

Islamabad POST

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South Korea's new President set to get tough on N. Korea

Detailed News On Page-07

Italian PM tests positive for Covid-19

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Ukraine war has political solution

Detailed News On Page-08



Briefs

Nasreen Jalil to be Sindh governor

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has sent the summary to appoint M Q M - P's nominee Nasreen Jalil as the Sindh governor to President Arif Alvi, media reported Sunday. Nasreen has served as a Senator from March 2012 to March 2018. She would be the third female governor in the history of Pakistan after Dr Shama Khalid who served as the governor of Gilgit-Baltistan from March-September 2010, and Begum Raana Liaquat Ali Khan who was the Sindh governor from 1973-1976.

Saudi king in hospital for tests

WEB DESK

JEDDAH: Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz was admitted to hospital on Saturday in the Red Sea city of Jeddah to undergo medical tests, the state-run Saudi Press Agency reported on Sunday, citing a statement from the royal court. He is undergoing the tests in the King Faisal Specialist Hospital, the statement said, giving no other details. "May God preserve the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and may he enjoy health and wellness," the statement said. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif took to Twitter to pray for the "early recovery and complete health" of the monarch.

Zelenskiy says evil has returned

DNA

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Sunday that evil had returned to Ukraine but that Kyiv would prevail in an emotional address as Europe marks the surrender of Nazi Germany in World War Two. "Darkness has returned to Ukraine decades after World War Two... The evil has returned," Zelenskiy said. "In a different form, under different slogans, but for the same purpose."

'ISPR: keep Army out of politics'

The practice of unsubstantiated, defamatory and provocative statements / remarks is extremely damaging

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

RAWALPINDI: The military has warned politicians, journalists and analysts against dragging Pakistan Army and its leadership in the country's political affairs, saying that the practice is "extremely damaging". "Recently there have been intensified and deliberate attempts to drag Pakistan's Armed Forces and their leadership in ongoing political discourse in the country," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement on Sunday. "These attempts are manifest through direct, insinuated or nuanced references to Armed Forces as well as their senior leadership, made by some political leaders, few journalists and analysts on public forums and various communication platforms including social media." The military's media wing further said that this practice of unsubstantiated, defamatory and provocative statements / remarks is extremely damaging. "Pakistan Armed Forces take strong exception to such unlawful and unethical practice and expect all to abide by the law and keep the Armed Forces out of political discourse in the best interest

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FIA warns expats against offensive posts

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has warned all expatriates of Pakistani origin that their names can be put on the Exit Control List if they put up "offensive and seditious" social media posts that may lead to chaos in Pakistan. "All Pakistani origin expatriates living outside Pakistan are advised to desist from spreading chaos in Pakistan while staying abroad. Their social media posts must not be offensive and seditious," the FIA spokesperson said in a statement. The agency directed the expatriates to read the "Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act 2016 (PECA)" to make sure that their social media posts "do not constitute any offence". "If they commit any offence, Red Notices through INTERPOL can be issued against them for their arrest. Their names can be put on Exit Control List.

Imran vows to bring 2m people to Capital

PTI Chairman terms PM Shehbaz Sharif a "beggar, servant, and a thief"



Imran to address rally in Faisalabad on May 15

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Former Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Mian Farrukh Habib has said that Chairman Imran Khan will be received on his arrival in Faisalabad. Imran Khan will address the people at Dhobi Ghat Ground on Sunday, May 15. All arrangements have been made for the preparation of the meeting. He said this while addressing a consultative meeting of officials and workers. He said that the people of Faisalabad

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Govt warns PTI against bloodshed in long march



BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Information Minister Mairaj Aurangzeb on Sunday announced that if the PTI's planned long march to Islamabad leads to bloodshed, then the government will take measures to stop it. Her comment came in response to former interior minister Sheikh Rasheed's statement when he expressed his fears that the PTI's planned long march might get "bloody" and demanded the "powerful quarters" to intervene. Speaking during a press conference in Lahore, Aurangzeb criticised former prime minister Imran Khan and said

FIA plea about PECA withdrawn

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Hours after the FIA approached the Supreme Court for the restoration of section 20 in the PECA Act 2016, Information Minister Mairaj Aurangzeb announced that the plea has been "withdrawn immediately" as it goes against the government's policy for freedom of expression. "The prime minister and I learned a short while ago that FIA has filed a petition in Supreme Court against the Islamabad High Court judgment regarding PECA Act 2016 to seek restoration of section 20 of the Act. Please note that this petition stands withdrawn immediately, as it is squarely against the

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that nothing is bothering him more than the fact that Shehbaz Sharif has become the country's premier through a democratic process. "An incompetent, thief and corrupt prime minister was removed from power through a no-confidence motion," said Aurangzeb, adding that his allies left him because he failed to fulfil his promises. She further said that Imran Khan, through his "independence march", will not be able to distract the attention of the masses from the Farah Gogi corruption scandal. Addressing Khan's alleged US-backed conspiracy which, according to him, led to his ouster from the government, Aurangzeb asked: "What kind of atomic bomb were you making that the United States felt threatened by you and sought to remove you from power?" "There was no conspiracy. Imran Khan is not sad about his ouster but he cannot tolerate Shehbaz Sharif replacing him," she said, adding that Shehbaz did not get a single vote from a "turncoat" to become the premier. She said that despite being in power for almost four years, Imran Khan is

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LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif inaugurates the Saleem Memorial Trust Hospital. - DNA

Thousands vote for Khalistan referendum in Italy
A large number of Sikhs were present outside the polling stations

NEWS DESK

MILAN: The Khalistan independence movement from India has reached Italy where the Khalistan referendum has been organized by Sikhs for Justice. Voting for the Khalistan referendum took place in the Italian city of Brescia, with thousands of Sikhs exercised their right to vote in the referendum. A large number of people belonging to the Sikh community were present outside the polling stations. Voters demanded that India liberate Khalistan and the United Nations should take notice of the atrocities against Sikhs in India. One day before the Khalistan voting, thousands of Sikhs marched to highlight the importance of Khalistan on the occasion of Besakhi.

NA session today

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi, under Article 54(1) of the Constitution, has summoned the National Assembly session on the advice of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at 4 pm on Monday. As per the details, the NA session will be held at Parliament House and Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf will preside over the session. - DNA

National interest priority, says PM Shehbaz

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday stressed that national interests should be given priority while executing the public welfare projects including hospitals to serve the masses. He was addressing an inauguration ceremony of Saleem Memorial Trust Hospital. The six-storey, 350-bed hospital is equipped with the latest state of the art treatment facilities. The prime minister praised the owners of the Trust and expressed the hope that hospital would serve the ailing humanity with world class treatment facilities. He said the managers of the Trust would not only earn prayers of the patients, but also earn blessings in the world hereafter. prime minister expressed the confidence that the experienced hands in the hospital would run the facility efficiently. The prime minister said they had set up PKLI hospital in Lahore on this model to serve the masses with latest treatment facilities and wanted it to function like John Hopkins health facility. Hepatitis filter centers across Punjab province were set up under its patronage and patients from all over the country came for treatment, he added.

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PM directs for measures after GB lake outburst

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday directed the authorities concerned to immediately put in place all the required emergency measures to cope with the situation arising out in the wake of glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) from the Shishper Glacier in Gilgit Baltistan. The directives were issued after damages were caused by the melting of Shishper glacier, gushing forth water in the downstream lake which inundated the surrounding areas. The prime minister directed for shifting of the affected families and their movable articles to the safe areas and the

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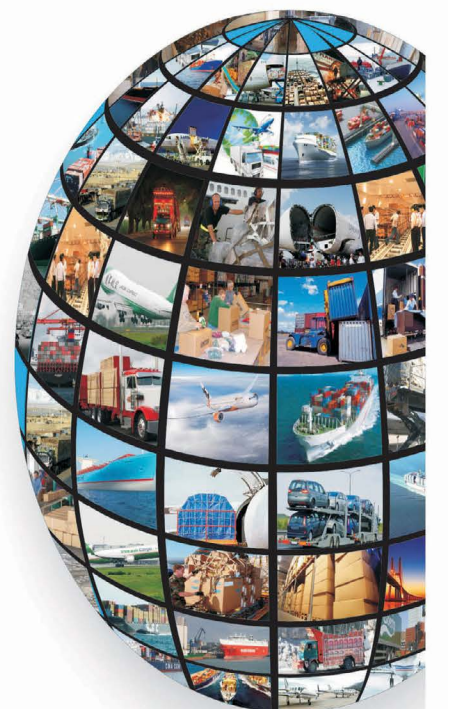
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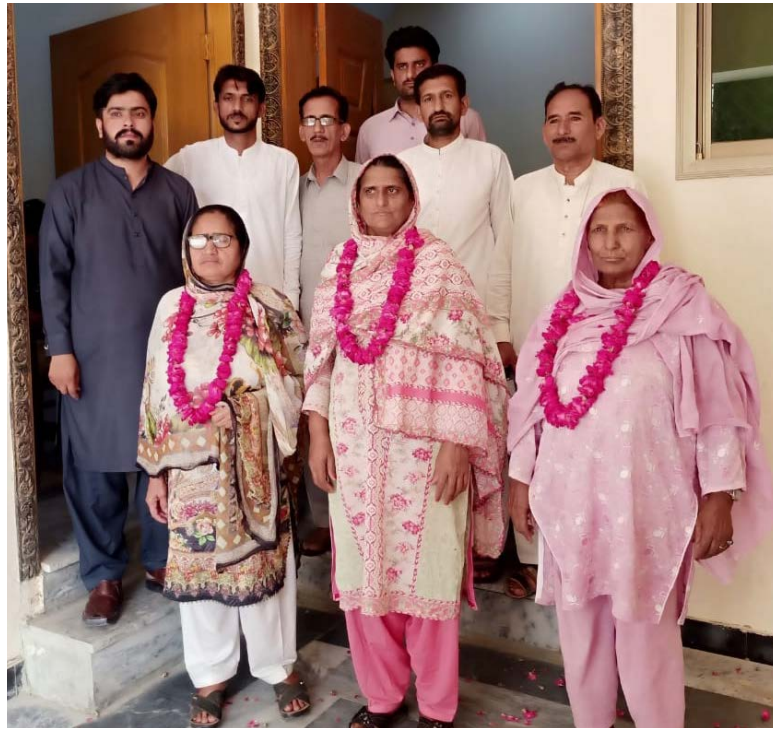


