



Islamabad POST

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Pervaiz Elahi lashes out at PTI opponents

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Briefs

Process of development resumed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb says the process of development, and public service that remained stalled for four and a half years has resumed across the country. In a tweet today, she said there is only one slogan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa now calling for development there, in the same way like PML-N government did in Punjab. Marriyum Aurangzeb said Khadim-e-Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif during his visit to Mansehra on Sunday inaugurated several projects.

Qureshi wants suo moto on NAB amend

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi has urged the Supreme Court of Pakistan to take suo moto notice of the recent legislation passed by the Parliament to amend the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) law. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, Qureshi said that the amendment would benefit the political leaders currently in power, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Qureshi listed several changes to take away powers from NAB officials. - DNA

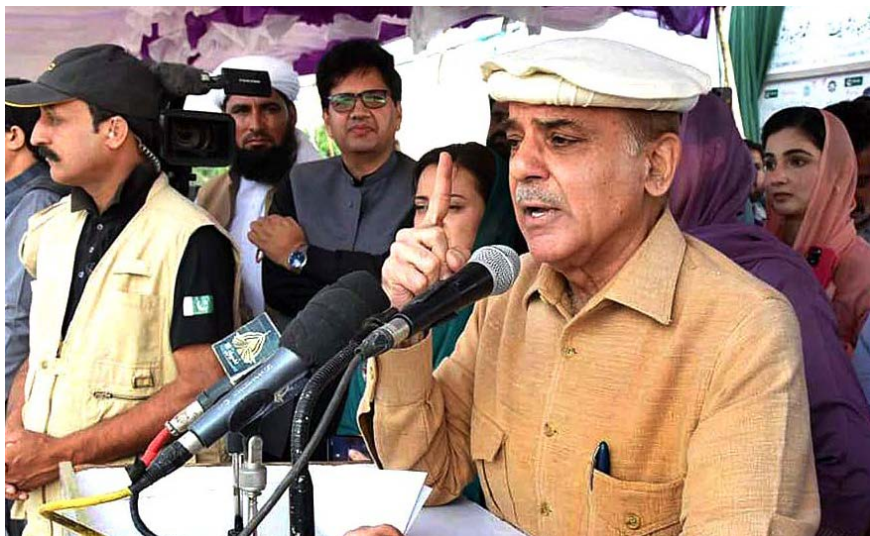
Govt to stabilize economy

DNA

LAHORE: Adviser to Prime Minister in Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira says incumbent government is taking concrete measures to stabilize the national economy. Talking to newsmen in Lahore on Sunday, he said PTI Chief badly damaged the economy of the country and his policies are the main cause of inflation and price hike in the country. The Adviser said we removed PTI government through a democratic and constitutional way. However, he said our doors are open for dialogue for the solution to national issues.

PM says will transform KP into Punjab

Says leaked audio tape exposes Imran Khan's hypocrisy and double standards



MANSEHRA: PM Shehbaz Sharif addressing a public gathering. - DNA

NEWS DESK

MANSEHRA: The Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that the government was helpless and they increased the petroleum prices with a heavy heart. Addressing a public gathering in Mansehra, he said Multan, Sukkur and Hazara Motorways are the mega projects which were completed during Nawaz Sharif regime. He said the journey of development and prosperity will be continuing with the same spirit and devotion. The Prime Minister assured the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for provision of flour on the prescribed rates of Punjab. Shehbaz Sharif said that efforts will be made to remodel Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the pattern of Punjab. Referring to the increase of petroleum prices, he said

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Khan fell at Zardari's feet: Maryam

DNA

MANSEHRA: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice President Maryam Nawaz on Sunday said that Imran Khan claimed to be standing firm but fell at Asif Ali Zardari's feet and the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have rejected the long march based on anarchy and sedition and Shabbaz Sharif will heal the wounds inflicted by former PM. Addressing the rally, she said that Shehbaz Sharif is the real

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UN Peacekeepers day Pakistan among the largest troops contributing states

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday said that Pakistan was the largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping missions in the world as it had so far provided about 200,000 personnel. Such a gesture also manifested Pakistan's desire and efforts for peace, the prime minister said in a message on the International Day of the United Nations Peacekeepers being observed on May 29. The prime minister paid tribute to the efforts, contributions, professionalism and sacrifices of the Pakistani Peacekeeping Missions under the UN

umbrella, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister also paid rich tributes to the contributions of armed forces of Pakistan, Rangers, FC and police force in the UN peacekeeping missions. UN Secretary General and other UN offices had lauded and acknowledged contributions and sacrifices of Pakistan's peacekeepers, he said, adding that during 1960 to 2022, the officers and jawans of Pakistan peacekeepers had played exemplary and praiseworthy role in the UN missions. A total of 169 Pakistani peacekeepers had embraced shahadat while performing duties

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Zelenskiy visits frontline outside Kyiv



NEWS DESK

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy visited troops on the frontline in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region on Sunday, his first official appearance outside the Kyiv region since the start of Russia's invasion on Feb. 24. "You risk your lives for us all and for our country," the Presi-

dent's office website cited him as telling the soldiers, adding that he handed out commendations and gifts. Zelenskiy's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, wrote on the Telegram app that the president had also visited Ukraine's second-largest city of Kharkiv. Yermak said Zelenskiy toured destroyed residential buildings, noting that their replacements had to be built

with bomb shelters in place. The president's chief of staff added that 31% of Kharkiv region's territory was currently occupied by Russia, and a further 5% had been taken back by Ukraine having been occupied earlier. Ukraine has started receiving Harpoon anti-ship missiles from Denmark and self-propelled howitzers from the United States, arms that will bolster forces fighting Russia's invasion, Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said on Saturday. "The coastal defence of our country will not only be strengthened by Harpoon missiles - they will be used by trained Ukrainian teams"; Reznikov wrote on his Facebook page. He said Harpoon shore-to-ship missiles would be operated alongside Ukrainian Neptune missiles to defend the coast, including the southern port of Odesa.

Israeli police lock Palestinians in mosque

WEB DESK

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: Israeli police faced off with Palestinians holed up inside Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque on Sunday as hundreds of Jews visited the holy compound ahead of a contentious Jewish nationalist march through the heart of the Old City. The annual Jerusalem procession celebrates Israel's capture of the Old City in the 1967 Middle East war and draws thousands of cheering, chanting participants to its narrow, stone streets. Palestinian factions have warned that the flag-waving parade through the city's Muslim quarter could re-ignite their decades-old conflict with Israelis. Tensions have been rising in the city for weeks. Hours before the procession was due to kick off, police locked some Palestinians inside a mosque on the Al-Aqsa compound as Jewish visitors arrived for daily tours of the compound, which is revered by both Muslims and Jews. Al Jazeera reported that Israeli forces occupied the rooftop of the al-Qibli prayer hall in the compound on Sunday morning and besieged the worshippers inside it to enable the passage of settlers to go unhindered.

Imran accuses Govt of plans to recognise Israel

"We will not accept these thieves and slaves of the US," he says



DNA

CHARSADDA: PTI Chairman Imran Khan on Sunday once again criticised the incumbent coalition government and alleged that it was going to recognise Israel. The former prime minister's comment came in response to Israeli President Isaac Herzog's statement where he acknowledged that he had had a meeting with a Pakistani-American delegation, terming the encounter "amazing." A Pakistani government official, however, maintained that "no official or semi-official delegation from Pakistan met

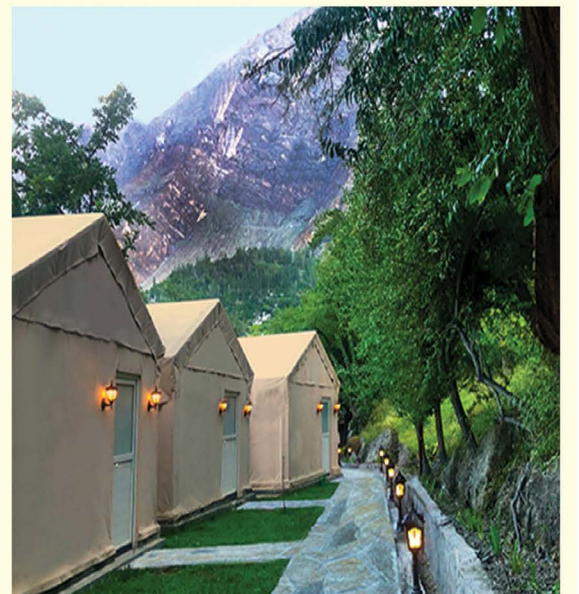
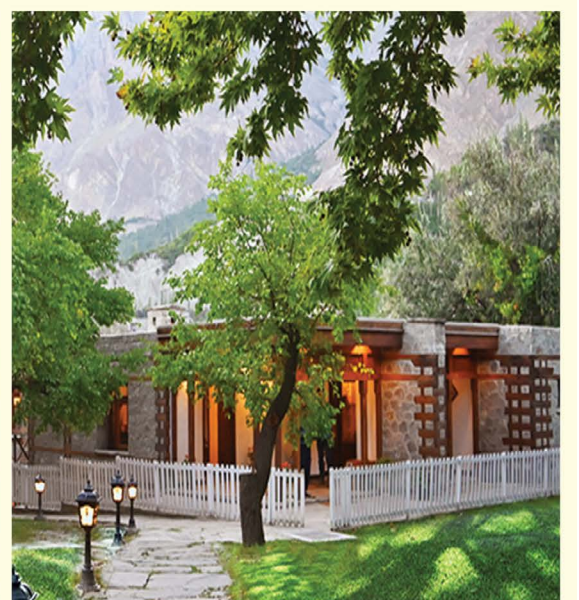
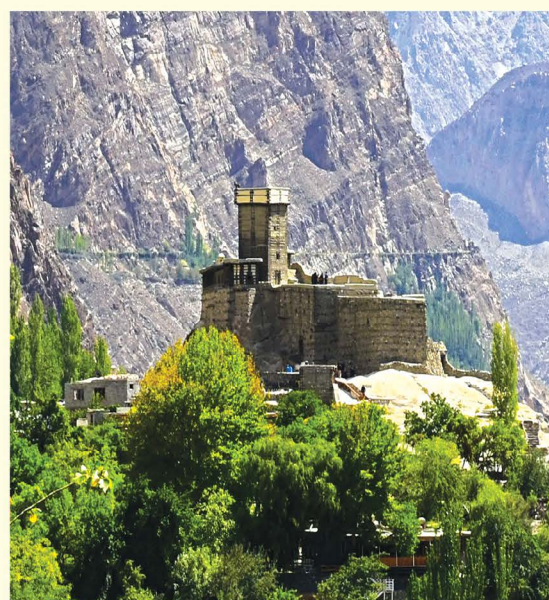
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'No delegation visited Israel'

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Spokesperson Foreign Office on Sunday categorically rejected the notion of any delegation from Pakistan visiting Israel. Responding to media queries, he said the reported visit in question was organized by a foreign NGO which was

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SCO heads of ministries and depts meet in Tashkent - Page 07

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Pakistan's education system must develop critical thinking

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The opening ceremony of the HEC Funded Sindh consortium of universities, for the establishment of Business Incubation Centers (BICs) with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, was held on May 28, 2022, at IoBM, Karachi. The Chief Guest was Professor Dr. Tariq Rafi, Chairman Sindh Higher Education Commission (HEC). Invited to this event were the vice chancellors of various universities, heads of incubation centers of business schools, corporate leaders, and IoBM's alumni. The consortium was formed in April 2022 by IoBM and is led by Mehran University of Engineering & Technology (MUET). Other member universities are Sindh Madressatul Islam University (SMIU) and Dawood University of Engineering & Technology (DUET). It will help the country achieve its goals of sustainability and livelihood and become a seat of learning for the same,

not only for Sindh but also for Pakistan. The HEC-recognized consortium will offer capacity-building training programs, mentorship, and establish industry linkages to selected start-ups. These startups will be incubated in the new Cohort Incubation Program 2022 by IoBM's Shahjehan S. Karim Incubation Center (SSKIC). During his address, Mr. Talib Karim, President IoBM said that the consortium is the first such project financed by the HEC. It enables the partner universities to exchange knowledge, facilities and build resources. IoBM SSKIC has finalized ten start-up ideas that will receive seed money of PKR 500,000 each to build a prototype. He added that IoBM targets nearly 20% of its students to set up their businesses. IoBM Chancellor, Mr. Bashir Janmohammad emphasized that start-ups are the best option for the youth who aspire to become entrepreneurs. He also stressed the need to strengthen the industry-academia linkage. Professor Dr. Faizullah Abbasi, VC, DUET

commented that the professors and the industry professionals need to use the same jargon and terminologies to reduce the communication gaps and hence reinforce the industry-academia link. Professor Dr. Rafi emphasized the importance of research conducted in universities. He mentioned that the graduates should remain relevant to the industry to become successful professionals or entrepreneurs. He also called for the universities to encourage the students' business ideas. The education system must inspire the students to become critical thinkers, he added. Dr. Inamullah Bhatti, Director, ORIC, MUET, presented an overview of the start-ups incubated at MUET. Mr. Mehboob Karim, Advisor to SSKIC, IoBM, presented the roadmap of the consortium. Two start-ups, Creative3D and Bridge-Care, that were incubated at the SSKIC, shared their journey and the insights they gained while being incubated. President IoBM presented mementos to the guests.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Adviser on Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs and senior PPP leader Qamar Zaman Kaira addressing a press conference. – DNA

