



Islamabad POST

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Detailed News On Page-08

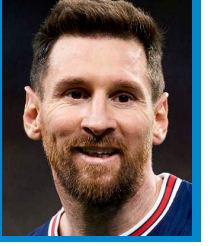
Borrell to do everything to save Iran deal

Detailed News On Page-07



Messi tops highest paid athletes list

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

FM Bilawal to visit the US next week

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will pay an official visit to the United States (US) of America from May 17-18, 2022, the Foreign Office said Thursday. This was announced by Foreign Office Spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmad during his weekly press briefing held here on Thursday. During the trip, FM Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will hold meetings with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other US officials, he added. It would be Bilawal's first official visit as the foreign minister of Pakistan on the invitation of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

BHC Turner meets Ch Shujaat

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: British High Commissioner (BHC) Dr Christian Turner on Thursday called on

PML-Qsupremo and former prime minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. The two discussed the issues of mutual interest during the meeting. BHC Turner also inquired about the health of Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BoI) Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Chaudhry Shafay Hussain, British High Commission representative in Punjab Alex Ballinger, Political Advisor British High Commissioner in Lahore Office Talar Raza and Muntaha Ashraf were also present on the occasion.

Electoral reforms necessary

DNA

LONDON: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said electoral reforms are very essential for holding free, fair and transparent elections in the country. Talking to a private news channel, he said that the government would not go in the general elections by leaving incomplete electoral reforms process. He said his statement regarding appointment of the Army Chief was published without reference and context.

Statements about Gen. Faiz

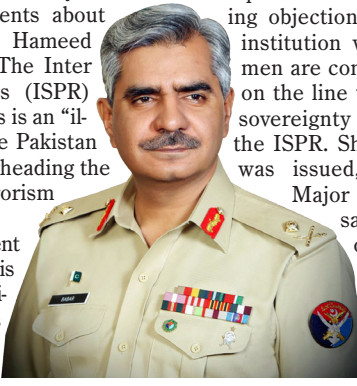
Army says 'imprudent comments' ill-suited

DG ISPR says if someone thinks that there is a division within the armed forces, then they are mistaken

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

RAWALPINDI: Taking note of the "imprudent comments" issued by some "important senior politicians" about the Peshawar Corps commander, the military's media has termed such statements about Lieutenant General Faiz Hameed as "very inappropriate". The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) noted that Peshawar Corps is an "illustrious formation" of the Pakistan Army that has been "spearing the national war against terrorism for over two decades".

"One of the most competent and professional officers is entrusted with the responsibility to lead this prestigious formation. Imprudent comments made by important



senior politicians recently about Corps Commander Peshawar are very inappropriate," said the ISPR. The military's media wing noted that such statements "undermine the honour and morale of the institution and its leadership". "It is expected that the senior political leadership of the country refrains from passing objectionable remarks against the institution whose brave officers and men are constantly putting their lives on the line to guard the integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan," concluded the ISPR. Shortly after the statement was issued, Director-General ISPR Major General Babar Iftikhar said that the armed forces of the country have made "repeated requests" to keep them away from political discourse.

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov calls on Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf. – DNA

Pak, Afghan track two diplomatic mission to meet

SHAMIM SHAHID

ISLAMABAD: Track two diplomatic mission, a joint body of Pakistan and Afghanistan is going to meet at Islamabad on May 15th-18th. It is first ever meeting after empowering of Taliban. Earlier it held nine meetings during Karzai and Ghani governments. Track two mission comprising Pakistanis considered close or loyal to Pakistan secret agencies but receiving financial support from western world. This meeting will be followed by another joint gathering from 22nd till 25th in Islamabad arranged by another think tank. A number of Afghans are likely to attend.

Pakistan proud of its friendship with Azerbaijan

Azerbaijani Ambassador calls on NA Speaker; felicitates him on his election

MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf has said that Pakistan is proud of its everlasting friendship with Azerbaijan. According to details, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov met with Raja Pervez Ashraf and discussed bilateral relations and issues of mutual interest. Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf said that Pakistan values its cordial fraternal relations with Azerbaijan and Pakistan is proud of its everlasting friendship with Azerbaijan. He said that the relations between the two countries' parliaments would be further strengthened through continuous engagement in the parliaments of both the countries, adding that Pakistan wanted cordial relations with its neighbors and all the countries in the region. He said that Pakistan believes in resolving all outstanding issues through dialogue, adding that Pakistan values Azerbaijan's support for Pakistan's position on Kashmir issue in international and regional forums.

Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf said that there are vast opportunities for promotion of bilateral cooperation in economic and social fields in Pakistan and Azerbaijan, and the establishment of Urdu Department at Baku University is commendable. He said that the establishment of Urdu department at Baku University would provide an opportunity for the young generation of both the countries to get acquainted with each other's language, culture and culture. Will bring the people of the two countries closer together. He said that there were vast opportunities in the energy sector in which cooperation could be enhanced and the Pakistani delegation would participate fully in the Paico Conference to be held in Azerbaijan. Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf further said that Paico would play an important role in bringing the member countries closer. The Ambassador of Azerbaijan congratulated Raja Pervez Ashraf on his election as Speaker of the National Assembly, saying that Azerbaijan attaches great importance to its fraternal relations with Pakistan.

Imported govt is not acceptable: Imran

PTI chairman said that it is the responsibility of the brave young people to participate in this struggle

FAISAL MUNIR / DNA

ATTOCK: Former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan is addressing a public gathering in Attock district on Thursday, as part of his party's ongoing campaign to pile pressure on the PML-N-led government to call early elections. The deposed premier has time and again claimed that a "foreign conspiracy" was hatched to topple his government over his refusal to have Pakistan's foreign policy be influenced by others. Since his ouster, he has held public rallies in major cities of the country and announced that he would give a call for a long march to Islamabad after May 20. (Picture on Page 02)

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Two PMs running the country: Sheikh

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: Former interior minister Sheikh Rasheed said that there are two prime ministers running the country one is PML-N quaid Nawaz Sharif and other is Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. He express these views on Thursday in PTI Jalsa in attock. He said that similarly there are two finance ministers in the country on is Finance Minister Miftah Ismail and other is PML-N leader Ishaq Dar.

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ISLAMABAD: US Charge de Affaires Angela Ageler calls on Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. – DNA

Imran Khan challenges SC ruling on Suri's actions

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan has challenged the Supreme Court (SC) judgment that declared the National Assembly deputy speaker's ruling regarding the rejection of a no-confidence motion against him unconstitutional. The review petition contended that the bench of the apex court has erred to appreciate the provisions of the Articles 66, 67 and 69 of the Constitution read with Article 248 that bars the superior court to interfere in the proceedings of the parliament and/or hold inter alia the president, prime minister,

Continued on Page 06

Lettergate: Alvi wants CJP to form judicial commission

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi, in a letter to the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP), has requested to form a Judicial Commission, chaired preferably by the CJP himself, to conduct open hearings and thoroughly probe the allegations of regime change conspiracy to avert political and economic crisis in the country and keep the political powder keg from igniting. Underlining the importance of constituting the Commission, the President said that a serious political crisis was looming in the country and major polarization was taking place in politics, in the wake of recent events, as well as among the people of Pakistan. He emphasized that it was the collective duty of all institutions to make

utmost efforts to avert damaging consequences to the country and prevent further deterioration. The President regretted the fact that random comments were being quoted out of context, misunderstandings were increasing, opportunities were being lost, confusion prevailed, and with the economy also in crisis, the situation on the ground was approaching a political powder keg that may ignite at any time. The President pointed out that the Supreme Court, in the past, had taken initiatives to constitute judicial commissions in matters of national security, integrity, sovereignty and public interest. "A Judicial Commission, headed by Chief Justice Nasir ul Mulk and two Hon'able judges of Supreme Court, inquired

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Sardar Yasir hosts reception for the Kazakhstan delegation – Page 03

US-Pakistan launch initiative to strengthen higher education – Page 04

Ukraine joins Afghanistan and Yemen in shaping Gulf rivalries – Page 05

Internship Program ends with discussion on holistic concepts – Page 06

CG Vancouver and USPICC agree to boost bilateral trade – Page 07

Flamenco dance performance provides a real feast to Islo people – Page 08

Army chief should have flawless past: Maryam

The PML-N vice president says Imran Khan has nothing to show for the four years

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice President Maryam Nawaz on Thursday said that the chief of army staff should be a person who has a "flawless reputation", free from any criticism or doubts. "The chief of the army must be honourable and should be free from any stains on his reputation," she stated, responding to a question. Maryam made these remarks while talking to media personnel outside the Islamabad High Court (IHC) and also said that the army operating within constitutional limits was welcome and that only one person – Imran Khan – had a problem with this. The PML-N vice president maintained former premier Imran Khan had nothing to show for the four years he was in office, and that he needed "letters and conspiracies" because he had demon-

PML-N leadership discusses options in London meeting

NEWS DESK

LONDON: A consultative meeting of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chaired by supreme leader Muhammad Nawaz Sharif was held in London. In a statement, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said that during the meeting various options were discussed for taking a decisive action against the transgressors of the constitution. She said the PML-N leadership is unanimous

in dealing with the violators of the constitution in accordance with the law. PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif was briefed on the serious constitutional, economic and administrative issues inherited by the current government from the previous one. The Information Minister further said that another meeting would be held today for taking final decisions to steer the country out of these challenges. She went on to say that all the decisions would be announced with endorsement of all the coalition parties. The

Information Minister said the meeting was informed that prices of petroleum products had not been increased to provide relief to the masses. She said the meeting was also given detail briefing on the crisis created by the PTI government in the energy sector, especially in form of load shedding. Marriyum Aurangzeb said the meeting also discussed various proposals to help masses get rid of inflation by providing them relief. She said steps taken by the current government so far were also reviewed in detail.

strated no performance. "The former prime minister pushed Pakistan back by 400 years in four years," she said. She stated that whenever Imran, who is also the chief of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), was asked about inflation or why flour and medicine were expensive, he would claim that there was a conspiracy against him. She added that the biggest conspiracy against the country was Imran Khan and that no one could dare to pull off such a conspiracy. "You have brought the country's economy to the intensive care unit (ICU), and yet, you are not ashamed to hold a press conference today," Maryam alleged. The PML-N leader, referring to the PTI, said that these people were holding a press conference against the inflation brought about by them and that Imran Khan was a thief along with his former ministers.

Continued on Page 06

STEAM education system starts in KP

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has officially become the first province in the country to teach STEAM courses in schools starting with Peshawar's Government Higher Secondary School Mathra. The province's Department of Education has partnered with Future Pakistan to empower more than 4 million government school students with several skill-based courses from primary to higher secondary levels.

"We are very proud and excited that Future Pakistan is playing a crucial role alongside the provincial government in developing the progressive future of the children of KP," said Omar Farooqi, Founder, and Chairman of Future Pakistan. Farooqi said that Future Pakistan had received a mandate from the KP Education Ministry to provide STEAM education and health support to children studying in government schools across the province.

Farooqi also lauded KPK Education Minister Shahram Khan Tarakai's commitment to education. "We are grateful to Minister Tarakai, who supported us and gave us huge responsibility. Without his guidance and the Education Department's support, this endeavor would not have been possible," he said. Farooqi said that Minister Tarakai is very committed to the cause of empowerment of KPK children with 21st-century skills and education.

"We will provide three short courses on different technology skills to students every year for five years across the province. We started our first school in Peshawar and will be adding schools organically. A Hackathon will be organized every year to showcase the local talent and skills these children have acquired over a year. It will be a gradual learning process," he said.

According to him, the idea is to produce the best technology brains not just for Pakistan but also for the world, making KPK the breeding ground of tech talent

in South Asia and beyond. Farooqi also said that students and their families would also be provided regular health checkups and medical support from the next month. "We believe that a hungry and sick child and family cannot learn anything no matter how much effort we make. A good education has to be complemented with good health support. Hence Future Pakistan wants to make sure that every child and family benefits from this scheme," said Farooqi.

Mohammed Arsalan, a grade 8 student at the Government High School in Mathra Peshawar, was very excited to attend the first class. "My father is a carpenter. I want to become a software engineer and help my father and his business grow globally. I never thought that I would start learning these courses from my school. This is very exciting. I am very thankful to my school for making my dream. Students like me can acquire the knowledge and skills to build our future and fulfill our ambitions," 13-year-old Arsalan said.



ATTOCK: PTI Chairman Imran Khan addressing a public gathering. – DNA

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Khuda Yar Civil Judge 1st Class Gujrat

Title: Muhammad Tariq Versus: Province of Punjab etc.