LAHORE: President Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf Punjab Shafqat Mehmood chairing the meeting of districts presidents, secretaries. — DNA

Mothers' day function held in Faisalabad

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: On the movement of Director General Public Relations Punjab Saman Rai, a function was held at Divisional Information Office Faisalabad on the occasion of Mother's Day in which Director Information Muhammad Awais Abid highlighted the glory of mother. Liaquat Ali, Faiz Rasool, Muhammad Faisal, Muhammad Rashid, Muhammad Bilal Mustafa, Rizwana Latif, Mohammad Aslam, Zulfikar Ali, Mohammad Hameed, Shahid Saleem, Fahad Fayyaz and others participated. Director Public Relations on this occasion, the greatness of the mother was paid tribute. DPR said that we have the honor of great being like mother is the greatest blessing for human beings. He said that all the achievements of my life are due to the prayers of my mother. Other participants said that mother is the greatness and blessing of which there is no substitute in the world, we all want to always obey her orders while respecting the greatness of mother. They said that mother gives spring feeling in sorrow we are proud of mother. Meanwhile the function was also organized at District Information Office Toba Tek Singh, where the mother of staff



members were invited in the office and volunteers of Civil Defence paid salute to the greatest mother and flowers were thrown on them besides sat them as chief guest. Flowers were also

Seven PHP officials suspended

FAISALABAD: Seven officials of Punjab Highway Patrol (PHP) police including an Assistant Sub Inspector were suspended on the charge of habitual absence, negligence, delinquency and abuse of powers. A spokesman for the PHP police said on Sunday that SSP Patrolling Faisalabad Region Mirza Anjum Kamal paid a surprise visit to PHP Post Sahianwala and checked crime control situation, attendance of Jawans and their discipline. He found 6 PHP Jawans absent from duty and indulged in habitual absence, negligence and delinquency as well. Therefore, he immediately suspended ASI Adeel Mustafa, constables Sohail Mubarak, Umar Farooq, Saddam Hussain, Muharrar Ishrat Naveed and Imdad Hussain. The SSP Patrolling also suspended in-charge PHP police Tahira Abad on the charge of abuse of powers while further action against him was underway. — APP

Extension of waiver on import from Afghanistan welcomed

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR, May 8: Vice President Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi has welcomed government's decision of extending waiver on import of Afghanistan in Pak rupees till June 30, 2022 and constitution of committee for initiation of barter trade with neighbour country. In a press statement here on Sunday, Zia-ul-Haq said he is also Chairman of tier Custom Clearing Agents' Association and has welcomed the decision as very welcome as it will improve development in region with improvement of commerce and trade in the region benefiting thousands of people on both sides of the border. He said due to extension in waiver for trade with Afghanistan in Pak rupee has saved business community of the country from facing huge financial losses. The decision was very timely and need of the hour, providing time for businessmen of both the countries to continue trade and find out a suitable solution for commerce through barter trade system.



Zia also appreciated constitution of committee by Pakistan for initiating discussion to initiate barter trade between both the countries. He said Afghanistan government had already formed the committee and now talks will initiate between both sides after decision taken by Pakistan government.

13 member committee constituted by Pakistan for barter trade comprises members FPCCI, PAJCCI, Sarhad Chamber, Chaman Chamber, Chamber, All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Chamber, Rice Export Association, Pharmaceutical Manufacturer Association, Cement Manufacturer Association, Poultry Association, Carpet Manufacturer and Exporters Association and Meat Export and Processing Association. The committees of Pakistan and Afghanistan will hold online meetings and submit suggestions to their respective governments for initiation of barter trade between both the countries. Zia said there are a lot of problems in barter trade system but consultation between businessmen of both the countries will find out suitable solution to these problems and trade and business in the region will continue to flourish.

Curbing flour smuggling Centre's job not province's: KP minister

DNA

PESHAWAR: While reacting to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's statement that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government should stop the wheat and flour smuggling to Afghanistan, KP Food Minister Atif Khan has reminded the federal government that it is Centre's responsibility to end smuggling of the commodity, not the vice versa. In a video message on Sunday, KP Food Minister Atif Khan said first of all, flour was not being smuggled to Afghanistan.

And if at all the commodity is being smuggled out, then it's federal government's responsibility to curb it, he said adding that the premier should hold federal departments accountable for that. Atif Khan reminded the premier that the authorities which controlled the border movement, they came under the federal government's



control. He said earlier (in PTI stint) there was not any smuggling of the commodity. "But if the wheat and flour are being smuggled out, the federal government should act to stop it," he added. He further demanded of Prime Minister Shehbaz to ensure the wheat transportation from Punjab after lifting an embargo on the provincial flour transportation. The provincial food minister said there was no dearth of flour and the province had enough stock of it. He denied any hike in the Atta price.

PECA Act

Media houses show concerns on FIA's petition

JAC was given personal assurances from the then leading members of the opposition that draconian law was not acceptable

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI: The Media Joint Action Committee has shown serious concern on FIA's filing a writ petition challenging Section 20 of the infamous Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) Act 2016 before the Supreme Court against the stated policy of the present government. The committee, comprising of Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE), Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA), All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), and Association of Electronic Media Editors and News Directors (AEMEND) is of the considered opinion that the petition was an attempt to once again invoke the "black law," which was put to rest by the honourable Islamabad High Court only last month.

JAC was given personal assurances from the then leading members of the opposition (Pakistan Muslim League (N) President Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Mut-

'FIA withdrawing appeal against section 20 of PECA 2016'

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) filed appeal in the Supreme Court regarding striking off a portion of section 20 of Prevention of Electronic Crime Act (PECA) 2016. The FIA spokesperson said that the FIA filed the appeal without getting permission from the Ministry of Interior and the Government. "The appeal is being withdrawn immediately," the Spokesperson said. — APP

tahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Convener Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Ameer Siraj ul Haq) that draconian law was not acceptable. While rejecting the amendments in PECA law the Federal Minister for Information Marriyam Aurangzeb had assured JAC that the government will review the original PECA Act after holding deliberations with all stakeholders. The media Joint Action committee has sought fulfillment of the assurances previously given by the coalition government. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has been asked to personally intervene and see this matter through and ask the concerned to hold discussions with

the JAC to address the gaping holes in the PECA Act 2016. The Joint Action Committee believes that any failure to do so would only lead to fingers being directed against the credibility of this government's commitment to freedom of speech. The Joint Action Committee appreciated the Information Minister's statement that FIA had filed the petition without Government's knowledge and that it is being withdrawn. The JAC has also noted the statement of FIA. However, the Committee demands that a thorough investigation must be initiated to find out how FIA filed the petition without taking the relevant ministries into confidence.

Minor girl dies due to dog bite

KAMRAN GUJJAR

JHELMUM: Five years old girl died due to lack of dog bite vaccine in Jhelum District Headquarters Hospital, while the doctor gave the child a Polyfax cream on the wound and gave evidence of her incompetence. According to the details, a five-year-old girl was bitten by a dog, on the last day, the child's father took the child to the emergency hospital where the doctor instructed to apply polyfax cream on the child's wound after the check-up, while the dog's vaccine was not even present in the district headquarters hospital.

The condition of the five-year-old girl deteriorated due to alleged negligence and negligence, on which the doctor referred to Rawalpindi, where the child was brought from the market to the jhelum, the condition of the child was re-deteriorated, after which the child was taken to the district headquarters hospital, after which the child was drowned again, after a little while, the five-year-old resident of Karampur died after being beaten by a dog. Parents have said that instead of vaccinating in the DHQ hospital emergency, the doctor advised polyfax, which worsened our child's condition.

2 criminals held, contraband seized

FAISALABAD: The police on Saturday arrested 22 criminals and recovered drugs and illegal weapons from their possession in the district during the last 24 hours. According to police, raiding teams nabbed 13 drug pushers and recovered 4.6 Kg hashish and 267 liter liquor from their possession. The police also held one gambler and recovered stake money. — APP

138 power pilferers netted

MULTAN: Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO) have netted 138 power pilferers during separate operations launched throughout the South Punjab in a day, MEPCO official said on Sunday. MEPCO teams accompanying task forces raided different places in Multan, Vehari, Sahiwal, Rahimyar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Bahawalnagar, Khanewal, and Dera Ghazi Khan and detected theft of 121,000 electricity units. A sum of over Rs 3.1 million fine was imposed while FIR was registered against eighteen of them over involvement in tampering. — APP

Over 783 manholes covered in Faisalabad

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: As many as 783 un covered manholes have been covered during last 105 days besides 129 City Council's are being made zero open manholes and 7 FIRs have registered and 2 were arrested for stolen covers. This was informed during the weekly review meeting regarding implementation on public initiatives. Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad informed that Zebra Crossing/speed breakers have been made out side 138 govt and 141 private schools. He further informed that District Education Authority has

been sensitized to educate teachers for safe road crossing to the school child and submitted report. He said that 6685 street lights have made functional and 18 bridges have repaired during the last 105 days. He informed that 1258 closed drains cleared and 140713 tons waste transferred to dumping site and 65 transports stands and public buildings were white washed. Green belts and play grounds are also being making rehabilitate. Deputy Commissioner informed that 1686 vehicles impounded and 6.6 million fine was imposed to smoke emitted vehicles. Likewise 10.9 million fine was also imposed to overloaded more than 3954 vehicles.