‘We will force Imran to commit political suicide’

SAQIB MUSHTAQ

BAHAWALPUR: Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz Sharif has said that Imran Niazi, we will force you to commit political suicide. You will commit suicide as you used to say. You gave as many touches as you had to. Six days later, if you make a move, one touch of gel remains. We will throw you in jail. Javed Miandad had said that he does not know anything else. Yes, begging is a good demand. Providing people with the best daily travel facilities. The people gave love to me and my sister Maryam. Now there will be 24 buses in Bahawalpur instead of 12. Supplying water to the people of Cholistan was not a favor but our duty. Khurshid Shah gave his share of water to meet the shortage of water. I thank him. I want to make the people of Bahawalpur happy for the sake of Allah. Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz Sharif said that we do not work to show or please the people but we work for the pleasure of Allah Almighty and will continue to do so. Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif have taught me to guard what you say and keep your promises. Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz Sharif said that the people of Pakistan saw what kind of real freedom march Imran Niazi had

come out for. When I hugged Shaheed Akmal's seat, my father's corpse was lying in front of him and tears were flowing from his eyes at this hour of twelve years. My heart was weeping tears of blood that now at every step of life the deprivation of the father will come before this child. From whom will he ask for new clothes for Eid? When I went to the house of Shaheed Constable Muhammad Javed in Sialkot, his daughter said, "Uncle Hamza, everything is gone." When his hands are yellow, he will not have a hand of compassion on his head. The Chief Minister said that Imran Niazi brought the protocol of Chief Minister KPK to the ground and left from there. From place to place they fired in the air, cleared the greenery, set the trees on fire, injured the police and the rangers but still the rat came out of the dug mountain and this morning he was wearing black spectacles saying that I had to go back and come back. Imran Niazi is a coward. Wazira Ali said that the pretenders of South Punjab province deprived the people of their real rights. Roads are broken, people do not get medicines, fertilizers. Seeing educated children unemployed, daggers fall on the hearts of parents. The Chief Minister said that if the intention is good then Allah helps.

Ten kg flour of Rs. 650 has been reduced by Rs. 160 to Rs. 490 now. A subsidy of Rs. 200 billion is being given on it. Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz Sharif said that Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif, realizing the love and affection of the people of Bahawalpur, decided to bring the governor from here. Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz Sharif further said that Nawaz Sharif turned down billions of dollars and detonated six nuclear warheads as compared to five in India. He said that now is the time to make wise decisions for Pakistan and its people. Petrol has been made expensive by keeping a stone on the heart, but as in the past, solar parks have been set up and 12,000 MW power plants have been built. Now we will proceed in the same way. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said, "Listen Imran Niazi, is your independent Pakistan the name of Farah Gogi's looting?" Is the purpose of the real free march to lift people's turbans? The point is, nobody wants to be bothered with the idea of a fundraiser and foreign funding. Your ego can't be bigger than Pakistan we will bury your ego. The story of has also begun. It said there was an international conspiracy against me. I ask you to ask for help from those who keep saying bad things because 24 lakh 90 thousand people have come to your meeting.

CEO FESCO monitors power restoration works

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Due to heavy thunderstorms & rain in different areas of Sargodha circle including Shahpur, Joharabad, Nishtarabad, Kot Farid, Jahwarian, Sillanwali, Bhagatwala, Sahiwal etc, consumers have to face power outages due to falling hoarding & signboards, broken HT, LT poles and electricity lines. In this situation, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engr. Bashir

Ahmad immediately reached Sargodha and personally monitored the power restoration works in the areas affected by the severe cyclone. He directed Superintendent Engineer (SE) Sargodha Circle Shahbaz Ahmed, Executive Engineers (XENs), Sub Divisional Officers (SDOs) and operation staff to repair HT and LT lines, replace damaged electricity poles and transformers on an emergency basis, keeping the safety first principle in their mind. As soon as the storm stopped, the operation

staff started the restoration work and power was restored to 80% of the area by 6 o'clock till morning while work on others areas continued and last evening 100% power was restored in all areas. CEO FESCO Engr. Bashir Ahmed commended the officers and operation staff of the Sargodha Circle for restoring the power supply to various areas of the Circle in record time and directed them to keep the same spirit in mind in future and customer service should be their motto.

DC Faisalabad calls on parliamentarians

DC inspected various parts of the park and expressed his displeasure over the cleanliness of the park and directed to maintain a clean and attractive environment at all times

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Lieutenant (ret'd) Sohail Ashraf called on the members of the Assembly and ticket holders. Welcoming the parliamentarians, Deputy Commissioner said effective measures are being taken to provide best services to citizen and given best relief to the people is the main agenda, in order to provide maximum relief to the citizens regarding civic amenities, the assistance and guidance of the members of the Assembly is also essential in this regard. He also said the problems and complaints of citizen are also solving with priority and provided clean drinking water to the citizen was his top priority. He asked the members of the assembly to assist in proposing plans for regional development and solving the problems of the people so that the mission of urban development and public welfare could be carried forward together. A briefing was given regarding the ongoing and new schemes of ADP while the details of DDPI and ADP schemes were discussed and DD Development said that the schemes would be updated by holding National Constituency Wise meetings with the Members of Assembly. Comprehensive details of the latest situation will be

provided and matters related to completion of ongoing, launching of new public welfare schemes will also be decided.

DC for improvement of Canal Park

Deputy Commissioner Lieutenant (ret'd) Sohail Ashraf has ordered to improve the condition of Canal Park Samundri road as a priority and said that effective measures should be taken to make the park attentionable of the citizen as it is located in the center of the city. He issued the order while visiting the park and reviewing the situation. Assistant Commissioner City Sahibzada Muhammad Yousaf, DD Development Rana Tahir and other officers were also with him. The Deputy Commissioner inspected various parts of the park and expressed his displeasure over the cleanliness of the park and directed to maintain a clean and attractive environment at all times. He urged the departments to renovate the park and said that the park should be prepared for public entertainment beyond expectations so that visitors to the park could see a clean and beautiful environment. He declared to visit the park again and cleared that the situation of park would be more better than before. Meanwhile the treeming of plants and cleanliness of waste was done after the Deputy Commissioner visit under the supervision of AC City. He informed that more positive steps are also being taken beside contacted with philanthropist for run this park.

PANAH holds two-day international conference on rising heart diseases

ISLAMABAD: A two-day international conference on "Cardiovascular Diseases, a Threat to National Development" was organized by the Pakistan National Heart Association (PANAH) at the Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology (AFIC) Rawalpindi to discuss causes of rising heart diseases, suggestions for prevention, awareness and the importance of simple lifestyle changes. President PANAH Major General (R) Masood-ur-Rehman Kayani thanked the participants of the conference and termed the increase in heart diseases a matter of concern and appealed to authorities concerned to take emergent steps to curb the disease rise.

While General Secretary Sanaullah Ghuman informed everyone about the aims and objectives of PANAH and the importance of the conference. The participants of the conference said that this conference, which was organized to highlight the importance of heart diseases, was of very important nature. The overall objectives of the conference were to bring together local and international researchers, academics, and policy makers on a single platform to help promote the importance of timely treatment and research and make recommendations for the prevention of heart diseases. The importance of healthy diet for reducing coronary heart diseases (CAD) in Pakistan could be stimulated and

the causes of diseases can be addressed. Participants cited tobacco use as a major cause of heart disease. The participants said that they were hopeful that the conference would help work together with a new determination to tackle the growing burden of heart diseases. On the occasion, PANAH distributed gifts and certificates to five young bloggers who have written excellent blogs on the harms of sugary drinks which were considered as a major cause of deadly diseases including obesity, heart, diabetes and other CDs. Chairman Science Foundation Prof. Dr. Shahid Mehmood also announced a cash prize of Rs 10,000 for each bloggers for encouraging bloggers. Vice Chancellor of Riphah University, Hassan Mohammad Khan, Chairman Science Foundation Prof. Dr. Shahid Mehmood Beig, Commandant AFIC Major General Muhammad Afsheen Iqbal, Lieutenant General (R) Azhar Rashid, Major General Naseer Ahmed Samoor, Prof. Dr. Anjum Jalal, Prof. Col. (R) Dr. Junaid Saleem, Dr. Ayesha Mohi-ud-Din, Dr. Mujtaba Qadri, Dr. Hamza Azhar Ghauri, Major General Khurram Shehzad attended as special guest. While a large number of national and international health professionals, researchers, teachers, students, bloggers, civil society and PANAH members attended. – APP

Labour rates fixed in Faisalabad division

FAISALABAD: The government has fixed labour rates for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers in Faisalabad division. A spokesman for the divisional administration said in a statement on Sunday that unskilled workers would get minimum daily wages of Rs 777 in Faisalabad, whereas this rate would be Rs 769 per day in other districts of the division including Jhang, Toba Tek Singh and Chinot. Similarly, labour rate for semi-skilled workers in Faisalabad would be Rs 808 per day, whereas it would be Rs 783 daily in other districts of the division. The daily labour rate for skilled worker would be Rs 887 in Faisalabad and Rs 858 in other districts, he added. – APP

State land retrieved from grabbers

FAISALABAD: Assistant Commissioner Jaranwala Ahmad Saeed Manj has retrieved state land from Qabza Mafia in Chak No.71-GB. A spokesman of local administration said on Sunday that AC Jaranwala received complaints that some land grabbers were illegally occupying 10-marla of state land near graveyard at Chak No.71-GB. On these complaints, the AC Jaranwala along with his team reached at Chak No.71-GB and retrieved the land by removing encroachment of Qabza Mafia from state land with the help of police. – APP

Man's body found from canal

FAISALABAD: The body of a man was found from a canal in the area of Khurrianwala police station. Rescue-1122 spokesman said on Sunday that some passersby spotted the body of a man aged around 25 years floating in Rakh branch canal near Gattwala and informed the rescuers. Divers of Rescue-1122 fished out the body and handed it over to the area police, who dispatched it to mortuary while further investigation was under way for identification of the ill-fated man, he added. –APP

FWCCI to organize conference on women's economic empowerment

President FWCCI said that with the resumption of the global supply chain after Covid-19 Pandemic, new businesses had started and it was important to make women aware of this

ISLAMABAD Faisalabad Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FWCCI) will organize a conference on the role of women in the national economy and women empowerment here on May 30. The theme of one-day conference to be held under the auspices of Faisalabad Chamber was 'Women Economy-Empowering World', said a press release issued by FWCCI. The conference would be attended by the presidents of 24 women's chambers across the country, members of the executive body, foreign ambassadors and key members of the government's economic team, President FWCCI Nighat Shahid said. Nighat said that Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Miftah Ismail would be the chief guest in the conference besides whom other ministers, including Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar would address the session. She said that the conference, which would be attended by experts in their fields, would focus on the role of women in the national economy, women's business, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), trade and taxes and business facilitation for women. Nighat said that the purpose of the conference was to discuss the role of women in the national economy and business, and to highlight their problems and to bring these issues before the higher authorities. She further said that the various technological innovations were being used in trade at that time, the understanding of which was necessary for women's growth in businesses. She said that professional training of women in the e-commerce and IT sector including online business was very important to excel in modern businesses.