Notice to: 1. Incharge Land Record Centre Village Poran Tehsil Sarai Alamgir District Gujrat, 2. Muhammad Banaras son of Sardar Khan Caste Rajput R/O Poran Tehsil Sarai Alamgir District Gujrat

Suit For Declaration with consequential and permanent injunction

Whereas in the above mentioned case it has been proved to the satisfaction of the court that the above mentioned defendants are not to be served in ordinary way. It is therefore proclaimed under order 5 rule 20 CPC that if the said defendants will not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8 AM on 14-05-2022.

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Madam Shagufta Sabir Judge Family Court Gujrat

Title: Asmat Nazeer etc. Versus: Muhammad Irfan Khan etc.

Notice to: 1. Muhammad Irfan Khan S/O Muhammad Khan, 2. Muhammad Khan S/O Mehran Khan R/O Sarley Kalan Tehsil Phalia District Mandi Baha Uddin

Suit For Dissolution of Marriage, Maintenance, delivery expenditure & dowry articles

Whereas in the above mentioned case it has been proved to the satisfaction of the court that the above mentioned defendants are not to be served in ordinary way. It is therefore proclaimed under order 5 rule 20 CPC that if the said defendants will not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8 AM on 20-05-2022.

Court Reporter Gujrat 0333-8409964 Qaisar Mehmood Warraich

Speakers call for promoting interfaith harmony

KARACHI: Academics, human rights activists, government officials and civil society members at a seminar here on Thursday called for the need of further promotion of interfaith harmony for the eradication of extremism. The seminar on "Interfaith Harmony in Sindh" was organized by The Knowledge Forum (TKF) in consultation with the Sindh Madressatul Islam University at the university premises, said a statement.

MPA, Ms. Mangla Sharma; Secretary of Human Rights Sindh, Ms. Noreen Bashir; Bishop of Karachi and Balochistan Frederick John; Prof. Dr. Zahid Ali Chanar, Dean at Faculty of Social Sciences at SMIU; Dr. Subhash Gurio from Social Development Faculty of SMIU; Prof. Dr. Shahzad Channa from

Regional Dawah Centre of International Islamic University, Islamabad; Prof. Dr. Jahan Ara Lutfi from Sheikh Zayed Islamic Centre, University of Karachi; Ms. Naghma Shaikh and Shujaiddin Qureshi from TKF were the main speakers. MPA, Ms. Mangla Sharma said that Sindh was a province, where people were living in peace for centuries. "I used to study Islamiyat in my school and my children have also read it," she said, adding that some anti-social elements were spreading violence in the society.

Secretary Human Rights Sindh Ms. Noreen Bashir asked the students to work for spreading tolerance and peace in the society. She said social media had provided opportunities to work for peace in society. Dr. Jahan Ara Lutfi said Islam was a religion of peace.



GILGIT: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Qamar Zaman Kaira in a meeting with Ex-Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez Ur Reman during his first visit to Gilgit-Baltistan. – APP

Restoration of Saturday's holiday for banks opposed

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Business community here expressed serious concern over restoration of Saturday's holiday for bank employees across the country. The community demanded the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to review its decision and to abolish the Saturday holiday forthwith. The apprehensions

were raised during a traders' and industrialists meeting that was chaired by Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Hasnain Khurshid Ahmad, held here at Chamber's House on Thursday. The meeting was attended by the chamber's senior vice president Imran Khan Mohmand, vice president Javed Akhtar, former presidents, executive members, traders', industrialists, importers and exporters. Hasnain Khurshid noted the country's economy is rapidly leading toward downgrading, which is mostly dependent on exports and foreign exchange reserves. On the other hand, he said it is witnessing sluggish trends in businesses, trade and exports in the aftermath of several novel coronavirus waves in the country generally and particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The SCCI chief went on to say that the restoration of commercial banks Saturday's holiday in such a depressing economic conditions and scenario couldn't be

Targeting COAS is tantamount to Army

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PML-Q Deputy Secretary Information Khawaja Rameez Hassan said in a press release that no nation anywhere in the world who's criticized its defense institutions. He said that Pakistan is the only country where a regular propaganda campaign is launched against the forces and law enforcement agencies in case of any political change and crisis. He said that Pakistan Army has already made it clear that it has nothing to do with political issues.

FESCO chief to hold E-court

FAISALABAD: CEO of FESCO Engineer Bashir Ahmad will hold an E-court (Khuli Kutchehry) on Facebook, here on Saturday, May 14, 2022. A spokesman said on Thursday that the open court would start at 10:30 a.m. and the FESCO chief would listen to electricity related complaints till 12:30 noon. – APP

AC takes action against violators of one dish rule

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Assistant Commissioner City Sahibzada Muhammad Yousof took action and arrested the managers of two marriage halls and sealed the marquees for violating one dish and closing time. AC checked the 24 marriage halls in different area and clarified to the owners and managers of the marriage halls that violation of the Marriage Act is not acceptable and therefore one-dish and punctuality should be ensured in the marriage ceremonies otherwise the halls and managers would be in jail. He said that checking should be continued and there is a zero tolerance policy in this regard.

Meanwhile the Spokesperson of district administration has said that the Marriage Act is being fully and suc-

cessfully implemented in the district and timely measures taken by the district administration have resulted in significant reduction in one-dish violations in marriage halls. He said the officer of district administration had checked 48 marriage halls in one day and out of the inspections, only one violation was reported and two

managers were arrested for the violation in Tehsil City and the marriage hall was fined Rs. 50,000. He said that one dish and fixed time of 10 pm will not be allowed to be violated and checking teams are also preparing a comprehensive action plan for the marriage functions on weekend (Saturday and Sunday).



DPO assures protection, assistance to minorities

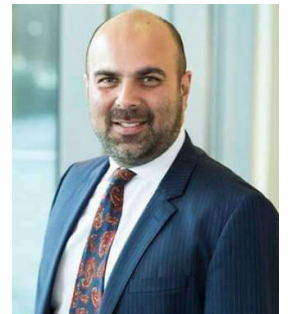
PESHAWAR: District Police Officer (DPO) Hangu, Asif Bahadur Thursday assured full security to the minority community and said that they were free to practice their religion and celebrate festivals. While talking to the leaders of the community in his office, he shared that necessary steps were taken to protect their [minority community] religious sites and rights, as enshrined in the constitution. Bahadur further said, "The Hangu police is a professional force and is fully capable to protect lives, property and religious places of the minorities".

The minority community leaders, Namat Kumar and Yaqoob Masih expressed gratitude to DPO and added that the community would fully cooperate with the police in performing duties. – APP

KP govt taking measures for uplift of merged districts

DNA

PESHAWAR: Minister for Finance Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Taimur Saleem Jhagra on Thursday said the provincial government was making sincere efforts for the socio-economic development of the merged districts. Addressing a press conference here, the provincial finance minister said that budget for the tribal districts, which stood at Rs 32 billion before the merger, has now swelled to record Rs 77 billion. He added that all such development-oriented measures spoke high volumes of the provincial government's sincerity and efforts. Similarly, the development budget for the tribal districts was Rs 21 billion, that was increased to Rs 37 billion in the budget 2019-20, while Rs 54 billion were earmarked in 2021-22. Jhagra said that criticism at talk shows would not serve the purpose, and



underlined the need for the government to release the fourth quarter development budget for the merged tribal districts. He said that the federal government had withheld Rs 17 billion of the merged tribal districts, adding that he would write a letter to the finance division to get rights of those districts. Similarly, Taimur added that funds meant for inclusion of the tribal districts into 'Sehat Card Plus' facility had not been released yet. He further stated that amount which was owed to the KP government under the net hydel profit was still awaited.

Govt should promote solar energy through relaxed taxation

Dr. Muhammad Arif said that aggressive research in solar energy is going on and experts are trying to produce new solar panels with multiple facilities in addition to enhancing its life up to 40 years

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Solar energy is the future of Pakistan and the government must encourage and promote it through relaxed taxation measures, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). Addressing a seminar on solar energy in FCCI here today, he said that this safe, cheap and renewable energy is most particularly for the third world countries who could not bear the production of costly energy generated by fossil fuel. He said that although Pakistan is facing a shortage of energy, we must have a futuristic vision to concentrate on enhancing our dependence

on energy with zero carbon emission to overcome the challenges of global warming. He said that Pakistan is most suitably located in a region where sunlight is available 17 hours during a day but we are unable to exploit this unlimited resource of Allah Almighty. He further said that the gov-

ernment should also exempt import of solar panels from all taxes to encourage its use at domestic, commercial and industrial level. He said that, we want to use green energy by converting FCCI complex from FESCO to solar and in this connection, ZG Solarage must cooperate with FCCI by offering subsidized

rates. He said that installation of this solar system would certainly encourage 7300 FCCI members to avail this facility at their homes and workplaces. Earlier Mr. Gulraiz Khan of ZG Solarage Private Limited underlined the importance of solar energy and said that he was trying his

best to introduce this system for the benefit of the people in addition to saving the environment from the ill impact of global warming. Engineer Ahmad Hassan, Chairman FCCI standing committee on R & D said that 27, 044 Twh is generated throughout the world. "Out of it 36.7% electricity

is produced through coal which is intensively polluting the environment", he said and added that the share of electricity generated through solar, wind, tidal and geothermal is only 8.2%. He further said that China is the largest producer and consumer of solar energy with 33%. He said that this energy is comparatively much cheaper and hence the cost of industrial production in China is much cheaper than the other countries. "It is one of the major factors for its competition in the world markets", he said and added that we should also promote solar energy to reduce our cost of industrial production and make our exportable surplus competitive in the global markets.



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Briefs

US urges 'transparent' probe into journalist's killing

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States on Wednesday denounced the killing of Palestinian-American Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh as she covered an Israeli army raid and called for a thorough investigation. State Department spokesman Ned Price said the United States was "absolutely heartbroken" to learn of her death and the injuries to her producer in the occupied West Bank. "We send our deepest condolences to Shireen's family, friends and loved ones and strongly condemn her killing, as we do the killing of journalists around the world," he said. The US ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, called for the killing to be "investigated transparently." "We're encouraging both sides to participate in that investigation so that we can get down to why this happened," US ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said. Washington's "highest priority is protection of American citizens and the protection of journalists," she added. Thomas-Greenfield said she had been interviewed by Abu Akleh during a visit to the region last year and had "extraordinary respect for her." The Qatar-based Al Jazeera television channel charged that Israeli forces deliberately and "in cold blood" shot veteran reporter Abu Akleh, 51, in the head during the unrest in the Jenin refugee camp. But Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett suggested "armed Palestinians" were "likely" responsible, although Defense Minister Benny Gantz appeared to distance himself from the remarks and said he "cannot exclude any option." The European Union called for an "independent" investigation. Price said the United States could not judge who killed her but welcomed an investigation led by Israel. "The Israelis have the wherewithal and the capabilities to conduct a thorough, comprehensive investigation," he told reporters. The investigation must end with "those responsible for her death being held responsible for their actions."

Pak, China to carry forward friendship: Zhao Lijian

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistan and China have agreed to carry forward traditional friendship and both the countries will never allow any force to sabotage their all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. This was stated by Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian during his regular briefing in Beijing Thursday. Referring the virtual meeting of State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi with his Pakistani counterpart Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, he said the two foreign ministers reached important consensus on deepening our all-whether strategic cooperative partnerships and political cooperation. He informed that the two foreign ministers exchanged views on further strengthening the safeguarding of safety for Chinese citizens and institutions in Pakistan during their first meeting since the new government in Pakistan came into office. "It is also the first official bilateral meeting after Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was sworn in," he added. The spokesperson said, the two foreign ministers reached important consensus on deepening our all-whether strategic cooperative partnerships and political cooperation, adding, "Both agreed that China and Pakistan should carry forward our traditional friendship." He said that friendship towards China remained the shared consensus in Pakistan transcending political differences. Foreign Minister Bilawal reiterated that the China-Pakistan friendship remained the cornerstone for Pakistan's foreign policy, and also was a strategic priority for Pakistan.

Flamenco dance performance provides a real feast to Islo people

The artists will also perform in Faisalabad, Lahore and Karachi. Ambassador Duran deserves kudos for introducing this sort of music in Pakistan

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Spain in collaboration with the Islamabad Club organized Flamenco dance performance in the beautiful laws of the Islamabad Cricket Club, adjacent to Pakistan Sports Complex. The venue is recently inaugurated with the efforts of the Cabinet Secretary and Administrator of the Islamabad Club Ahmed Nawaz Sukhera, who himself happens to be a great lover of Cricket and a Cricketer himself.