FCCI chief welcomes successful visit of PM to Saudi Arabia

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Atif Munir Sheikh, has welcomed the successful visit of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to Saudi Arabia. He hoped that both countries would take initiatives to transform their excellent, brotherly and religious relations into strategic partnership. In a statement issued here on Saturday, Atif Munir Sheikh said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are enjoying best relations for the last many decades. He said that Saudi Arabia is now ready to make huge investments in Pakistan due to the productive visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and as a result of it, our finance

minister is now negotiating with Saudi authorities to give final touches to the proposed investment plan. He said that Saudi Arabia is contemplating to set up a major petro-chemical plant in Pakistan while some sites have already been identified where Saudi Arabia will make huge investments. Atif Munir Sheikh also welcomed the Kuwaiti offer to invest 75 billion dollars in Pakistan and said that oil rich Gulf States could fulfil our ever-increasing needs of oil and gas due to the newly infused warmth in our bilateral relations. He said that availability of cheap fuel for thermal units would also help Pakistan to overcome the load shedding. He hoped that strategic partnership would pave the way for the stabilization of Pakistan's economy on a sustained basis.

Sindh, South Punjab wilting without water

DNA

LAHORE: Sindh and South Punjab are confronting serious problem of water scarcity that is threatening crop harvesting and endangering lives of both the humans and livestock. The water shortage is assuming alarming proportions in Sindh as agricultural economy is on the verge of annihilation. The harvest is withering away due to closure of canals.

The water scarcity has put a seriously damaging impact on the habitat conditions as people are compelled to migrate to other places due to non-availability of water. The situation is scarier in the riverine area of Sindh — district Sajawal — where crops have wilted owing to non-availability of water. It's giving nightmares to the growers whose produce is ruining. For the last three months, water has not been released to the canals in Sajawal. Not only the crops are dying but it has become difficult for humans and cattle to quench their thirst in the face of drought-like conditions in the district. Livestock has started perishing here and people have start-



ed migrating to other areas. The Sajawal residents have appealed to Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah to immediately solve water problem in the area in order to save lives of both humans and livestock. Sindh CM Shah complained on Saturday that there was unjust distribution of water resources between the federating units and Sindh was not getting its due share. He said he would talk to the federal minister on the issue. He, however, admitted that there was a water shortage in the entire country, and Sindh was no exception. He even suggested to growers not to sow rice crop this time round in order to preserve water. There is an extreme water shortage in the water flow at Kotri Barrage of River Sindh. According to control room at Kotri Barrage, the upstream water flow at the barrage was recorded 4,900 cusecs and downstream flow was recorded just 200 cusecs. The Kotri Barrage is giving a spectacle of vast expanse of sand now. The South Punjab dwellers are also facing the similar problem of water scarcity. Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shehbaz took notice of the situation and directed the authorities to ensure water provision to the parched areas of the province. He vowed to help the growers saying he would not leave them alone in this time of crisis.

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Early elections

THE senior PML N leader and former Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, in a TV interview yesterday disclosed that PML N supremo Mian Nawaz Sharif was in favour of early elections, maybe in October this year. He further said that it was a party decision that the interim set up will not last for long. He however did not respond to questions regarding incumbent Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif statement that his government will complete the rest of the tenure.

The former Prime Minister and head of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan has announced to spearhead a long march towards Islamabad most probably in the last week of the month. The political parties, by and large, do not choose the month of May for long marches and rallies because of scorching heat that restricts public mobility. However, the PTI had to do it now for it cannot afford to delay its movement anymore. There is no doubt that PTI, after the unfolding of the so-called 'lettergate' issue, has sought to improve and strengthen its popularity, which at one point seemed to have touched the lowest ebb. It was just a month ago that even the die-hard PTI workers had resolutely announced not to vote for Imran Khan keeping in view the three years and seven months performance of the PTI government. The youth; women voters and supporters especially seemed greatly disturbed with the PTI performance. Price hike; free ride of the dollar; lawlessness and so on and so forth were the key issues that had made all and sundry disappointed. In the light of the above, if the PTI government would complete its five year term, its defeat in the elections would have become certain. But then surfaced the Lettergate issue and things dramatically turned into PTI's favour.

Another important development that presumably has forced PTI to have an early long march relates to a possible smear campaign being launched against the PTI chairman by making public some videos that may contain indecent materials. The purpose of the campaign, as claimed by the PTI leadership, is to disparage the respect and credibility of the party chairman in the eyes of his voters and supporters and even the general

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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



As the West looks to Ukraine, Daesh-K continues to threaten Afghanistan

Giorgio Cafiero

The West's Afghanistan policy: This brings us to the point that Washington's financial warfare against post-US Afghanistan is set to boost Daesh-K's ability to grow

THE dangers posed by the terror group should be worrying for countries in Afghanistan's neighbourhood and beyond. Since the Taliban took over control of virtually all of Afghanistan last year, it has failed to curtail terrorism waged by Daesh Khorasan Province (Daesh-K, ISK, or ISKP), which has increased its attacks in recent weeks.

Founded in 2015 as an offshoot of Daesh, Daesh-K continues spilling blood in Afghanistan. Last month, the terror group was particularly gruesome with its deadly attacks in Mazare Sharif, Kunduz, and Kabul, killing at least 100 people. The Taliban's difficulties establishing a stable order in post-occupation Afghanistan stem from various factors, including Daesh-K's terrorism. The extremist group is working to undermine the Taliban's narrative about bringing peace to Afghanistan following the withdrawal of US/NATO forces. By the same token, the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) will probably find itself benefiting from the Daesh-K threat in certain ways too.

Growing regional and international perceptions of Daesh-K as a grave threat can help the Taliban convince more foreign countries that they have no choice but to engage Afghanistan's only de facto government for counter-terrorism purposes. In the case of Russia, this has already become somewhat of a reality. Moscow's recent decision to establish diplomatic relations with the IEA largely stemmed from concerns about Daesh-K. Likewise, Iran is avoiding hostilities in its relationship with the IEA despite its concerns. However, regional and glob-

al powers sharing the Taliban's determination to prevent Daesh-K from successfully pursuing its local and global agenda will not guarantee formal recognition of the IEA as a "legitimate" government any time soon. For that to occur, the Taliban would need to make major changes to its governance that demonstrate a true commitment to ruling the country in more inclusive and tolerant ways. Local and regional capacity: In contrast to Daesh franchises in the Levant and Libya, it is unlikely that Daesh-K will manage to establish a de facto state on Afghan soil. Isaia Galace, a global Security Analyst at RANE, explained in an interview with TRT World that "since the Taliban takeover, ISKP has not demonstrated the capability or near-term intent to durably hold territory in Afghanistan and establish local governance structures, which would be necessary for the group to claim the establishment of a so-called 'caliphate.'" Anatol Lieven, a Senior Research Fellow at the Quincy Institute and a former British correspondent in Afghanistan, explained that the range of local and regional actors aligned against the group would also limit its ability to rule in the country.

"China would certainly give help, though not military intervention, to the Taliban to prevent this happening, perhaps via Pakistan," he added. But even without creating a "caliphate" on Afghan soil, Daesh-K can be expected to remain a persistent threat to IAE's rule by exploiting a sense of alienation on the part of Afghan Salafists, which has increased because of the Taliban's campaign to crush the terror group. The Taliban's decision to engage China, Iran, Russia, and other foreign powers that Daesh-K considers enemies will also advance the group's narratives about the IAE being insufficiently Islamic as defined by these extremists. It is difficult to imagine states bordering Afghanistan not becoming increasingly worried about Daesh-K's activities in the future. "It is only a matter of time that Daesh-K gets emboldened enough to expand its target areas and reach Afghanistan's larger neighbourhood," Rabia Akhtar, a non-resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's South Asia Centre, told TRT World. Although denied by the Uzbek government, Daesh-K recently claimed that it carried out a cross-border attack against an Uzbek military base. The group has also been responsible for attacks against Pakistan, including a mosque bombing in Peshawar.

The stabbings at the revered Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad last month by an Uzbek national who entered Iran illegally via Pakistan contribute to Tehran's growing fears of such headline groups like Daesh-K that target Shia Muslims in countries bordering Iran. Given that Khorasan refers to territory in parts of Iran, it is only natural for Tehran to view Daesh-K as a direct national security threat. Neighbouring countries also have concerns about potential refugee flows stemming from increasing instability in Afghanistan brought about by the terror group, as well as recruitment efforts that could lead to growing radicalisation among their own marginalised citizens. Yet the dangers posed by Daesh-K should be worrying for countries beyond Afghanistan's neighbourhood. The West should also be concerned about the extremist group's international agenda. If chaotic conditions on the ground permit Daesh-K to gain greater influence and members, it is not difficult to imagine the organisation plotting attacks against the West from Afghanistan.