President FWCCI said that with the resumption of the global supply chain after Covid-19 Pandemic, new businesses had started and it was important to make women aware of this



Nighat said that at present women in Pakistan were working in small and cottage industries who had skills but the middle man paid them less by keeping high value of their skills. She said it was important for women to be aware of e-commerce and online business so that they could register their own businesses. In that regard, she said, "We need government support so that we can train women in this regard and connect them to the international market." She said that currently the

volume of e-commerce and online business markets in the world was \$7 trillion, where there were vast job opportunities for women. Nighat said that more money could be earned from less investment in that sector, besides it was also the cause of growth in domestic foreign exchange. She said that the government would provide internet and IT facilities to women in remote areas, which would lead to growth in the field of freelancing in the country and boost the economy of the country. She said that women in this sector could introduce domestic products through trade in the global market and increase the volume of domestic trade to take Pakistan out of the trade deficit. She said that at present women had a vital role in every sector of the country including business, and women formed 51% of the country's population. And the advancement of women in economic activities and business was essential for the strengthening of the national economy, she said. – APP

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May 06 / UAE
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May 07 / Kazakhstan
Armed Forces Day

May 08 / Czech Republic
National Day

May 09 / European Union
National Day

May 17 / Norway
Constitution Day

May 21 / Hungary
Armed Forced Day

May 22/ Yemen Republic
Re-unification Day
(National Day)

May 24 / Eritrea
National Day

May 25 / Lebanon
Liberation and
Resistance Day

May 25 / Argentina
National Day

May 25 / Jordan
Independence Day

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ISLAMABAD: Wives of diplomats posing for a picture on the occasion of National Day reception of Azerbaijan. More picture and news on the Back Page. – DNA

New approaches needed to control traffic congestion

M USMAN KHAN/APP

ISLAMABAD: Once known for its serene evenings, friendly weather and smooth traffic flow, the federal capital has fast lost its beauty and serenity. Massive construction in surroundings and rising human and vehicular population is adding to the miseries of capital dwellers with every passing day. With its population reaching almost 2.5 million people and registered vehicles number crossing 1.3 million, road infrastructure of the city seems like shrinking. The enjoyment of a pleasure drive in bygone days has turned into a nightmare as reaching any destination within the capital now consumes three fold more time than almost eight to ten years back. But, who cares, obviously no one even if it costs much more to the commuters than previous years in terms of fuel cost and psychological effects. “Almost five years back, it used to take me 15 minutes to reach my home at Pakistan Town from main capital city. But, now traffic congestion spoils more than an hour during peak time,” said Rashid Mahmood.

“The situation has worsened to the extent that all the time on road, I fear colliding with other vehicles especially the bike riders who least care of lane and speed,” he said. He demanded immediate steps and strict implementation of laws to smoothen traffic flow and bring back driving wisdom to the capital commuters. Unruly driving is very common with skeletal number of traffic wardens deputed to penalize the violators. Law abiding and sane commuters are usually under threat of accidents due to over speeding, frequent lane change, wrong overtaking and zig-zagging by ruthless bikers. Recent years saw it further worsening as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government despite its tall claims of reformation could not even streamline the traffic flow on Islamabad Expressway. Rather its rhetoric and slang language grew intolerance among youth especially bike riders who not only massively violate traffic rules but also behave obstinately even with senior citizens. Psychiatrists also see this phenomenon as one of the major causes behind rising trends of intolerance, unruly behaviors and road side brawls. The situation is also wor-

risome in terms of parking space at all business points of the capital especially at busy points like Blue Area, Jinnah Super, Super Market and all other small and big markets in G and F sectors. Commonly thinking and seeing examples of other world mega cities, in our case it seems more an issue of traffic rules implementation than the vehicles load. Even our main arteries like Expressway, Srinagar Highway, IJP, Margalla, Murree (Barakahu) and Nazimuddin roads are most often choked. Mushroom growth of private schools at every nook and corner of capital sectors and towns is another major cause of traffic snarls. According to Islamabad Deputy Commissioner’s office, 2,000 to 3,000 vehicles are registered every month in federal capital while the number of traffic wardens remains the same. “We have serious manpower issue as present traffic staff was quite insufficient to control and streamline traffic,” an official at Deputy Commissioner’s office said requesting anonymity. “It is not only a governance or law enforcing issue, but it also relates to policy decisions.” By the time, there are 700 police officers on

traffic duty against the needed strength of an additional 3,000 to regulate traffic. “One can easily compare ten years back human and vehicular population with the present days,” remarked a traffic police official. “How can the same strength of staffers perform outstandingly when human and vehicle populace has doubled.” The newly appointed Islamabad Police Chief has made changes in the police squad but changing positions cannot address the staff shortage problem. In a much needed effort, the ITP in coordination with capital administration had succeeded in staggering the timings for educational institutions and offices located in different areas to manage traffic congestion during peak hours. “Situation on Srinagar highway has improved after making it a signal free corridor. We need more such steps to streamline traffic flow,” said an ITP official. Although the traffic police officials presented their own reasons of traffic jams yet their failure in effective implementation of traffic rules cannot be overlooked. Their argument brings to mind the times of SSP Sultan Azam Taimoori when any violator could not escape easily after violating traffic code.

Forest Fires

Pak- China to establish JWG to explore coop

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China will establish a Joint Working Group (JWG) to explore possibilities of cooperation between the two countries on managing forest fires hazards under the framework of Pakistan-China co-operation on disaster management. According to Gwadar Pro, a high-level delegation online meeting was held, with the view to explore possibilities of cooperation between the two countries on managing forest fires hazards. The Chinese side was briefed by the National

Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on the overall challenges of forest fires in Pakistan while specifically informed on the recent fires in Pine Nut forest of Koh-e Suleman Range Balochistan. The Chinese side was also informed of the capacity gaps and potential areas for technical assistance and cooperation particularly in the use of modern technologies for early warning, mitigation and response to forest fires. Pakistan’s delegation was led by Lieutenant General Akhtar Nawaz, Chairman NDMA, and Liu Weimin, Director General of the Department of International Cooperation & Rescue, Ministry of Emergency Management headed the Chinese delegation.

Education system needs to be improved

MAHNOOR MUSTAFA



Education is the foremost and fundamental need for the transformation of humanity, and this transformation really acquires to leave no stones unturned as well the magnificent framework with superb administration. The main concise of education is that it builds in people the consciousness with regard to their global citizenship at both the national and international arena. As education is a way towards development of a nation our country’s education system needs to provide healthier meals so that it can also produce the courteous and proficient and the adept minds, who can later serve for the development of Pakistan, as the education can lift a state from poverty to prosperity. But unfortunately, the education system of Pakistan is not taken into consideration by the leaders and politicians of our state. It composed into it so many complexities and the factors which really need to situate appropriately. Sadly, the politicians really do not take into contemplation the educational system of the country, which requires to be changed qualitatively. The system’s formation with the good quality also inculcates the requirement of time to be implemented.

It is a demise that our politicians only work with accord to the electoral periods but they forgot that their electoral cycles have nothing to align with the education’s quality. The question to be raised is that why our state’s politicians did not talk about the improving the education system for a single time in any of their statements? Why is it? Are they our masses who do not value the good education? Don’t they want to provide their children the quality education? Today, mostly people of Pakistan put water down the soup and have to pay the high dues to the private sector education, just because of the fascinating environment of the schools and colleges and the quality of education. In contrary, the public sector education is disregarded and the competition is made among the children who are characterized on the basis of their schooling sectors. There is much need for our system of education to be transformed, many factors in this sector needed to be focused but mainly with the demand of spending more on education, there is also a need for the system to be efficient and administration to run a taut ship because only spending money will not be effective, as illiteracy and lack of awareness are the promotions of ineffective education system. The policies should be established with the committees and commissions to alter the educational system of Pakistan, which is considered as a disgrace and really need to be improved.

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
FREQUENCY ALLOCATION BOARD
Plot No. 112, H-10/4, Islamabad.

SITUATION VACANT

Frequency Allocation Board (FAB) having its Head Office at Islamabad intends to hire the services of an energetic and competent Medical Consultant (on Contract) to provide medical consultancy/ services for the organization across Pakistan.

Name of posts/ Grade/ No. of Posts	Regional /Provisional Quota	Qualification/Experience and Age limit
Medical Consultant Equivalent to EG-3 on contract for a period of two years (Extendable) No of Post:01	Merit: The appointment will be made on open merit basis	Qualifications: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MBBS Qualified from a reputed institution or university (PMC recognized). Persons having at least 10 years' experience in relevant field will be preferred if other conditions are equal.• Valid registration with Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC). Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 10 years post qualification hospitals experience.• Preference will be given to candidates having FCPS/ MCPS degree in family medical MSPH or equivalent and working experience of Government Hospitals. (In case of FCPS, 2 years' experience is required whereas in case of MCPS/MSPH, 4 years' experience is required. Job Description: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advise FAB management/ Medical Committee on health related issue.• Ensure judicious and unbiased provision of medical services to all employees of FAB as per departmental rules.• Providing Medical consultation to the organization's employees/ dependents and refer them accordingly to the hospitals/ Labs etc as and when required.• Visit hospitals/ medical center/ druggists in case of emergency even on Sunday/ Holidays.• Liaison with panel Hospitals/ medical centers etc. for the provision of smooth services.• Processing medical bills etc. of panel hospitals/ doctors/ druggists etc. every month at Head quarters.• Arrange seminars/ Health Education programs for the organization's employees.• Keeping the Organization Head informed about health related matters from time to time.• Taking all preventive measures (including vaccination) for prevention of disease in the department.• Keeping a strict watch on medical expenses of the department to make the system cost-effective, suggesting measures from time to time to control the medical expenses.• Prepare annual medial budget.• Maintain Employees personal data and keep the record updated.• Manage the processes related to compliance by following Organizational Policies, SoPs and guidelines. Age Limit: Maximum 45 years

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Director (Admin/HR)
Frequency Allocation Board HQs

CDA satisfied with Orange line metro passenger load

DNA

ISLAMABAD: CDA team satisfied on average daily ridership on Orange Line Metro bus route. During a meeting at cda hq, data regarding average ridership on Orange Line Metrobus route was analyzed. Average daily passenger load for 15 buses has been 11,464 per day ,So per trip 30 passengers per bus. It was further apprized that by Average daily usage criterion, faiz Ahmed faiz junction for orange and red line was busiest with 1,746 passengers per day where as police foundation mauve area stop was least used. Furthermore, highest number of passenger on any day was 16,000 plus on 23rd May. It was observed that with passage of time the ridership is getting stronger on this route . The capital development authority management observed that it was matter of great satisfaction that large number of people are utilising this facility.

PM felicitates newly elected CPNE office-bearers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday congratulated the newly elected office-bearers of the Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE). The PM Shehbaz extended his congratulatory message to CPNE president Kazim Khan, senior president Ayaz Khan, secretary general Aamir Mahmood and other elected members of the body, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister said that journalism and freedom of expression were the requisite constitutional requirements for strengthening of democracy. He reiterated that the coalition government not only firmly believed in the protection of media freedom but also taking steps for its promotion.

Briefs

Pakistan's five-member delegation to visit India

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A five-member Pakistani delegation led by Indus Water Commissioner Mehr Ali Shah left for neighboring country on Sunday for Pak-India water talks. The talks will be held on May 30 and 31 and the agenda of the talks includes a schedule of joint inspection of barrages while the talks will be held in New Delhi. Issues related to water sector will also be discussed in the dialogues, while the issue of providing advance information on flood waters will be discussed. The annual report of Indus Water Commissioners will be finalized in the talks, while construction of dams by India will be discussed. Pakistani delegation will leave for India through Wagah border and will return to Pakistan on June 1. Earlier, talks were held in Pakistan in March.

Ghakar Street crying for water

RAWALPINDI: Water shortage has perturbed the residents of Ghakar Street Mehmoodabad at Adiala Road and its adjoining areas as no substitute arrangements were made by the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) to meet shortage of water in the area. The locals namely Rizwan Chatta, Zahoor, Adalat, Rab Nawaz, Ghulam Abbas, Riaz, Fayyaz, Said Rasool, Ali Nawaz, Shakeel Ahmed, Sheikh Tasleem, Muhammad Javed, Muhammad Aslam, Muhammad Akram, Wasiq Razzak, Sajjad Sadiq showed their grievances and asked the quarters concerned to meet their demand of water supply on priority. They said they would stage protest if they were not provided uninterrupted water. One of the complainant Inam Ullah told APP that there was no pipeline in the street while the adjoining streets were getting proper water that was totally unjustified. Another complainant said, "We have to fetch water from far flung areas to meet the daily needs. We can't afford a water tanker that is costly and unaffordable and we have to pay Rs2,000 to buy water from private water tankers," he added. The residents of the area demanded to ensure regular supply of water during hot summer season. The area tubewell operator said that the residents should approach and asked to officials concerned to lay down the pipeline in the area, after that the issue would be resolved. An official of WASA said that agency was working out proper plan to cope with the issue. He said the WASA had already initiated to lay down water pipelines in different areas of Adiala Road including Kehkashan Colony, Munawar Colony, Dhama Syedan, Sanjoli Street, Bank Colony, Hill View Lane, Sadiq Town, Jarahi, and Janjua Town to provide pure drinking water round the clock at the cost of Rs 400 million. – APP

47 beggars arrested

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police, during its crackdowns on professional beggars, arrested 47 beggars to discourage the menace of begging and avoid risk of road accidents due to jaywalking of tramps. On the directives of the in-charge Beggars Squad, along with their respective teams, took action against the professional beggars, and detained them in different police stations of Rawalpindi city, said the Rawalpindi Police spokesperson. On this occasion, SSP Operations Waseem Riaz said the special beggar squad was working hard to overcome the increasing number of professional beggars. "The professional beggars stand on various highways and squares of Rawalpindi city and not only affect the flow of traffic but also increase risk of accidents. Therefore, the public is also requested that do not serve alms to them as discouraging such factors will not only improve the society but also the flow of traffic," he said. – APP



ISLAMABAD: Women taking interest in various paintings displayed on the occasion of National Day reception of Azerbaijan. More picture and news on the Back Page. – DNA

75 % work of Pakistan's first AI lab under CPEC completed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Seventy-five percent work of Pakistan first high-standard artificial intelligence laboratory under CPEC at National University of Science and Technology (NUST) has been completed while the equipment installation is almost 100% finished, Gwadar Pro reported on Saturday. At the beginning of this year, the laboratory under CPEC-Qinglan Artificial Intelligence Laboratory was officially established at NUST, with joint efforts of NUST and Guangzhou Institute of Chinese Academy of Sciences. Research, development and customization is currently underway. I would say work is almost finished to 75%," Muhammad Khubaib Shabbir, Deputy Director of China Study Center of NUST told Gwadar Pro.