Ambassador of Spain Manuel Duran in his brief remarks introduced the Spanish artists to the audience besides giving a brief description of what the artists were going to present. The audience could not resist themselves to shower huge applause on the artists after witnessing their spell-binding performance. The artists will also perform in Faisalabad, Lahore and Karachi. Ambassador Duran deserves kudos for introducing this sort of music in Pakistan. During his tenure he has facilitated a number of such performances. The last performance that was organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs drew huge interest. The ambassador said, last year we celebrated a very special anniversary: 70 years ago diplomatic relations between Spain and Pakistan started by establishing in 1951 our first Embassy in Karachi, which was then moved to Islamabad.

Since then, me and all my predecessors have been working with one goal in mind: strengthening ties between our countries and peoples, increasing contacts and encouraging Pakistani citizens discover all that Spain represents: an open, friendly country, with a long and rich history that connects us with the rest of the world. As you know, Spanish culture is immense and diverse, the result of centuries of evolution and contacts with other peoples. 'And I would like today to focus precisely on culture: the Spanish Embassy has brought a flamenco



music group directly from Seville, Andalusia, to Islamabad. Today will be the starting point of a tour that will take them to other cities'. While talking about the dance, he said, flamenco, even if it needs no introduction: Flamenco is one Spain's most valuable world intangible cultural heritage manifestations, as listed by UNESCO. It is a mix of dance, singing and clapping. And the roots

of flamenco was born. As you see, even if 6,500 kilometers separate our two countries, culture brings us together and shows us how close we can be. I hope you enjoy today's cultural show. 'I would like to hand a small token of gratitude and respect to the honorable Administrator, Mr. Ahmad Nawaz Sukhera, and to the respected Secretary, Mr. Shehryar Mirza'.

Madinah incident: IHC refrains police from registering FIRs

The IHC CJ said using religion for politics is tantamount to contempt to oneself and a serious violation of human rights. CJ said that things will go wrong if society will not have tolerance and forgiveness

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Athar Minallah on Thursday stopped the police from registering 'blasphemy' cases against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders. The case hearing has been adjourned for two weeks and summoned by the attorney general in the next hearing. IHC CJ Athar Minallah remarked that it is the responsibility of the political leadership to create harmony in society. "Religious sentiments are important but the state has some responsibility. We have seen that religion was used in the past and it is the Constitution which united people," CJ remarked. Chief Justice Athar Minallah said that he saw the FIR and it should not have been registered at first and in general the cases registered in Pakistan are not correct. The IHC CJ said using religion for politics is tantamount to contempt to oneself and a serious violation of human rights. "CJ said that things will go wrong if society will not have tolerance and forgiveness. IHC CJ remarked, "What happened in Madinah city was absolutely not the right thing but it occurred there." The top judge of the Islamabad High Court said that there should be some rules of policies and religion must not be used for politics.

Former information minister Fawad Chaudhary appeared before the IHC and said that he was surprised at the lodging of such cases. Fawad Chaudhary said, "We have full commitment. We will not use religious cards against each other. The government should also not use the religious cards." Fawad said that he witnessed martial laws and other discriminations in the past but never a contempt of religion case was registered. He said he has close relations with the Law Minister but he was surprised by his statements. Fawad added, "This trend that has started will pose dangerous consequences." - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul calls on Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar. - DNA

Sri Lanka bans ex-PM, allies from leaving country

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has appointed MP Ranil Wickremesinghe as new prime minister

COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan court on Thursday banned former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, his politician son Namal and 15 allies from leaving the country over violence against anti-government demonstrators. The magistrate in capital Colombo ordered police to investigate Monday's mob attacks on peaceful protesters, which led to retaliatory violence that claimed nine lives and caused widespread destruction. A petition to the court had also asked for an arrest warrant against Rajapaksa and his associates, a court official AFP. "But the magistrate turned it down because police anyway have powers to detain any suspect," the official added. Victims of Monday's violence say that Rajapaksa and key aides had bussed around 3,000 of their supporters into the capital and instigated them to attack peaceful protesters. The loyalist mob poured out of his residence and assaulted anti-government demonstrators with sticks and clubs.

Buddhist monks and Catholic priests were among at least 225 people hospitalised after the attack. Reprisals soon spread across the country, with dozens of homes of Rajapaksa loyalists set ablaze. The premier resigned and had to be evacuated from his home by heavily armed troops. The 76-year-old former leader is currently holed up at a naval facility in the east of the island nation. His former minister son Namal told AFP on Tuesday that the family had no intention of leaving the country. Meanwhile, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has appointed a new prime minister as he tries to defuse protests over his handling of a severe economic crisis. Senior opposition MP Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn in to lead a proposed cross-party government. The move came after the president ignored calls to resign, and vowed to restore order in a national address. Nine people have been killed and 200 injured in unrest since his brother resigned as prime minister on Monday. During his nationwide address, Mr Rajapaksa said he would appoint a new prime minister who commanded the majority of support in parliament, as well as a new cabinet. Mr Wickremesinghe has been on Sri Lanka's political scene for decades - this will be his sixth stint as prime minister, although he's never seen out a full term. - Agencies

Palestine rejects Israel's request

WEB DESK

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Authority (PA) rejected an Israeli request for a joint investigation into the killing of senior Al Jazeera journalist, a Palestinian official said on Thursday. "Israel has requested a joint investigation and to be handed over the bullet that assassinated journalist Shireen, we refused that," senior PA official Hussein Al-Sheikh said on Twitter. Abu Akleh, 51, was shot in the head by the Israeli army while covering a military raid in the West Bank city of Jenin on Wednesday, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. The PA will carry out its own investigation "independently," said Al-Sheikh, adding that it will "inform her family, the US, Qatar, and all official authorities and the public of the results of the investigation." "All of the indicators, the evidence, and the witnesses confirm her assassination by Israeli special units," he added. Israel's defense minister on Wednesday said Israel had requested a joint probe with the Palestinian Authority into the journalist's killing.

Borrell to do everything to save Iran deal

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell will do "everything possible" to bring Iran nuclear talks back on track and ensure full compliance with the treaty, an EU official said on Thursday. "This is the interest and the role of the coordinator (of the Iran nuclear deal) to do everything he can in order to save this agreement," Peter Stano, the lead spokesperson of the EU diplomatic service, told reporters at the European Commission's daily news briefing. He stressed that Borrell is committed "to make everything possible to bring the ongoing talks about the full compliance to a successful conclusion." Stano also underlined that the EU countries, the members of the treaty, and the entire international community want these efforts from the EU foreign policy chief as the coordinator since the agreement "is an important part of the non-proliferation architecture."

Covid has claimed 1 million lives in US: Biden

ANKARA: The more than two-year COVID-19 pandemic in the US has so far claimed one million lives, said President Joe Biden on Thursday. The country "marks a tragic milestone and each was an irreplaceable loss," Biden said in a statement. Each life lost left behind "a family, a community, and a nation forever changed because of this pandemic. Jill and I pray for each of them," he added, referring to the first lady. Calling on Americans to "remain vigilant against this pandemic," he said it is "critical" that Congress sustain resources, including testing, vaccines, and treatments in the coming months. While marking the landmark losses, the statement also came amid Biden's fight for Congress to pass more money for COVID prevention and treatment, in the US and abroad, an effort that is currently stalled. Since December 2019, the coronavirus has claimed over 6.25 million lives in at least 192 countries and regions, with over 519 million cases reported worldwide, according to the US' Johns Hopkins University. - Agencies

PTI minister threatened of martial law: Bilawal

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari Thursday revealed a PTI minister had threatened him with the imposition of martial law a night before the no-confidence motion against ex-prime minister Imran Khan was passed. In his address to the National Assembly, Bilawal told the house that the PTI minister asked him to either accept early elections or martial law would be imposed in the country. The foreign minister said that despite PTI's repeated attempts to defeat the no-confidence motion against the former premier, their bids were foiled and the no-trust vote was successful. Bilawal then demanded an investigation into the events leading up to and post the no-confidence motion that led to former

prime minister Imran Khan's ouster. Ex-deputy speaker Qasim Suri had termed the no-trust motion against Khan "unconstitutional" and dismissed it on April 3, and following this, the then-prime minister advised President Arif Alvi to dissolve the assemblies and he followed suit. But the then-Opposition filed a plea in the Supreme Court seeking the nullification of the government's move. The top court then on April 7, declared the government's decision to dissolve the assembly and Suri's ruling against the constitution. The SC had asked to hold the voting on the no-confidence motion on April 9, but Khan had the speaker prolong the session. But near midnight, the speaker resigned from office. Being the senior member of the panel of chairs, PML-N MNA Ayaz Sadiq chaired a session on early April 10 and held the voting

no-confidence motion which ultimately led to Khan's ouster. "This house must form a high-level parliamentary commission or committee to investigate the events leading up to April 3, post-April 3, of the night of April 9 and 10, and the events that have taken place to date after [the no-confidence motion was successful]," Bilawal said on the floor of the National Assembly. The PPP chairman said the "attacks on the constitution and the house" should be taken seriously, and an investigation should be held to determine who was at fault. "Even the Supreme Court termed the previous government's acts of April 3 as unconstitutional. In the way that the former government tried to escape from the challenge of the no-confidence motion, it was unconstitutional and the people of Pakistan demand accountability," he added.



National Days and Armed Forces Days

- APRIL**
 April 04 / Senegal National Day
 April 07 / W. H. O. World Health Day
 April 12 / Somalia Armed Forces Day
 April 15 / DPR Korea The Day of the Sun
 April 16 / Denmark National Day
 April 17 / Iran Army Day
 April 17 / Syria Independence Day
 April 18 / Zimbabwe Independence Day
 April 24 / Holy See Anniversary of His Papacy of his Pontificate
 April 25 / DPR Korea Armed Forces Day
 April 26 / Tanzania National Day
 April 27 / Sierra Leone Independence Day
 April 27 / South Africa Freedom Day
 April 30 / Sweden Birthday of His Majesty
 April 30 / Netherlands Birthday of Queen



Hotels & Restaurants
 Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
 Marriott.....051- 2826121
 Monal.....0334-5421812



Airlines
 Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency
 Rescue (Police).....15
 Bomb Disposal.....15
 Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
 Emergency Ambulance..1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
 Motorway Police.....9266044
 Motorway Police..9270601-20
 Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
 Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry
 Edhi Ambulance.....115
 PIA Flight Info.....114
 PIA Cargo.....9280979
 Railway Inquiry.....117
 Railway Exchange 9270831-5
 WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
 CAA.....9281092



Hospitals
 CMH.....5611111
 MH.....5611116
 Cantt Hospital..9270907-11
 DHQ.....5556311-4
 RGH.....9290301-7
 Holy Family.....9290322-7
 PIMS.....9261170-79
 Polyclinic.....9218300-09
 Shifa International.4603666



Departments
 CDA.....9221334-43
 CDA.....9208301-04
 Met Office.....9250360-6
 RDA.....5555864
 TMA.....5770886
 Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan
 Corporation.....9209224
 Potohar Town.....9209224
 Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank
 Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Sardar Yasir hosts reception for the Kazakhstan delegation

Ambassador of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Kistafin expressed his sincere gratitude to Mr. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan



ISLAMABAD: A business delegation of "Edelweiss" LLP representatives, the Scientific and Production Union, visited Islamabad. The purpose of the visit was the enterprises of military-industrial complex of Pakistan. During the visit to POF (Pakistan Ordnance Factories) and PAC (Pakistan Aeronautical Complex Kamra), the Kazakhstan delegation got acquainted with the products of these enterprises, as well as their production capacities. Mutual interest was expressed in the development of cooperation between the military-industrial enterprises of the two countries in certain areas. In general, the parties noted the need to increase bilateral military-technical cooperation. In the evening, in honor of the delegation of Kazakhstan businessmen, Mr. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, the former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, CEO of Sardar Group of Companies, organized a reception for the business circles of the capital and official representatives. During the event, the parties noted the existing potential for the development of economic cooperation. Ambassador of Kazakhstan H.E. Mr. Yerzhan Kistafin expressed his sincere gratitude to Mr. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan for the high level of the reception and informative discussions.

US Embassy and UAJK celebrate anniversary of Lincoln Corner

ISLAMABAD: US Embassy's Minister Counselor for Public Affairs Raymond Castillo and Vice Chancellor Dr. Kaleem Abbasi joined faculty and students to celebrate the 15-year anniversary of the Lincoln Corner at the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in Muzaffarabad and to renew its Memorandum of Understanding for another two years. Established in 2007, the Lincoln Corner at University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir is one of the longest serving in Pakistan. "As we mark this 15-year anniversary celebration, we have many activities also to look forward to in the future. Today I have the pleasure of announcing the launch of the Academy of Women Entrepreneurs training for Lincoln Corner Muzaffarabad starting June 11. AWE Pakistan is a competitive, fully-funded program offered by the U.S. Mission to Pakistan to help women entrepreneurs with the skills, resources, and networks needed to establish and grow their businesses, through facilitated, online learning," Mr. Castillo said in his remarks. "The 15th year anniversary celebration is also part of a larger 75th anniversary celebration of U.S.-Pakistan bilateral relations. Our partnership has grown in many areas, and we look forward to building on our successes and expanding further on the ties between the American and Pakistani people," noted Minister Counselor Castillo. The Lincoln Corner at the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir's City Campus includes a Maker Space with a 3-D printer and virtual reality headsets, a comprehensive collection of books, magazines, scholarly databases, and an Americana-themed public events space. Lincoln Corner Muzaffarabad is part of a network of 19 American Spaces across Pakistan and more than 600 across the world. In Pakistan, these Spaces are partnerships between the U.S. Mission to Pakistan and eminent Pakistani institutes of education and culture. Lincoln Corners are event spaces and resource centers that connect young leaders with the United States.