The West's Afghanistan policy: This brings us to the point that Washington's financial warfare against post-US Afghanistan is set to boost Daesh-K's ability to grow. "The poorer and more desperate ordinary Afghans become, the better for ISK," according to Lieven. "That is why present US policy towards Afghanistan is extremely counter-productive." It would behoove officials in the US to realise how such stringent sanctions and the seizure of Afghanistan's sovereign wealth are strangling Afghanistan and worsening its already grave humanitarian disasters. On April 25, UN experts called on Washington to "take into serious consideration the growing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and to re-assess its decision to block the Da Afghanistan Bank's foreign assets...and to decisively contribute to the international efforts in addressing the growing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan." The further exacerbation of these horrifying conditions will provide extremists like Daesh-K much fertile ground as they seek to overthrow the Taliban and pursue their global Daesh agenda.

To deny Daesh-K further opportunity to grow in Afghanistan, the US would be wise to revisit its sanctions policy towards Afghanistan. But now, as Washington and European capitals have all their eyes on Ukraine, post-troop withdrawal Afghanistan is off.

— Courtesy: TRT World

Debating the debate over the Russian war in Ukraine

Marwan Bishara

It is on this particular point that Putin finds a strategic ally in China's strongman, Xi Jinping, who has also been unhappy with constant US prodding and interference in Chinese as well as wider...

THE war in Ukraine, like all wars, was born of sin – a terrible sin that has so far led to the death of thousands, the destruction of entire cities and the displacement of millions, with untold ramifications for global security.

But whose sin was it? It was certainly not Ukraine's. The insistence of its inexperienced president on NATO membership may have been unwise, but it was no crime. It must have been Russia's, obviously. Or was it – albeit not so obvious – America's sin? Washington and its pundits regard Putin's Kremlin as the source of all evil. They accuse the Russian president of harbouring authoritarian and imperial ambitions reminiscent of those seen in 19th century imperial Russia, and waging a bloody war to dismember or annex large parts of a sovereign state, Ukraine. They claim in the process he is destabilising Europe and changing the world order.

Quite the feat. Moscow and its pundits, on the other hand, see Washington as the source of all international malevolence, interfering in Ukraine politics and using Kyiv to undermine Russia's security. They claim the expansion of NATO right up to its borders left Moscow with no choice but to intervene to defend its vital interests and protect Russian nationals against Western supported "Ukrainian Nazis". Quite the stretch. So, who is right and who is wrong here? The answer lies in an old parable about a man who goes to the village elder to complain about his neighbour. "You are right," says the elder. And when the neighbour comes to make similar complaint, the elder declares that he is "right, too". But "how could both be right?" protests the elder's son, "when only one can be!" "You are right too, my son," proclaims the elder. Though not an elder, I also reckon both sides may be right, as I too hope to be. Russia has indeed invaded under false pretences. If it had any real grievances against Kyiv or Washington, Moscow could have taken the UN or the international legal route. It had the clout to do so effectively. Instead, it chose war – a crude and antiquated conventional war. The Kremlin knows all too well that a good deal of the trouble in Ukraine is of its own doing. It helped trigger this episode by annexing Crimea, and encouraging secession in the eastern provinces to destabilise the country after Kyiv turned westward in early 2014. The Russian leader has made clear on a number of occasions that Ukraine holds a particularly special place in Russia's heart, and that he was not going to let go of it. The real reason hides in plain sight: they are addressing the public, not the generals or even the decision makers; normalising the US support for the war and molding the public opinion in its stead. That is a self-inflicted crime against journalism that undermines public trust in liberal democracy. Likewise, when President Biden calls Putin a war criminal and that he has to go, media pundits outdo him by calling Putin evil – pure evil – and urge the white House not to walk back Biden's comment on regime change, insisting that the slip is a necessary slap down. None of this is to say that media pundits should not advocate for the principle of resistance, liberation and justice. They must. Or, that journalists have not excelled in their coverage of the war tragedies. More than a few have. When it comes to war, the media is indispensable to shine a light, not turn on the heat; provide more fact, less hype; offer analysis of the war, not battlefield strategies; and, yes, promote peace, not incite violence. Weaponising the media is more fitting of an authoritarian regime than it is for a democracy. It weakens the chances for diplomacy and makes it ever harder to reach or accept a peaceful settlement when the time comes, as it must. For the sake of all Ukrainians. For all our sakes.

— Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Time for West to end its double standards

Chris Doyle

The International Criminal Court has rightly started an investigation into potential Russian war crimes in Ukraine with additional funding from major powers. But when the ICC dared to consider starting an investigation into the possible crimes...

ONE of the great challenges in addressing European and American politicians is to open their eyes to the blatant double standards in their contrasting handling of Ukraine and other crises, such as Palestine. What is as clear as the sun in the sky to those in the developing world seems to be alien to the worldview of so many in Washington, London, Berlin and Paris.

This is why Prince Turki Al-Faisal was spot on to chastise the hypocrisy of the West. Across the world, right-thinking people agree that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a blatant aggression on a peaceful neighbor, a violation of international law and something that needs to be opposed.

But what so many Western politicians fail to comprehend is that, in the rubble of Mariupol, Palestinians see Gaza, Syrians see Aleppo, Raqqa and Homs, and Iraqis see Mosul. Palestinians in Gaza still navigate the rubble from not just one but at least five major Israeli bombardments of their open-air prison this century. When Arabs see Ukrainian refugees crossing into Poland, they think of Syrians fleeing into Leb-

anon, Jordan and Turkey. Palestinians think of their Nakba, or catastrophe, 74 years ago, when 70 percent of their people became refugees. They shudder at the overt racism on display when various members of the European commentariat welcome Ukrainians because they are "like us" – blond-haired and blue-eyed, watch Netflix and have Instagram accounts.

Yet, perhaps most jarring of all is what Prince Turki focused on: The speed and toughness of the sanctions imposed on Russia, strengthened every other day, contrasted with the complete lack of accountability that Israel benefits from vis-a-vis its oppression of Palestinians. This was clear even before the latest Russian invasion of Ukraine; after all, it took just a few days for the EU to impose sanctions on Moscow back in 2014 for its invasion and annexation of Crimea.

Any talk of sanctions on Israel is not only not entertained but, in many cases, almost criminalized. Israel has occupied the West Bank including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights for close to 55 years. Just as Russia has been accused of the war crime of transferring citizens into occupied Crimea, Israel has transferred more than 650,000 of its citizens into occupied territory. Russia and Israel have apparently transferred Ukrainians and Palestinians, respectively, out of occupied territory, also a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. And Israel has bombed civilian targets in Gaza, frequently using many of the lame excuses we now find trotted out in official Russian propaganda. The International Criminal Court has rightly started an investigation into potential Russian war crimes in Ukraine with additional funding from major powers. But when the ICC dared to consider starting an investigation into the possible crimes committed in Palestine by any party – in other words both Israeli and Palestinian groups – the Trump administration sanctioned not Israel but ICC officials.

Quite naturally, no Western power is selling arms to Russia. Rightly so. Yet practically every Western

power has a thriving arms trade in both directions with Israel. The US provides billions of dollars of military aid every year.

Major international companies have, within weeks, packed up their businesses in Russia. Woe betide any company that considers doing so regarding Israel. Ben & Jerry's, the ice cream company, last year took a principled decision to stop selling its products in illegal Israeli settlements. The outcry was heard around the globe.

Why should Israel continue to exercise a get out of jail free card? Anger could be assuaged with some modicum of effort to hold Israel to account, even if it fell far short of the draconian measures implemented against Russia. The international consensus is, for example, that Israeli settlements are illegal. EU statements say this routinely. Why then does the EU continue to trade with settlements? This is trade in the proceeds of crime. At best, governments have issued guidelines to ensure the labeling of such products. Israeli leaders are laughing.

One would love to think that Israel will alter its behavior and end its occupation and systemic discrimination against Palestinians without sanctions and legal measures. One hopes that, one day, Israeli leaders will realize that true peace and security can only be achieved by ending these. The evidence thus far is that this is not happening, no more than the Russian leadership has comprehended the folly of its Ukrainian gamble.

Post-Ukraine, the international order needs to be revitalized. It is outdated, unfit for the 21st century. One thing in particular must change: The era of one rule for some and another rule for the rest has to end. Principles have to be applied evenly and fairly. The West and its friends such as Israel have to submit themselves to exactly the same rules as everyone else. As we all long to see the end of the Russian aggression and occupation of Ukraine, we must also push for and demand the end of the Israeli occupation and aggression against Palestine.

— Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Keep Army out of politics; ISPR warns

FROM PAGE 01

of the country," it added. The statement comes amid the heightened political activity in the country triggered by the ouster of PTI-led government through a vote of no-confidence last month with both former PM Imran Khan and ruling PML-N kicking off mass public campaigns. Punjab Governor Omar Sarfraz Cheema has also refused to endorse election of Punjab chief minister and sought military's intervention to resolve the 'constitutional crisis' in the province. "If army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa can provide me just one subedar and four soldiers, I will arrest this 'unconstitutional, illegal and fake' chief minister [Hamza Shehbaz] and send him to jail," he said in a statement. Similarly, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) also detained those allegedly involved in running smear campaigns on social media to defame the military and its top leadership after Imran Khan lost no-trust vote and PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif became the prime minister.

PM directs for measures after GB lake outburst

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supply of edible, medicines and other emergency equipment to the affected area, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. Expressing his deep grief and sorrow over the losses, the prime minister said that all possible steps would be taken for the rehabilitation of the affected residents. He also summoned a report over the incident and directed for full assistance to the government of Gilgit Baltistan. A directive was also issued for the provision of substitute access to the area after the crumbling of Hasan Abad bridge. The prime minister directed for making of estimate regarding disruption of agriculture and potable water system in the area besides, two powerhouses which had also been affected. He directed for immediate restoration of 700MW and 250MW powerhouses on war footing and said that its expenditures would be borne away by the federal government.

