



# Islamabad POST

Thursday, May 04, 2023

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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**Turkiye closes its airspace to Armenian flights**

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## Briefs

**Imran urges solidarity with CJP**

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: As we are standing at its turning point, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on Thursday appealed the people to come out of their homes in their cities and villages on Saturday evening to express solidarity with Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial and Supreme Court. In a video message, PTI Chairman said: "We are at decisive moment of the history and a mafia is making the decisions of the country." Imran Khan said that they were afraid of losing elections because of historical inflation and worst unemployment. PTI Chairman vowed that the mafias were doomed to defeat in the elections that was the reason they were hell-bent on destroying the Constitution of Pakistan and the Supreme Court.

**FM heads to India for SCO moot**  
India provides airspace route to FM plane

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will be leading the Pakistan delegation to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Council of Foreign Ministers meeting being held today (Thursday) in Goa, India. According to the Foreign Office, the Foreign Minister is attending the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers meeting at the invitation of the current Chair, Minister for External Affairs of India Dr. S. Jaishankar. The Foreign Office said our participation in the meeting reflects Pakistan's commitment to the SCO Charter and processes and the importance that Pakistan accords to the region in its foreign policy priorities. "Our participation in the meeting reflects Pakistan's commitment to the SCO Charter and processes and the importance that Pakistan accords to the region in its foreign policy priorities," the Foreign Office spokesperson said. FM Bilawal Bhutto had also attended the last meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in July last year in Tashkent.

## ECP challenges SC verdict

# 'Judiciary can't fix poll date'

In a 14-page petition, ECP says that apex court should review its decision

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court to review its directives to hold elections for the Punjab Assembly on May 14, urging it not to intervene in its matters. In a 14-page petition—the electoral body said that apex court should review its decision as the judiciary "doesn't have the authority to give the date of elections." The petition was registered hours after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) said that it would submit a detailed report of the talks between the party leaders and the ruling alliance, urging the apex court to implement its verdict in Punjab polls case. "[...] it is most respectfully prayed that this August Court may graciously accept the instant Review Petition by revisiting, reviewing, reconsidering and recalling its Impugned Order/Judgment dated 04.04.2023, in the interest of justice and equity," the petition read. The petition highlighted that superior courts of the country have been granted a special power under Article 199 and Article 184(3) of the Constitution to judicially review actions/decisions of the public bodies. "The superior courts can define

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**PTI to approach ECP for Punjab campaign**

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) decided on Wednesday to approach the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to start the electoral campaign in connection with the Punjab Assembly elections. The sources disclosed that the PTI had decided to approach the electoral watchdog to start electoral campaign across the province including Lahore. The application will be filed on behalf of Dr Yasmin Rashid. The PTI will also request the ECP to provide sound system facilities to the party during its electoral campaign for the Punjab Assembly polls. On April 4, a three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Ijazul Ahsan, declared an ECP order to put off elections in

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## PTI seeks execution of SC's polls verdict

Files a petition in apex court after no breakthrough in talks

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In spite of the best efforts, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and government negotiating teams could not arrive at any constitutional solution to hold polls across the country on same date, the PTI requested the Supreme Court (SC) to implement its judgement dated April 4 in letter and spirit regarding holding polls in Punjab on May 14. In the light of the apex court's order, PTI submitted a constitutional petition on behalf of its negotiation team on Wednesday, praying that the SC should execute its judgement of April 4, 2023 to hold polls of the Punjab Assembly on May 14 so that the Constitution is upheld and does not stand violated. It was stated that the SC in its order dated April 4 suggested that the political parties may meet together and hold a dialogue to determine the way forward for holding of elections to the Assemblies of Pakistan in accordance with the Constitution. PTI in accordance with its commitment made before the top court constituted a three members committee comprising PTI Vice Chairman

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**'Show up in court', IHC warns Khan**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday warned Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan Wednesday that his interim bail in nine different cases would be cancelled if he failed to appear in court today (Thursday). IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard Khan's bail pleas in two different cases related to threatening officers of the armed forces and the attempted murder of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Mohsin Shahnawaz Ranjha. During the hearing, the IHC chief justice observed that the law was very clear and

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LONDON: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif being received by Pakistan High Commissioner to the UK Mr. Moazzam Ahmad Khan and Special Representative of the British Foreign Secretary Mr. David Gordon-MacLeod at the airport in London. — DNA

**Press Freedom Day PM pays tribute to journalists**

Says media people working in challenging environment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As the international community observed World Press Freedom Day on Wednesday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to the journalists across the world, particularly those in Pakistan, for their commendable work to inform and educate the people. "On World Press Freedom Day, I pay glowing tributes to journalists across the world, particularly those in Pakistan for the commendable work they are doing to inform and educate

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**US envoy assures Dar of support**

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Charge d' Affaires of the United States Andrew Schofer on Wednesday called on Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and expressed confidence in the policies and initiatives taken by the government of Pakistan for its economic stability.

PICTURE ON PAGE 7

The envoy also extended his country's support to give further impetus to the economic and trade relations between the two countries, a Finance Division news release said. During the meeting,

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## Lawmakers protest against seeking of proceedings record

Speaker Pervaiz Ashraf says he would not "compromise" on the parliament supremacy

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The treasury and opposition benches in the National Assembly Wednesday once again strongly protested against the Supreme Court's orders to the lower house of parliament for handing over the record of proceedings related to a bill. The apex court has sought the house's proceedings regarding The Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act, 2023, which seeks to regulate the powers of the chief justice and devolve them to a committee. After strong protest from the benches, NA Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf tasked a committee — which was formed earlier to probe ex-CJP Saqib Nisar's audio leak — to oversee the matter of surrendering the record to the top court. In response to the members' protests, the NA speaker told the National Assembly that he would not "compromise" on the supremacy of parliament. "There should be no doubt that the house is supreme when it comes to the country's matters."