NA urges India to reverse illegal actions

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Thursday passed a unanimous resolution calling upon the international community to ensure accountability of India's grave and persistent violations of human rights, war crimes being committed in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu Kashmir (IIOJK). The resolution was moved by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari that urged India to immediately halt and reverse unilateral and all illegal actions it had taken in IIOJK and fulfill its obligations under the relevant UNSC resolutions. The House recalled the resolution of 6 August 2019 adopted unanimously by the Parliament of Pakistan and subsequent resolutions rejecting India's illegal, unilateral, reckless and coercive actions aimed at altering the internationally recognized disputed status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Alarming situation in IIOJK is arising out of continued Indian occupation in violation of international law and UN Security Council resolutions. The House expressed grave concern over the series of illegal measures that the Indian occupation forces had been taking to change the demographic composition of the occupied territories in stark violation of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council. It denounced the latest attempt at demographic engineering in IIOJK through a so-called 'Delimitation Commission' constituted in March 2020 in the occupied territory aimed at artificially altering the electoral strength of the Muslim majority in IIOJK. Noting that the Commission's recommendations had been rejected by a cross section of political parties in IIOJK, the House reaffirmed Pakistan's complete support and solidarity with the Kashmiri people. It rejected categorically the report of the so-called 'Delimitation Commission' that sought converting the Muslim majority of IIOJK into minority, and further marginalize, disenfranchise and disempower the Kashmiri population in IIOJK, and advance the political and electoral objectives of the BJP. The House expressed grave concern that through the 'delimitation' exercise, India was making attempts to further its illegal actions of 5 August 2019 and subsequent measures all of which had been categorically rejected by Pakistan and the Kashmiri people. The National Assembly recalled and reaffirmed that "the Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally recognized dispute and a long-standing item on the agenda of the UN Security Council." It declared that no facade of 'elections' based on a sham 'delimitation' exercise could substitute the legitimacy and indispensability of a free and impartial plebiscite held under the auspices of the United Nations to enable the Kashmiri people exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with the relevant UNSC Resolutions. It demanded that India must honor and fulfill its obligations under the international law, UNSC Resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention to refrain from bringing about any illegal demographic changes in the occupied territory. The House urged the Indian Government "to forthwith end its oppression and widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in IIOJK, and enable the Kashmiri people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination as enshrined in the relevant UNSC resolutions." The resolution reiterated the unflinching commitment and solidarity of Pakistan and the Pakistani people with Kashmiri brothers and sisters and reaffirmed that Pakistan would continue to extend all possible support in their just struggle for freedom and self-determination. - APP

RCCI to organise gems, jewellery and fashion expo

STAFF REPORT
 RAWALPINDI: The three-day Gems, Jewellery and Fashion Exhibition organised by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) will be held from May 20 to 22 at the Serena Hotel, Islamabad. President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce, Nadeem Rauf, while talking to media at the Chamber on Thursday said the primary aim of the exhibition was to encourage local traders and industrialists to take up the non-conventional sector like the gemstone business. He was accompanied by Sohail Altaf, Group Leader, Fayyaz Qureshi, Chairman Expo, and President Small Chambers Sheikh Asif Idrees. "The only solution to the current economic uncertainty was the signing of the Charter of Economy by all political parties", Nadeem Rauf said. Nadeem said although Pakistan's current economic situation and the environment were down and unfavorable, however, the business community and the Rawalpindi Chamber believed that trade activities should be continued in one form or another. He said that India's annual gems and jewellery exports amounted to more than 40 billion dollars, while it was only 24 million dollars in Pakistan. Responding to a question, Group Leader Sohail Altaf said that the business community was deeply concerned over the current economic and political uncertainty. He appealed to all political parties to think of the country beyond political affiliation. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Expo Fayyaz Qureshi informed that more than 50 stalls would be set up in the exhibition while exhibitors from all over the country would participate in the show. Conference and BTB meetings have also been arranged on the occasion of the exhibition. He asked the government to give incentives for the gems sector while tax exemption should be provided for setting up modern machinery and testing lab. Fayyaz also demanded the government to set up Expo Centres in Rawalpindi Islamabad.

Two gangs of snatchers held

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police busted two criminal gangs involved in numerous snatching incidents in the areas of Tarnol and Golra police stations, the police spokesman said on Thursday. He said a team of Golra police station led by SHO Nadeem Tahir apprehended two accused identified as Hameed and Usman of a snatchers gang and recovered two mobile phones and weapons from their possession. The accused were involved in looting people at gun point in areas of Sector G-13, chungi no. 26, GT road and other areas of the city. - APP

Briefs

ACB spring gala to start from today

ABBOTTABAD: Abbottabad Cantonment Board (ACB) has organized a three-day annual Spring Gala at Lady Garden from May 13, with various activities including wildlife, various industrial sectors, flower exhibition, and children's interest programs. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Amara Ammar while talking to the media persons said that after a break of two years owing to the outbreak of coronavirus the three-day Spring Gala is a tradition of Cantonment Board Abbottabad. Besides ACB, military commanders of the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) and other units would participate in the spring gala. During the exhibition, Lady Garden will be opened to families only from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. CEO said that the Spring Gala was a good activity for the Cantonment Board, which includes various informative programs like wildlife, different industries, and food stalls would not only provide information but also a source of entertainment for the families. She said that to encourage the female participants cash prizes would also be given to them, registration is open and all interested women could enroll themselves in the spring gala. - APP

IRSA releases 180577 cusecs water

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Thursday released 180577 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 189413 cases. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1082.65 feet, which was 32.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded a 36447 and 33211 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 83083,73077 and 31010 cases respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River, a total of 37400 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 24966 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala.

Govt notifies transfer, posting of officers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Thursday notified transfer and posting of high rank officers. According to a notification issued by Establishment Division, Zahid Akhtar Zaman, a BS-21 officer of Pakistan Administrative Service, presently posted as Additional Secretary, Cabinet Division, is transferred and his services are placed at the disposal of Government of the Punjab with immediate effect and until further orders. While, Dawood Muhammad Bareach, a BS-21 officer of Pakistan Administrative Service, presently posted as Additional Secretary, Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Division, is assigned current charge of the post of Secretary, Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Division for a period of three months or till the posting of a regular incumbent; whichever is earlier, with immediate effect.

Chilam Joshi Festival starts

ISLAMABAD: A four-day Chilam Joshi festival, will kick off today in Kalash Valley, the festival commemorates the arrival of summer and celebrates the abundance of dairy products during the season. The people of Kalash love music and dance to the beat of drums. Both men and women partake in dancing festivities, where they make circles and enjoy the sound of music. This festival gives an excellent opportunity to celebrate the beginning of summer and to give a message of peace to the world. - APP

Pak, US launch initiative to strengthen higher education



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The United States Government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is partnering with the Pakistani government to launch a \$19 million, five-year program to improve Pakistan's higher education system and increase the employability of university graduates. This is another example of the breadth of cooperation between the United States and Pakistan as we celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations.

The program will integrate the best practices in teaching, research, governance, and sustainability to benefit 15 public Pakistani universities across the country, including five women's universities. Through this program, universities will provide students with research opportunities, soft-skills training, and support services such as career counseling. Through collaboration with industry, the program will help align academic preparation with workforce needs.

"USAID is proud to collaborate with the Higher Education Commission on this program," said USAID Mission Director Julie A. Koenen. "The Higher Education System Strengthening Activity (Hessa) will build stronger Pakistani universities that offer the education and research experiences students need to be more employable in the local market. This will prepare talented young people with the required skills to find jobs and launch their careers. It will also support the needs of industry, increase

hiring and productivity, and stimulate further economic growth." HEC Chairman Dr. Tariq Banuri said, "Hessa is an innovative initiative expected to make notable contributions towards improving the institutional and technical capacities of its partner universities which shall impact the quality of our future scholars. I am confident that the nexus of U.S. universities with HESA-partner higher education institutions will result in policy reforms that will benefit all universities in Pakistan."

Govt working to enhance trade connectivity with Central Asia

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Syed Naveed Qamar said here that Ministry of Commerce was working on a policy to enhance trade and connectivity with Central Asia, through Afghanistan and Iran. The ministry has already taken several measures to materialize this policy, the minister said in a written reply to a question to National Assembly. He said, Pakistan and Afghanistan have finalized and implemented main operational part of Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA 2021) which would ensure free movement of trucks between the two countries. He said, agreement between Uzbekistan and Pakistan on Transit Trade was signed on July 15, 2021 which provides free movement of trucks between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. The transit trade agreements, he added, were also being negotiated with Kazakhstan and Tajikistan while Pak-Uzbekistan Preferential Trade Agreement

(PTA) was signed on March 3rd, 2022.

The Agreement provides preferential access of products of one country in the market of the other, by eradicating trade barriers. He said, PTA was also being negotiated with Azerbaijan whereas Pakistan had also established Joint Working Groups (JWGs) on Trade with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. The JWGs would help to ensure economic cooperation by holding business forums, exhibitions, seminars and eradicating technical barriers to trade by harmonizing standards.

The minister said, Pakistan and Iran had established a framework of Joint Trade Committee, under which economic cooperation in the fields of trade, banking, customs are agreed. In addition, Pakistan and Iran have signed MOU to establish six joint border markets. Pakistan has also signed customs and banking cooperation agreements with Uzbekistan, Iran and Afghanistan and had been negotiating Mutual Recognition Agreements with Central Asian Republics on SPS and technical standards.

Govt urged to declare 'Climate Emergency'

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Subh-e-Nau, Shahida Kausar Farooq, an NGO working for environmental issues, on Thursday, appealed to the federal and provincial governments to immediately impose an environment emergency in the country to deal with the devastating effects of global warming in Cholistan, Gwadar and Dera Bugti areas. In a statement, Mrs Farooq said that environmentalists around the world have been warning for decades that global warming could cause sudden changes in the weather around the world. It was being predicted that changes would happen and the world might face famine as a result, she noted. In addition, she [Shahida Farooq] also added that "the warmest months of April and May have made these predictions come true," "We need to take revolutionary steps today," she said. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of CDA on visited the ongoing construction work at Seventh Avenue Interchange and Rawal Dam Chowk. Officers of the Engineering Wing were also present on the occasion. - DNA

General assembly meeting of CINUVU concludes at AIOU

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The third General Assembly meeting of COMSTech Inter Islamic Network on Virtual Universities (CINUVU) concluded here at Allama Iqbal Open University yesterday. 43 member universities attended the two-day meeting. Statutes have been drafted with mutual consideration and soft copies are provided to the member countries for any amendments. Delegates from Turkey, Iran, Bangladesh, Syria, Malaysia, Indonesia, Gabon (Africa), and Chad (Africa) attended the meeting in Islamabad while other member universities participated online.

In the closing session held on Thursday, Allama Iqbal Open University and Bangladesh University of Health Sciences signed an MoU for the students and faculty exchange program.

VC, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum and Vice Chancellor, Bangladesh University of Health Sciences, Professor Dr. Faryadul Alam signed the documents. Expressing his views on the occasion, Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum said that brotherly Islamic countries needed a dynamic platform for discussions about education and research. He said that with the formulation of stat-

utes for CINUVU, we would not face any problems in organizing activities, and the organization would be able to conduct its activities systematically. He added that AIOU has established three excellence centers, (Excellence center for Seerat un-Nabi, Iqbal chair of Tasawwuf and Muslim thoughts, and dialogue with history) within the campus and AIOU is very keen to research collectively with brotherly Islamic countries, especially Iran and Turkey in these areas. Delegates of member countries thanked Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum for the wonderful hospitality arrangements.