Govt warns PTI against bloodshed in long march

FROM PAGE 01

still hurling accusations against his opponents. Shedding light on Imran Khan's foreign policy and the decision of his government to allow the International Monetary Fund to sway over the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) by giving it autonomy, the information minister said that it was PM Shehbaz Sharif who broke the country free of shackles and approached friendly countries for the sake of Pakistan's development.

National interest...

FROM PAGE 01

PML-N government was changed and what happened during the last four years was a painful story, he said, adding that the national wealth belonged to the people. The prime minister referring to the economic constraints said that the government was hardly meeting its expenses. He said 1122 was an initiative of Pervaiz Elhai but he had expanded it throughout the province. The prime minister urged the philanthropists to come forward and execute such public welfare projects across the country. Earlier, Chairman Trust Shehzad Saleem gave an overview of the project. The prime minister visited different sections of the hospital and was briefed about the provision of treatment facilities including oncology, cardiology and OPD.

DNA



LAHORE: CPNE delegation in a meeting with Prime Minister. – DNA

Syria gains victory in int'l war: Ayatollah Khamenei

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei received and held talks with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Tehran, Iran, on Sunday evening

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei told the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Tehran that Syria gained more credibility after the victory in an international war on that country. Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei received and held talks with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Tehran, Iran, on Sunday evening. Referring to Syria's great successes in the political and military arenas, Ayatollah Khamenei said that Syria today is not like Syria before the war, although there were no destructions then, Syria's credibility and prestige are much higher now as compared to the past, and everyone looks up to this country as a power. Ayatollah Khamenei further noted that while nations in some states in the region condemn their rulers for normalizing relations with the Zionist regime, the people of these states poured into the streets in large numbers on International Al-Quds Day and chanted anti-Zionist slogans, which shows the reality of the region today.



Pointing to the several factors that influenced the resistance and victory of Syria in the international war, Ayatollah Khamenei described President al-Assad as a determined ruler wishing more success for him in the reconstruction of Syria in the post-war era with God Al-Mighty's help. Ayatollah Khamenei further recalled Martyr

Qassem Soleimani, saying that Lieutenant General Soleimani paid special attention to Syria and its war on terrorists similar to the sacrifices he made during the Iraqi-imposed war against Iran by Iraq's Baath regime. Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that the relations between the two nations of Iran and Syria need to be further expanded. Referring to the claims on the friendship of some states that have been against Syria over past years, he added that the future must be clarified from the past experiences. Pointing to the special attention of the Iranian president and his administration to Syria, Ayatollah Khamenei called on the Syrian government to seize the opportunity to enhance the mutual ties between the two states. The Syrian president, for his part, lauded the Iranian resistance over the past four decades and expressed his appreciation to the people and government of Iran due to their support for Syria. He also recalled the sacrifices that martyr Soleimani made for Syria. Bashar al-Assad noted that Iran's firm stances over past four decades on regional issues, especially the issue of Palestine, showed every nation in the region that the path showed by Iran is a right and principled one.

Alcaraz says he is ready for the big league

SPORTS DESK

MADRID: Carlos Alcaraz is no longer allowing nerves to get the better of him and said that he is ready to regularly go toe-to-toe with the top players after the Spaniard rallied past world number one Novak Djokovic to reach the Madrid Open final on Saturday. The 19-year-old prevailed 6-7(5) 7-5 7-6(5) over the Serbian in an absorbing contest that lasted more than three hours, becoming the first player to beat Djokovic and Rafa Nadal at the same claycourt event.



read more Alcaraz was ranked just a year ago but has climbed into the top 10 on the back of three titles this season. Asked what was different about his game now, Alcaraz said: "I would say that I am more mature to manage the tough moments, the nerves, everything. I mean, to manage everything on court. Well, I think I am able to play long rallies." In a see-saw clash that could have gone either way, Alcaraz used his aggression to great effect as he smashed a series of winners past Djokovic in the tie-break to take the match and set up a meeting with Alexander Zverev on Sunday. "As I have always said, you have to try to go for the match. In those decisive moments is when you see the good players and the top players, I want to make a difference on that," added Alcaraz, who will move up to sixth when the new rankings are released on Monday.

Ex-security chief John Lee becomes Hong Kong's leader

FOREIGN DESK

HONG KONG: A former security chief who oversaw the crackdown on Hong Kong's democracy movement was anointed the business hub's new leader by a small committee of Beijing loyalists. John Lee, 64, was the only candidate in a Beijing-backed one-horse race to succeed outgoing leader Carrie Lam. His elevation places a security official in the top job for the first time after a tumultuous few years for a city battered by political unrest and debilitating pandemic controls. Despite the city's mini-constitution promising universal suffrage, Hong Kong has never been a democracy, the source of years of public frustration and protests since the 1997 handover to China. Its leader is instead chosen by an "election committee" currently comprised of 1,461 people – roughly 0.02 percent of the city's population. After a brief secret ballot on Sunday,



1,416 members voted for Lee while eight voted against according to officials. The rest did not cast ballots. "I declare that the only candidate Mr John Lee Ka-chiu is returned in the above mentioned election, congratulations," returning officer Justice Keith Yeung Kar-hung, announced. Protests have been largely outlawed in Hong Kong, with authorities using an anti-coronavirus ban on public gatherings of more than four people as well

as a new national security law. Police ringed the exhibition centre with security, and 6,000 to 7,000 officers had been placed on standby, according to local media. The League of Social Democrats – one of the only remaining pro-democracy groups – held a three-person protest before polls opened, chanting "Power to the people, universal suffrage now". "This is what John Lee's new chapter looks like, a shrinking of our civil liberties," said protester Vanessa Chan as dozens of police officers looked on. "We know this action will have no effect, but we don't want Hong Kong to be completely silent," she added. Under President Xi Jinping, China is remoulding Hong Kong in its own authoritarian image after huge and sometimes violent democracy protests three years ago. Beijing deployed a sweeping security law to stamp out dissent and rolled out a new "patriots only" political system for Hong Kong to guarantee anyone standing for office is considered suitably loyal.

PBF holds General Council meeting

LAHORE: The General Council of Pakistan Boxing Federation, which met here on Sunday, discussed in detail the registration mechanism of pugilists and officials of boxing as well as adopted procedures to certify clubs at basic tiers. The Council considered various options to streamline affairs of boxers, said a spokesman of the PBF after the meeting. "The Council approved the Activity Report of the Federation and in particular lauded the befitting conduct of the National Boxing Championship in collaboration with D.H.A Lahore," he said. He said the meeting authorised President PBF to

enter into more ventures with D.H.A Lahore for organisation of Boxing events commending the support rendered by them. The Council members congratulated Zohaib Rasheed for securing Bronze Medal at ASBC Asian U22 Boxing Championships held at Tashkent, Uzbekistan. "The meeting approved future programs of Boxing and PBF at national and international levels. The meeting decided that holding of competition(s) allocated to member units of PBF is mandatory, noncompliance of which will deprive the concerned unit with certain rights including the right of vote. – APP

Bivol stuns Alvarez to retain WBC title

AGENCIES

LAS VEGAS: Unbeaten Dmitry Bivol retained his WBA light-heavyweight world title with a unanimous points decision over Saul "Canelo" Alvarez on Saturday, handing the Mexican superstar just the second defeat of his career. Russia's Bivol, 31, improved to 20-0 with 11 knockouts while multiweight champion Alvarez, the pound-for-pound king who went in a heavy favourite, fell to 57-2 with two draws. His only other defeat was to Floyd Mayweather at light middleweight in 2013. Alvarez made boxing history in November when he stopped Caleb Plant to become the first man to unite all four super middleweight world title belts. He had fought at light-heavyweight before, stopping Sergey Kovalev in the 11th round to win the WBO 175-pound title in November 2019. But there would be no late heroics against Bivol, who pressured Alvarez relentlessly throughout the bout and never appeared to be hurt seriously by the Mexi-



can, who struggled to get past Bivol's guard. "He hurt my arm," Bivol said, displaying a bruised upper arm that absorbed a string

of punches. "I felt his power, you can see on my arm. He beat my arm up – but not my head." All three judges – Tim Cheatham, Dave Moretti and Steve Weisfeld – scored the bout 115-113 for Bivol. "I prove myself today, I'm the best (in my division)," Bivol said. "Thank you, Eddie Hearn," he added in a nod to the promoter, "sorry I broke your plans with Gennadiy Golovkin." That was a reference to the planned third fight between Alvarez and Golovkin, which had been tentatively planned for September. It was a massive disappointment for the pro-Alvarez crowd at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, who were pulling for a Mexican victory on the Cinco de Mayo holiday weekend. While Alvarez was feted with Mexican flags and Mariachi music, the Russian national anthem wasn't played and Russian flags were banned inside the arena because of the country's invasion of Ukraine. Bivol said the crowd's partisan cheers whenever Alvarez seemed to be gaining ground "gave me more energy." Alvarez landed a big uppercut to Bivol's chin to end the fourth round. But his aggressive start to the fifth yielded little as Bivol turned the tables with a big flurry in the middle of the round and closed with a punishing left hand.

