Aliyev expressed his satisfaction with the

interest of large Saudi companies in Azerbaijan in this regard, describing the fact that Saudi company ACWA Power had laid the foundation of a wind power station in Azerbaijan as a good example of this. Emphasizing the fact that the two countries supported each other in international organizations, the head of state said that the increase in people-to-people contacts, reciprocal visits and the number of tourists had created a good basis

for further development of bilateral cooperation. President Ilham Aliyev also expressed his confidence that the visit of Sheikh Saud bin Abdullah Al-Mujib to Azerbaijan would contribute to the development of bilateral relations. Sheikh Saud bin Abdullah Al-Mujib conveyed the greetings of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King of Saudi Arabia Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud to the President of Azerbaijan. President Ilham Aliyev thanked for the Saudi King's and Crown Prince's greetings and asked the attorney general to extend his greetings to Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. Noting that they were happy with the development processes taking place in Azerbaijan, Sheikh Saud bin Abdullah Al-Mujib said: "I want to congratulate you on the development your country has achieved. We have heard a lot about Azerbaijan and the achievements of your country in the economic, social and economic spheres."

## IOF carries out demolition, arrest campaigns

NEWS DESK

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: The Israeli occupation forces (IOF) launched raid and arrest campaigns throughout the West Bank on Monday, which led to the outbreak of violent clashes. Dozens of Palestinians were injured as clashes broke out in Beit Dajan, east of Nablus, after IOF soldiers stormed the town and demolished two local houses. The Red Crescent in Nablus

reported 36 injuries in Beit Dajan clashes, three of them with rubber-coated metal bullets. An agricultural room was also demolished in the town during the raid. In Tubas, the Israeli bulldozers demolished two rooms under construction, in Khirbat Ainun, east of the city, for being allegedly built without Israeli permit. In Ramallah, several Palestinians were arrested in Beit Rima town including an ex-prisoner, which led to the outbreak of violent clashes. A 16-year-old teen was also detained in al-Khalil and taken for investigation for un-

known reasons, while several military checkpoints were erected throughout the city. Meanwhile, Israeli police arrested an ex-prisoner after breaking into his family house in Qatana town in Occupied Jerusalem. In Jenin, at least five young men were detained after IOF troops stormed Rummanna town. The IOF also stormed Elad suspects' family houses, in Jenin, as a prelude to demolish them. A minor was also detained in Nablus after IOF soldiers stormed and violently searched his family house.

## Baghdad-Erbil crisis looms after oil talks collapse

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Oil Minister Ihsan Abdul Jabbar has dropped a bombshell by acknowledging that no agreement has been reached with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) over oil and energy, warning of a crisis erupting between Baghdad and Erbil. Last March, the Federal Supreme Court announced a binding and final decision for all authorities in Iraq that the KRG has no jurisdiction to sell oil extracted from the region without Baghdad's consent. While the KRG considered the top court's decision politicized, it remains effective nationwide. Moreover, Iraq said it will start implementing a court ruling that gives the federal authorities oversight of Kurdistan production after failed talks with officials from the semi-autonomous region. Baghdad's central government has long asserted its right to manage resources in Kurdistan, which has been pumping and selling oil independently. - APP

# Confidence in RMB to rebound despite COVID-19

BEIJING: Pakistani experts believe that depreciation burdens on RMB have reduced due to more robust economic growth and rising foreign exchange reserves in China, while the current devaluation is due to the latest pandemic outbreak in different key cities of China. Shan Saeed, Chief Economist at Juiwai IQI told China Economic Net that in the last 37 days, RMB has depreciated 4% against USD, and western media continue to feel worried about its outlook. With \$3.2 trillion of foreign reserves, macroeconomic stability in China is coming back. "I'm confident in Yuan to bounce back despite challenging global economic fragilities. China's economic growth in recent years makes the Yuan an attractive currency for investors. Economic growth has given strength to Yuan, and the People's Bank of China (PBOC) has played an important role in maintaining the structural stability of the Yuan," he mentioned. He further said that many economies have started moving their trade and commerce in Yuan, which is well positioned to become the currency for the emerging markets.