Ashrafi pledges to continue struggle for rights of 5 m Pakistani expats

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Special Representative for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Maulana Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi Thursday pledged to continue his struggle for the legal rights of 5 million Pakistani expatriates in the Middle East. In an exclusive talk with APP, he said 'Pakistan comes first' was the motive of his life; therefore, he was not scared of any malicious social media campaign against him because he was beyond of all this petty politics presently going on in the country. He said to be chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council was the most precious position for him as compared to any

other portfolio in his life adding he used to serve Pakistani diasporas, fight for their legal rights, provide them protection and resolve their issues in Middle East when he did not have any official designation. He said he would continue his mission of peace, progress and prosperity with same zeal and zest adding the 'Aman Committees' would be revived across the country under the umbrella of Paigham-e-Pakistan as intersect and interfaith harmony and dialogue were need of the hour. It would help promote religious harmony and take the country to new heights of glory, he added. - APP

ICCI delegation congratulates DC Islamabad

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry led by President Muhammad Shakeel Munir called on the Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon and congratulated him on his appointment. ICCI Senior Vice President Jamshed Akhtar Sheikh, Vice President Muhammad Faheem Khan, Chairman Founder Group Khalid Iqbal Malik, Former President Muhammad Ijaz Abbasi, Former Senior Vice President Khalid Chaudhry, Former Vice President Ashfaq Chatha, Convener ICCI Police Committee Saif-ur-Rehman Khan, Convener ICCI Administration Committee Raja Abdul Majeed, ICCI Executive Member Fasih Ullah Khan, Irfan Chaudhry and others were in the delegation. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that close cooperation between ICCI and the ICT Administration was necessary to solve the problems of the business community and hoped that Deputy Commissioner Islamabad will take ICCI in confidence and cooperate in resolving the issues. Addressing the ICCI delegation, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz



Memon said that their cooperation was needed to solve the problems. He said that the administration was working for price control in the markets and no one would be allowed to make illicit profits. He said that various price control lists are issued in the sectors while there is no shortage of items in the wholesale market. He said that the government has issued orders for one-dish and working hours for wedding halls and

hoped that the business community would cooperate in this regard. Khalid Iqbal Malik, Chairman, Founder Group, while congratulating the Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, said that we would extend all possible cooperation and hoped that the ICT Administration would take the business community on board on initiatives of their interest. ICCI Senior Vice President Jamshed Akhtar Sheikh and former President Mu-

hammad Ijaz Abbasi said that booking of wedding halls is done six months in advance so it is not possible to restrict working hours and menu immediately. He said that the concerned association should be taken into confidence before imposing a ban in Islamabad. The two sides also discussed other issues of mutual interest and reaffirmed their commitment to work together to achieve common goals.

IGP issues "displeasure letters" to two SDPOs

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younus has issued "displeasure letters" to the two Sub-Divisional Police Officers (SDPOs) for not following the time line given for resolving the complaints received during the "Khuli Kachehri" (open court). During the open court proceeding, he also warned the Station House Officer of Khana Police Station for his performance. "Khuli Kachehri" has become a main feature of Islamabad Police wherein the IGP listened to the public as well as police officials' issues. On Thursday, it was attended by 26 citizens and police officials whose complaints were marked to the officers concerned. The IGP also directed the officers concerned to resolve the complaints within a given time frame. The IGP approved three months leave of an injured official and ordered to give him Rs. 20,000 as a welfare fund. He also ordered to give welfare fund amounting to Rs. 20,000 each of the two officials. On the occasion, Ahsan Younus said the police was committed to resolve public grievances on priority and secure the lives and properties of the citizens. "We are public servants and to secure the life and property of the citizens is our foremost priority" the IGP maintained. He strictly directed all zonal officers to listen to public complaints and resolve them purely on merit. "No laxity will be tolerated in this regard" he added. He further stated that a massive campaign against drug menace and land grabbers was in full swing. IGP directed all the police officials to adopt courteous attitude with the complainants visiting police stations and accomplish their responsibilities in a professional manner. - APP

Plastic materials exports witness 29.88 pc increase

ISLAMABAD: Plastic materials exports during the first nine months of fiscal year of 2021-22 grew up by 29.88 percent as compared to the exports of the commodity during the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July-March 2021-22, Plastic materials worth US \$ 303,225 as compared to exports of \$233,458 during the same period of last year. According to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 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

Imran attempting to cause instability: Ahsan Iqbal

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday said that Pakistan Threese-e-Insaf leadership was trying to destabilize the country with its lies and propaganda-based narrative and Imran Khan has no regard for the constitution. The incumbent government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would take all possible steps to steer the country out of economic, political crises, he said while speaking to PTV News programme. PTI government had damaged the country, but now the situation was improving on fast track, he added. Present government was making efforts for welfare of people and providing them basic amenities of life, he mentioned. Due to wrong policies of the PTI government, the country's economy was now facing multiple challenges, however, new government was taking steps to overcome these challenges. Replying to a question, he said that present government would bring electoral reforms to ensure transparency.

PTI and Election Commission

PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry has said that they were ready to sit with the government for the formation of a new Election Commission of Pakistan, a day after the party decided to move Supreme Judicial Council for reference against the chief election commissioner. He said that only reforms are needed in the ECP and they are ready to sit with them for the formation of the new election commission. It comes a day after Fawad Chaudhry said PTI had decided to file a reference against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja in the Supreme Judicial Council. Chaudhry, who was speaking to the media outside the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) alongside PTI leader Faisal Vawda, said the "biggest reason behind the political crisis that Pakistan is facing today is the election commission being non-functional as an institution". The statement came after a detailed judgment on Wednesday, in which the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) dismissed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) reference against its 20 defecting members of the National Assembly for disqualification on grounds of defection under Article 63A (1) (a) of the constitution. A three-member panel of the ECP headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja heard the case. The Chief Election Commissioner read the verdict, which was earlier reserved by the election commission's three-member panel. The detailed order of the three-member commission which was issued later said, "We are of the unanimous view that declarations/references have not been proved in terms of Article 63 A (1) (a) of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973."

It added, in the light of arguments of the learned counsel for the parties and material available before the commission, the members have arrived at the irresistible conclusion that the petitioner party has failed to substantiate the factum of defection as mentioned in the declaration in compliance with the provisions of Article 63A(1)(a) of the Constitution. The commission said that the perusal of record reveals that the alleged defectors have neither resigned nor made any statement before the media or any other forum that they have joined any other parliamentary party. Under the current circumstances, it is crucial for the political parties to engage in some manner. Things are getting out of hands fastly, it is about time that the leadership sits together for some productive thing rather than playing the blame game. Fawad's statement that the PTI can talk on issues regarding Election Commission would be a good start in bilateral negotiations on issues of mutual interest.

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Learning to live with Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic keeps a very erratic calendar. While cases are down in many countries, there is a spike in the caseload elsewhere.

In the Chinese capital Beijing, authorities are racing to contain a small but stubborn outbreak to avoid a Shanghai-type prolonged lockdown. China's two biggest cities – Beijing and Shanghai – have tightened Covid-19 curbs in recent weeks, raising new fears as the battle to contain the virus continues.

With an aim to detect and isolate infections early enough to avoid mass closures and movement curbs, China seeks to avoid any infection spikes as summer approaches.

Elsewhere, low Covid-19 cases in Middle East, US and European countries in recent weeks have resulted in less hospitalisation. Death rates have also been down, leading to an easing of pandemic restrictions in many countries. While countries are at the earlier stages in the pandemic's trajectory, many sections of the population continue to be vulnerable to the Covid-19 infection. The thing with any pandemic is that it is not really over until it is over everywhere. Nations need to make sure that measures like controlling transmission, regardless of emerging variants, is strictly adhered to.

The world is now entering the third year of the pandemic. With summer here, it may even be tempting for exhausted societies to be lax and drop their guard. We must be wary of such attitudes.

As we have seen, the surge of the highly transmissible omicron variant a few months ago resulted in a huge spike in cases. Largely successful vaccination drives have kept hospital intensive care units manageable and case-fatality rates down. In many places now, widespread Covid-19 testing, the use of masks and physical distancing requirements have helped stem the spike. However, new estimates from the World Health Organisation (WHO) show that the full death toll associated directly or indirectly with the Covid-19 pandemic – described as "excess mortality" – between January 2020 and December 2021 was approximately 14.9 million, much higher than reported numbers. That is a very sobering thought. The current receding of infection and cases does not mean that the virus has disappeared. We are not yet at the pre-pandemic levels.

While most restrictions have been lifted, it is incumbent upon all of us, all nations, to maintain vigil, protect our vulnerable and stay ahead of the virus' path.

A changing geopolitical prospect

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



This new form of geopolitics has different characteristics and forms in different regions. In Europe, Brexit has repositioned the central European Union on the regional scene since the late twentieth century, as nations seek to advance their own interests. With changes in United States alliance policy under the Trump administration, it cannot be rule out possible political differences between the USA and Britain over the transatlantic alliance with continental Europe

Political geography is a framework that we can use to understand the complex world around us. Global politics, or "getting what you want in the world", involves thinking and acting geographically. But what does that

mean? Geopolitics explains how countries, corporations, terrorist groups, etc., try to achieve their political goals by controlling the geographical features of the world. We call these features geographical entities. Geographic entities are the places, regions, territories, scales, and networks that make up the world.

Geopolitics sees a particular use of force: how countries and other groups compete for control of these institutions in the international community. The control of these institutions is seen as helping countries and groups achieve their goals. Geopolitics has always been viewed from both an international and global perspective, which means that the issues under consideration are global. Political geography seeks to define international politics in terms of geography—location, size, and resources. It seeks to identify the relationship between geographic location, resources, and foreign policy. Thus, political geography can be defined as the struggle for control of geographical entities with an international and global dimension and the use of these geographical entities for the security, political and economic achievement. Geopolitical examples may include trade agreements, war treaties, border or territorial acknowledgements, climate agreements, and more. Two recent examples are NAFTA and the Kyoto protocol.

The year 2019 revealed another mys-

tery that is called the era of "hybrid geopolitics". The role of traditional geopolitics, which dominated the nineteenth century, declined in the twentieth century with scientific and technological progress and the emergence of international governments. But the 21st century, especially 2019 was a rebirth of a set of the new frontiers of science and technology. It is difficult to explain this trend in the context of bilateral relations or regional development. When we study current international system, hybrid geopolitics is observed as a phrase that is accurately described in 2019. The problem is that the world of hybrid geopolitics is vaguer than in the past and also increases the likelihood of unstable regional or international order. Despite the growing need for cooperation on emerging security issues, mistrust and strategic animosity between the major powers is growing. The strategic calculations of each country to ensure its survival and prosperity are becoming complex. In this context, we can understand the choice of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to stand with the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and the US Indo-Pacific Strategy while trying to develop a joint strategy on its own. On the other hand, Korea's choices are more complicated because it cannot rely on the collective solidarity of its ASEAN partners and is a divided country surrounded by more powerful neighbors. Thus, 2019 was the year that most clearly expressed these concerns. The forces that drive competition and cooperation between states on the basis of "hybrid geopolitics" in 2019 will become even stronger in

2020. At the same time, with this new geopolitical math, changes in regional and global power relations will accelerate. Above all, the field of hybrid geopolitics is likely to be more diverse as strategic competition between the United States and China continues. More specifically, the trade dispute between the United States and China will escalate over dominance in science and technology, as well as in finance. In addition to geography, they will compete to win over others by using cultural and military similarities, driving international public opinion, and using security responsibilities as weapons. Even so, owning one is still beyond the reach of the average person. Both sides are well aware that their competition is of a long-term nature and they have good reasons to avoid a full-blown surge. However, it is inevitable that the strategic rivalry between the United States and China will continue and intensify. This is because both sides consider the current contest uncompromising and are confident that they will win in the end. While the Trump administration maintained that its allies were doing their "fair share," the Trump administration was unlikely to end its influence over its existing allies and partners. In this context, the Trump administration was expected to eventually implement a policy that will put pressure on its allies and partners to accept a multilateral "trap." Instead of withdrawing from the competition with the United States, China will try to draw other countries into its orbit regionally and globally. Japan and Russia will also promote their strategies based on hybrid geopolitics to bridge the gap

between their internal stability and the uncertainty surrounding their position in the international system. Given this, Northeast Asia will see competition in various areas, such as existing borders, new fictitious borders and borders of future interest, and it is likely that countries will cooperate and compete with each other on a case-by-case basis.

Meanwhile in the Middle East the decline of the United States and the resurgence of China and Russia are more prominent. Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia are struggling for a new geopolitical map that would increase instability throughout the region. In Southeast Asia, the ongoing strategic rivalry between the United States and China will exacerbate ASEAN's difficulties. ASEAN sought to consolidate its position in 2019, but in the process, it also demonstrated its potential and the limits of its strength as a collective actor. Therefore, it will be interesting to know the strategic calculations and policy versions provided by ASEAN when Vietnam takes over the presidency in 2020.