The lab has been put into full use, both students and teaching staff are keen on researching Pattern and Facial Recognition

algorithms, the reporter learned. "Currently, Cognizer-V1 intelligent video analysis project-a pilot project with the Government of Pakistan, and a commercial project, namely GymBot are the main projects that are under development," Muhammad Khubaib Shabbir revealed. "Ideally, Cognizer-V1 is one of the most sophisticated surveillance equipment, which has the capability of converting ordinary cameras and surveillance equipment into a Smart Equipment, using AI and Computer Vision Algorithms." Muhammad Khubaib Shabbir said. "To put it simple, the Cognizer-V1 has the ability to sense the people who are lurking around in certain areas and generate warnings, regarding dangerous behavioral patterns such as suicide, or other suspicious activities." Muhammad Khubaib Shabbir said. In the case of Pakistan, the country is blessed with a large number of artificial intelligence application scenarios and

a huge market, thanks to its world's 6th largest population. Moreover, the country is never short on talents. However, challenges lie in the commercialization of scientific achievements- an important step which can be viewed as one of the sources for innovation. Due to the backward industrial conditions and obstruction of international exchanges during the epidemic, the progress of commercialization in Pakistani scientific research institutes has been extremely slow. "Our other key project, 'GymBot', can be a perfect example of science commercialization. It is designed to be a deep learning device, using AI and Computer Vision Algorithms and serve as an auxiliary tool under various gym scenarios, monitoring whether the clients' postures are correct. Experts in various fields are joining the research team to finalize the product. The core functions have been developed already. Now what the team is doing is developing additional mod-

ules to integrate and research new areas to better customize the device." Muhammad Khubaib Shabbir shared his insights. "It is important to keep in mind that Guangzhou Institute of Chinese Academy of Sciences has shared the source code for 'GymBot'. This enabled the researchers from Pakistan to get first-hand experience of the latest results on AI developments and offered them a chance to learn from it, enhance it and make it more usable for the local community. This will most definitely open new doors of opportunities for Pakistanis." Moving ideas from lab to marketplace is a complicated journey. Researchers and stakeholders need to manage the time-consuming process of moving from academic to commercial contexts, and seek balance between different goals amongst stakeholders and researchers. CPEC enables the exchanges of advanced concepts, from both technical and management level. Qing Luan lab can be one of the successful examples.

IGP for tightening noose around drug dealers

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan on Saturday directed all the field police officers to intensify crackdown on drug smugglers and users across the city. The use of drugs in educational institutions and hostels should be curtailed and action should be intensified against those involved in drug smuggling, said a news release. He stressed upon the officers to round up the accused in drug cases and get them strictly punished from the courts. The IGP reiterated that coordination and information sharing with other law enforcement agencies should be further improved to tighten the noose around the major drug smugglers so that culprits could be brought to book. He said special awareness campaigns and lectures should be continued in educational institutions to keep students safe from drugs and assistance should also be sought from civil society, teachers and religious scholars. The IGP asked the police to write letters to the heads of all educational institutions to closely monitor the students residing in their institutions. We want to save our youth from tobacco, said IGP and expressed the hope that the administrative heads of educational institutions will fulfill their responsibilities for the prevention of drug menace. – DNA

AIOU conducts first board meeting for History Chair

ISLAMABAD: The first meeting of the Board of Management for the chair "Creating Archives of Intelligentsia of Pakistan" set up recently by Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) was held yesterday. Vice Chancellor, AIOU Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum highlighted the salient objectives of newly established Chair on History. He said AIOU has set up a Chair to record and preserve the Oral History on multidisciplinary topics to reconnect our future generation with our history to enhance the pace of ideological and intellectual development. Prof. Dr. Samina Awan who held this chair elaborated convened the meeting. – APP

Int'l Turkic Academy honors Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The President of the International Turkic Academy, Dr. Darkhan Kydyrali presented gold medal to Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTECH on the occasion of international "Al-Farabi – Iqbal" forum held in Almaty, Kazakhstan on May 26-27.

The president of the Turkic Academy said that the Academy is awarding Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary with its prestigious award "Gold Medal" for his exceptional contribution to the development of cooperation in the Turkic world. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary is world renowned medicinal chemist. He has published 1,175 research papers in the fields of organic and bioorganic chemistry in international journals, 76 books and 40 chapters in books published by major US and European press. He has secured 40 US patents so far.

Dr. Choudhary's work has been cited



by the researchers from around the world by 30,000 times and his h-index is 70. By now 98 national and international scholars have completed their PhD degrees under his supervision. Dr. Choudhary is D.Sc., Ph.D., and C. Chem. He has been awarded by dif-

ferent governments of Pakistan with Hilal-e-Imtiaz, Sitara-e-Imtiaz, and Tamgha-e-Imtiaz. He is a laureate of Mustafa PBUH Prize, ECO Award, Khawarizmi Award, COMSTECH Award, TWAS Young Scientist Award, and Prof. Abdus Salam Prize.

Pak-China red chilli farm achieves bumper harvest

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Six model farms under Pakistan-China Red Chilli Contract Farming Project are achieving a bumper harvest in southern Punjab and northern Sindh, Pakistan, with an estimated yield of 700 tons of dried chillies, China Economic Net (CEN) re-

ported on Saturday. According to Dai Bao, leader of the agricultural project of China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) in Pakistan, crops in the six model farms with a total area of nearly 300 acres began bearing fruits in May. "When the chillies are naturally dried we'll ship them to China for further processing," Dai noted. Compared with last year, the size of

planting area has increased six times, extending from Lahore to other parts of Punjab and Sindh. Also, "the total output increased seven-fold, and the yield per unit area increased by more than 30 percent," Dai shared with CEN reporter. More than 200 local technicians were trained this planting season and nearly 1,000 jobs were created, Dai added.

Film, Culture Policy 2018 revived: Marriyum

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Saturday said that the Film and Culture Policy 2018 was revived to uplift the industry through multiple incentives. Marriyum made the announcement in a meeting with the delegation of Film Producers Association. She also informed them about the steps being taken by the government for the revival of the film industry. "Recommendations for the revival of industry would soon be formulated after consulting the stakeholders of film and culture sectors," she said assuring the delegation that those recommendations would soon be presented before Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and made part of the next budget. The minister said Punjabi movies were the country's asset and their production would be increased under the new policy. Special incentives would be given for preparation of the content related to children especially movies, cartoons, plays, stories and educational programme. She said the film sector was being given the status of industry to offer it maximum incentives. The new policy was aimed at improving the quality, story and technology of movies. Marriyum said the policy would not only ensure revival of cinema through construction of new such facilities, but would also include incentives for the artists.

14 criminals arrested; narcotics seized

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police have arrested 14 criminals including drug peddlers, liquor sellers and illegal weapon handlers from different areas of the city and recovered 370 gram hashish, 15 liters liquor, one SMG with ammunition from their possession, a police spokesman said. According to the details, Islamabad police accelerated crackdown against criminal elements in order to reduce crime rate in the federal capital. In this regard special police teams from different police stations are formed to take stern action against those anti social elements. A koral and Bani Gala police team arrested two drug peddlers namely Sabtain and Zulqaisar and recovered 370 gram hashish from their possession.

Supporting small traders creates positive impacts

ISLAMABAD: Supporting locally-owned small businesses has significant positive economic impacts—even before our world was struck with the COVID-19 pandemic. Meher Kashif Younis, former senior Vice President Lahore chamber while talking to a delegation of young educated progressive women led by Ms Noora Ahmad from Sialkot here on Sunday said It's important that we continue to support our communities and look to our local small business for the essentials we are purchasing. He said spending locally ensures that your sales taxes are reinvested in the local economy, which results in improvements in the community. Highlighting his point of view, he said 100 rupees spent at locally-owned businesses is reinvested into the local economy through wages, goods and services, profits, and donations. He said women entrepreneurs and minority-owned businesses hire more people of color and pay higher wages than larger national chains. He stressed the urgent need of focusing on the improvement of the locally manufactured and assembled products at par with national and global standards to attract local and foreign buyers besides fully encouraging buying made in Pakistan rather than foreign products. – APP

Joint action needed to counter climate threat

ISLAMABAD: President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftikhar Ali Malik on Sunday cautioned that looming climate threat hovering around South Asia badly needed joint action to counter this alarming situation. Talking to a delegation of women led by Ms. Ayesha Abdullah Butt here today, he said climatic variability, according to several studies "greater in the Hindu Kush-Himalaya (HKH) mountainous region of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan than in other parts of the world." He said glaciers one of the most important indicators of climate change, and the HKH region was the host to some of the world's largest glaciers, which were the major water source of the Indus, Brahmaputra and Ganges river. He said climate change affects the hydrological cycle,



influencing both water availability and demand. He said as water became scarce it's demand also increased. He said that Asian Development Bank in its report in 2014 also underscored the impact of climate change in South Asia which predicted that "warming trend of about 0.75 C has been observed in annual mean temperatures in South Asia over the past century. Unless there is a concerted efforts worldwide to cut greenhouse gas emissions, South Asia will suffer huge economic, social and environmental damage from the consequences of climate change". Iftikhar Ali Malik said that Maldives was one of the more vulnerable SAARC member and it could literally disappear under the rising waters of the Indian Ocean if global warming is not reined urgently and then there will be seven SAARC countries left. – APP

Climate crisis is eminently solvable

Floods, droughts, fires and increasing temperatures are disrupting economies and communities across the world. All of this is happening at an amazing regularity. Some of the highest global temperatures were recorded between 2015 and 2021. The State of Climate report, released by the United Nations, has pointed out that key indicators of climate change – greenhouse gas concentrations, ocean heat, sea-level rise and ocean acidification – climbed by record margins last year.

From shrinking mountain glaciers to ice melting at a faster rate than usual in Greenland, Antarctica and the Arctic, the environmental havoc wrought about by global warming stares us in the face. Scientists have reported changes in flower blooming times and early dust storms – just some of red herrings of the crisis upon us.

In fact, the sheer scope of the climate change seems to be exceeding our society's ability to adapt. That is the reason our response must change too. The US climate envoy John Kerry set the tone for how the world's response must be when he spoke at the recent World Economic Forum, noting that we have the technology to fight climate change. It just needs to scale up. As of now the world is behind the required pace of change. It is therefore incumbent upon countries to strictly adhere to limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid a catastrophe. The COP26 climate change conference was a step in that direction. It led to countries agreeing upon the Glasgow Climate Pact that urges governments to commit and contain deforestation and global methane emissions while transitioning to net-zero emissions, among other measures.

Let us have no illusions. Climate change isn't something that will happen decades in the future; its effects are happening now. It is true that we may cope with the fallout for a while, but there will come a point when we will not be in a position to do so because the scale of catastrophe will be immense.

The climate crisis is solvable. It needs commitment at multiple levels – government, business and society. Progress in renewable energy can lead to a large reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Businesses need urgent plans for navigating a transformation and redefining the business model for a low-carbon world. This will greatly lead the way in building a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy that helps all people thrive. This is our planet's only chance.