Imran vows to bring 2m people to Capital

FROM PAGE 01

people will come to Islamabad," the PTI chairman said while addressing a public gathering in Abbottabad. The former prime minister told his supporters that the incumbent government "fears" their passion and added that 11 parties had gathered to remove him from power. The PTI chairman claimed that when he and his supporters will come to Islamabad, the federal capital will fill up with the chants of "imported hukumat na manzoor" (imported government unacceptable) and "we want real freedom". Continuing his claim that the United States conspired to remove him from power, Imran Khan said that the incumbent leaders were involved in the process. "The Pakistani nation will not accept these leaders," the PTI chairman claimed. The former prime minister went on to say that he was "never ready to be part of the war on terror with the US and neither was he willing to give air bases to Washington." "Americans wanted a leader like Pervez Musharraf who would have obeyed them upon receiving a single call," Khan claimed. Turning his guns towards PM Shehbaz Sharif, the PTI chairman claimed that he was a "beggar, servant, and a thief". "The lies that Sharif family have told, I have not seen anyone spread such lies ever before," claimed the PTI chairman. He added that when the imported government came to power, the prices of all goods increased. Khan also requested the media to go to shops and ask about the prices of ghee like they used to do when he was in power. The former premier said that the value of the US dollar against the Pakistani rupee increases when stolen money is sent abroad, adding that ever since the new government assumed power, the rupee's value has been decreasing.

Imran to address rally in Faisalabad on May 15

FROM PAGE 01

have always played a historic role and this time too they would force millions of people to attend the meeting of Chairman Imran Khan and force the imported rulers to flee. He said that the ocean of people making fun of Mi-anwali rally has made it clear that whenever Chairman Imran Khan calls, the nation will come out for Islamabad. He said that Imran Khan sacrificed his power but he has proved to be a bold, self-reliant leader by rejecting foreign pressure on national independence and security. He said that those who have offered Eid prayers in security forces and closed rooms will come out tomorrow to serve the people. He said that the imported rulers coming through the back door are afraid to face the people and whenever they come out of any siege, they face public reaction.

FIA plea about PECA withdrawn

FROM PAGE 01

government's stated policy and principle of standing for and ensuring freedom of expression," tweeted the information minister. Aungzeb said that PM Shehbaz Sharif has "taken strict notice of the filing" of the petition. She shared that the news of the petition had reached to them a "little late" as they were in Bisham for the public gathering "during the day where there were no signals". A spokesperson of the FIA also confirmed that the appeal has been "withdrawn immediately". The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), which was made part of the petition welcomed PM Shehbaz Sharif's order for withdrawing FIA's petition. The journalists' body said that it has been appealing for an "urgent meeting" of the Joint Action Committee to review the PECA act.

Briefs

Turkish president to visit Azerbaijan

BAKU: The Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will visit Azerbaijan, the Turkish media report. Recep Tayyip Erdogan will take part in TEKNOFEST International Aviation, Space and Technology Festival to be held on May 26-29. TEKNOFEST in Baku is organized by the Azerbaijan Ministry of Digital Development and Transport. At the same time, the TEKNOFEST production office operates in Baku. The full staff of the office consists of Azerbaijani specialists. The event has been held annually since 2018, with the joint organization of the Turkish Technology Team Foundation, which is managed by the Turkish Ministry of Industry and Technology and the technical director of Baykar Makina, in partnership with more than 60 Turkish state institutions, universities, and private companies. The goal is to popularize such areas as aviation, space industry, and digital economy, to encourage entrepreneurship in these areas, to identify the knowledge and skills of young engineers through competitions organized within the framework of the festival, as well as to present national technologies to the general public. - APP

Uzbek-Kyrgyz FMs discussed bilateral ties

TASHKENT: Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan Vladimir Norov held a telephone conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan Jeenbek Kulubaev, reports "Dumyo" IA correspondent. According to Uzbekistan MFA, Vladimir Norov congratulated Jeenbek Kulubaev on his appointment and wished him success in his professional activities. The parties discussed current issues of Uzbekistan - Kyrgyzstan relations of good neighborliness and strategic partnership in various fields. It was noted that thanks to the political will of the leaders of the two countries, cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan has risen to a qualitatively new level in recent years, being filled with new content. The importance of timely and high-quality implementation of the agreements reached during the summit meetings and the adoption of effective measures to further enhance cooperation in political-diplomatic, trade-economic, transport, cultural-humanitarian and other fields was emphasized. - Agencies

France's Macron inaugurated for second term

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron was on Saturday inaugurated for a second term after his election victory over the far right, facing immense challenges in foreign and domestic policy following a first term which had often polarised the nation. In a ceremony at the Elysee Palace, Macron was confirmed by Constitutional Council chief Laurent Fabius as the winner of April presidential election and then signed the formal re-investiture document. Attended by a few hundred people including his wife Brigitte and his only surviving predecessors Francois Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy, the ceremony was relatively modest but marked the first time a French leader is serving a second term in 20 years. Macron faces a daunting agenda of implementing the reforms he vowed when he came to power as France's youngest-ever president in 2017, as well as dealing with the Russian assault against Ukraine. He is also indicating a more inclusive and understanding style of ruling after his first term saw critics complain the former investment banker had abrasive and arrogant methods. "I vow to build a planet that is more livable, a France that is more alive and a stronger France," he said in a speech at the Elysee Palace, vowing a "new method" to govern. - APP

Ukraine war puts EU 'at crossroads' on anniversary
EU is also challenging an assertive China, and it learned bitter lessons from Brexit and four years of Donald Trump in the US

BRUSSELS: As the EU poises to mark its anniversary on Monday, it is morphing into a more muscular global actor, a transformation accelerated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "(The) war in Ukraine is fundamentally challenging our European peace architecture," European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen declared on Friday. That can be seen in the EU's evolution. What began seven decades ago as a trade bloc binding formerly warring nations together, is today a political heavyweight funneling weapons to Kyiv and imposing unprecedented sanctions on Russia. The EU is also challenging an assertive China, and it learned bitter lessons from Brexit and four years of Donald Trump in the United States. But analysts say it still has a long way to go to become the strate-

gically autonomous goliath championed by French President Emmanuel Macron, who currently holds the EU presidency. "Fundamentally, for Europe to morph into a geopolitical actor, this requires more than some policy fix or institutional fixes," said Luuk van Middelaar, a Dutch political theorist who served in the cabinet of former European Council president Herman Van Rompuy. The EU indeed "crossed a Rubicon" by deciding to finance 1.5 billion euros (\$1.6 billion) of arms deliveries to Ukraine, he said, a "striking" turnaround from its pacifist history. Yet it has a poorly defined common strategy towards its near neighbors, whether they be Russia or the "grey zone of countries" aspiring to join, including Ukraine, he said. Newly re-elected Macron is expected to

pursue his agenda more vigorously, backed by some other leaders this week and a bloc-wide citizens' consultation for ground-up changes to the EU's underpinning treaties. The EU needs "pragmatic federalism" which would see member states lose their ability to veto decisions agreed by a super majority, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi argued to MEPs on Tuesday. If there is any treaty revision, it should be embraced "with courage and confidence", he said. Current EU institutions and processes were "inadequate" to address the fallout from the Ukraine war, he added. Fabian Zuleeg, head of the European Policy Centre, told AFP: "We are at a crossroads, that for me is unquestionable." When Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, "everything changed," he said. "Many taboos have fallen

and countries are doing things which they never thought they would do," said Zuleeg. Not only was EU foreign and security policy affected, but also its agriculture, migration, industrial policies and other areas, he added. "We can decide to use this as a moment when the European Union gets equipped with the kind of decision making processes, the kind of competences, the kind of laws it needs. "Or we try to go down the route of individual countries doing things by themselves, which in my opinion is going to fail." Treaty change was one option, he said. Another was for EU countries to band together and exclude dissenting member states from their decisions. Zuleeg said certain decisions would still need to be taken together, and where that was not possible, groups could work in smaller intergovernmental formats. - APP

Italian PM tests positive for COVID-19



ROME: Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi has tested positive for COVID-19, the government said in a statement on Monday, according to Xinhua. Draghi, 74, who is fully vaccinated, "is asymptomatic," according to the statement. His schedule has been curtailed, including a planned trip to Angola and the Republic of the Congo scheduled for April 20-21. The statement said Draghi will be replaced by Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio and Ecological Transition Minister Roberto Cingolani for the trip. Draghi's positive test comes as coronavirus infection rates in Italy are on the rise compared to recent lows from early March, though mortality and hospitalization rates remain low. The most recent data, from Sunday, showed nearly 52,000 new infections nationally, the sixth consecutive day with more than 50,000 new cases.