"At Juiwai IQI Global, we expect RMB to maintain stable against USD and to trade between 6.39 and 6.77 in 2022. The GDP growth outlook remains positive and is expected to

meander around 4.7% to 5.3% in the current year," Shan stated. Shan believes that China would continue to make economic progress and lead the world with a solid growth outlook

and per capita income, adding that China will become one of the top economies by 2025 and China takes the driving seat. Sheikh Muhammad Shariq, Vice president of the National Bank of Pakistan and Chief Representative in China told CEN that the current depreciation of the Chinese Yuan is due to COVID-19 that affected the economy, especially after the outbreak in Shanghai, which caused to stop or slow down many trade activities including imports and exports from Pakistan as Shanghai port is one of the busiest ports of the world. "China's economy might face some difficulties due to the latest COVID-19 outbreak and the reducing of economic growth target this year which is 5.5% less than the previous year. But I'm confident that the Chinese economy is expected to maintain its resilience and likely to meet its annual growth target," Shariq stated. He further said that World Bank and IMF also reduced the world growth target and China is one of the main stakeholders and key growth drivers of the world, and these are the reasons for the temporary depreciation of the Yuan. - Agencies



**Briefs**

**China starts world's 1st trial on Omicron-specific vaccine**

ISLAMABAD: China on Monday launched the world's first clinical research on a sequential trial of an Omicron-specific vaccine candidate in Central China's Hunan Province. It will evaluate the vaccine's safety and immunogenicity in humans and the research is expected to be completed in about three to four months. Zhang Yuntao, chief scientist from the China National Biotech Group (CNBG) - developer of the vaccine candidate, who attended the launch ceremony - said that the clinical study, which plans to enroll more than 4,000 volunteers, is the world's largest clinical study of a vaccine against the Omicron variant, Global Times reported. "In this study, a randomized, double-blind, controlled study design was used to evaluate the safety and immunogenicity of the Omicron-specific vaccine in volunteers aged 18 years and above who had received two or three doses of COVID-19 vaccines at different intervals and in different dose sequences," Zhang said. The plan for this clinical study will need to be determined after further discussions with experts and drug authorities, and it is expected to take about three to four months to complete, Zhang said. In April, Sinopharm obtained clinical trial approval from the National Medical Products Administration and approval from the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong, respectively. - APP

**US dollar continues thrashing Pakistani rupee**

ISLAMABAD: The US dollar on the opening day of the business week thrashed the Pakistani rupee as it reached Rs187.53 from Rs185.63 with an increase of 90 paisas against the Pakistani currency. At one stage, the US dollar gained Rs1.27 but later ended the day with a gain of 90 paisas. Forex dealers said that the US dollar has now crossed the psychological mark of Rs187 and inches towards Rs188. The previous week's close was Rs186.63 and the US dollar gained 94 paisas against Pakistan Rupee in comparison to Thursday's closing which was Rs185.69.

**'Pakistan fully capable of meeting challenges'**

BEIJING: Pakistani security forces are fully capable of meeting new security challenges, ensuring the safety of the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as well as the safety of Chinese personnel, institutions and projects in Pakistan, Cheng Xizhong, Visiting Professor of Southwest University of Political Science and Law said on Monday. Prof. Cheng, who is also Senior Fellow of the Charhar Institute said in a statement that objectively speaking, due to the deterioration of the regional security situation and the proxy war launched by the regional power, Pakistan is currently facing security challenges. He, however, said the overall security situation of the country has been improving in the past 10-15 years due to the strong and effective crackdown measures taken by the Pakistani government and security forces. He believed that the Pakistani government and law enforcement departments not only have sufficient capacity, but also attach great importance to ensuring the safety of their own citizens and foreigners in Pakistan.