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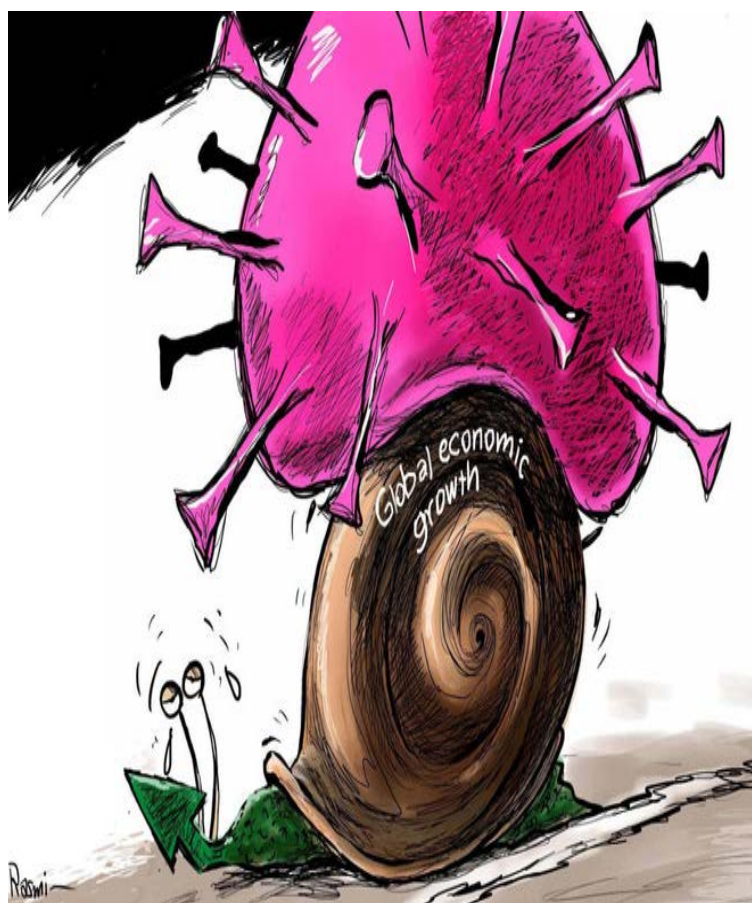
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Calls for gun control to no avail

Another horrible mass shooting shook United States this week just days after the one in Buffalo, New York. The perpetrator, a teenager, shot his grandmother first and then killed 19 students and two teachers at an elementary school in the city of Uvalde, Texas. Speaking from the White House barely an hour after returning from a five-day trip to Asia that was bracketed by the mass shootings, a clearly shocked and horrified US President Joe Biden said, "And we must ask when in God's name will we do what needs to be done to, if not completely stop, fundamentally change the amount of carnage that goes on in this country. It's time for action." Vice-President Kamala Harris said: "Enough is enough."

Yes, it is high time that action was taken to stop such carnage. But no matter how loud the calls are today for gun control, that remains mission impossible for the US. In 2012, a lone gunman rampaged through Sandy Hook primary school – killing six adults and 20 children. Afterward there were loud calls for gun control similar to those being voiced today. Former president Barack Obama vowed to do everything in his power to act and the Democrats proposed US-wide laws banning specific models of firearms and enhancing background checks. Some of the measures received Republican support, but it proved impossible to get them through Congress and into law. Something is clearly wrong with the political system in the US that such a popular move cannot be carried out because of the power of the gun lobby. Almost 20 million guns were sold legally in the US in 2020, and the figure was nearly 19 million in 2021. The total economic value of the firearm and ammunition industry in the US increased from \$19.1 billion in 2008 to \$63.5 billion in 2019, a 232-percent increase, according to a report by the National Shooting Sports Foundation. The firearm and ammunition industry paid nearly \$7 billion in business taxes, including property, income and sales-based levies.

With the huge interests behind the firearm industry, it would be naive to believe that any effective action will ever be possible to put people's lives first. For many US politicians, political activities for vested interests are their political lifeblood.

"When in God's name are we going to stand up to the gun lobby?" Biden said on Tuesday. Not until the political system in the US is reformed to treat its maladjustment.

Is Putin achieving his goals in Ukraine?

Leonid Ragozin



The fall of Mariupol to the Russian military represents one of these bonus achievements. Russia now has a land corridor to Crimea, which it occupied in 2014. On top of that, it has ended Crimea's water and power blockade, maintained by Ukraine all those years. The freshwater canal connecting the Dnieper River to the arid Crimean Peninsula is now in Russia's hands

The last of the Ukrainian defenders in the port city of Mariupol surrendered at the Azovstal plant on Friday. The fact that at least half of them belong to the Azov regiment, created by far-right militants in 2014, offers the Kremlin a chance to claim major progress with regards to one of the officially declared goals of its war on Ukraine – the "denazification" of the country.

Inevitably, the Russian propaganda machine is now excitedly parading all the tattoos and patches on the uniforms of the surrendering Ukrainian soldiers, which betray the far-right sympathies of their bearers. In violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment

of Prisoners of War, pro-Kremlin outlets are circulating videos of POWs, who are being forced to strip and expose their tattoos for the cameras of propagandist TV channels. Filming POWs, including scenes of their interrogation and torture, is practised by both sides in this war. Officials in both Russia and Russian-backed unrecognised statelets in eastern Ukraine are now calling for a trial of Azov fighters. Right at the end of the Azovstal siege, the Russian Prosecutor-General's Office appealed to the Supreme Court to declare the Azov regiment a terrorist organisation. This would potentially allow Russia to try the members of Azov in its territory as terrorists. Alternatively, the Kremlin could stage that trial in the Donetsk and Luhansk statelets, which – unlike Russia itself – practise capital punishment. The Russian effort to highlight Ukraine's troubling tolerance of the far right would be more convincing if Russia itself weren't coopting them as well. The infamous Wagner Group, a private army that now fights on the Donbas front near the town of Popasna, for example, includes the Rusich unit, which is

made up of open neo-Nazis from St Petersburg. But such facts are virtually unknown to the Russian public, so with the help of its massive propaganda machine, the Kremlin will be able to tick off the goal of "denazification" as achieved, given that Azov is by far the most symbolic example of Ukraine's controversial relationship with the far right. But what about the other goals? While many in the West seem to think that Putin aims to occupy the whole of Ukraine, Russia's territorial expansion goals officially declared at the start of the operation are not nearly as ambitious. They boil down to establishing control over the entire territories of Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine, which Russian-backed separatists have only partially controlled since 2014. This is a rather daunting task in military terms because it involves taking over the best-fortified areas of Ukraine, which have been carefully preparing for this battle for seven years. The Russian progress in Donbas has been steady so far, but very slow. The Russians are now close to establishing full control of Luhansk region, but Ukraine's strongholds in Donetsk region will be a much harder nut to crack.

In terms of selling the war to the jingoist part of Russian society, any Ukrainian territory outside of Donetsk and Luhansk claimed by Russia is just a bonus. The Kremlin does not need to obtain any territory outside Donbas to convince its support base that it achieved its goals and declared victory. The fall of Mariupol to the Russian military represents one of these bonus achievements. Russia now has a land corridor to Crimea, which it occupied in 2014. On top of that, it has ended Crimea's water and power

blockade, maintained by Ukraine all those years. The freshwater canal connecting the Dnieper River to the arid Crimean Peninsula is now in Russia's hands. So is a nuclear power station to the north of the peninsula, not to mention the power grid in southeastern Ukraine which can be now connected to Russia. Only historians looking into the Kremlin archives, years or decades from now, will be able to reveal the details of Putin's original plan for Ukraine. For now, all we know is that the first stage of the war included an ill-fated march on Kyiv and a failed attempt to encircle Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv. Was it a part of the plan for a broad occupation or a way of distracting Ukrainian forces while Russia was establishing the land corridor to Crimea?

It may well be an example of what British political scientist Mark Galeotti once dubbed the Kremlin's "ad-hocracy". Perhaps there was not much of a plan – just a desire to punish Ukraine for refusing to implement the Minsk agreements, which ended the first war in Donbas in 2014-15 and envisaged autonomy for the Russian-backed parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions within Ukraine. A week before Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine, President Zelenskyy had called the Minsk agreements "vapid" and designed to turn Ukraine into a losing side. In that respect, the attack on Kyiv could have been more of a punitive raid than an attempt to seize territory. The atrocities exposed after the Russian army retreated from northern Ukraine suggest that they were not exactly fighting for hearts and minds in this part of the country. If this is indeed accurate, what's crucial for the Kremlin is that at the end of the current war, Ukraine

is forced to agree to a truce that will be much more humiliating than what was envisaged by the Minsk agreements. If the war ends with Russia occupying all of Luhansk and Donetsk plus retaining control of the land corridor to Crimea, it will be more than enough for Putin to declare a spotless victory. But to cement his victory, the Russian leader will need to convince Ukraine to agree to a truce under such conditions, and that's a totally different story. Ukraine and its Western allies are hoping that under pressure from crippling sanctions Russia will eventually exhaust its military and economic potential and lose the battle.

This would be a desirable outcome, not only for Ukraine and Europe but Russia itself, as it would be beneficial for the country to leave this dark period in its history behind as quickly as possible and transform into something akin to post-1945 Germany rather than continue acting as an aggressive military dictatorship and further damage its economy. But while Russia is expected to lose 11.2 percent of its GDP this year, Ukraine's economy may shrink by 45 percent by the end of 2022, according to the World Bank. Ukrainian officials are bragging about a major counter-offensive later this year, fuelled by all the heavy weaponry Western allies have begun supplying in recent weeks. But it's unclear if it has the human resources to mount it. Offensives lead to considerably higher human losses than defensive wars and even with all the state-of-the-art Western weaponry, Ukraine will still be facing a very formidable enemy. The odds are high that it will reach its pain barrier long before Putin's Russia.

Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Bush and the hypocrisy of American moral outrage

Talha Abdulrazaq

I would hazard a guess that Bush is well aware that his decision to invade Iraq was wholly unjustified and brutal. I am equally certain that he thinks about his legacy due to his Iraq policies every day, and thanks his lucky stars that he was the president of the most powerful nation on earth rather than the president of a third world country the International Criminal Court would not be afraid of prosecuting

There's nothing funny about Iraq's destruction.

As if American political discourse could not plumb the depths of immorality and depravity any further, the original sinner of the 21st century – George W Bush – re-emerged to show that he remains, without a doubt, one the most morally bankrupt US presidents in recent memory.

wholly unjustified and brutal invasion of Iraq."

But this was no mere gaffe – rather, this was an insight into the troubled mind and soul of a liar and war monger who is arguably behind the root reasons behind much of the Middle East's problems today. Many condemn Putin's assault on Ukraine as an act of aggression, just

While speaking at an event on Wednesday, the gaffe-prone former president was busy denouncing Russian President Vladimir Putin for his decision to attack Ukraine in February. However, rather than engage in commentary about Putin, Bush engaged in the mother of all Freudian slips and said that the war was "the decision of one man to launch a

as he had decided to wage war against the aspirations of the Syrian public who wanted freedom from the yoke of the Assad family's decades-long reign of terror. But there is a very exclusive club of people on this planet who would do well to stay out of the public discourse and never rear their heads again, as they are themselves not only advocates of, but primary antagonists behind, wars of aggression. This is definitely a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

While former British Prime Minister Tony Blair is definitely a lifelong member of that club, Bush is its president for life as there is no one alive today that can possibly match his record for the mass destruction and destabilisation of entire regions, particularly the Middle East. By invading first Afghanistan in 2001 and then Iraq in 2003, Bush presided over not only two failed wars, but also a chain reaction of events that has led to a devastated region today.

It is therefore rich indeed that someone like Bush now has the temerity to criticise Putin – only to bungle even that and instead implicate himself. Even Blair has come out to criticise Putin, decrying the humanitarian catastrophe and threat to the West, and

Europe in particular, unleashed by the Kremlin's faltering war machine. While Blair played second fiddle to Bush, he is still no less culpable. This is, of course, not to say that Putin is above reproach – neither he nor his top lieutenants are. Russia has itself been accused of engaging in numerous war crimes, whether in Chechnya or Syria.

But a war cannot be agreeable whenever the West engages in it, yet is now somehow a cardinal sin only when the West's opponents engage in it. This level of sheer hypocrisy is reminiscent of former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stating in 1996 that the deaths of half a million Iraqi children was "worth it". The level of inhumanity on display by the late Albright is almost matched by the callous indifference shown by Bush himself.

I would hazard a guess that Bush is well aware that his decision to invade Iraq was wholly unjustified and brutal. I am equally certain that he thinks about his legacy due to his Iraq policies every day, and thanks his lucky stars that he was the president of the most powerful nation on earth rather than the president of a third world country the International Criminal

Court would not be afraid of prosecuting.

Yet, and precisely because of that, both he and the crowd that sat around him last Wednesday can simply and casually laugh off his subconscious trying to make itself heard, and the deaths and displacement of millions of Iraqis. Apparently, it is funny that the US and its allies destroyed an entire nation and subjected it to occupation.

To US politicians and the wider public, Iraq was a "bad" chapter in American history they would all like to move away from. Bush may have since been slammed by many in American media, academic and policy circles. But he is criticised from a US-centric perspective rather than out of any pain felt at what the American Empire did to Iraq, damning the country and its people to decades more of war and suffering based on the whim of a liar who was hunting for any excuse to wage war.

While the US – and especially Bush – would rather forget what happened in Iraq, the screams and curses of millions of innocent Iraqi men, women and children will haunt their legacy for generations to come – and even that is no justice for what they have gone through.