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**Govt files reference against Imran, ex-CJP**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In a new turn in the ongoing political drama, the federal government on Wednesday filed a reference against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chief Imran Khan and former chief justice Saqib Nisar. The reference was filed under election act 2017 and article 218 of the constitution. It was filed by Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan and Attaullah Tarar of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz in which Imran Khan, Saqib Nisar, Najim Saqib, Abuzar Chaudhry, Mian Aziz, Ejaz Chaudhry and Asad Umar were made parties. The text of audio leak of Najim Saqib was

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## Israeli airstrikes on Gaza kill Palestinian

The exchange erupted when a prominent Palestinian detainee died in Israeli custody

CENTRELINE REPORT

JERUSALEM: Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip killed a 58-year-old man and wounded five others on Wednesday, Palestinian health officials said, even as the latest spasm of violence between Israel and Palestinian resistance in the enclave appeared to ebb. Israeli fighter jets struck targets in Gaza in response to salvos of rockets launched by Palestinian groups

at Israeli territory on Tuesday. But after sunrise, the violence seemed to subside as both sides signaled they wanted to avoid a wider conflict. The exchange erupted when a prominent Palestinian detainee died in Israeli custody after an 87-day hunger strike. The death of Khader Adnan, 45, a leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group credited with popularizing hunger strikes as an effective form of activism, reverberated across the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, where he is revered as a national hero. Protests erupted at Israeli military checkpoints and a general strike shuttered stores across the territories. Palestinians and rights

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Why major European cities are rejecting Israeli apartheid — Page 05

Resistance groups, Israel agree to Gaza ceasefire — Page 06

Turkiye shuts its airspace to Armenian flights — Page 07

Azerbaijani artists present a beautiful musical performance — Page 08

## Russia accuses Ukraine of trying to kill Putin

The Kremlin says Russia reserved the right to retaliate, and hardliners demanded swift retribution against Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russia accused Ukraine on Wednesday of attacking the Kremlin with drones overnight in a failed attempt to kill President Vladimir Putin. A senior Ukrainian presidential official denied the accusation - the most serious that Moscow has levelled at Kyiv in more than 14 months of war - and said it indicated Moscow was preparing a major "terrorist provocation". The Kremlin said Russia reserved the right to retaliate, and hardliners demanded swift retribution against Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy. "Two unmanned aerial vehicles were aimed at the Kremlin. As a result of timely actions taken by the military and special services with the use of radar warfare systems, the devices were put out of action," the Kremlin said in a statement. "We regard these actions as a planned terrorist act and an attempt on the president's life, carried out on the eve of Victory Day, the May 9 Parade, at which the presence of foreign guests is also planned ...

"The Russian side reserves the right to take retaliatory measures where and when it sees fit." Baza, a Telegram channel with links to Russia's law enforcement agencies, posted a video showing a flying object approaching the dome of the Kremlin Senate building overlooking Red Square - site of the Victory Day parade - and exploding in an intense burst of light just before reaching it. Reuters could not immediately verify the video's authenticity. Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said in comments sent to Reuters: "Ukraine has nothing to do with drone attacks on the Kremlin. We do not attack the Kremlin because, first of all, it



does not resolve any military tasks." He added: "In my opinion, it is absolutely obvious that both 'reports about an attack on the Kremlin' and simultaneously the supposed detention of Ukrainian saboteurs in Crimea ... clearly indicate the preparation of a large-scale terrorist provocation by Russia in the coming days." Vyacheslav Volodin, issued a statement demanding the use of "weapons capable of stopping and destroying the Kyiv terrorist regime". Margarita Simonyan, head of the state broadcaster RT, wrote on Telegram: "Maybe now things will get started for real?" The statement from the presidential administration said fragments of the drones had been scattered on the

territory of the Kremlin complex but there were no casualties or material damage. RIA said Putin had not been in the Kremlin at the time, and was working on Wednesday at his Novo Ogaryovo residence outside Moscow. Another video circulating on Russian social media appeared to show a plume of smoke over the Kremlin after the purported attack. The video was posted in the early hours of Wednesday on a group for residents of a neighbourhood that faces the Kremlin across the Moskva River. It was picked up by Russian media, including the Telegram channel of the military news outlet Zvezda. Victory Day is a major public holiday commemorating the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War Two, and a chance for Putin to rally Russians behind what he calls his "special military operation" in Ukraine. Russia marks the occasion with a huge military parade on Red Square, for which seating has already been erected. The state news agency TASS said the parade - for which the Kremlin last week announced tighter security - would still go ahead.



## Ammonia leak leaves many hospitalized in Attock

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: Scores of people especially women and children were affected by ammonia gas leakage from an under construction ice factory running illegally in a residential area along with GT road in Hassanabdol, police, rescue 1122 and civil defense sources said.

According to the information, most of people fainted in gas leakage incidents specially children. On getting information, Rescue 1122 and local administration teams reached the spot and controlled the leakage of the gas. As per reports, the labourers were on routine duty when suddenly the gas started leaking due to defective and substandard gas cylinders. District Emergency Officer Attock Ali Hasnain has said following the incident, rescuers entered the factory using safety gadgets and controlled the gas leakage by closing the main valve of the gas cylinder. According to rescue sources, the gas leakage enveloped the surrounding residential areas which left dozens unconscious who were taken to various hospitals of the area for treatment. He said that liquid ammonia is used as the refrigerant in ice plants as it takes a lot of energy from the surroundings to vaporize. Exposure to high concentrations of ammonia in air causes immediate burning of the eyes, nose, throat and respiratory tract and can result in blindness, lung damage or even death in severe cases. Inhalation of lower concentrations can cause coughing, and nose and throat irritation. An official of local administration has said that gas leaked from an old cylinders kept in the godown of ice factory, which affected the residents of the area.

Nisar Ali Khan Group warden Publicity Civil Defence and Muhammad Nawaz, bomb disposal Commander district Attock has said that the bomb disposal squad visited the premises and found no sabotage or terrorist activities in the compound and the gas was leaked due to possible negligence of the employees or substandard gas cylinders. When contacted, assistant commissioner Dr Sana Ramchand has said that soon after the incident, the local administration swing into action and make steps to control the situation. She said that the premises were sealed for illegal activity and reports were seek from the environmental department to take legal action against the owner of the manufacturing unit for negligence. She said that no manufacturing unit would be allowed to operate in the area to risk public lives and violators would be dealt with iron hands accordingly.



ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels hosted a luncheon meeting with the senior journalists of Islamabad to mark the Press Freedom Day. — DNA

# Speakers highlight multiple dimensions of Pakistan-Russia ties

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a Roundtable with H.E. Danila Ganich, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Pakistan, on 'Commemorating 75th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between Pakistan and Russia.' The discussion was chaired by Amb. Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI. Participants included: Ms. Sahar Kamran, former Member Senate of Pakistan; Lt. Gen. Asad Durrani (R), Ambassador Nadeem Riyaz, President, IRS; Ambassador Shah Jamal, former Ambassador of Pakistan; Ambassador Tasneem Aslam, former Ambassador of Pakistan and Spokesperson; Major General Muhammad Raza Aizad, DG, ISS-RA, NDU; Dr. Tughrul Yamin,

Senior Research Fellow, IPS; Dr. Farah Naz, Assistant Professor, NUST; Dr. Shabir Ahmed Khan, Director, Area Study Centre for China, Russia & CARs; Dr. Asma Naveed, Professor, NUML; Dr. Afia Malik, Research Economist, PIDE; Mr. Ali Salman, Executive Director, PRIME and Research Associates from CASS and IPRI.

Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director CSP, and the research faculty of ISSI also participated in the Roundtable. In his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Amb. Sohail Mahmood outlined the different phases of Pakistan-Russia relations over the past 75 years – including in the cold war era, the post-cold war years,

and the current phase. He underlined that the relationship, currently, was marked by friendship, increased mutual understanding, and growing cooperation across myriad domains. Noting convergent interests across a range of regional and international issues, he observed that the desire for enhanced cooperation was driven

by Pakistan's deepening engagement with the Eurasian region and the imperatives of geo-economics. During the absorbing interactive session, the deliberations focused on multiple dimensions of Pakistan-Russia relations, which, the participants noted, were marked by cooperation in diverse fields, including energy, security, agriculture, and people-to-people contacts. In the regional context, developments with regard to Afghanistan, South Asia, Central Asia and regional connectivity were discussed. The evolving situation with respect to the Ukraine conflict was also reviewed. The prospects of a political settlement and China's potential role in this context was evaluated. Participants shared their views and assessments. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG ISSI, made the concluding remarks.



## Pak, Uzbekistan for smooth connectivity to enhance relations

PESHAWAR: Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan Aybek Arif Usmanov called on Engr Amir Muqam, Adviser to Prime Minister for Political, Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture at Islamabad on Wednesday. Adviser to PM Engr Amir Muqam welcomed the Uzbekistan Ambassador and said that the two countries have always had friendly and brotherly relations, says a press release here. Adviser to Prime Minister Engr Amir Muqam has extended his felicitation to President Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev on winning a nationwide referendum to extend the president's term limit. During the meeting, they discussed mutual interest

issues including the possibility of strengthening ties in cultural heritage. Engr Amir Muqam said that the two countries should benefit from the experience of each other, adding that there is significant potential for cooperation between the two countries. Adviser to PM Engr Amir Muqam said that economic, political and cultural ties between the two friendly countries are a source of unity. Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan Aybek Arif Usmanov acknowledged the potential for cooperation in the field of cultural heritage and expressed his desire to undertake joint ventures on a progressive basis.

The Ambassador invited Adviser to PM Engr Amir Muqam on behalf of President Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and the Cultural Minister to the cultural event being held from May 5 to May 9 in Uzbekistan. The Adviser to PM thanked the Ambassador of Uzbekistan and also accepted the invitation to attend a cultural event. The Ambassador said historic links are manifested in Sufi traditions in Pakistan, adding that the two brotherly countries share a common history and faith. The Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan stressed for promoting connectivity projects between Pakistan and Uzbekistan to bolster bilateral relations.—APP

## NA passes 'The Trade Marks (Amend.) Bill

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly here on Wednesday passed a Trade Marks Ordinance, 2001 [The Trade Marks (Amendment) Bill, 2023 by clause by reading to facilitate local brands to protect their logos in more than 128 countries]. The bill was tabled by Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar. The legislation will also enable local brands for international registration of trademarks and electronic validity/payment of the documents. According to statement of Objectives and Reasons: President of Pakistan signed the "Instrument of Accession" of the Madrid Protocol on 23rd February, 2021 which was deposited by our Permanent Mission to LIN, Geneva to World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) on 24th February, 2021 to make Pakistan, member of the Madrid System. The Protocol has been entered into force on 24th May, 2021 for facilitating local brand owners of Pakistan to protect their trademarks in up to 128 countries by filing a single international application in one language.—APP

## PARC holds national dialogue on Agri research

ISLAMABAD: A three-day National Dialogue on Agricultural Research started at the National Agricultural Research Centre, Islamabad. Speaking at the inaugural session, the Honorable Minister of National Food Security and Research, Chaudhary Tariq Bashir Cheema, highlighted the government's commitment to promoting the agricultural sector and improving the livelihoods of farmers. The Dialogue has been planned to provide platform for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to discuss and deliberate on the latest developments and innovations in agricultural research and plan for future research accordingly. The stakeholders will be making efforts to identify strategies and solutions to overcome the challenges faced by the agricultural sector and pave the way for sustainable development. The National

Dialogue on Agricultural Research will cover a range of topics, including crop improvement, livestock and fisheries, natural resource management, food security, and rural development. The event will feature interactive sessions, panel discussions, and presentations by renowned experts and scientists in the field of agriculture. The Secretary, Ministry of National Food Security and Research emphasized to improve governance through establishment of a well-coordinated system among different institutions and rationalize existing resources to improve efficiency of the research system. Chairman Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) welcomed the distinguished guests. He highlighted importance of research to deal with the food security challenge of the country. He shared PARC led coordinated efforts of National Agricultural Research System like.

## ZONG 4G announces corporate partnership with STCL

DNA

ISLAMABAD: ZONG 4G, Pakistan's leading telecom operator, has signed a contract with SHABIR TILES AND CERAMICS LTD, one of the country's largest manufacturer

and suppliers of tiles and ceramics, to provide customized corporate voice, data, and Enterprise solutions. The partnership will enable SHABIR TILES AND CERAMICS LTD to perform daily operations with increased efficiency and reliability. As part of the

partnership, ZONG 4G will provide SHABIR TILES AND CERAMICS LTD with tailored data and voice services for its core operational business. The contract signing ceremony was held in the presence of representatives from both companies. Com-

menting on the partnership, the official spokesperson for ZONG 4G said, "We are delighted to announce our partnership with SHABIR TILES AND CERAMICS LTD. At ZONG 4G, we are committed to providing innovative and reliable communication solutions that cater to the unique needs of our corporate clients. With this partnership, we aim to support SHABIR TILES AND CERAMICS LTD in achieving their business objectives.

# Honoring everyday heroes: International Firefighters' Day

KARAMAT ALI



Every year on May 4, International Firefighters' Day (IFFD) is marked to recognise and commemorate the sacrifices made by firefighters across the world. The day serves as a reminder of the courage, selflessness, commitment, bravery and dedication of firefighters who risk their own survival to safeguard people and property from fires and other disasters. After five firefighters tragically lost their lives vying for an Australian wildfire in 1998, the concept of International Firefighters' Day was first put forth.

The incident sparked a worldwide outpouring of gratitude and support for the sacrifices made by firemen, not only in Australia. The incident sparked a worldwide outpouring of gratitude and support for the sacrifices made by firemen, not only in Australia. Since that time, governments, communities, and firefighting organisations all around the world have recognised International Firefighters' Day as a global occasion. It's a chance to express appreciation for the firefighters' efforts and to spread knowledge of the difficulties they deal with on daily basis. Firefighters are essential members of the nations who respond to a variety of situations, such as fires, natural catastrophes, and events involving hazardous chemicals. They are trained to work in some of the most difficult and hazardous circumstances imaginable, often risking their own lives to protect others. Due to the crucial and dangerous nature of their work, fire rescuers, also known as firemen, are frequently viewed as unsung heroes.