Despite the emergence of hybrid geopolitics, emerging security challenges will ensure cooperation and collaboration between states. States may continue to work ostensibly for "global governance" but even in the emerging field of security, they have to see the boundaries imposed by the national interests of individual states. That is, the uncertainty in hybrid geopolitics will extend to emerging security issues. While all nations will emphasize the need to cooperate on common public goods and common causes of concern, individual national interests and the geographical locations of countries will be a major challenge.

Ukraine joins Afghanistan and Yemen in shaping Gulf rivalries

James Dorsey

At the same time, Gulf states, if attacked, may not have the wherewithal of the Ukrainians if the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is anything to go by. That drives home the Gulf states' dependence on a third-party security guarantor in the absence of confidence-inspiring multilateral, regional arrangements

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan was a geopolitical watershed. Its shockwaves continue to reverberate and are magnified by the wars in Ukraine and Yemen.

Coupled with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the US withdrawal removed a major obstacle to Iranian projection in Central Asia and created an opportunity for Iran to potentially enhance its influence, increase trade, and

expand security cooperation in Central Asia.

Moreover, the withdrawal worked in Iran's favour by putting one more nail in the coffin of an almost 80-year-old alliance between the United States and Iran's arch-rival, Saudi Arabia.

Already angry at US President Joe Biden's refusal to deal directly with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman because of the 2018 Saudi killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Saudi Arabia saw the bungled withdrawal, along with the US failure to respond robustly to attacks on critical Gulf state infrastructure by Iran and Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, as further evidence of America's increasing unre-

reliability as a security guarantor. Last month's revival of security talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia highlighted the arc that links the Ukrainian and Yemeni wars with the withdrawal.

Saudi Arabia is groping for an exit from an eight-year-long war in Yemen that has cost it significant reputational damage and raised questions about its military capabilities. talks with Iran broke off shortly after the US withdrawal. However,

they were revived as Russia struggled to achieve some semblance of victory in Ukraine.

The timing highlighted that Iran's options might be less curtailed by the Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Yemen wars than those of other regional players.

Ukraine has taken Russia out of the equation as a possible guarantor of security or an alternative to the United States as an arms supplier for Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.

That leaves Saudi Arabia worried about its ability to protect itself despite increased military prowess and an armory filled with some of the world's most sophisticated weaponry, with no good options.

The kingdom may be looking at China but is likely to discover that it is looking at a power that still lacks the capability and the will to replace the United States and would likely extract a higher price for offering to guarantee regional security.

Few would argue that the scenes of tens of thousands at Kabul airport trying to flee Afghanistan as American troops withdrew inspired confidence in US protection.

The ability of the United States and Europe to bolster Ukrainian resistance will likely have mitigated to some degree the impact of the dra-

matic pictures from Kabul.

At the same time, Gulf states, if attacked, may not have the wherewithal of the Ukrainians if the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is anything to go by. That drives home the Gulf states' dependence on a third-party security guarantor in the absence of confidence-inspiring multilateral, regional arrangements.

Kuwaitis largely fled Kuwait at the time while a US-led coalition forced Iraq to withdraw. In the wake of Ukraine, Russia is too preoccupied to take on other major military commitments, and China would not entertain the idea. That leaves the US for the foreseeable as the Gulf states' only alternative.

Viewed from Tehran, the post-US withdrawal world is a different world in which the United States has been humbled and removed from one of its borders.

It is a world where the Taliban-governed Afghanistan is a more immediate problem for Iran than the Gulf states.

In recent days, Iran has reportedly moved additional military forces, including the army's 88th armored division, to its border with Afghanistan amid rising tensions with the Taliban. Iranian officials say border guards have acted with "restraint" in the face of alleged provocative actions by Taliban forces.

The troops were ordered to the border after Pakistani militants, based in eastern Afghanistan, stepped up their attacks inside Pakistan.

Last month, two Pakistani airstrikes in eastern Afghanistan killed at least 40 people, including some civilians. The United Nations said that 20 children were among the dead. The strikes occurred against areas believed to have been from where militants had killed seven soldiers in Pakistan.

Pakistan hasn't confirmed the airstrikes and declined to comment on the civilian deaths but said earlier that "terrorists were using Afghan soil with impunity to carry out activities inside Pakistan."

Anti-Iranian protests in Herat and Kabul and the stabbing by an Afghan national of three clerics in Iran also fueled tensions between the two countries.

The incidents cast a shadow over Iranian efforts to capitalise on the fallout in Central Asia of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The Taliban's acting minister for refugees and repatriations, Khalilurrahman Haqqani, is expected to visit Tehran in the coming days in an effort to reduce tensions.

"Yemen and Ukraine are not major headaches for Iran. Afghanistan is," said an Arab diplomat.

Briefs

UN launches probe into Russian abuses in Ukraine

GENEVA: The United Nations Human Rights Council voted overwhelmingly Thursday to launch an inquiry into alleged serious violations committed by Russian troops in Ukraine, putting their conduct further under the microscope. Concerned by extrajudicial executions, civilian casualties, the use of torture and abuses against children, the council voted 33-2 to create an investigation into alleged violations, with a view to holding the perpetrators to account. China and Eritrea voted against the resolution, while 12 countries including India, Pakistan and Cuba abstained. Russia branded the extraordinary meeting of the UN's top rights body a politicised stunt and refused to attend. Telling the council that an 11-year-old boy, now traumatised, had been raped in front of his mother, Ukraine's Deputy Foreign Minister Emine Dzhaparova said Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces were inflicting "pure evil". Russia was committing "the most gruesome human rights violations on the European continent in decades", she said, speaking from Kyiv. "These have been 10 weeks of sheer horror to the people of my country. Torture and enforced disappearances, sexual and gender-based violence; the list of Russia's crimes is endless. - Agencies

Imported govt is not acceptable: Imran

FROM PAGE 01
Addressing a rally in Attock, the PTI chairman said that it is the responsibility of the brave young people to participate in this struggle with me and further urged the women to also take part in it saying that they have to be part of this real war for independence. This is an important time for our country, and we have to decide either we want to submit being slaves to America or live as the citizens of an independent sovereign state. Former interior minister Sheikh Rasheed, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Shah Mahmood Hussain Qureshi, Former Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan, Former Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and PTI leader Zulfi Bukhari, Former Chief Minister of Punjab Usman Buzdar, Former Deputy Speaker of National Assembly Qasim Khan Suri, Member of National Assembly (MNA) Maj (R) Tahir Sadiq and Former SAPM climate change Malik Amin Aslam were also present on the occasion. Imran Khan said that the PTI has finalised its plan and strategies to lead out its anti-government long march and to draw a deluge of protesters from across the country to Islamabad and block the routes leading to and from the capital, sources privy to the plans. His first anti-government roadshow on April 13 in the centre of his party's political power, Peshawar, saw a big turnout where Imran announced his plan to continue protesting against the newly-installed government until fresh elections were held. He termed the newly-formed set up an "imported government" and lashed out at Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, saying the "decisive moment" had come for the people to decide if they wanted "slavery or liberty". PTI chairman Imran Khan has said the imported government is not acceptable and he will never accept the corrupt people imposed through foreign conspiracy.

Two PMs running the country...

FROM PAGE 01
Former interior minister Sheikh Rasheed said that PPP chairman Asif Ali Zardari is a friend of American President Joe Biden. He said that Dollar has reached to Rs200 and the country can be defaulted. Again there will be rule of Allah's creation and there will be long march which would be its last limit.

Internship Program ends with discussion on holistic concepts

Sharing his thought on the occasion, Dr. Mehmoodul Hasan Khan said that the concept of Rahmatan Lil 'Alamiin and Wasathiyah had become hot topic in Indonesia

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Online Internship Program on Contemporary Dynamics of Indonesia concluded with its final session featuring enlightening discussion on the holistic concepts of "Rahmatan Lil 'Alamiin and Wasathiyah Islam". The month long Online Internship Program (OIP) was a joint collaboration of the Indonesian Embassy, Islamabad, and the University of Peshawar organized with the objective to augment improved understanding about modern Indonesia and highlight aptly the existing and emerging dimensions and potentials for the multifaceted bilateral cooperation development between Indonesia and Pakistan. The OIP brought eminent panelists from diverse academic background and areas of specializations to share their in-depth and insightful perspectives and analysis on topics of mutual interest ranging from the challenges, achievements and transformations of the Indonesian society, success of ASEAN, Indonesia's growing regional economic integration and the concepts of "Rahmatan Lil 'Alamiin and Wasathiyah Islam" which was receiving growing audience in Indonesia and elsewhere in the Muslim societies. Dr. Dicky Sofjan, Partnership & Networking Coordinator of the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS), University of GadjahMada, Indonesia, was the guest speaker on this closing occasion. In his presentation on the session's theme of "Redefining Islam as Rahmatan Lil 'Alamiin and Wasathiyah Islam" the speaker said that the ICRS has been working with many Islamic scholars and intellectuals and also had international collaboration on inter religious studies. Dr. Dicky Sofjan said that Indonesia was country of a mega biodiversity and was home to 700 psycholinguistic groups with rich and diverse culture and tradi-

tions. On Indonesia's religious diversity the speaker informed that Islam was the predominant religion in Indonesia and besides other recognized religions such as, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism there were over 400 local indigenous belief systems and spiritualism practiced in different parts



of Indonesia. He explained that Indonesia was not an Islamic state but had "Pancasila" as its state ideology and the philosophical basis of the Indonesian state. He observed that Muslims as a whole were confronted by many common challenges in the modern day and the questions being raised that why Muslims in general

were economically, academically, technologically and democratically backward. Commenting on many theories, hypothesis and analysis on the issues of the Muslim societies, Dr. Dicky Sofjan pointed out that recent works by Muslim intellectuals identified the alliance between the clergy and the state as one of the reason for the underdevelopment of the Muslim societies in different parts of the world. Discussing the phenomenon of the anti-Islamic sentiments he said that Islamophobia was rising due to the religious illiteracy and this was his motivation for his collaboration work with the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs to develop religious literacy programs which primarily focused on not learning Islam but about learning religion and creating awareness that religion necessarily confronts the reality of economy, politics and international relations. He said that there were issues of discrimination, hate

speech and stereotyping and the Muslim were generally seen with more tendencies towards extremism and terrorism giving a false notion of Islamic terrorism. He informed that his institution has been working to develop the idea to bring forth the real face of Islam which was the Rahmatan Lil 'Alamiin. He said that the Quran describes Prophet Muhammad as the mercy and blessings to the Multiverse who taught his followers to be grateful to God, be kind, generous and mindful of others and be strategic in their actions. Further elaborating he stated we as human being, were not alone or living in an isolated island and hence had to be mindful of others as well and needed to be fully wary and cognizant of the reality of the day as we were living in the increasingly developing multicultural global society where we had engage with people having different world view on various issues including religion and salvation.

Army says 'imprudent comments' ill-suited

FROM PAGE 01

Speaking to a private news channel, the DG ISPR said that for the last few days, the political leadership of the country has been issuing some "very inappropriate statements" about the armed forces. "We have repeatedly made requests not to drag the army into political matters," he said, adding that the armed forces have "nothing to do with politics as per the law and Constitution of the country." He further said that the Constitution has clarified the procedure of appointing the army chief. "We, as an institution, have been showing tolerance for a long time," Maj Gen Babar said, adding that as a country, Pakistan faces numerous challenges. "The army is playing an important role in the internal security of the country on all fronts, therefore, the focus of the military leadership is on those responsibilities."

Army chief should have flawless...

FROM PAGE 01

"You [Imran] are blaming the four-week-old government for inflation, how could you talk about inflation when you ruined the economy?" she asked. Maryam further questioned how they could talk about dollar rates after the US dollar went up to Rs189 under their leadership. She stated that this was the work of an amateur, and alleged that Imran appointed Farah Khan Gogi and his own relatives in important positions to get money. She claimed that whilst being ousted, the PTI chief had also set fire to Pakistan's relations with other countries.

Lettergate: Alvi wants CJP...

FROM PAGE 01

into rigging allegations in 2013 elections. Similarly, Judicial Commissions were established to investigate the Memogate matter, and a still functional Judicial Commission exists for missing persons, that is headed by an Hon'able Judge of the Supreme Court", he observed. He further stated that there seemed to be a political consensus in the country as, according to press reports, the Prime Minister had also expressed a desire for establishing a Commission. The President said that the nation held the Supreme Court in high regard and expected it to meet its expectations, adding that the Commission should investigate the matter based not on technicalities of law but in the real spirit of justice. He said that it, undoubtedly, would be a great service to our country, as the people of Pakistan deserved clarity on such a matter of national importance. The President said that in world history there existed myriad examples of regime change operations through conspiracies which were later confirmed by the declassification of top-secret documents. He lamented that it happened much later after the destinies of these countries had been significantly damaged by these illegal interventions.