Courtesy: TRT World

Briefs

PM says will transform KP into Punjab

FROM PAGE 01

the government has increased the prices in compulsion due to the wrong decisions and agreements of the previous government. Shehbaz Sharif said the government has announced a twenty-eight billion rupees subsidy package for eighty million poor people of the country. He said Lap-top will be provided to the position holders students in the upcoming budget. Shehbaz Sharif criticized Imran Khan for his flawed policies, creating unemployment and creating chaos in the country. The Prime Minister congratulated the people of Balochistan over the holding of successful local government elections. The Prime Minister also announced the establishment of a medical college, special grant of one-billion rupees development for Mansehra and setting up of Hazara Electric Supply Company. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said that the recently surfaced purported audio tape exposed Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chief Imran Khan's hypocrisy and double standards. The prime minister, on his twitter handle, said that in the surfaced audio tape, the PTI chief allegedly sought NRO for himself and his previous government. Imran Khan manufactured fake foreign conspiracy story when his other efforts had failed, he added. "The audio tape that surfaced recently exposes Imran Khan's hypocrisy & double standards. Contrary to his claims, he sought NRO to save himself & his govt. The fake story of foreign conspiracy was manufactured after all his efforts failed. His lies stand exposed," the prime minister posted a tweet.

Khan fell at Zardari's feet: Maryam

FROM PAGE 01

servant of Pakistan who changed the destiny of Punjab and he will also change the fate of Pakistan. "I promise that the wounds that Imran Khan inflicted on the chest of Pakistan will be healed by Shehbaz Sharif and Nawaz Sharif," Maryam Said. Taking a dig at PTI chairman, she further said that Imran Khan used the resources of KP for the failed march, adding that KP's people rights were also sacrificed for the failed sit-in "Imran Khan was disappeared from Islamabad in the morning while he left the people for dying," she added.

Imran accuses Govt of plans to...

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the Israeli president". "This government will strike a deal with India to sell the people of Kashmir, and to top it off, they are also going to accept Israel," he said while addressing the PTI workers' convention in Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Beraing the coalition government, Khan said that while it "conspired" with the Americans to remove him from power, the people of Pakistan would never accept an "imported government" that has been imposed on them. "We will not accept these thieves and slaves of the United States," he said, adding that the PTI was fighting the real war of liberation against those who "robbed the country." Speaking about the violent clashes between PTI workers and the police during the party's "Azadi March," Khan said that two of his workers — one from Lahore and the other one from Mardan — lost their lives while fighting for the country's independence. "As long as I am alive, I will not end my struggle and jihad against these thieves," Khan said. The former premier censured the government for using force against PTI workers who took to the streets against the alleged foreign conspiracy and said that the Supreme Court had allowed the PTI to protest peacefully as a democratic right but the government tried to sabotage it.



SWEDEN: Alby Zalmi Team Championship pose for a group photo after winning the European Cricket League Championship. – DNA

Turkey cannot say 'yes' to countries supporting terrorism

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: Turkey cannot say "yes" to countries who want to join NATO but also support terrorism, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in remarks released on Sunday. Speaking to reporters on his way back from Azerbaijan, Erdogan said that last week's talks on Sweden and Finland's NATO membership bids hosted by Turkey at the Presidential Complex in the capital Ankara "did not happen at the desired level." Saying that Sweden and Finland have expectations from these talks, Erdogan said however that they have not taken the necessary steps on Turkey's demands and stressed that terrorists are even now still walking the streets of Stockholm while Sweden protects them "with their own police." "They are not honest or sincere. We cannot repeat the mistakes made in the past on (admitting) countries that embrace and feed such terrorists into NATO, which is a security organization," he said. "For as long as Tayyip Erdogan is the head of the Republic of Turkey, we definitely cannot say 'yes' to countries which support terrorism entering NATO," he underlined.

Erdogan also said Turkey wanted to see an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine as soon as possible, but that the situation was becoming more negative each day. Adding that he will soon have separate phone calls with his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts, Erdogan said Turkey will continue to encourage the parties to maintain channels of dialogue and diplomacy to bring peace to Ukraine. Turkey last week listed five "concrete assurances" it was demanding from Sweden, including the "termination of political support for terrorism," "elimination of the source of terrorism financing," and the "cessation of arms support" to the PKK, which is designated as a terrorist group by the United States and European Union, and its Syrian branch YPG. The demands also called for the lifting of arms sanctions against Turkey and global cooperation against terrorism. Finland and Sweden formally applied to join NATO this month, seeking to boost security following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. They hoped it would be a quick accession process and other NATO members touted the planned enlargement as historic. But Turkey, a longstanding member of the alliance, has voiced objections to their membership bids, criticizing the countries for tolerating and even supporting terrorist groups. All 30 NATO states must give their approval before a new member can be admitted and thus benefit from the pact's collective-security guarantee. Ankara hosted Wednesday consultations with Swedish and Finnish delegations on their NATO applications in the capital. It has been conveyed that their NATO bids cannot progress unless Turkey's security concerns are addressed through concrete steps, and in a certain timeframe.



NATO bids cannot progress unless Turkey's security concerns are addressed through concrete steps, and in a certain timeframe.

Will Karim Benzema win Ballon d'Or?

WEB DESK

PARIS: Karim Benzema seems to be the overwhelming favourite to win the Ballon d'Or after Real Madrid's Champions League victory - so is this the French veteran's finest hour? The 34-year-old, who scored 44 goals in 46 games this season, would become the second-oldest player to win it after Blackpool's Stanley Matthews, who was 41 when he won the first ever award in 1956. Goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois was man of the match in Paris and Vinicius Jr scored the only goal in the 1-0 win over Liverpool. It was a rare quiet night for Benzema - who had a goal disallowed for offside - in a brilliant season. "Of course," Benzema told Canal Plus if he was thinking about the Ballon d'Or - the prize organised by France Football which is awarded annually to the world's best footballer.

Self-belief carries Real to Champions League glory

SPORTS DESK

SAINT-DENIS: Real Madrid are champions of Europe for a record-extending 14th time after Carlo Ancelotti's side beat Liverpool 1-0 in Paris on Saturday, but rarely have the Spanish champions taken a more chaotic road to glory. Madrid only made it to the French capital thanks to stirring fightbacks at the Santiago Bernabeu to see off Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and then Manchester City in the knockout rounds. More madness ensued at the Stade de France, where kick-off was delayed by over half an hour as security problems outside the ground prevented fans from taking their seats. Amid the confusion, Madrid had experience on their side in the form of the most successful coach in the competition's history. Ancelotti now stands alone as the only manager to win four Champions League titles, surpassing Bob Paisley's three European Cups with Liverpool and Zinedine Zidane's hat-trick as Madrid boss between 2016 and 2018.

"I am a record man," said Ancelotti. "I'm pleased to have won the Champions League four times, but I am even more thrilled to have come back to Madrid and had such a spectacular season." Even once the action got underway there was more controversy as Madrid had a goal ruled out late in the first half for offside against Karim Benzema despite Liverpool's Fabinho playing the ball into the Real captain's path. Other coaches would have raged at the officials, but Ancelotti was characteristically cool on a night he wrote himself into the history books. Just a year ago, Ancelotti was on the other side of Merseyside at Everton, after his stock suffered from short spells at Bayern Munich and Napoli. The 62-year-old said on the eve of the game that the change to be back on the biggest stage in world football 12 months later felt like "vertigo". Yet he delivered the favour Everton fans craved by denying Liverpool a joyous end to a momentous season. "Everton weren't that happy," added Ancelotti on his return to Madrid, where he also won the Champions League in

the debut season of his first spell in 2014. "I think they are a bit happier now." Six days ago, Liverpool were dreaming of an unprecedented quadruple. Instead they have to suffice with a League Cup and FA Cup having come up short by the finest of margins in both the Premier League title race and now in the Champions League final. The week also did not start well for

Madrid. The Spanish giants were jilted by Kylian Mbappe, who decided to remain at PSG for a further three years. Mbappe's arrival at the Santiago Bernabeu could have had major implications for the future of Vinicius Junior. The 21-year-old Brazilian, who plays in the same position as Mbappe on the left of the attack, has enjoyed his breakout season under the tutelage of Ancelotti.



Pak-China plus movement urged for the region

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Devcom-Pakistan bilateral webinar pinpoints multiple severe threats to the energy sector, economic security, geopolitical defense and food shortage. The experts urged collective vision, absolute wisdom and integrated efforts to protect the greater South and West Asia. Geopolitical analyst Munir Ahmed announced the launch of Pak-China Friendship and CPEC Awards to identify, recognize and appreciate individuals and organizations dedicated to the exemplary bond of the two nations. The initiative will encourage and inspire others to follow the suite. Islamabad — Speakers at the Devcom-Pakistan webinar urged the governments and other stakeholders to come up with a Pak-China plus movement to combat the challenges emerging from the regional conflicts. The geopolitical pursuits are likely to hit China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) if cohesive and corrective measures are not taken. The intensifying cold war strategies and increasing interest of the US, UK and NATO countries in the extended region may hamper the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and CPEC, a very ag-

gressive rail and road connectivity and trade regime of President Xi Jinping. An outline of the changing global scenario is fast emerging after the abrupt withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan. Further adding to miseries of the extended region is the ever-increasing US and NATO deep engagement in the Russia-Ukraine war have set red alert for the future economic growth and connectivity. Seems a seismic shift to the Indo-Pacific region at large in the evolving world order. Development Communications Network (Devcom-Pakistan), DTN and Friends of China organized the webinar on the subject "Where CPEC stands in the emerging global scenario?" on Saturday. The panel of experts included Centre for China and Globalisation (Beijing) Vice President Prof Victor Gao, Amb Retd Naghma Hashmi, Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Beijing) president Wang Zihai, Embassy of China in Islamabad Cultural Counselor Zhang Heqing, Centre for China and Globalisation (Beijing) Sr. Research Fellow and Media Expert Zoon Ahmed Khan, Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director Munir Ahmed, EastWest Institute (London) Senior Research Fellow Dr. Najam Abbas and University of Peshawar Head of China

Study Center Prof Dr. Zahid Anwar. Centre for China and Globalisation (Beijing) Vice President Prof Victor Gao said highly coordinated efforts are being made by the so-called super power to put the region on fire. The Russia-Ukraine way is likely to hit the region badly. Lives and livelihoods of billions of people in the region are at stake. All the stakeholders and countries need to have a consolidated approach towards solutions. China will not compromise on any threat to its any part of land, economic and strategic interests. He urged both the governments to launch the Pak-China plus movement for the CPEC 2.0 along with the joint information technology solutions and software development engaging the youth of Pakistan. IT technology is the future and China can offer numerous opportunities in this sector. Trade of good services shall be on top priority for the educated youth. Ambassador retired Naghma Hashmi said China's speedy economic growth has been a matter of concern for the US and the West. Now, the US is the country owing largest debt to China but propagating against CPEC and BRI initiatives as a debt trap. Falls acquisitions will not work out. The next three decades are very impor-

tant for the region. China shall take lead in developing vision 2050 for the region in close collaboration with the regional stakeholders. Unfortunately, the resource-base is not wide enough but we have to find the resources for an inclusive and cohesive long-term economic development and security engagement. Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Beijing) president Wang Zihai urged for intensive industrial cooperation between the two countries that has already been delayed for long. Pakistan needs to provide an enabling environment and security to the Chinese working in the different sectors and cities in Pakistan. The recent attacks have shattered Chinese workers and investors' trust. Pakistan internal and external political affairs shall not affect the Chinese interests and investments. It would be a big dent to bilateral industrial cooperation. He said the trade deficit between both countries is a big concern. Pakistan with the technical support of the Chinese industrial tycoon can develop in-land high quality products exported to China and other countries. Pakistan lacks quality standards certification that have hampered its exports. China can help in this regard too.

'No delegation visited Israel'

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not based in Pakistan. "Pakistan's position on the Palestinian issue is clear and unambiguous. There is no change whatsoever in our policy on which there is complete national consensus." He said Pakistan steadfastly supported the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination. "The establishment of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State with pre-1967 borders and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in accordance with the relevant UN and OIC resolutions, is imperative for just and lasting peace in the region," he added.

Pakistan among the largest troops contributing states

FROM PAGE 01

in the UN missions abroad, the prime minister said, saluting their valor and sacrifices. "The sons and daughters of the nation have displayed their professional capabilities worldwide by maintaining peace and serving the humankind," he added. The prime minister said the international recognition of the professionalism of armed forces of Pakistan to carry out their responsibilities across the globe in the challenging situations was a matter of great pride.