Firefighters are vital members of society, and their work goes beyond putting out fires. Fire-

fighters are vital members of society, and their work goes beyond putting out fires. They are the first to arrive at numerous kinds of crises including explosions, road accidents, medical emergencies, and natural disasters. When everyone else flees, they are the ones who dash in to save lives and safeguard property. One must undergo extensive training that includes both physical and mental preparation in order to become a firefighter. Learning about fire behaviour, extinguishing methods, search and rescue procedures, and emergency medical treatment are all part of the training. Likewise, firefighters receive training to operate various types of equipment and to work in hazardous situation. Firefighters must undergo tough and difficult training in order to be ready to handle any difficulties they may experience on the job. Their willingness to go through such training in order to contribute to the safety of their communities speaks volumes about their commitment. Firefighters frequently have to make split-second judgments in high-stress circumstances. To work as a team, they must be

intellectually prepared, physically healthy, and have strong communication abilities. Apart from that, they must be able to maintain composure and calm under pressure. Therefore, this day is an opportunity to honour the courage and humanitarianism of these people who work tirelessly to keep us safe. On top of that, it provides a great chance to promote the value of fire safety and to motivate individuals to take precautions to protect themselves and their communities from the risk of fire. During Ch Pervaiz Elahi's time as the Chief Minister of Punjab in Pakistan, the Rescue 1122 Service emerged in 2004 to offer contemporary and effective emergency response services to the people of Pakistan. Under the dynamic leadership of Dr Rizwan Naseer, the Sectary Emergency Services, it preliminarily debuted as an ambulance service. Fire and rescue services in Pakistan were mostly insufficient and obsolete prior to Rescue 1122 being founded. Modern firefighting techniques and equipment were nonexistent, and many fire departments lacked sufficient personnel and received inadequate training. As

a result, fires frequently resulted in serious property damage and fatalities. The Government of Punjab established the first Fire & Rescue Service in 2007 after realising the need for advanced and effective emergency services in that country. The first contemporary Fire and Rescue Services in Pakistan have been founded thanks in large part to the Fire and Rescue Service of Rescue 1122. The Fire Rescue Service is outfitted with state-of-the-art firefighting equipment, such as fire tenders, snorkels, aerial & turntable ladders, and rescue equipment, and its staff is well-versed in the newest safety protocols and modern firefighting techniques. Since its creation, the Rescue Service has saved the lives of almost 12 million victims of various emergencies without any discrimination, responding in an average response time of seven minutes, and has saved losses worth billions of rupees by improving its response time and professional firefighting in the modern line. It is imperative to take preventive measures to avert fire crises since they can have devastating effects and result in substantial loss of life and property. Educa-

tion about fire safety measures, such as the right handling of combustible items and electrical equipment, safe evacuation methods, and the significance of installing smoke detectors and fire alarms, is one of the most efficient approaches to stave off fire emergencies in this situation. Regular building inspections are essential to identifying and addressing potential fire dangers, especially in high-risk locations. Because faulty electrical wiring and appliances are one of the main causes of fire emergencies, ensuring proper installation and maintenance of electrical systems can help reduce a significant fire emergency. It is essential to make sure that the electrical system is installed by qualified electricians and has maintenance carried out on a regular basis. Furthermore, flammable substances like gasoline, propane, and other chemicals should be handled and stored properly to prevent fire emergencies. Store these items in designated locations, far from heat sources and open fires. The likelihood of fire incidents can be decreased by educating people about good fire safety techniques, such as

not smoking indoors and never leaving cooking appliances unattended. The well-trained and vibrant community members can play a vital role to extinguish fire at local level before reaching professional fire emergency services at the incident site. In reacting to fire crises and putting them out before they cause serious harm, firefighters are essential. In order to ensure that firemen can respond appropriately to any situation, it is crucial to invest in their training and equipment. On this significant day, Let us honour and salute all the real heroes from every nation who put themselves in danger to protect their compatriots. I would like to pay a rich tribute to all fire rescuers who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty while saving the lives and property of Pakistani people. May Almighty Allah rest their souls in eternal peace and grant them the highest place in Jannah (Ameen).

—The writer is Public Relations Practitioner at Punjab Emergency Service Department (Rescue 1122) Headquarters, Punjab. He can be reached at twitter @ KaramatAli1985



## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### APRIL

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



## Hotels & Restaurants

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



## Airlines

- Turkish Airlines.....8494949



## Emergency

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



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Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489  
CAA.....9281092



## Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111  
MH.....561116  
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11  
DHQ.....5556311-4  
RGH.....9290301-7  
Holy Family.....9290322-7  
PIMS.....9261170-79  
Polyclinic.....9218300-09  
Shifa International 4603666



## Departments

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

## Islamabad Metropolitan

- Corporation.....9209224  
Potohar Town.....9209224  
Rawal Town.....5773343

## Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Chairman gives representation to ICCI in CDA Board Meetings

Former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtavari thanked the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Shehbaz Sharif for appointing an excellent and business-friendly person as Chairman CDA and demanded that the term of office of Chairman CDA should be given 3 years constitutional protection

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA Captain (Retd) Noor Ul Amin Mengal along with his team visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and speaking on the occasion said that the business community is an important stakeholder in the development of the city, therefore, President ICCI would be invited as a member to CDA Board meetings to include the voice of business community in CDA's policy making process. CDA Member Finance Syed Mazhar Hussain Shah, Member Engineering Syed Munawar Shah, Member Planning & Design Waseem Hayat Bajwa, Member State Muhammad Afnan Alam Khan, Member Environment Captain (Retd) Anwar ul Haque, Member Inspection Riaz Randhawa, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon and others were present on the occasion. The chairman said that CDA will provide plots to ICCI for construction of expo center, school and hospital while sports ground will also be given to the chamber. He said that CDA is making business-friendly policies to facilitate



the business community. He said that commercial plots will be given to the business community on 33-, 50- and 99-years lease so that they do not face any problem in doing business. He said that commercial building drawings will also be approved within a month. He said that all the markets of Islamabad will be developed and upgraded on modern lines. He said that to solve the problem of parking in the markets, 6 more parking plazas will be constructed through private sector by allotting them plots on lease for 33 years.