Fiji seizes yacht of sanctioned Russian oligarch

MOSCOW: Russian Oligarch Suleiman Kerimov's \$300 million yacht was seized in Fiji at request of the US, the US Justice Department said on Thursday. "Fijian law enforcement executed a seizure warrant freezing the Motor Yacht Amadea (the Amadea), a 348-foot luxury vessel owned by sanctioned Russian oligarch Suleiman Kerimov," the department said in a statement. According to the statement, Fijian law enforcement, with the support and assistance of the FBI, seized the yacht after a US district court found the yacht was subject to forfeiture based on probable cause of violations of US law, including money laundering. - APP

India reports 3,451 new COVID-19 cases

NEW DELHI: India's COVID-19 tally rose to 43,102,194 on Sunday, with 3,451 new cases registered during the past 24 hours across the country, showed the federal health ministry's latest data. Of the new cases, 1,407 were reported from Delhi. Presently there are 5,955 active cases in the capital city, and the positivity rate stood at 4.98 percent. Besides, as many as 40 deaths across the country due to the pandemic since Saturday morning took the total death toll to 524,064. There are still 20,635 active COVID-19 cases in the country, a rise of 332 active cases during the past 24 hours. So far 42,557,495 people have been successfully cured and discharged from hospitals, out of which 3,079 were discharged during the past 24 hours. - APP

S Korea's new president set to get tough on North

SEOUL: South Korea's hawkish new president will be sworn in Tuesday, and he looks set to get tough with Pyongyang, departing from what he has called the "subservient" approach of his predecessor. For the past five years, Seoul has pursued a policy of engagement with North Korea, brokering summits between Kim Jong Un and then-US president Donald Trump while reducing joint US military drills. Pyongyang sees as provocative. But talks collapsed in 2019 and have languished since, while the nuclear-armed North has dramatically ramped up weapons tests, conducting 15 so far this year, including the launch of its largest-ever intercontinental ballistic missile. Unlike outgoing President Moon Jae-in, who saw North Korea as a negotiating partner, incoming leader Yoon Suk-yeol sees the country as an adversary, said Cheong Seong-chang of the Center for North Korea Studies at the Sejong Institute. - APP

Crowds jeer SL PM on outing

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa was booed and heckled Sunday on his first public outing since protests erupted across the country demanding his ruling family resign over the worsening economic crisis. Months of blackouts and acute shortages of food, fuel and medicines have caused widespread suffering across the South Asian island, which is enduring its worst-ever economic downturn. Sunday saw the premier, brother of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, visited one of the holiest Buddhist temples - housing a reputedly 23-century-old tree - in Anuradhapura. But dozens of men and women carried hand-written placards and chanted

slogans demanding that "thieves" be banned from the sacred city, which lies 200 kilometres (125 miles) north of Colombo. "We will worship you if you stand down (as Prime Minister) and leave," one man shouted. Heavily armed Special Task Force (STF) commandos were deployed while police moved to clear the road for Rajapaksa's convoy of six vehicles. Officials said the premier would return to the capital by helicopter. Several major roads in the country are blocked by people protesting the lack of cooking gas, petrol and diesel. The defence ministry in a statement said demonstrators were behaving in a "provocative and threatening manner" and disrupting essential services. - Agencies

Xi warms up economy, virus narrows options

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping has offered state backing for tech, infrastructure and jobs to revive China's economy, but analysts warn growth will continue to wilt until Beijing drops its rigid virus controls. Two and a half years since the coronavirus first emerged in Wuhan, China is the last major economy still closed off to the world, despite its relatively low death toll. Lockdowns across dozens of cities - from the manufacturing hubs of Shenzhen and Shanghai to the breadbasket of Jilin - have wreaked havoc on supply chains over recent months, crushing small businesses and trapping consumers at home. That has imperilled Beijing's full-year growth target of about 5.5 percent, with forecasters anticipating that around one

percentage point may be shaved off that figure. "We remain deeply concerned about growth," Nomura analysts said this week. "We believe the Omicron variant and zero-Covid strategy represent the dominant challenges to growth stability." Yet China's Communist leadership insisted Thursday that the country will stick "unswervingly" to zero-Covid, with a meeting chaired by Xi declaring that "persistence is victory". To curtail the growing economic damage, Beijing has offered words of respite to the tech sector from rolling regulatory crackdowns and promised to pump prime the economy with an "all-out" infrastructure campaign. But observers say rallies may be temporary as long as the state's reflex remains to hammer down the virus caseload at all costs. - APP



BAKU: Azerbaijan FM Jeyhun Bayramov and Chairman of Supreme Assembly of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic Vasif Talibov witnessing exhibition on the occasion of the 99th birthday anniversary of Heydar Aliyev. - DNA

Kushner's new fund plans to invest Saudi money in 'Israel'

MONITORING DESK

WASHINGTON: Jared Kushner's new private-equity fund plans to invest millions of dollars of Saudi Arabia's money in Israeli startups, The Wall Street Journal reported on Saturday. According to people familiar with the investment plan, The Wall Street Journal reported that the plan is a sign of warming ties between "two historic rivals." Affinity Partners, which has raised more than \$3 billion, including a \$2 billion commitment from the kingdom's sovereign-wealth fund, has already selected the first two Israeli firms to invest in, these people said. The decision marks the first known instance that the Saudi Public Investment Fund's cash will be directed to 'Israel', a sign of the kingdom's increasing willingness to do business with the occupation state, even though they have no diplomatic relations. This could help lay the groundwork for a breakthrough normalization pact between the two, the Journal reported. 'Israel' is deepening business and se-



curity ties with Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates, nearly two years after the U.S. brokered historic normalization deals. Kushner, former President Donald Trump's son-in-law and a former senior White House adviser, played an instrumental role in the so-called Abraham Accords. He has also established strong ties with Saudi Arabia's Crown

Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler. Since leaving the White House, Kushner has tapped his White House contacts across the Middle East to develop his private-equity firm. As part of the negotiations to secure the kingdom's funding, Saudi officials agreed that Affinity Partners could invest in Israeli firms, the people familiar with the firm's plans said. The kingdom could also open its economy to Israeli businesses via work with Kushner, they also noted. In an interview, Kushner said he viewed his investment plans as an extension of his work in the White House in advancing ties between 'Israel' and Arab neighbors, which have long refused to normalize relations with 'Israel' until its leaders agreed to the creation of a Palestinian state. "If we can get Israelis and Muslims in the region to do business together it will focus people on shared interests and shared values," he said. "We kicked off historic regional change which needs to be reinforced and nurtured to achieve its potential." Source: The wall Street Journal

'New era' starts in N. Ireland with Sinn Fein victory
Sinn Fein, once referred to as IRA's political wing, is now biggest party

AGENCIES

LONDON: A "new era" has started in Northern Ireland with a historic election victory of Sinn Fein, the Irish nationalist party once referred to as the political wing of the Irish Republican Army. In last Thursday's election, Sinn Fein won most of the seats in the 90-seat local parliament, otherwise known as the Assembly or Stormont, for the first time since the foundation of Northern Ireland as a state in 1921. The nationalist party won 27 of the 90 seats and the DUP won 24 according to results as of Saturday evening, with the results of two more seats pending. The party's victory means the end of the rule of the Royalist Protestants who forever want to be part of the UK, unlike Sinn Fein, the representatives of Irish Catholics who would like to see their country unified with the Republic of Ireland. "This has been an historic election," Michelle O'Neill, Sinn Fein's vice president, said in her victory speech on Saturday. Hailing "an election of real change," she signaled a change for the country, which may now fast head to unification with the Republic of Ireland. On Twitter, O'Neill wrote that "a new era begins" in response to a congratulatory message from Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, who has had ideas of her own of separating her country from the UK after Brexit and came out victorious, too, in the recent elections. However, unlike the Scottish bid for a second independence referendum, which requires approval from Westminster, a public vote in Northern Ireland on merging the two Irelands is guaranteed by the internationally-signed Belfast Agreement. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who saw his Conservative Party vote share drop sharply across England,

Scotland, and Wales, congratulated all the winners in Northern Ireland and urged them to work together to form a new devolved government. "Over the coming days I will be meeting with all the party leaders and will urge them to restore the Stormont institutions at the earliest possible moment, starting with the nomination of an Assembly Speaker within 8 days," he said in a statement. "A new power-sharing Executive is vital for progress and prosperity for all in Northern

Ireland," said Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Micheal Martin, also urging Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to work together to form a new government. Both premiers underlined their commitments to the 1998 Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement as co-guarantors of the deal, which ended the Troubles, the decades-long era of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. However, the DUP has yet to announce that they will nominate a deputy first minister who would work alongside O'Neill.

According to a unique arrangement based on the Good Friday Agreement, the first minister and deputy first minister must be nominated and work together with equal powers. But if the DUP does not nominate a deputy, Sinn Fein will not be able to form a new Executive. When and if the new Executive is formed without any delays, the first bump on the road will be the Northern Ireland Protocol, a deal signed between the UK and EU as an addendum to the EU Withdrawal Agreement.



Briefs

Iran says Ukraine crisis has political solution

MONITORING DESK

TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Sunday that the Ukraine crisis has a political solution, adding that Iran is against the war in Ukraine as opposed to the war in Yemen. Amirabdollahian met and held talks with his Polish counterpart Zbigniew Rau in the Iranian capital on Sunday. In a press conference with Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amirabdollahian said that Iran and Poland have a long-standing and historical relationship that dates back to 540 years ago, and this is a great asset in the relations between Tehran and Warsaw.

He added that Poland played an important humanitarian role in the Ukraine crisis in recent months, both for the displaced people of Ukraine and on the issue of the immediate transfer of Iranian nationals at the onset of the crisis from different parts of Ukraine to Poland and from there to Iran.

Afghanistan receives 32m USD cash aid

KABUL: Afghanistan received a batch of 32 million U.S. dollars in humanitarian cash assistance on Sunday, the country's central bank said. "Following a series of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, a shipment of humanitarian aid worth 32 million dollars reached Afghanistan on Sunday. The cash aid was delivered to a commercial bank," Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) said in a statement. The central bank welcomed "the arrival of currencies into the country through principled and legal means." While appreciating the humanitarian assistance of the international community, the Afghan central bank called for better relations with its partners in the financial and banking sectors. - Agencies

Turkey hosts over 4 mln refugees in total: official

WEB DESK

ANKARA: Turkey currently hosts 4,082,693 refugees, 3,762,686 of whom are Syrians, Turkish deputy Interior Minister Ismail Catakli was quoted by daily Hurriyet as saying on Sunday. As many as 323,859 irregular migrants have been deported during the last 5 years, he said. In 2022, a total of 21,087 people from 113 different nationalities were deported, topped by Afghanistan with 9,654 people, and Pakistan ranks second with 4,206, he added. The number of Syrians that voluntarily returned to the "secure" areas in northern Syria is 497,926, Catakli said. "Turkey is the only country that can manage its immigration policy in line with the law and humanitarian values," he noted.