Djokovic sets up potential Nadal quarter-final

PARIS: Defending champion Novak Djokovic set up a potential French Open quarter-final against long-time rival Rafael Nadal by moving up a gear to beat Argentine 15th seed Diego Schwartzman. Top seed Djokovic produced his best level so far at Roland Garros to win 6-1 6-3 6-3 in the fourth-round match. The 34-year-old Serb defended well to save seven of eight break points while taking six of his 11 chances. Nadal, 35, will fix up the meeting if he beats Felix Auger-Aliassime later. Like Djokovic, 13-time champion Nadal has not dropped a set on the Paris clay this year and the fifth seed will look to protect that record against an opponent who is now coached by his uncle, Toni Nadal. Canada's Auger-Aliassime, seeded ninth, had never won a main-draw match at Roland Garros until this tournament. Djokovic uses crowd energy to beat Schwartzman. Two-time champion Djokovic came into the French Open having played fewer tournaments than usual this year but is showing signs of peaking at exactly the right time. Schwartzman, a 2020 semi-finalist, was supposed to be Djokovic's toughest test so far. But Djokovic saw off the diminutive Argentine in a professional display that was less comfortable than the scoreline suggested. – Agencies

Sri Lanka Cricket wants to shift Asia Cup

KARACHI: Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has prepared a proposal to shift the Asia Cup 2022 somewhere else amid the ongoing political and economic instability in their country. According to Cricbuzz, SLC will present their proposal to Asian Cricket Council (ACC)'s president Jay Shah during their meeting on the sidelines of the Indian Premier League (IPL) final, scheduled to take place today (Sunday) in Ahmedabad. The SLC's president, Shammi Silva, and a few other members have already arrived in Ahmedabad for the mega IPL final between Rajasthan Royals and Gujarat Titans. As per several reports, UAE is considered to be an option to host the event. Initially, Asia Cup is scheduled to take place from August 27 to September 11 in Sri Lanka. India will defend its Asian title as they won the last edition in 2018. However, some of the ACC members have stated that a final decision on the matter will be made after reviewing the situation. – DNA

Briefs

First shipment of Pakistani mangoes reached China

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The first shipment of Pakistani mangoes of this season has arrived in Kunming, China, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. As per Adnan Hafeez, General Secretary of the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce in China (PCCIC) and Director of Imperial Ventures (Pvt), the first batch of Sindhri mangoes landed at the Kunming airport with a total volume of 2.3 tons. "We have prepared almost 3 tons but due to our strict sorting standards, exported only 2.3 tons in the shipment," he added. He noted, part of the first shipment will be distributed to Chinese wholesalers and retailers as samples. Pakistan mangoes, considered the king of fruits in the country, have a growing presence in the international market and have made several forays into the Chinese market. In 2021, Pakistan exported 37.4 tons of mangoes to China, as per the General Administration of Customs of China.

Turkey reports over 1,200 new coronavirus cases

ANKARA: Turkey registered 1,260 new coronavirus infections over the past 24 hours, according to data released on Wednesday. The Health Ministry said four related deaths and 1,225 recoveries were also recorded, while 137,573 tests were conducted. To stem the spread of the virus, Turkey has administered more than 147.7 million vaccine doses since it launched an immunization drive in January 2021. More than 57.83 million people have received their first jabs, while over 53.06 million are fully vaccinated. Turkey lifted its longtime indoor mask mandate last month, except for public transportation and in hospitals. More than 526.9 million COVID-19 cases and over 6.28 million deaths have been reported in at least 192 countries and regions since December 2019, according to the US-based Johns Hopkins University. – Agencies

Mexico confirms 1st monkeypox case

WEB DESK

MEXICO CITY: Mexico confirmed the first reported monkeypox case on Saturday. Deputy Health Minister Hugo Lopez-Gatell said on Twitter that a 50-year-old man, a permanent resident of New York City, was probably infected in the Netherlands. The man is currently being treated in Mexico City, where he is reportedly stable and in isolation. On Wednesday, Mexico's National Committee for Epidemiological Surveillance shared a series of preemptive measures, quoting that the presence of the virus in the country was "inevitable." Lopez-Gatell also assured that the emergent virus has a slight infection rate and the probability of a full-blown epidemic is low.

Govt suggests steps to check Monkeypox cases

ISLAMABAD: The government has issued special instructions to all the national and provincial health authorities to remain on high alert for any suspected case of Monkeypox. According to an official of the Ministry of National Health Services, the situation is being closely monitored by the health authorities and as per reports of the National Institute of Health (NIH), no case of Monkeypox has yet been diagnosed in Pakistan. He added timely detection and notification are important for prompt implementation of preventive measures and all public and private hospitals have been directed to ensure readiness for isolation and treatment. – APP



ISLAMABAD: Famous Romanian Artist GRIGORE LES and others perform at Lok Virsa during a musical evening. – DNA

SCO heads of ministries and depts meet in Tashkent

DNA

TASHKENT: The Third Meeting of Heads of Ministries and Departments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Member States responsible for Environmental Protection Issues was held in Tashkent under the chairmanship of the Uzbek side. The Meeting was attended in a hybrid format by heads and representatives of ministries and departments of the SCO Member States responsible for environmental issues (Republic of India, Republic of Kazakhstan, People's Republic of China, Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Russian Federation, Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Uzbekistan) and the SCO Secretariat. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Narzullo Oblomurov, Chairman of the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Ecology and Environmental Protection. At the beginning of the Meeting, the heads of delegations made reports on the state and prospects for the development of cooperation in the field of environmental protection of the SCO



Member States. The sides exchanged views on the implementation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Concept of Cooperation of the SCO Member States in the Field of Environmental Protection for the period 2022-

2024, approved at the SCO Summit on September 17, 2021 in Dushanbe. The parties approved the Program of Joint Creation of the SCO Platform for the Exchange of Environmental Information and recommended its approval. The

dates and venue of the next, Fourth Meeting of the Heads of ministries and departments of the SCO Member States responsible for Environmental Issues in 2023 will be agreed additionally through the SCO Secretariat.

NC demands punishment against BJP spokes

ISLAMABAD: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the National Conference has expressed dismay over the blasphemous, offensive, and frighteningly hurtful statement of the BJP Spokesperson Nupur Sharma against Prophet Muhammad (SAW) during a debate on a national news channel. Salman demanded that an FIR must be lodged and stern action against the erring BJP leader was needed for unravelling such an antediluvian mindset. He added that the smart alecks of the saffron brigade cannot hide behind Article 19 of the Indian constitution which guarantees freedom of speech to the citizens. – APP

569th anniversary

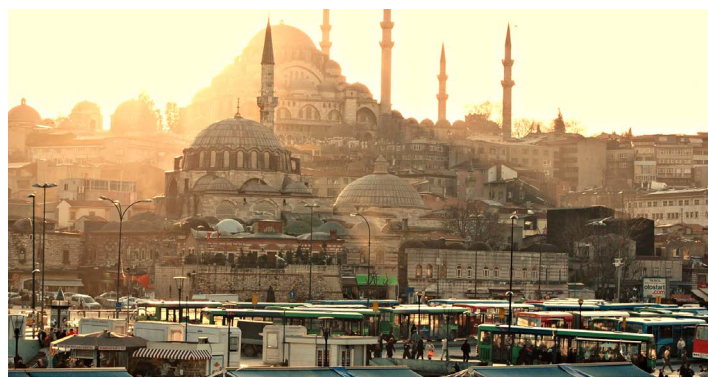
Turkiye marks conquest of Istanbul

FOREIGN DESK

ISTANBUL: Turkiye on Sunday is commemorating the 569th anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul, hailing it as the momentous start of a new era. Istanbul, a cosmopolitan city, was besieged 28 times throughout history before its conquest in 1453 by Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II. In recognition of his victory, the 21-year-old ruler was thereafter known as Mehmed the Conqueror. In a prophecy about Istanbul's conquest by a Muslim ruler, the Muslim Prophet Muhammad said: "Istanbul will surely be conquered; what a good commander is the conqueror, what a good soldier is the conqueror." On the night of April 21-22, 67 small and medium ships were moved to the Golden Horn – the primary inlet of the Turkish Straits – by soldiers and animals through the bed of the Kabatas Stream, which

poured into the Tophane Port. The first walls of the city were built in 657 B.C. Roman Emperor Septimius Severus (193-211) demolished these walls during the city's invasion and built a wall that ended near Hagia Sophia, including the Sarayburnu and later Sultan Ahmet Square. During the reign of Constantine (306-337), the city – from the Marmara coast to the Golden Horn – was surrounded by city

walls for the third time. All preparations for the conquest of Istanbul were carried out in Edirne, just west of Istanbul. Mehmed II set off from Edirne. Venetian commander Bartolomeo Soligo, fighting for the Byzantines, closed off the entrance of the Golden Horn by laying a chain at the entrance to its inner harbor. Mehmed II and the Ottoman Army drew near Constantinople. The army had near-



ly 80,000 soldiers. The siege started with the firing of a big cannon. The Ottoman Navy came before the port of Constantinople. The navy boasted 145 ships, including 12 galleys and 25 transport ships as well as small boats. Ottoman ships were moved to the Golden Horn via land. Captain Giorco Coco, who was tasked with burning the Ottoman ships in the Golden Horn, failed and died inside his sinking vessel. Ships attacked to lift the chain at the entry of the Golden Horn, but the attack failed. While attacks on the Istanbul walls continued, a tunnel was dug to enter the city. When the sounds of the excavations were heard in the city, the Byzantines noticed it and blocked the tunnel. Mehmed II sent one last envoy to the emperor, but his offer was rejected. The seventh tunnel Ottoman soldiers dug also failed. Mehmed II concluded that digging tunnels would cost many lives.

Fig industry, a new page in China-Pak agri co-op

Boosting local production is arguably the top priority of China-Pakistan fig cooperation, obviously

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Fig industry is going to add a new sweet page in China-Pak agricultural cooperation, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Sunday. "As a large agricultural country, about 65-70 percent of Pakistan's population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Compared with traditional crops such as wheat, maize and cotton, fig, as an emerging cash crop, can obviously play a greater role in promoting farmers' income. At present, we have carried out a small-scale fig soil environmental improvement experiment to adopt the "actinomycetes + biochar" fertilization mode, which has achieved remarkable results," noted Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Shar, Researcher of Yangling Fig Research Institute. His viewpoint was echoed by Eric Fang, Chairman of Yangling Fig Industry Development Company Ltd, "In the future, in addition to simple planting experiments, we hope to bring a complete set of technical systems to Pakistan."

"There are more than 20 varieties of figs in our demonstration garden, of which two most outstanding varieties have an average yield of 2 tons per mu (0.067 hectare). Besides, with a short growth cycle, they can be picked in just five months," Eric Fang said in an exclusive interview with China Economic Net, "in fact, it is only the average yield of the first year of harvest, a few years later, the yield can reach

a peak of 5 tons per mu." On the other hand, statistic from Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) shows that fig cultivation in Pakistan is about 875,000 hectares and the total production can reach 7,200,000 tons. With an average production of about 8.23 tons per hectare, the yield cannot meet the need of whole country, therefore, Pakistan imports a large number of figs from Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and other central Asian countries. Boosting local production is arguably the top priority of China-Pakistan fig cooperation, obviously. "Considering that fig originated in Arabian Peninsula, Pakistan's high temperature and abundant sunshine are already suitable for its growth. What we need to do is to promote the concept of "facility agriculture" here. Our facility greenhouses, water-saving irrigation systems and automatic control systems can well cope with the extreme climate that may occur. Temperature-controlled greenhouses can adjust the temperature whether it encounters high temperature or low temperature. If the local soil lacks one or several trace elements necessary for plants, integrated water and fertilizer system can replenish nutrients in time. And facing the shortage of water resources in Pakistan, Yangling has formed a complete set of targeted measures, precise control of water is no longer a problem with water-saving irrigation systems. If a branch of the Yangling Agricul-

tural Demonstration Zone can be set up in Pakistan in the future, we can slowly evolve a complete planting system suitable for Pakistan based on local conditions, which has the lowest risk and cost. Kill two birds with one stone, it's a win-win situation," Eric Fang emphasized. Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Shar also mentioned the problems he encountered in Pakistan, "The abuse of chemical fertilizers is the most important factor in reducing yields. Most local farmers lack systematic agricultural knowledge so they believe that the more fertilizers are applied, the better the crops grow. On the contrary, it can increase the pests and diseases and reduce the yield. Instead of using pesticides and chemical fertilizers that are harmful to health, it is better to change the planting mode, like using new nutrients such as straw and biochar to achieve the effect of increasing yield and environmental protection." Besides yield, quality is also an issue that Yangling fig producing areas are very concerned about. According to Eric Fang, many varieties have reached a fairly high yield now, under this premise, the quality should be improved and the output value can be further increased, so as to increase income. China and Pakistan also have a lot of room for cooperation in this regard. "Not only introducing China's superior varieties into Pakistan, but also improving the local fig quality." Moreover, to increase the output value, industrialization is the only way.

The reporter learned that apart from the existing by-products such as jam and dried fruit, Yangling Fig Industry Development Company Ltd has also developed fig cosmetics, including shampoo, shower gel, perfume, facial mask, and has cooperated with several biopharmaceutical company in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province to develop fig health supplements and medicines. Eric Fang told CEN, "Given that China-Pakistan cooperation requires complementary advantages, we hope to make full use of Pakistan's advantages in land, labor, photovoltaic energy, and build a production center in Pakistan in the future. Because of the epidemic, we can start related online personnel training in Pakistan. Figs have high economic value and are highly processed, so except the fresh fruit, the processing industry is also promising. I believe the future of this industry is bright." As for Dr. Shar, it is his primary goal to use the advanced agricultural knowledge learned in China to benefit his hometown. He mentioned that in Pakistan, fig producing areas are mainly concentrated in the north. Pakistan has vast desert areas, and many places have sandy loam soils that are most suitable for fig growth, so he hopes that these areas can be fully utilized. What's more, local farmers generally do not know much about the commercial value of fig by-products, and it is a top priority to spread relevant knowledge for them as soon as possible.