He said that 9 sectors including car show rooms and transport terminals have been exempted from commercial fee and plots would be given to them on 33 years lease. He said that sanitation system in rural areas will be outsourced and public toilets in markets will also be built through private sector on leased basis. He said that powers have been withdrawn from building inspectors and a better system is being introduced. He said that all mega projects in Islamabad will be completed by July this year. He said that the Building Control Cell

Inspectors who had issued notices in the previous dates would be suspended and legal action would be taken against them. He said that the issue of encroachments in markets will be addressed in consultation with ICCI and concerned market associations. He also announced CDA Liaison Officers for ICCI who will assist in resolving CDA and MCI related issues of the business community. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtavari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in his address, highlighted the key issues

of the business community including representation of ICCI in CDA Board, allotment of plots to ICCI for expo center, school and hospital, allocation of sports ground to ICCI, development of markets on modern lines, provision of vegetable, fruit and meat shops in markets, addressing issues of parking, roads, sewage, sanitation issues, ensuring availability of fire fighting system for high rise buildings, graveyard for Christian community, withdrawal of BCS notices issued in previous dates, operation of buses on new routes in Islamabad in consultation with ICCI, expediting work on Bara Kahu Bypass, Abolition of BCS NOC for property transfer in family, avoidance of auction of commercial plots without infrastructure, reduction of additional story charges etc. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI, emphasized the need to dualize the roads of I-9 and I-10 Industrial Areas, run cheap buses for workers and establish check posts in industrial areas. Former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtavari thanked the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Shehbaz Sharif for appointing an excellent and business-friendly person as Chairman CDA and demanded that the term of office of Chairman CDA should be given 3 years constitutional protection.

## Advisor to PM calls on DG DTCM

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister (PM) on Tourism and Sports Awn Chaudhry called on Director General (DG) Dubai Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) Helal Saeed Al-Marri in Dubai on Wednesday. Helal Al Marri, congratulated on the successful participation of Pakistan in the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) being held in World Trade Center Dubai from May 1-4, said a press release received here. "Pakistan is participating in the event with a 25 members delegation to showcase the rich tourism potential of the country. Pakistan Pavilion in ATM was inaugurated by Advisor to PM on Tourism and Sports and since then has attracted an impressive flow of visitors, tourists and investors. Helal Al Marri encouraged the participation of Pakistan in future travel and tourism events as well." Awn Chaudhry appreciated Dubai's tourism vision that has made the country a top tourist destination in a span of a few years. Talking about tourism in the country, he said, "The country is blessed with beautiful natural landscapes ranging from deserts to seas to mountains and variety of weather all the year around. The country has something to offer for tourists of all interests. He also talked about the immense investment potential in tourism." He extended an invitation to Helal Al Marri for participation in International Tourism Conference being held in Pakistan this year. The Conference would showcase the country's tourism potential and attract foreign tourists and investors in the sector. --APP

## Rupee gains 04 paisas against Dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee gained 04 paisas against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Wednesday as it closed at Rs283.87 against the previous day's closing of Rs 283.91. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 285.85 and Rs 288.75, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs2.09 to close at Rs 313.48 against the last day's closing of Rs 311.40, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen went up by 03 paisas to close at Rs 2.09; whereas an increase of Rs1.39 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 355.49 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 354.10. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham the Saudi Riyal came down by 01 paisa each to close at Rs 77.30 and Rs 75.69, respectively. --APP

# President directs State Life to pay insurance claims Rs 3.2 m

## MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has rejected three separate representations filed by the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC) as maladministration was established on its part in three cases. The State Life had repudiated insurance claims of the complainants on the ground that the insurance policyholders had pre-insurance ailments which they had wilfully hidden at the time of obtaining the policy, a President House statement said on Wednesday. The president directed SLIC to pay insurance claims worth over Rs 3.2 million to three complainants and report compliance to Wafaqi Mohtasib within 30 days. The president

gave these directions while rejecting three separate representations filed by SLIC against the decisions of the Wafaqi Mohtasib. As per details, Samina Shahzadi, Muhammad Mehfooz, and Seeta (the complainants) stated that their family members had obtained insurance policies from SLIC worth Rs 2.9 million, Rs 198,290, and Rs 192,000 respectively. After the deaths of policyholders, the SLIC refused to pay the death insurance claims to complainants. Feeling aggrieved, the complainants separately approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib, which passed orders in their favour. The SLIC then filed separate representations with the president against the decisions of the Mohtasib, which he also rejected. In the case of Samina Shahzadi, President Alvi observed

that her deceased husband (Muhammad Saeed Ahmed) had died due to COVID-19, as reported by ABWA Hospital and Research Centre, Faisalabad, and not due to the pre-insurance ailment of brain tumour as claimed by the SLIC. In the case of Muhammad Mehfooz, the president pointed out that the policy was issued to his sister (Chand Bibi) on 26.12.2018 and she died on 19.12.2021 after the expiry of a period of over 3 years & 7 months. Similarly, he noted that the policy was issued to the husband of Seeta (Jodho Mal) on 31.12.2018, who later died on 17.03.2021 after the expiry of a period of over 2 years and 2 months. The president highlighted that as per Section 80 of the Insurance Ordinance, 2000, no policy of life insurance effected after the

commencement date of the Ordinance, could be called in question after the expiry of the two-year period on the ground that a statement made in the proposal for insurance or in any report of the medical officer was inaccurate or false. He further observed that in both cases, the Confidential Reports of the Field Officers of SLIC had declared the policyholders as healthy at the time of issuance of the policy and had categorically stated that they knew the deceased since birth. President Alvi concluded that since maladministration on the part of SLIC stood established in all the three cases, therefore, representations were being rejected and SLIC was directed to pay the death insurance claims to the complainants.

# SECP introduces framework for 'online only' brokers

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has approved the regulatory framework for online-only brokers through amendments to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) Rulebook, paving the way for the launch of Online Only Brokers in Pakistan. "Cognizant of the growing demand for online investing platforms, the SECP is committed to promoting innova-

tion in the securities market while ensuring investor protection," said a press release issued here. "This regulatory framework is a significant step towards achieving that goal, it added. Under the new regime, the customer onboarding process will be conducted online and the Online Only brokers will be able to provide trading services to their clients, exclusively through online means. Online Only Brokers will be

a sub-category of Trading Only Brokers. As a result, the custodial and clearing services will be performed by Professional Clearing members, resulting in significantly less compliance and operational requirements, thereby allowing the brokers to concentrate on their core competencies of brokerage services and distribution. This will enable new entrepreneurs to start brokerage businesses at lower prelim-

inary and operational costs. The new category will also attract new investors in the capital market as it offers greater convenience for managing investments via online means. The framework includes net worth requirements of PKR 7.5 million and a single member company is also eligible to apply. SECP has also notified license issuance and renewal fees at PKR 50,000 and PKR 25,000 respectively for Online Only Brokers. Moreover, existing brokers may also switch to this new category to lower their overhead costs and remain focused on the core business of trading. --DNA