**President approves appointment of Attorney General**

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Monday gave approval to the appointment of Ashtar Ahsan Ali as Attorney General for Pakistan. According to a statement issued by the President Office on Monday, the President appointed the Attorney General on the advice of the Prime Minister under Article 100 (1) of the Constitution. The post of the Attorney General for Pakistan had become vacant after the resignation of Khalid Javed Khan. - APP

**Taliban plans to consult elites for convening Jirga**

In this respect, some of Taliban leaders are also suggesting holding a special session of proposed Jirga in Qandahar

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR—Amidst earning world-wide condemnation in return of its restrictions against women and victimization of rivals, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan decided consulting elite class regarding its policies. For the purpose, the Taliban leaders have initiated preliminary consultations with each other regarding a session of traditional Jirga. However, some of Taliban leaders are opposing theme of Jirga, suggesting it with an Islamic name. The reports pouring in Peshawar from Kabul that top leaders of Taliban regime also called as Emirate Islami Afghanistan decided taking the nation into confidence

regarding its acts and steps. In this respect, they initiated steps for convening traditional Loya Jirga like session. So far they initiated meetings with fellow Taliban fighters and commanders throughout the country and also some sympathizers from abroad especially Pakistan. A senior journalists from Afghanistan Said Rahman Rahmani in a telephonic conversation confirmed the proposed plan of Taliban leaders and said on completion of preliminary consultation schedule of the proposed Jirga like sitting will be announced. The Jirga besides, leading Taliban leaders will also be attended by some of the former Jihadic leaders, religious leaders, academicians and ex-technocrats. There is a proposal regard-

ing presence or attendance of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Haibat Ullah Akhund in the proposed Loya Jirga. But like of founding leading leader Mullah Mohammad Omar Akhund, Mullah Haibat Ullah is reluctant to visit Kabul. In this respect, some of Taliban leaders are also suggesting holding a special session of proposed Jirga in Qandahar. The Taliban leaders are likely to extend invitation to some of former ministers and technocrats who are residing in western European and American countries. In this connection, Taliban under a deal allowed former Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah to go abroad whereas he would convince his Northern Alliance stalwarts for attending the session. Despite close links between

Pakistan and Northern Alliance leaders, the Taliban government is facing armed resistance in Northern Alliance dominated areas of Afghanistan. Former Prime Minister and chief of his faction Hizbe Islami Afghanistan Engineer Gulbadin Hekmatyar is the lone Jehadi leaders who is respected by Taliban leaders. Some insiders believes that Hekmatyar is being respected by Taliban in the light of instructions from Islamabad. Along with former President Hamid Karzai, several other former Jehadi leaders, ex-ministers and officials are stranded in Kabul but they are being treated by Taliban as their rivals. So far no one of them consulted by Taliban leaders regarding proposed Jirga.

**UK says Russia's Putin makes 'fairytale claims'**

WEB DESK

LONDON: Russian President Vladimir Putin has "made a number of fairytale claims for months and years now," British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said Monday. Wallace's remarks came as a response to Putin's claims that his country was under NATO threat he made at the Russia's Victory Day parade in Moscow earlier in the day. Wallace accused Russian generals of hijacking their "forebears' proud history," and said they must face war crimes trials. The defense secretary said at the National Army Museum that there "can be no victory day, only dishonor." "One of his claims is that he is surrounded [by NATO]. NATO accounts for 6% of his land border. That's not being surrounded if only 6% of your land border is NATO countries," Wallace said. "I think he is believing what he wants to believe - a slight shine of desperation. "But let me put on the record categorically: NATO, Britain, eastern Europe is not planning to invade Russia and never has done." Accusing the Russian regime of "mirroring (the) fascism and tyranny" of Nazi Germany, Wallace said the Russian suffering was used under the Soviets "as it is now, to cover up the inadequacy of those ruling in safety and comfort from behind the Kremlin walls." "Fear and sycophancy dictated behaviors then, and today's Russian armed forces still carry that Soviet imprint - the imprint of amorality and corruption," he said.