Netanyahu storms Al-Aqsa's Al-Buraq Wall

NEWS DESK

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has just broken into Al-Buraq Wall plaza, the western portion of Al-Aqsa Mosque complex in occupied Jerusalem. Ahead of the far-right "Flag March" which is due to take place in the Old City at 4:00 p.m., Netanyahu has broken into the Al-Buraq Wall, known to Jews as the "Western Wall", amid high tensions in the area as over 1044 colonial settlers, including MK Itamar Ben-Gvir, broke into the Al-Aqsa compound from today's early morning hours till 11:00 am. The settlers entered through the Mughrabi Gate, one of the Gates of the Old City of Jerusalem and is under full-Israeli control. The settlers performed Talmudic rituals in its courtyards and provocative dances. Earlier today, dozens of well-armed Israeli occupation forces raided the mosque to make a way for settlers to break into the holy site. The occupation forces attacked the Palestinian worshipers inside the holy site and blockaded them inside the prayer halls to empty the courtyards of its worshipers to secure the settlers' entry. The provocative storm of the holy site came only a few hours before the "Flag March," an annual rally planned by Israeli far-right settlers as part of celebrations to commemorate the so-called "reunification" of the city under Israeli rule.

Sheikh Sabri urges Palestinians to march en masse

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: Sheikh Ekrima Sabri, Aqsa Mosque preacher and head of the Higher Islamic Council in Jerusalem, has called on the Palestinian masses to march en masse to the Aqsa Mosque to defend it against settler break-ins. In press remarks on Sunday morning, Sheikh Sabri stressed the need for every Palestinian to strive to reach the Aqsa Mosque with night and main. On Sunday morning, a large number of Israeli police forces stormed the Aqsa Mosque's courtyards and locked dozens of Muslim worshipers inside the Qibli prayer building before allowing Jewish settlers to defile the Islamic holy site in different groups. Earlier, Palestinian young men inside the Qibli building clashed with Israeli police officers, who gathered outside, and showered them with stones, chairs and firecrackers, while chanting religious slogans. – Agencies

India heading toward another power crisis

FOREIGN DESK

NEW DELHI: Lower pre-monsoon coal stock at thermal power plants in India could lead to another power crisis in July-August, an independent research organization said in a report on Sunday. "Going by coal stocks in thermal power stations, India's current power crisis is unlikely to be resolved soon. The onset of the southwest monsoon will further hamper mining and transportation of coal from mines to power stations," the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said in the report. "At the start of May 2022, non-pithead power stations have only six days of coal left, against the stipulated 20-26 days. On the other hand, pithead power stations have coal stock enough for 13 days," said the report. According to the CREA, a lower pre-monsoon coal stock at power stations indicates the possibility of another power crisis in July-August 2022. "Plant operators and regulators had three months to prepare and avoid a crunch," Sunil Dahiya, an analyst with the CREA, said. "Yet, no preemptive action was taken to resolve this crisis." The CREA said the problem of power shortage is not coal production but distribution and official apathy.

Briefs

Elahi
bashes PTI's
opponents

DNA

LAHORE: Speaker Punjab Assembly Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi on Sunday said that those who have been dreaming of Imran Khan's arrest should worry about themselves. Talking to media, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi said that the preparations for the real independence long march [Haqiqi Azadi long march] are ongoing. He mentioned that the incumbent government is afraid of Imran Khan. The fake rulers are practicing every illegal way to stop the long march, he added. The Speaker Punjab Assembly made it clear that nothing could stop the long march. He explained that they will not be able to cause any damage to the ongoing preparations for PTI's long march by putting up fake cases against the party's leaders and workers.

Ukraine get
missiles,
howitzers

WEB DESK

KYIV: Ukraine has started receiving Harpoon anti-ship missiles from Denmark and self-propelled howitzers from the United States, arms that will bolster forces fighting Russia's invasion, Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said on Saturday. "The coastal defence of our country will not only be strengthened by Harpoon missiles – they will be used by trained Ukrainian teams," Reznikov wrote on his Facebook page. He said Harpoon shore-to-ship missiles would be operated alongside Ukrainian Neptune missiles to defend the coast, including the southern port of Odesa. Serhiy Bratchuk, a spokesman for the Odesa regional military administration in southern Ukraine, said in an online post that "so many Harpoons have been handed over to us that we can sink the entire Russian Black Sea Fleet."

Azerbaijan embassy hosts
grand National Day reception

Direct flights which started from Karachi, Lahore to Baku in March, 2022 (Islamabad to be started in coming weeks) is also another milestone that was achieved between Azerbaijan and Pakistan



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan, while speaking on the occasion of the National Day of Azerbaijan said, that May 28 is celebrated as the Independence Day of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan Democratic Republic which was the first democratic secular republic in the Muslim East was established on May 28, 1918. He said, the measures taken during Azerbaijan Democratic Republic were important in terms of establishing the foundations of independent statehood and determining the future direction of development. The establishment of democratic rights and freedoms, recognition of equal rights of all citizens regardless of ethnic and religious affiliation, giving women the right to vote even before many European countries, declaring the Azerbaijani language the state language, paying special attention to the

development of education and culture, the establishment of the national army and security structures clearly characterize the scale, essence, and meaning of the policy pursued by the government of the Republic. Ambassador Khazar said, after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the people of Azerbaijan established an independent Republic of Azerbaijan based on the traditions of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Under the leadership of National Leader Heydar Aliyev, tremendous efforts were done and steps were taken to strengthen the restored independence. "Today, under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, the process of development of democratic, legal, secular state and civil society in the Republic of Azerbaijan continues successfully. These successes are reflected in all aspects of Azerbaijani people's lives. As a result of the victory in the war the liberation of Azerbaijani territories



from Armenian occupation in 2020, and the surrender of Armenia are natural consequences of Azerbaijan's achievements under the leadership of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, President Ilham Aliyev'. After the restoration of Azerbaijan's Independence in 1991, Pakistan was one of the first countries recognized independence of Azerbaijan, he added. Further dilating on the bilateral relations the ambassador said, Azerbaijan and Pakistan are bound by the relations of strong friendship, brotherhood and strategic partnership based on historical and cultural roots. The two countries have always supported each other both bilaterally and within international organizations. 2022 marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. The relations forged between peoples of both countries are among the primary factors conditioning our inter-state cooperation.

It is pleasant that throughout these 30 years, Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations, underpinned by mutual trust and confidence, have developed exponentially, and new directions of our engagement have been identified. Azerbaijan-Pakistan Intergovernmental Joint Commission and around 10 Joint Working Groups under this Commission serve the further improvement of the relations between brotherly countries. He said, direct flights which started from Karachi, Lahore to Baku in March, 2022 (Islamabad to be started in coming weeks) is also another milestone that was achieved between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. It gives an impetus to further deepen people to people contacts with easily visa obtaining procedure, to increase number of tourist from both countries, as well as to serve to expand economic cooperation, increase trade and raise the level of relations between business communities of the two countries.

Shanghai,
Beijing
to ease
restrictions

NEWS DESK

SHANGHAI: Shanghai said on Sunday "unreasonable" curbs on businesses will be removed from June 1 as it looks to lift its COVID-19 lockdown, while Beijing reopened parts of its public transport as well as some malls and other venues as infections stabilised. The Chinese commercial hub of 25 million people aims to essentially end from Wednesday a two-month lockdown that has severely damaged the economy and seen many residents lose income, struggle to source food and to cope with the isolation. The painful coronavirus curbs in major Chinese cities run counter to trends seen in the rest of the world, which has largely tried to return to normal life even as infections spread. Shanghai, China's most populous city, will end many conditions for businesses to resume work from June 1. The city also launched measures to support its economy, including reducing some taxes on car purchases, accelerating issuance of local government bonds, and speeding up approvals of real estate projects. Shanghai will ask banks to renew loans to small and medium firms worth a total of 100 billion yuan (\$15 billion) this year. Wu did not give details of which restrictions would be cancelled.

Deadly nose-
bleed fever
shocks Iraq

WEB DESK

NASIRIYAH, IRAQ: Spraying a cow with pesticides, health workers target blood-sucking ticks at the heart of Iraq's worst detected outbreak of a fever that causes people to bleed to death. The sight of the health workers, dressed in the full protective kit, is one that has become common in the Iraqi countryside, as the Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever spreads, jumping from animals to humans. This year Iraq has recorded 19 deaths among 111 CCHF cases in humans, according to the World Health Organisation. The virus has no vaccine and onset can be swift, causing severe bleeding both internally and externally and especially from the nose. It causes death in as many as two-fifths of cases, according to medics. "The number of cases recorded is unprecedented," said Haidar Hantouche, a health official in Dhi Qar province. A poor farming region in southern Iraq, the province accounts for nearly half of Iraq's cases.

PUC wants Pak
delegations' Israel
visit probed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has a very clear and explicit stance on the Palestinian issue. The delegation, which held a meeting with the Israeli President was not representative of Pakistani people and the state, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council. In a joint statement, leadership of Pakistan Ulema Council demanded of Prime Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif to hold investigations against those who visited Israel on Pakistani passports and who allowed them to visit Israel. Whoever is involved in this act, legal action should be taken against them, said leadership of Pakistan Ulema Council. A series of atrocities committed by Israel forces on Palestinians and indignity of Masjid-e-Aqsa will come to an end soon. Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United Nations should take notice on disgrace of Masjid-e-Aqsa by Israeli forces, said leadership of Pakistan Ulema Council. Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council, Maulana Asad Zikriya Qasmi, Maulana Abdul Haq Mujahid, Maulana Noman Haashir, Maulana Mohammad Shafi Qasmi, Maulana Asadullah Farooq, Maulana Abu Bakr Hamid Sabri, Maulana Tahir Aqil Awan, Maulana Mohammad Aslam Siddiqui, Maulana Aziz Akbar Qasmi, Maulana Saad Allah Shafiq, Maulana Mohammad Ashfaq Patafi, Alama Tahir-ul-Hasan, Allama Pir Zubair Abid, Maulana Abdul Hakim Athar and other said in a joint statement that a delegation, who visited Israel in the name of Pakistan has tried to tarnish the image of Pakistan and Islam. – DNA

Russia,
Kazakhstan to buy
Afghan onions

DNA

KABUL: The Afghanistan Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock (ACAL) said that Kazakhstan and Russia have shown interest in purchasing Afghan onions. ACAL said that several Afghan trucks loaded with onions are headed to the borders bound for Central Asian States. "Fortunately, we were able to have good exports to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and from there to Russia. This year also the markets in Russia need onions," said Mirwais Haji Zada, head of the ACAL. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock said it has new plans for the export of Afghan agriculture products. "Now, the countries who want to import products from Afghanistan and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock have set up a process to control the exports to prevent a crisis in the country but also to bring good income for the farmers," said Musbahuddin Mustaeen, a spokesman for the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock. The farmers called on the government to provide markets for their products. "We want the government to find a good market for our products so we can have good sales," said Rahmullah, a farmer.

Nepal flight missing with 22 on board

AGENCIES

KATHMANDU: A passenger plane with 22 people on board went missing in Nepal on Sunday, the operating airline and officials said, as poor weather hampered a search operation. Nepal's air industry has boomed in recent years, carrying goods and people between hard-to-reach areas as well as foreign trekkers and climbers. But it has a poor

safety record. The Twin Otter aircraft operated by Tara Air took off from the western town of Pokhara bound for Jomsom at 9:55 am (0410 GMT) but air traffic control lost contact after 15 minutes. "We are trying to locate the possible area where the aircraft might be," Sudarshan Bartaula, spokesman for Tara Air, told AFP. "Search and rescue teams from both the police and the army are heading towards that direction." He said there were 19 passengers on board

and three crew members. The passengers included two Germans and four Indians, with the remainder Nepali. Jomsom is a popular trekking destination in the Himalayas about 20 minutes by plane from Pokhara, which lies 200 kilometres (120 miles) west of the capital Kathmandu. Phanindra Mani Pokharel, a spokesman at the Ministry of Home Affairs, said two helicopters had been deployed for a search operation. But he said visibility was low. "The bad weather is likely to hamper the

search operation. The visibility is so poor that nothing can be seen," Pokharel said. Nepal's aviation industry has long been plagued by poor safety due to insufficient training and maintenance. The European Union has banned all Nepali airlines from its airspace over safety concerns. The Himalayan country also has some of the world's most remote and tricky runways, flanked by snow-capped peaks with approaches that pose a challenge for even accomplished pilots.

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