# Minister greets media people on Press Freedom Day

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State/Special Assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan for Public Communication and Digital Platforms, Mr. Fahd Haroon had a meeting with Mr. Saeed Sarbazi, the President, of Karachi Press Club, he congratulates the media and journalists community on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, which will be celebrated on May 3rd, 2023. The theme for this year's celebrations is "Shaping a Future of Rights: Freedom of Expression as a Driver for all other human rights," which highlights the importance of freedom of expression in the enjoyment and protection of all other human rights. Fahd Haroon discussed, the theme for this year's World Press Freedom Day, "Shaping a Future of Rights: Freedom of Expression as a Driver for all other human rights." He said that "highlighting the crucial role of freedom of expression in promoting and protecting all other human rights. Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, and it serves as a cornerstone for democracy, good governance, and sustainable development." He further said, "It is through the exercise of this right that individuals and communities can voice their opinions, share information, and engage in public debates that lead to the realization of their other rights." This year's theme is a call to action for governments, civil society, and media organizations to work together to promote and protect the freedom of expression and to recognize its indispensable role in shaping a future of rights for all. He further said, "As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of World Press Freedom Day, it is crucial to remember the significance of press freedom in ensuring transparency and accountability in a democratic society." The Government of Pakistan recognizes the importance of press freedom and is committed to protecting the rights of journalists and content creators. In line with this commitment, the government is working on developing a policy framework that will protect social media content creators against illegal harassment, undue pressures, and actions from unwanted elements. These initiatives will help Pakistan in shaping the future of rights, especially in the digital age of public communication. The framework for social media will also empower citizens to protect their rights to express themselves. Fahd Haroon said that "As we celebrate World Press Freedom Day, let us also remember the contributions of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in safeguarding the journalist's right to write and speak the truth.

# Kuwait, Pakistan to collaborate for disaster mitigation

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nassar Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Kuwait Ambassador to Pakistan called on Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lt General Inam Haider Malik, HI (M) in his office today. Chairman NDMA expressed his gratitude to the Government of Kuwait and diplomatic team in Pakistan, for generous support during floods 2022. He shared the significance of enhanced utility of modern technology in creating networked, satellite intelligence on climate based interface and proactive national readiness being developed by Pak NDMA for possible greater usage in region. Pakistan's capability to project future disasters and accordingly plan mitigation models based on scientific solutions are underway. Besides disaster risk reduction, the high-end approach will enable



teams of experts for dissemination of awareness campaigns and multi-lingual early warning mes-

sages through automated system to reach public via all possible means of communication. NEOC

will prove to be a model disaster mitigation/management hub for the region, and NDMA

will replicate same on provincial levels at later stage, highlighted the Chairman. The Amba-

sador appreciated the envisioned NEOC of Pak NDMA and agreed to formulate strategies for

participative investment in pre-disaster planning and management, to reduce loss of human lives and infrastructure. They discussed necessity of continued support in the fields of disaster mitigation specifically sharing of satellite feeds/soft wares for pre-disaster predictions, and exchange of academic experts through platform of National Institute of Disaster Mitigation (NIDM) of NDMA for developing shared intellectual repository. The two sides reached consensus on expanding the capacity-building of Pakistan's national disaster response efforts. "Kuwait and Pakistan enjoy long history of friendship and brotherhood, the ties between the two countries are rock solid and unbreakable, "Our people are deeply indebted for the support by Pakistan especially when medical professionals were sent to help combat Covid 19", the Ambassador endorsed while ensuring possible cooperation.



## Briefs

**ANF seizes 670.322 kg drugs in 43 operations; arrests 39**

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan seized 670.322 kg of drugs and 12.350 kg of suspected substance, worth US\$ 14.580 million internationally during the last two weeks, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that ANF arrested 39 accused including three foreigners and a woman besides impounding 10 vehicles while conducting 43 counter-narcotics operations throughout the country.

He said, the seized drugs comprised 61.878 kg opium, 44.041 kg heroin, 561.297 kg hashish, 2.080 kg amphetamine (Ice), eight grams cocaine, 204-gram weed, 683 ecstasy tabs (356 grams), 1980 Lexotanil tabs (430 gram), 28-gram intoxicated pills and 36 LSD stickers.

ANF Balochistan recovered 554.005 kg of drugs in 12 operations while arresting eight accused including a foreigner involved in drugs smuggling and impounded five vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 60 kg opium, 19 kg heroin, 475 kg hashish and five gram of weed.

ANF Punjab in their operations recovered 23.071 kg of drugs in 10 operations and arrested 12 accused besides impounding a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 600 grams of opium, 19.883 kg of heroin, 2.3 kg of hashish, 160 grams of weed and 530 Lexotanil tabs (128 grams).

ANF KPK recovered 58.583 kg of drugs in four operations and arrested three accused involved in drug smuggling besides impounding a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 58.309 kg of hashish and 500 ecstasy tabs (274 grams).—APP

**Power tariff likely to up by 34 paisa for March**

ISLAMABAD: The power tariff is likely to increase 34 paisa per unit for the consumers of XWAPDA power distribution companies under monthly fuel cost adjustment (FCA) mechanism for March. National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) concluded public hearing into the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA-G) petition on behalf of XWAPDA DISCOs here with Chairman NEPRA Tauseef H Farooqi in the Chair. Other members including Masqood Anwar Khan, Rafique Ahmad Shaikh, Mathar Niaz Rana and Amina Ahmed were also present on the occasion. The CPPA sought Rs 1.17 per unit increase in the tariff for March. However, as per the authority calculation, the increase stood at 34 paisa. The raise would be applicable to all consumers except lifeline, K-Electric and electric vehicle charging stations. . Meanwhile, the authority also concluded hearing into petition of KE for the said period. K-Electric sought Rs 4.49 per unit increase in the tariff for the said period. However, the authority calculated the increase as Rs 3.70 per unit. The authority would announce the decisions in both petitions after reviewing statistics.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A Federal Minister for Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique met with the delegation from Oman.—DNA

**China presents a fresh approach to the world on development paths**

Instead, China has looked inward, drawing upon its own rich history and thousands of years of civilizational development to create a model of modernity that is truly innovative and unconventional

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese modernization presents a fresh approach for the world to consider when it comes to development paths.

This is especially vital given the challenges posed by climate change and growing geopolitical competition, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Wednesday.

China's resolute efforts to address the global deficits of development, peace, governance, and trust through modernization is a new phenomenon that is being viewed with suspicion by the Westerners. In simple words, the Chinese modernization contains four essential attributes - cooperation, harmony, peace, and development - as a path to creating a

global community with a shared future. The world is closely watching China's modernization process. With skyrocketing inflation and the erosion of many economies after three years of pandemic, the global community is acutely aware of the need to prioritize effective modernization efforts. Dispelling the notion that "modernization equals Westernization," China's astounding development has corroborated the fact that there is alternative, viable, practical and more effective approach to modernization for developing nations. The success of China's modernization can be attributed to four key factors: a far-sighted vision to construct socialism with Chinese characteristics, resolute efforts by CPC to implement this vision, acknowledgement and acquisition



of cutting-edge technology, and appreciation for the significance of infrastructure. One of the differentiating features of CPC's vision of modernization is that it does not claim that a "single or universal template for modernization" will work for all the countries. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to modernization. Given the varying historical contexts of countries, diverse pathways

to development must be devised. Hence, Chinese citizens must tailor solutions to domestic challenges that are grounded in their unique national conditions.