Imran Khan challenges SC ruling...

FROM PAGE 01

speaker as well as deputy speaker of the National Assembly. "The stated institution cannot be subordinate and answerable to the jurisdiction of a bench of the apex court due to the unequivocal bar of jurisdiction contained in the abovementioned articles of the Constitution," the petition maintains. "The apex court has erred to appreciate the mandate of the Constitution which ensures that parliament, as well as the members/officers thereof, the president as well as the prime minister, are not answerable in the exercise of their functions well as discretionary powers before any court nor their discharge of constitutional obligations can be called into question before any court under the Constitution." The entire jurisdiction exercised by the top court is in violation of Article 175 of the Constitution, the appeal read.

Palestinians mourn Shireen Abu Akleh at state funeral



FOREIGN DESK

RAMALLAH: Palestine Thursday morning held a grand state funeral for an iconic Palestinian journalist killed yesterday by Israeli military gunfire in the West Bank refugee camp of Jenin. The funeral procession of Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh set off from the Istihari Hospital in al-Rihan neighborhood and made its way to the presidential complex, al-Muqata'a, where a grand state memorial was held with the attendance of

President Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayeh along with a host of officials and hundreds of mourners. The honor guard brought the body of the veteran journalist, draped in a Palestinian flag and a press vest, keffiyeh, and flowers, to al-Muqata'a, where President Abbas and Prime Minister Shtayeh bid their farewell to her and laid a wreath over her coffin as sad mournful bagpipes were played. Eulogizing Abu Akleh, President Abbas described her as "a hero who sacrificed

her life in defense of her cause and her people. She was an honest and patriotic voice who conveyed the suffering of the mothers of martyrs and prisoners, the suffering of Jerusalem, the camps, the protests and the incursions into towns and villages." President Abbas held Israel fully responsible for the killing of Abu Akleh. "We hold the Israeli occupation authorities fully responsible for the murder, and they will not be able with this crime to hide the truth, and this crime must not go unpunished." He said that

the Palestinian Authority has refused calls for a joint investigation with Israel into the murder of Abu Akleh "because it is they who committed the crime and because we do not trust them," stressing that "we will immediately go to the International Criminal Court to prosecute the criminals." The body of Abu Akleh, a Palestinian Christian and a US citizen, will then be taken in a convoy to St. Joseph Hospital in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem. She will be buried on Friday in a cemetery next to her mother.

Iga Swiatek comeback thwarts Azarenka for 25th straight win

ROME: World No.1 Iga Swiatek survived a bruising test overcome former No.1 Victoria Azarenka 6-4, 6-land advance to the quarterfinals of the Internazionali BNL d'Italia. The victory extended Swiatek's remarkable winning streak to 25 matches, the longest streak since Serena Williams ran off 27 wins in 2015. The victory sets up a marquee match-up against 2019 US Open champion Bianca Andreescu on Friday. While the scoreline appears perfunctory, Swiatek found herself under constant pressure from Azarenka's suffocating return game. The 20-year-old needed 79 minutes to complete a come-



back from a double-break down at 0-3 in the opening set. Azarenka held at least one break point in each of Swiatek's service games in the opener, generating a total of 11 break points. But in the key game of the first set, Swiatek came through a seven-deuce

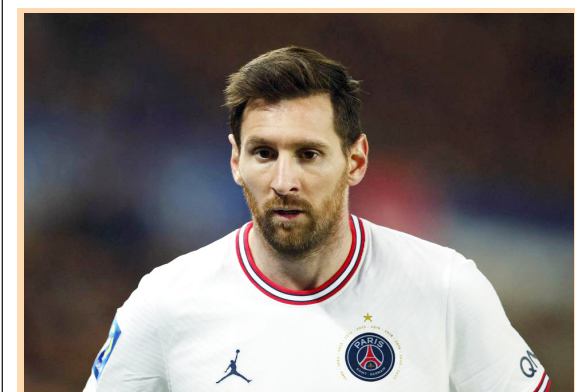
game, wiping out three break chances, to hold for a 4-3 lead. That hold was a part of a five-game run for Swiatek, but Azarenka's trademark fight never wavered. With Swiatek serving for the set at 5-3, the former No.1 wiped out four set points and broke to get back on serve. Swiatek kept her cool. By now, the Pole had leveled up her tour-best return game, and she broke Azarenka on her fifth set point to finally seal the set. Swiatek continued to dominate on return through the second set, breaking Azarenka four more times to close the match and book her spot in a fifth straight quarterfinal. - Agencies

Bismah retained Pak captain

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board on Thursday confirmed Bismah Maroof will continue to lead the national women's limited-overs teams in the 2022-23 season. Pakistan are gearing up for an action-packed bumper season in which they will play, at least, 25 matches with the schedules for the ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup and ICC Women's T20 WorldCup to be announced. Their season begins by hosting Sri Lanka in Karachi for three T20Is and three ODIs in what will be the first instance of ICC Women's Championship matches being staged in Pakistan from later this month. - APP

Shaheen Afridi leaves Middlesex to prepare for West Indies series

ISLAMABAD: Fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi has left Middlesex to return to Pakistan ahead of the series against West Indies, bbc.com reported on Thursday. The 22-year-old left-arm, who signed as an overseas player this season, was due to leave Middlesex in early June to represent his country. But he has instead left with immediate effect to rest and spend time with his family before the series. Afridi has featured in Middlesex's County Championship wins over Glamorgan, Leicestershire and Sussex. He has taken 14 wickets at an average of 25.43, helping Middlesex to the top of the Division Two table. Afridi, who has already played 42 Tests and made 70 appearances in limited-overs formats for Pakistan, is due to return to the county following his international commitments and will be available for the later stages of the T20 Blast. "Shaheen has played international cricket in all three forms of the game already this year and came to Middlesex off the back of a busy playing schedule, so we are fully understanding and supportive of his request to go home and recharge ahead of him representing his country," said Alan Coleman, Middlesex's head of men's performance cricket. Meanwhile, Mohammad Rizwan, Hasan Ali and Mohammad Amir are also sitting out their respective counties' Championship fixtures this week but Haris Rauf is back for Yorkshire after a side injury, ESPNcricinfo reported. Rauf did not bowl in the second innings of his most recent game and missed Yorkshire's draw against Essex last week but was named in their XI for the Roses match against Lancashire on Thursday morning. Hasan has been rested. Rizwan is unavailable for Sussex's fixture away against Leicestershire due to a family bereavement. - DNA



Lionel Messi tops Forbes' highest-paid athletes list

LONDON: Lionel Messi was the world's highest-paid athlete over the last year, according to the annual Forbes list released on Wednesday that had the Paris Saint-Germain forward ahead of the NBA's LeBron James and Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo. Messi earned \$130 million, a figure which includes \$55 million of endorsements, during the 12-month period ended May 1, 2022, to sit atop the list of the 10 highest-paid athletes a year after finishing second to Irish MMA fighter Conor McGregor. Los Angeles Lakers forward James was next on the list after bringing home a combined \$121 million, shattering the \$96.5 million record for an NBA player that he set last year, while Portugal captain Ronaldo earned \$115 million to sit third. - Agencies

Azeri President attends opening of Kharibulbul festival

The first "Kharibulbul" festival was held in Shusha in 1989 in connection with the 100th birthday anniversary of the famous singer, pedagogue and People's Artist Seyid Shushinsky (1889-1965)

NEWS DESK

BAKU: The 5th "Kharibulbul" International Folklore Festival has today opened in Shusha, the cultural capital of Azerbaijan. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva attended the opening of the festival. The 5th "Kharibulbul" International Folklore Festival, held in the "Year of Shusha" on the occasion of the 270th anniversary of the city of Shusha, has been organized by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, the Ministry of Culture and the Shusha City State Reserve. The 5th festival, which will end on 14 May, is being attended by musicians and dance groups from different countries, as well as folk groups from different regions of

Azerbaijan. The first "Kharibulbul" festival was held in Shusha in 1989 in connection with the 100th birthday anniversary of the famous singer, pedagogue and People's Artist Seyid Shushinsky (1889-1965). The event was organized in May of that year in Shusha during

the flowering of kharibulbul (Ophryscaucasica). Along with local performers, the first festival was attended by music groups from the former Soviet republics of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia (Bashkortostan), Lithuania and Belarus. In 1990, the "Kharibulbul"

festival gained international status. The invitation of folk groups from the Netherlands, Germany, Israel and Turkey to the second festival also aroused great interest. Due to the difficult situation in Shusha in the aftermath of the start of the Karabakh conflict,

the concerts were organized in Aghdam. A number of concerts of the festival were also held in Barda and Aghjabadi. In total, the second festival was attended by about 170 delegates from different countries. About 300 delegates from 25 countries took part in

the third "Kharibulbul" festival held in 1991. Artists from the United States and Australia also attended the festival. Due to the large number of spectators, the main concerts of the festival were held in stadiums. The final concerts of the second and third festivals were held at the Heydar Aliyev Palace in Baku. The fourth festival was to start in Baku on 15 May 1992, and was supposed to be the most spectacular event ever held. Five hundred people from more than 30 countries were expected to attend. However, due to the occupation of Shusha by Armenian troops on 8 May of the same year, it was not possible to organize the "Kharibulbul" festival. The festival was held only briefly at Imarat complex in Aghdam.



Briefs

Gas explosion in old Havana injures three

HAVANA: A gas explosion in Havana injured three people on Wednesday in the same neighbourhood as a similar blast that left 44 dead and destroyed an iconic hotel last week, authorities said.

The victims were a father and son and a neighbor, local official Yamila Velazquez told state television.

"The child's father had flipped the switch and there was an explosion. A neighbor suffered injuries to her legs and arms," Velazquez said, adding that the three victims were taken to a hospital by neighbors while the fire brigade cut off the neighborhood's gas supply.

The latest explosion comes just five days after a much more powerful one at the Saratoga hotel, just 800 meters (yards) away in Havana's old quarter, that killed 44 and injured 54.

Rescuers found another body in the rubble at that hotel Wednesday evening, bringing the death toll up to 44 there.

They are continuing to search through rubble at the hotel, whose first four floors were gutted by the explosion, which an official said happened while a gas tank was being refilled by a tanker truck. — Agencies

Biden loses potent aide with departure of Psaki

WASHINGTON: She could be playing the charmer, hurling verbal explosives, or just applying spin, but whichever version of Jen Psaki appears at the White House podium, there's little question her departure Friday strips President Joe Biden of an able ally.

Instantly recognizable with her fiery red hair, press secretary Psaki, 43, has been the public face of the Biden administration from the moment the veteran Democrat moved into a White House reluctantly vacated by Donald Trump on January 20, 2021. Psaki, who always said she didn't expect to keep the high-pressure position more than about a year, is now reportedly on her way to a lucrative host position at MSNBC cable news.

She's leaving just as a brutal midterm elections campaign starts, domestic problems like inflation and illegal immigration pile up around Biden, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine lurches into ever more complex geopolitical territory.

No doubt that Psaki's successor Karine Jean-Pierre — making history as the first Black and openly gay person in the job — can expect a torrid next few months. Jean-Pierre, however, will also inherit a presidential press operation rebuilt after the anti-media rantings of the Trump White House. — APP

Asian stocks down as inflation fears churn markets

HONG KONG: Asian equities slumped on Thursday following Wall Street's lead, as markets churned after a key US report renewed fears of inflation and a tightening of monetary policies.

Stocks have been volatile for much of 2022, fuelled by China's Covid-19 lockdowns, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and surging inflation that has dampened consumer sentiment.

Investors had been looking to the US consumer price report in hopes that easing inflation would lower pressure on the Federal Reserve to hike interest rates, but the rise of 8.3 percent was higher than expected.

Americans have felt the pinch of rising food prices, including big increases in dairy and cereal products.

The index for meat, poultry, fish and eggs surged 14.3 percent — the biggest gain since May 1979. US President Joe Biden called April's overall slow-down "heartening" — March saw a peak of 8.5 percent — but acknowledged inflation was still a major challenge, and said "bringing it down is my top economic priority." — APP

CG Vancouver and USPICC agree to boost bilateral trade

DNA

VANCOUVER: The Consulate General of Pakistan in Vancouver and the US-Pakistan International Chamber of Commerce (USPICC) have agreed to join hands to boost Pakistani exports to Canada.

It has also been decided to bring trade organisations of the two countries closer, support networking, arrange business to business meetings, hold exhibitions and festivals and improve communications between the business community of both the countries. The agreement was reached in a meeting between Consul General of Pakistan Vancouver Janbaz Khan and Malik Sohail Hussain, Secretary-General, USPICC.