**Bloodbath at PSX as index plunges over 1,400 points**

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed massive selling pressure on Monday as the benchmark KSE-100 index shed more than 1,500 points during intra-day trading. The market began its slide soon after opening at 44,840.81 points, with the benchmark KSE-100 index down 1,543 points, or 3.44%, by 1:59pm. As per the PSX Rulebook, if the index goes 5% above or below its last close and stays there for five minutes, trading in all securities is halted for a specified period. The benchmark index closed at 43,393.14, down 1,447.67 points, or 3.23%. - APP



ISLAMABAD: President ICICI Shakil Munir and his delegation met with Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov in his office and exchanged views on bilateral issues. - DNA

**Took suo moto of dy speaker's ruling after consulting 12 judges: CJP Ata Bandial**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The chief justice took suo moto notice of the ruling against the deputy speaker of the National Assembly after consulting 12 judges of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial said Monday. The 12 judges agreed that the speaker's ruling was a "constitutional matter", the CJP stated during a hearing of the presidential reference seeking an interpretation of Article 63(A) of the Constitution, which concerns the disqualification of lawmakers. In today's hearing, Makhdoom Ali Khan, the lawyer representing PML-N, was to present his arguments, however, he was not in the court. When the court was informed of

Khan's absence by an assistant lawyer, the chief justice said that the bench did not want to delay the matter any further. The court was then told that the PML-N lawyer will return on May 15. Chief Justice Bandial also inquired whether the new attorney general of Pakistan (AGP) will be coming to the court, but he was told that a few things were

pending before his official appointment, after which he will assist the court. While the additional attorney general, who was present in the courtroom, said that he wanted to bring to the

court's notice that the issue of the disgruntled PTI lawmakers was already being heard by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), and that the matter will be decided within 30 days. The CJP said that he was aware of this development, and the court did not have the time to hear the case of each and every defected member of the PTI. He further added the court plans to interpret Article 63(A) for the future generations of the country. In March, Pres-

ident Arif Alvi has sought the opinion of the Supreme Court after it emerged that members of the PTI will be siding with the Opposition in the vote of no confidence against ex-prime minister Imran Khan. In the petition, the president had asked the court if members, who cross party lines, should be disqualified for life. In Monday's hearing, the chief justice told PTI's counsel, Babar Awan, that regardless of how much the courts are criticised, the judges will keep defending the Constitution. Awan replied that he respected the courts. In response to this, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail remarked that he wished that this respect would be spread amongst the public as well. "Tell the people that courts open at night too," the justice added.

**EU's Michel forced to take cover during strike: EU official**

NEWS DESK

KYIV: European Council President Charles Michel, who made a surprise visit to Odessa on Monday, was forced to break off a meeting and take cover when missiles again struck the southern Ukrainian city, an EU official said.

The strike took place as he held talks with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal. "During the meeting with the PM, the participants needed to interrupt the meeting to take shelter as missiles struck again the region of Odessa," the official said. As part of the visit, Michel was shown around the port and "was able to witness first hand the im-

act of Russia's war on global supply chains," the EU official said. "The many tonnes of grain stranded in the port due to the Russian blockade of the Black Sea not only damage Ukraine's economy but equally hamper the world's access to vital food and endanger food security worldwide," the official said. Ukraine is a major global producer and exporter of wheat, but

the invasion has disrupted both planting and distribution, which has been crippled by Russia's destruction of transportation infrastructure and its blockade on Odessa, the main port for grain exports. Before the war Ukraine accounted for about 12 percent of the world's wheat exports, and the conflict has sent the prices of food commodities soaring.

**Ex-director FIA passes away**

LAHORE: Former Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Director Dr Rizwan passed away on Monday due to a heart attack. According to his family, Dr Rizwan suffered a heart attack and was immediately taken to Lahore Services Hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead. His funeral prayers will be held on May 10 (Tuesday) at 10am. Dr Rizwan was a resident of Lahore's Johar Town and was known as one of the most honest and upright police officers, media reported. The newly-elected PML-N-led government last month replaced Dr Rizwan with Additional Director Abu Bakar Khuda Baksh as head of the joint investigation team (JIT) probing the sugar crisis. Dr Rizwan had not only supervised the crackdown against the sugar mafia responsible for shortage of the commodity but also carried out investigations against PTI disgruntled leader Jahangir Tareen and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The officer was not only personally overseeing registration of cases against influential sugar mills owners and speculators but was also analysing data and evidence received from the State Bank of Pakistan, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and other departments.