This is what they call Chinese characteristics—an amalgam of geographical conditions and culture. Chinese modernization is characterized by several key elements, including a focus on the advancement of the population, the pursuit of shared prosperity, the promotion of both material and cultural progress, the fostering of a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature, and above all, a commitment to peaceful development. China has effectively disproven the notion that modernization is exclusively the domain of the West. Instead, each country can chart its own course towards modernization that aligns with its distinct national context.

China's modernization offers a fresh perspective and a valuable opportunity for the rest of the world to learn and grow.

The Chinese approach to modernization has been radically different from the West.

Rejecting the narrow confines of western theoretical frameworks, China has forged a path towards progress that is entirely unique and distinctly its own.

Unlike the West, China has been able to develop without succumbing to the colonialist mentality that has historically tainted the evolutionary phase of western modernization. Instead, China has looked inward, drawing upon its own rich history and thousands of years of civilizational development to create a model of modernity that is truly innovative and unconventional.

**Community development imperative for growth**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday said passing on the benefits of development to individuals, communities and under-developed localities was imperative for achieving sustainable national progress.

Chairing a meeting on development projects of backward districts, he said the government had prepared a special package for 20 selected under-privileged districts to bring them at par with other developed areas of the country.

Sharing detail of the package, Ahsan Iqbal said development activities would be carried out in 11 selected districts of Balochistan, five of Sindh, three of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and one of Punjab, with 50 per cent contribution by the federal government and 50 per cent of respective provinces.

The minister said surveys of the selected backward districts were being conducted to determine the required development projects of different natures.

**IRSA releases 136,300 cusecs water**

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 136,300 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 138,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1439.38 feet and was 41.38 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 32,200 cusecs while outflow was 33,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1122.00 feet, which was 72.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 48,400 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively.—APP

**Journalism in Pakistan enjoying complete freedom now: Marriyum**

"Journalists make society strong, it is said that information is power and a journalist gives you that power," she maintained

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Wednesday that the present coalition government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif fully believed in the freedom of the media and it would continue to take practical measures to protect journalists. In a statement on the occasion of Press Freedom Day being observed today (Wednesday) all over the world including Pakistan, she said now journalism in Pakistan was enjoying complete freedom. "The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees freedom of the press and citizens' right to access accurate information," the minister said. Paying tribute to those journalists who lost their lives in search of truth, she said that journalism in Pakistan



went through a difficult period from 2018 to 2022. The minister said that in four years of PTI rule, there was a "mysterious censorship" in the country that scared journalists. In 2017, Pakistan was ranked 139th in the World Press Freedom Index, due to PTI's anti-media policies, Pakistan's ranking decreased by 12 points. The person sitting in the chair of the Prime Minister was given the shameful title of "Press Freedom Predator", she remarked.

She said that Imran Khan not only silenced journalists but got them kidnapped and they were fired at to pressure them. She said that the PTI's four-year tenure was a dangerous period for journalists as Imran Khan had imposed restrictions on journalism. She said by imposing such restrictions, one can mislead the people but ultimately the truth has to prevail. The previous government increased the pressure from the state to muzzle the voice of journalists. Instead of rectifying his mistakes, Imran vented out the anger of his failures on journalists and media institutions. "Journalists make society strong, it is said that information is power and a journalist gives you that power," she maintained.—APP

**21 new Corona cases reported in last 24 hours**

ISLAMABAD: Health officials on Wednesday said that 21 new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours across the country. As per the data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH), the case positivity ratio was 1.18 percent while eight patients were in critical condition. No death was reported from the Coronavirus in the last 24 hours while 1,780 Covid-19 tests were conducted. Meanwhile, Minister for National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel said the government has strengthened the role of Border and Health Services in Pakistan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19. The minister said there was a surveillance system at all entry points of the country including airports. There will be rapid tests and screening of passengers at all airports, he added. He added 90 percent of the country's population already got the Covid-19 vaccine. "An efficient system with a proper management team is fully functional in the country to remain vigilant and is ready to make an emergency plan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19," the minister added.—APP

**Corona vaccine clinical trial continues at MIH**

ISLAMABAD: The clinical trial on the coronavirus vaccine is in progress at Maroof International Hospital (MIH) in the wake of a prevailing surge in the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a hospital spokesperson, the Clinical Trial Unit of MIH is conducting the trial involving a covid-19 vaccine LVRNA021 (mRNA-based) booster dose targeting the Delta BA.5 strain as well as Omicron variant B.1.1.529. He said that Maroof International Hospital is part of a multicenter phase III study for the COVID-19 booster vaccine LVRNA021. The trial has been approved by the National Bioethics Committee (NBC) Pakistan and the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP).

He said that the LVRNA021 vaccine is co-developed by AIM Vaccine Co., Ltd., Ningbo Rongan Biological Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd LiveRNA Therapeutics Inc. It is an mRNA-based vaccine targeting different variants of COVID-19 encoding the SARS-CoV-2 S protein of the Delta and Omicron BA.5 strain (Delta: BA.5=1:3) as well.

The phase 1 and phase 2 Investigator Initiated Trials (IIT) of the SARS-CoV-2 bivalent mRNA vaccine (LVRNA021) have been completed and the study

results demonstrated a favorable safety profile. The results have proved that the vaccine is well tolerated, safe, and immunogenic, supporting the next stage of clinical trials, he added. These trials are also being conducted at seven different sites in many cities including Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, and Karachi for recruiting volunteers in Pakistan. The trial participants are selected after necessary blood tests and after meeting the eligibility criteria mentioned in the trial protocol and standard operating procedures as approved by DRAP, NBC, and the Maroof ethics committee.—DNA

**Australian envoy calls on Riaz Pirzada**

Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada welcomed Neil Hawkins and underscored decades-long friendly relations and mutual cooperation between the two countries, said a press release

DNA

ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Australia Neil Hawkins called on Federal Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, here on Wednesday. Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada welcomed Neil Hawkins and underscored decades-long friendly relations and mutual cooperation between the two countries, said a press release. The two sides also exchanged views on enhancing bilateral ties and cooperation in many fields including education, trade

and particularly in the area of human rights. Minister briefed the envoy on the current human rights situation in Pakistan. He said that we had made many improvements in that regard, especially with the help and guidance of international agencies and friendly countries like Australia. He said the government initiated pragmatic policy reforms for improvements in the human rights situation with a special focus on less privileged segments i.e., children, women, persons with disabilities and transgender persons.