Ms. Bushra Rehman, the first President of Pakistan Western Canada Trade Association working under the patronage of the Consul General of Pakistan in Vancouver was also present at the meeting.

On the occasion, Janbaz Khan said that Pakistan enjoys strong bilateral and political relations with Canada. Pakistan exports to Canada, including leather goods, apparel and textiles, increased by 24 percent in 2021 and we are trying our best to increase exports. On the other hand, Canadian exports to Pakistan, which include edible oilseeds, pulses, and lumber, increased by six percent in 2021. Canada is Pakistan's twenty-first largest ex-



port partner, with bilateral trade exceeding \$1.8 billion in 2021, he added.

He said that we are promoting diplomatic, political, and educational engagements while efforts are underway to boost exports

of rice, surgical items, sports goods, etc. which will be beneficial for Pakistan.

Janbaz Khan informed that a "Biryani Festival" in Vancouver is on the cards which will help promote Pakistani rice in Canada.

He also offered membership of PWCTA to President of United Business Group (UBG) Zubair Tufail and Chief Coordinator UBG Malik Sohail Hussain which was accepted.

Bushra Rehman first President of Pakistan Western Canada Trade Association said that she is leaving for the US to attend the USPICC's seminar on New York Export Incentive Program at the invitation of the President of USPICC Sajjad Qamar and will discuss the possibility of signing an MOU between the two organisations.

Malik Sohail said that Chairman of USPICC Siddique Shaikh and President USPICC Sajjad Qamar are very interested in strengthening bilateral trade relations and they would launch the Canada Chapter of the chamber soon. He said that USPICC will cooperate with the Consulate General to open a display centre showcasing Pakistan products which will help boost exports.

Pakistan is a semi-industrialized, agri-based economy, one of the largest producers of natural commodities, and its labour market is the 10th largest in the world.

Agriculture in Pakistan plays a central role in the economy and it is the largest employment provider, but for the last few years agriculture is facing issues, exports are flat and imports are increasing, leading to a rising trade deficit which can be bridged through enhanced exports, said Malik Sohail.

Disney profit slips but streaming TV subscribers jump

SAN FRANCISCO: Disney on Wednesday said its profit slipped in the recently ended quarter but its television streaming service and parks were booming.

The entertainment giant reported net income of \$470 million, just over half of the \$912 million profit it made in the same period a year earlier. But park attendance that had fallen due to the pandemic rebounded and the Disney+ television streaming service gained 7.9 million subscribers to 137.7 million. When adding in subscriptions to Disney's streaming services Hulu and ESPN, the overall number tops 205 million.

"Our strong results in the second quarter, including fantastic performance at our domestic parks and continued growth of our streaming services once again proved that we are in a league of our own," said Walt Disney Company chief executive Bob Chapek. He told analysts Disney is open to raising its streaming service subscription price in the future, but has no specific plans. Disney+ is pursuing a version of the service that would be supported by advertising, Chapek said.

Disney+ gained more subscribers than analysts had expected, in stark contrast to a dive in subscriber numbers reported by rival Netflix in the first quarter of this year. — Agencies

Environmental degradation, a national security threat

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday said environmental degradation is emerging as a national security threat for Pakistan as it was paying a disproportionate price for climate change impacts derived by the developed world.

Federal Minister for Climate Change in her exclusive chat with APP said the glacial lakes outburst floods and heatwave were certain incidents that were predicted through advisories released in February by the relevant departments where the last alert was issued by the Ministry of Climate Change.

Sherry said the World Bank has mentioned that climate induced disasters were causing 4.6% of the country's GDP which was a huge sum that needed to be preserved through timely interventions.

She said the developed world has done injustice and ignored the third world particularly Pakistan that as bearing the burden of their environment damaging development.

She said plantation was necessary but not the only solution to cope with the whooping impacts of global warming, adding, "Adaptation is also necessary to be spearheaded at the individual and community levels and create awareness among the masses to deal with global warming".

RWMC carries out the anti-dengue campaign

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-dengue awareness campaign and cleanliness drive launched by Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) was underway in the city, on Thursday.

All-out efforts were being made to raise awareness about the life cycle, prevalence, treatment, and prevention of dengue.

According to a spokesman, the teams of RWMC conducted its campaign in Union Council-13 Katarian, where the communication teams distributed waste bags and pamphlets to highlight the importance of cleanliness and prevention of dengue.

The teams called upon the residents to keep an eye on junkyards, schools and under construction buildings which lead to the spread of dengue larvae and leave no place wet or stagnant water.

The spokesman said, "We will continue such activities in the coming days as the government has issued the threat of dengue fever spread linked with public health."

Photovoltaic is solution to Pakistan's energy crises, says Zardari

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: As electricity tariffs in Pakistan keep rising, former President Asif Ali Zardari stressed the necessity of increasing solar power generation in the country, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Thursday.

"Electricity is so expensive that ordinary people cannot afford it; we should focus on solar power generation," Asif Ali Zardari said while talking to newsmen in Karachi. "Instead of setting up solar powerhouses, we should help individuals have their own solar system in their homes and on their farm-lands," Zardari suggested, adding that to this end, the government should provide soft loans to individuals.

If there is more energy than their consumption, it should be supplied to the industrial sector, he said.

Pakistan has immense potential for solar power generation, but less than 2% of the total energy consumed in the country comes from solar power plants. The Government has not made substantial progress in fully utilizing the country's solar energy potential.

In 2015, National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) introduced Net-Metering Pakistan, an electricity policy for consumers to set up Renew-

able Energy (RE) facilities. They can use their own electricity and also can sell surplus energy to the National Grid.

However, the speed of Net-Metering adoption is very low in the country. According to data available with Gwadar Pro, so far, 20,296 licenses have

been issued to consumers. Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has issued 5,431, Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESC) 4,900, K-Electric 3,402, MEFCO 2,130, FESCO 1,310, PESCO 1081, GEFCO 1073, BTPL 484, DHA-EME 396, HESCO 47, SEPCO 24, QESCO 16 and TESCO only two. Apart from Net-Metering, the adoption of Solar PV Technology is very high. Solar energy is not only slashing power bills but also providing uninterrupted electricity. Pakistan is processing RE (wind/solar) projects

of 1400 MW under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), of which 700MW have been commissioned. They include four PV solar projects of 250MW. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under a project entitled 'Solarization Schools & Health Facilities' is providing solar power to 8,000 schools, 4,000 worship places, and 187 health facilities.

Under another project, the government is solarising business centers and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) by setting up solar mini-grid stations (Photovoltaic Solar System).

In addition to government initiatives, people who cannot afford to install a proper solar power facility can use one or two solar panels to run DC fans and other appliances during the daytime. Some people have also installed solar-powered tube wells on their small farms to cultivate vegetables and fruits. Since the majority of solar panels, rechargeable Lithium-ion batteries, and inverters used in Pakistan come from China, the two countries need to expand their cooperation in the photovoltaic industry.

Finland entry will be 'smooth and swift'

BRUSSELS: NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg on Thursday welcomed a decision by Finland's leaders to back joining the alliance, and said the eventual membership process would be "smooth and swift".

Finnish President Sauli Niinisto and Prime Minister Sanna Marin expressed support for NATO membership — in defiance of warnings from Moscow — and a formal statement on joining is expected on Sunday.

"This is a sovereign decision by Finland, which NATO fully respects," Stoltenberg said. "Should Finland decide to apply, they would be warmly welcomed into NATO, and the accession process would be smooth and swift." Finland and Sweden have taken steps towards joining the alliance since western powers began reviewing their security structures in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Kremlin denounced the idea that Finland, its neighbour, would join NATO. "The expansion of NATO and the approach of the alliance to our borders does not make the world and our continent more stable and secure," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. Helsinki insists its decision is not a threat to anyone.

But Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto told the European Parliament that "Russia's invasion of Ukraine has altered the European and Finnish security environment" and his country joining "would further strengthen NATO as a future ally". Stoltenberg stressed it was Finland's decision to make, and not a NATO power grab.

"I agree with President Niinisto and Prime Minister Marin that NATO membership would strengthen both NATO and Finland's security," he said.

"Finnish membership would demonstrate that NATO's door is open, and that Finland decides its own future."

Separately, European Council chief Charles Michel welcomed EU member Finland's leaders "paving the way" for their country to join NATO. He said the EU and NATO "have never been closer" and that Finland joining the alliance would be a "historic step, once taken, that will greatly contribute to European security." — APP

US eyes trade deal-lite as SE Asian leaders gather

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: The United States is preparing a scaled-back version of a trade pact as Southeast Asian nations gather in Washington, where President Joe Biden is seeking to show solid commitment in the face of a rising China.

Leaders from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations will meet Biden for dinner Thursday at the start of a two-day summit, part of a renewed US focus on Asia after months of intense effort on Ukraine.

Before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration had made clear that its top priority was competition with China due to its rapid technological advances and rising assertiveness both at home and abroad.

Kurt Campbell, the top White House official on Asia, said the United States would raise areas of cooperation with ASEAN leaders including fighting the Covid pandemic and disaster relief. He also said he expected "substantial interest" by Southeast Asian nations in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, or IPEF, the latest acronym-branded US trade initiative, which was mentioned late last year by Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Indonesia.

"We're quite confident that we're going to be able to have a substantial launch with a very broad range of potential players," Campbell said at the US Institute of Peace.

Koji Tomita, Japan's ambassador to Washington, told a separate event that he expected IPEF to be unveiled formally a week later when Biden visits Tokyo and Seoul. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Attorney General of Pakistan, Asthar Ausaf Ali, calls on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. — DNA

Power supply urgently needed in Gwadar

DNA

ISLAMABAD, May 12 (): Gwadar voices for urgent arrangements of power supply to ensure robust economic growth, business eco-system and logistic activities in Gwadar port as well as the Gwadar region.

The demand for an early supply of electricity was made at Pakistan Energy Development Conference 2022 held at China Business Center in Gwadar Port, according to Gwadar Pro. It was attended by COPHC chairman Zhang Baozhong, GDA Chairman Muneeb Qambrani, GPA Chairman Naser Kashani, GIEDA official Waqas Ahmed, Gwadar DC Capt Jamil Ahmed, and others.

Chairman COPHC Zhang Baozhong said "with regards to development, there are some issues to be solved and power remains the foremost one. We cannot develop until enough electricity is available."

"At COPHC, we produce electricity by generators which is very expensive. Chinese investors are keen to shift their industries

from China to Pakistan. Areas of investment are very diverse and include but not limited to refinery, assembly, petrochemical, and textile. However, without power, the shift might not be possible," he said.

"I have been here for 7 years and since then the provision of power remains my prime request on the government. The government has a plan to initiate the 300 MW power plant project. But that is yet to be materialized. I am happy to see this conference discussing energy issues. I hope the power issue will be resolved by the government soon," he added.

"We have the capacity to generate power on a large scale but if only government is ready to purchase. But that is yet to be reviewed due to the lack of consumer demand in Gwadar due to low population density", he added. He recalled that in the past 7 years of his stay in Gwadar, a lot has been achieved. He witnessed close cooperation with the local community. "Our brotherly security forces have coordinated with us a lot. Because of their sincere efforts, I have

been comfortable with the existing environment", he proclaimed.

"Before I set foot on Gwadar, I was very depressed. There used to be no proper residence for Chinese people and we used to stay at PC hotel. Business activities were very limited. There were no significant movements. Nevertheless, now Gwadar has become famous and business activities have gained pace," he clarified.

In his address, he said "we spent \$15 million to purchase 5 new cranes, replacing old ones in order to refurbish infrastructure at the port. LPG Vessel being offloaded today and a container vessel to arrive on Friday are testaments to accelerated port activities. These signals prognosticate good news for the future. However, more needs to be done. Energy issues remain the most prominent," he added.

On a query, he said that so far, they have invested more than \$300 million in Gwadar Port and Free Zone. Important mega projects such as New International Airport, East Bay Expressway, Pakistan China Vo-

luntary Training Institute, China-Pakistan Friendship Hospital, and 1.2-MGD plant are some of the grants from the people of China for the local brothers of Gwadar.

"On 17th May, 14 Chinese investors are coming to Gwadar to assess the investment potential of Gwadar and Balochistan. In addition to Chinese, last year we received more than 17 ambassadors from the US, Canada, and countries from the European Union. Undoubtedly, energy provision stays as a prerequisite. Without energy, no development can be achieved", he briefed that there are strong intentions from Chinese investors to invest \$5 billion to set up an oil refinery in Gwadar.

Once the plan is materialized, job opportunities can be offered to the locals in addition to the induction of business activities. Other sectors such as lubricants and agriculture are also under consideration. "During my stay in China, I have discussed the matter of meat export from Pakistan to the Chinese market and the government is willing to consider," he concluded.