**WB assures govt for support in future projects**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank on Monday assured full support in future to implement the projects funded by the institution and also economic reforms in the country. The World Bank Regional Vice President for South Asia, Hartwig Schafer had held a meeting with Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, Dr. Mohammad Jahanzeb Khan and discussed the country's development priorities and to support Pakistan's ambitious reform program on economic growth strategy, said a press release issued here. Mr. Schafer was accompanied by the Country Director for Pakistan, Mr. Najy Benhassine; Lire Ersado, Program Leader; Human Development World Bank, Abedalrazq F Khalil; Program Lead Sustainable Development, World Bank, Shahib Ali Mohib and senior economist. During the meeting Mr. Hartwig Schafer appreciated the steps taken by the Planning Commission in various sectors especially in Agriculture and Gender. The vice president underscored the need for structured reforms while appreciating the Planning Commission for approving key projects funded by the World Bank, which includes National Health Support Program, KP Rural (Road) Accessibility Project, Girl's Results Agenda for Development of Education Sector in Punjab. Similarly, the government's development priorities for the next few years were also discussed in various sectors. Mr. Schafer stressed the Planning Commission to focus on Coal and Hydro Power projects which will help Pakistan to meet its energy needs and would contribute toward increased growth rate essential for further progress of the country.

**China ready to build corridor for development: Zhao Lijian**

BEIJING: Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Monday that China was ready to better synergize development and strategy and advance high-quality development of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and build a corridor for digital and green developments. "We stand ready to better synergize our development and strategy and advance high-quality development of CPEC and build a corridor for digital development and green development," he said during his regular briefing held here. He said that China and Pakistan were all weather cooperative partners with profound and wide ranging cooperation. "We will continue to help Pakistan to advance its industrialization, improve capability," he added. The spokesperson hoped that Pakistan would create a safe and convenient environment for Chinese companies. Last week, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif talking to Yi Xiang, Senior Vice President of telecommunications equipment company, Huawei, said foreign tech companies would be facilitated in all respects with regard to investment and expansion. - APP

**Israeli forces kill 2 Palestinian youths**

AGENCIES

**Palestine, Israel on the verge of a new escalation**

TULKARM: Israeli occupation soldiers have shot dead two young Palestinians in separate incidents across the occupied West Bank, amid a flare-up of tensions between Palestinians and Israel in the occupied territories. In a brief statement, Palestine's ministry of health announced "the martyrdom of Mahmoud Sami Khalil Aram" that occurred on Sunday evening, after Israeli forces opened fire on him near the Jbara military checkpoint, south of Tulkarm, the local sources reported. Israeli media reported earlier that the Palestinian youth, who was from the besieged Gaza Strip, was allegedly trying to cross over the separation wall in Tulkarm. In second shooting, a Palestinian youth who was trying to open the gate of Tuqu settlement in eastern Bethlehem by shooting at the lock, was discovered and killed by the guard of the Israeli settlement. Some Israeli sources say four Palestinians tried to

infiltrate the settlement, three of whom fled away after the fourth was shot dead. The youth were identified as Mutasem Mohammed Atahalla from Harmhala

Palestinian attacks began during Ramadan, the last of which was an operation that killed three Israelis in Elad, east of Tel Aviv. Israeli Communications Minister Yoaz Hendel said that the release of Sinwar from prison during the Gilad Shalit deal was a mistake. Knesset Member Avi Dichter of the Likud party said that Sinwar should not reach old age, in reference to his support for the possibility of his assassination. Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz said: "We are looking at our steps and we will make our decisions, and we do it only in closed rooms." - APP

main gates of the occupied Old City of Jerusalem, over an alleged stabbing attack. Israeli media said the killing occurred after an Israeli security officer was stabbed outside the Old City, with the attacker shot and injured. Israeli security forces claimed that a "suspect armed with a knife stabbed an officer" outside the Damascus Gate, who was then taken to hospital in moderate condition. The latest development comes as the Israeli regime has escalated its deadly attacks against Palestinians in the run-up to Ramadan and sustained the violence throughout the holy fasting month, stirring up anti-Israeli sentiments throughout the occupied territories. The Israeli regime has also ramped up its violent attacks on Palestinian worshippers in the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the occupied Old City of al-Quds in recent weeks. Early this month, thousands of people across the globe took to the streets to deplore Israeli violence against Palestinians at al-Aqsa Mosque and elsewhere in the occupied territories.