'Cover faces': UN slams Taliban order for women

"This decision contradicts numerous assurances regarding respect for and protection of all Afghans' human rights, including those of women and girls"

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has criticized an announcement made by the Taliban ordering all women to cover their faces in public in the country. "UNAMA is deeply concerned with today's announcement by the Taliban de facto authorities that all women must cover their faces in public, that women should only leave their homes in cases of necessity, and that violations of this directive will lead to the punishment of their male relatives," the Mission said in a statement. According to information received by UNAMA, this is a formal directive rather than a recommendation, any violations of which will lead to the punishment of male relatives. "This decision contradicts numerous assurances regarding respect for and protection of all Afghans' human rights, including those of women and girls, that had been provided to the international community by

Taliban representatives during discussions and negotiations over the past decade," UNAMA said. Following the Taliban takeover in August 2021, the Taliban assured that women would be afforded their rights, whether in work, education, or society at large. News reports on the decree, which calls for women to only show their eyes and recommends they wear the head-to-toe burqas, say that this latest whittling of their rights in the country evokes similar restrictions from the Taliban's previous rule between 1996 and 2001. It also follows the reneging on an earlier promise to appease their headline rule at the expense of further alienating the international community, which has been eager for signs that the de facto authority is ready for positive relations with the wider world. After seizing power, the Taliban confirmed in September that secondary schools were reopening, but that only boys

would be returning to the classroom. Women teachers throughout the country were also unable to resume work. Six weeks ago, the de facto authority decided again to postpone secondary schooling for Afghan girls - drawing wide international, regional, and local condemnation. This latest decision by the Taliban threatens to further strain engagement with the international community. "UNAMA will immediately request meetings with the Taliban de facto authorities to seek clarification on the status of this decision," the statement continued, adding that UNAMA would also engage in consultations with members of the international community regarding the implications of this latest decree. Intense push-back against the Taliban have led to nations cutting development aid and enforcing strict sanctions on the country's banking system, pushing Afghanistan

towards economic ruin, it was pointed out. On August 30, 2021, the Security Council passed a resolution calling on the Taliban to provide safe passage for all those seeking to leave the country. During a high-level meeting in Geneva the following month, the international community pledged more than \$1.2 billion in humanitarian and development aid to the Afghan people. Meanwhile, the nation is becoming the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with needs surpassing those in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen, leaving nearly 23 million people facing acute food insecurity. In January, the UN and partners launched a more than \$5 billion funding appeal for Afghanistan, in the hope of shoring up collapsing basic services there. Throughout, the UN has pledged to stay and continue to deliver lifesaving humanitarian aid to the Afghan people across the country. - Agencies

Chinese plans for Taiwan affected by Ukraine war: CIA chief

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: China is closely monitoring Russia's conflict in Ukraine and that it is affecting Chinese leaders' calculations for Taiwan, the self-ruled island claimed by Beijing, CIA Director William Burns said Saturday. Burns, speaking at a Financial Times event in Washington, said the Chinese government had been struck by Ukraine's fierce resistance to Russia's invasion and by the economic costs Russia is bearing. "I think the Chinese leadership is looking very carefully at all this - at the costs and consequences of any effort to use force to gain control over Taiwan," Burns said. He cautioned, however, that it would not shift Chinese leader Xi Jinping's long-term goals for Taiwan. "I don't for a minute think that this has eroded Xi's determination over time to gain control over Taiwan," said Burns. "But I think it's something that's affecting their calculation about how and when they go about doing that." China has refused to condemn Russia's war in Ukraine and has criticized Western sanctions on Moscow. Beijing and Moscow declared a "no-limits" strategic partnership several weeks before the Feb. 24 invasion, and have been forging closer energy and security ties in recent years to push back on the United States and the West. But Burns said the United States believed China was unsettled by the reputational damage of being associated with the "brutishness" of Russian President Vladimir Putin's military action. "I think what the bitter experience, in many ways, of Putin's Russia in Ukraine over the last 10 or 11 weeks has done is demonstrate that that friendship actually does have some limits," Burns said.

PM desires to further enhance Pakistan-EU multi-faceted ties

The prime minister also underscored the importance of regular high-level exchanges between the two sides to deepen bilateral collaboration



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Saturday highlighted the strong economic, trade and investment ties between Pakistan and the European Union and expressed the desire for further strengthening of this multi-faceted relationship in diverse sectors including climate change and legal migration. The prime minister also underscored the importance of regular high-level exchanges between the two sides to deepen bilateral collaboration and enhance mutual cooperation on issues of peace and stability in the regional and international context. The prime minister was talking to Thomas Seiler, Charge d' Affairs, Del-

egation of the EU to Pakistan, who called on him, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The charge d' affairs congratulated the prime minister on assuming the office and conveyed best wishes of the European Council president and the president of the EU Commission. The prime minister thanked the charge d' Affairs for his felicitations and underlined the importance Pakistan attaches to its relations with EU and its member states. Thomas Seiler affirmed EU's commitment to further deepening of bilateral cooperation with Pakistan. Pakistan and EU are celebrating the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations this year. Events marking this milestone are envisaged to be held both in Islamabad and Brussels.

Mumbai mosques turn volume down after Hindu's demands

MUMBAI: Sitting in an office lined with books overlooking a giant prayer hall, Mohammed Ashfaq Kazi, the main preacher at the largest mosque in Mumbai, checked a decibel meter attached to the loudspeakers before he gave the call to worship. "The volume of our azaan (call to prayer) has become a political issue, but I don't want it to take a communal turn," said Kazi, one of the most influential Islamic scholars in the sprawling metropolis on India's western coast. As he spoke he pointed to loudspeakers attached to the minarets of the ornate, sand-coloured Juma Masjid in Mumbai's old trading quarters. Kazi and three other senior clerics from Maharashtra where Mumbai is located said more than 900 mosques in the west of the state had agreed to turn the volume down on calls to prayer following complaints from a local Hindu politician. Raj Thackeray, leader of a regional Hindu party, demand-

ed in April that mosques and others places of worship kept within allowed noise limits. If they did not, he said his followers would chant Hindu prayers outside mosques in protest. Thackeray, whose party has just one seat in the state's 288-member assembly, said he was merely insisting that court rulings on noise levels be enforced. "If religion is a private matter then why are Muslims allowed to use loudspeakers all 365 days (of the year)?" Thackeray told reporters in Mumbai, India's financial hub and capital of Maharashtra. "My dear Hindu brothers, sisters and mothers come together; be one in bringing down these loudspeakers," he said. Leaders of India's 200 million Muslims see the move, which coincided with the holy festival of Eid, as another attempt by hardline Hindus to undermine their rights to free worship and religious expression, with the tacit agreement of the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). - Agencies

Militant attack kills 11 Egypt troops: Army

CAIRO: Eleven Egyptian soldiers were killed on Saturday attempting to thwart a "terrorist" attack on the Suez Canal zone abutting the Sinai peninsula, a hotbed of militant activity, the army said. It was the heaviest loss of life the army had suffered in years in its long-running campaign in and around the Sinai against militants loyal to the Islamic State group. Five soldiers were also wounded in the firefight on the eastern bank of the canal, the army said, adding security forces were "continuing to chase the terrorists and surround them in an isolated area of

the Sinai". "These terrorist operations will not defeat the determination of the country and the army to continue uprooting terrorism," President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi pledged on n. - Agencies

Pak condemns attack in Egypt

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has condemned the heinous terrorist attack in Sinai, which resulted in death of eleven security personnel. In a statement, Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the Government and people of Pakistan extend deepest condolences to the bereaved families. The statement prayed for early recovery of those injured in the attack. It further said that Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We also reaffirm our solidarity with the brotherly people of Egypt. - DNA

60 feared dead after school bombed in east Ukraine

AGENCIES

KRAMATORSK: As many as 60 people were feared to have been killed in the Russian bombing of a village school in the eastern Ukrainian region of Luhansk, the regional governor said on Sunday. Governor Serhiy Gaidai said Russian forces dropped a bomb on Saturday afternoon on the school in Bilohorivka where about 90 people were sheltering, causing a fire that engulfed the building for four hours. "Thirty people were evacuated from the rubble, seven of whom were injured. Sixty people were likely to have died under the rubble of buildings," Gaidai wrote on the Telegram messaging app, adding that two dead bodies

had been found. Reuters could not immediately verify the report. Ukraine and its Western allies have accused Russian forces of targeting civilians in the war, which Moscow denies. The Russians were continuing their intensive shelling of the Azovstal steelworks, last bastion of Ukrainian resistance in the ruined southeastern port city of Mariupol, a deputy commander of Ukraine's Azov regiment said on Sunday. "We will continue to fight as long as we are alive to repel the Russian occupiers," Captain Sviatoslav Palamar told an online news conference, pleading with the international community to help evacuate wounded soldiers from the plant. In a week-long operation brokered by the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red

Cross (ICRC), scores of civilians who had taken refuge in the plant's underground shelters have been evacuated. Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Sunday that evil had returned to Ukraine but that Kyiv would prevail in an emotional address as Europe marks the surrender of Nazi Germany in World War Two. His video address, filmed in front of charred Ukrainian apartment blocks with footage of Russian missile strikes, comes a day before Kremlin leader Vladimir Putin marks the Soviet victory with a vast military parade. "Darkness has returned to Ukraine decades after World War Two... The evil has returned," Zelenskiy said. "In a different form, under different slogans, but for the same purpose."

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