Minister stated, "Pakistan Army is very vigilant on human rights issues in the border areas of the country where terrorist elements have made serious troubles in the past but now situations are coming under control due to the strict vigilance and a clear shift in policy. He further said, "We have always welcomed suggestions from brotherly countries and shown our commitment to fulfill international obligations in the subject of human rights." Minister commended Australian

support for relief and rehabilitation of flood affectees in Pakistan. He also stressed the need to revisit the policy and some changes in the rules for genuine Pakistani scholars who got study visas on merit in Australia. Neil Hawkins extended greetings on Eid-ul-Fitr and shared his views about the deep-rooted friendly relations between Pakistan and Australia. He further shared, "Pakistan has been placed at number seven in the list of coun-

tries where students apply for study visas and scholarships announced by the Australian Government and their number is continuously improving every year. Envoy said, "Strong Pakistani Diaspora and students in Australia are playing an important role in bringing the two countries closer." The High Commissioner also conveyed a few concerns over some human rights issues. He stated, "Australia is always beside Pakistan to combat with these challenges." He hoped to see Pakistan as a strong, democratic and prosperous country.

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## Violating the one-China principle

Not content with violating the one-China principle, the United States has launched what could be called a frontal assault on China's sovereignty, which in no way will be tolerated.

US officials have arranged for a delegation of 25 arms dealers to visit Taiwan from Tuesday apparently to explore the possibility of manufacturing weapons, mainly drones and ammunition, on the island, ostensibly to support its secessionist-minded leader Tsai Ing-wen's pro-independence agenda.

The roster of speakers and moderators from the Taiwan side that took part in the so-called Taiwan-US Defense Industry Forum in Taipei on Wednesday testifies to that. From James Huang, chairman of the "Taiwan external trade development council" to Shen Ming-Shih, acting deputy CEO of the "institute for national defense and security research" and Tsai Shih-Ying, coordinator of the "foreign and national defense committee of the legislative yuan" are all hardcore members of the pro-independence Tsai clique.

Washington has absolute say over its arms deals with the island, and this time it has hinted that, if not directly told, Taipei should invite the US arms dealers to the island, taking advantage of the window after the People's Liberation Army's intensive drills around the island as a warning to Tsai to not do something more provocative after her "stopovers" in the US last month. That the US delegation did visit the island despite initial hesitation that it could further irk Beijing and could lead to leaking of US military technology indicates Washington finally decided to indulge in brinkmanship and provoke Beijing to make a rash move and thereby justify, according to the US, the purpose of the delegation's visit. That's why Beijing said it will keep a close eye on the US delegation's visit to the island, and will act accordingly. Incidentally, however, compatriots on the island organized protests in Taipei against the visit of the "distinguished US guests", calling them "bloodsuckers" and "warmongers".

The Ukraine crisis has created an excuse for Washington and Taipei to pretend to safeguard "democracy" and, in the process, strengthen their evil nexus, because by constantly supplying weapons to Ukraine, the US has failed to deliver weapons to the island "on schedule". Also, by manufacturing weapons in Taiwan, the US arms dealers as well as the US administration can bypass a lot of problems to sell arms to the island. But the US' efforts to push the envelope in that regard, no matter when, pose a grave challenge to China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. By allowing the arms dealers' delegation to visit the island, the Joe Biden administration has once again reneged on its promise to not support the island's secessionists and violated the three Sino-US joint communiques, which could change cross-strait relations or Sino-US ties forever.

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## Vaccine shortfall

The horror of the Covid-19 pandemic brought with it one small cause for optimism: the crisis accelerated the development of new vaccine technologies, with the potential to protect against other diseases. Yet this leap forward was accompanied by a dramatic backsliding in the delivery of existing vaccines, with 23 million children missing out on routine immunisations in 2020 and 25 million in 2021 – the largest sustained decline in three decades. The World Health Organization reports that more prevalent and severe outbreaks of preventable diseases, including diphtheria and polio, are already occurring. While three-quarters of the children who missed out lived in just 20 countries, mostly in Asia, Africa and Latin America, there were declines in richer nations too. The UK Health Security Agency has warned that uptake of the meningococcal vaccine, and the last routine dose of the combined polio, diphtheria and tetanus vaccine, fell significantly last year among adolescents. Covid-19 overwhelmed healthcare systems and personnel, while lockdowns kept people away from facilities used to deliver shots. Supply chain disruption affected the availability of doses and syringes.

The WHO and others have now launched a drive to at least return to pre-pandemic vaccination levels, which were already plateauing. Catching up should be doable. Chad has actually increased its vaccine coverage since 2019. As Unicef warns, for many children, especially in marginalised communities, "vaccination is still not available, accessible or affordable". This is the primary issue, and though it is not simple, it can be addressed. But even before the pandemic began, the WHO had identified vaccination hesitancy as a top threat to global health. Campaigns against diseases such as measles have been victims of their own success; since most people never encountered them, the threat began to seem less urgent or serious.

The pandemic made things worse. Research by the Vaccine Confidence Project at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine found that the public perception of the importance of vaccines for children declined in 52 of 55 countries studied. The speed with which the new Covid vaccines were developed prompted concern as well as relief. But disinformation was also critical, with the WHO warning of an "infodemic" of wild rumours and conspiracy theories. Though social media companies undoubtedly bear responsibility, the growth of political polarisation and sense of uncertainty help to explain people's susceptibility. The majority of people still value and want vaccines, and the rest are mostly not hostile but ambivalent or sceptical, often about particular vaccines. Treating them as crazed or foolish will not help. Showing respect, acknowledging their concerns and putting risks in context rather than dismissing them is more productive. There are sound reasons why some groups may doubt whether medical professionals or the state have their best interests at heart. As health experts have pointed out, focusing on hesitancy spotlights individuals – but underlying inequalities largely explain reduced take-up, and resolving them is key to improved public health in this as in so many other regards.

## Why major European cities are rejecting Israeli apartheid

Ramzy Baroud

A twinning agreement with the Israeli city of Tel Aviv. The decision was not an impulsive one, although Ada Colau is well-known for her principled positions on many issues. It was the outcome of a fully democratic process, initiated by a proposal submitted by left-wing parties at the city council. A few weeks after the decision was made, a pro-Israeli legal organization known as the Lawfare Project announced its intention to file a lawsuit against Colau because she supposedly "acted beyond the scope of her authority." It meant to communicate a message to other city councils in Spain, and the rest of Europe, that there would be serious legal repercussions for boycotting Israel. However, much to the organization's – and Israel's – surprise, other cities quickly advanced

A succession of events that started in Barcelona, Spain, in February before moving to Liege, Belgium, and Oslo, Norway, in April has sent a strong message to Israel: The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement is alive and well.

In Barcelona, the city's mayor canceled a twinning agreement with the Israeli city of Tel Aviv. The decision was not an impulsive one, although Ada Colau is well-known for her principled positions on many issues. It was the outcome of a fully democratic process, initiated by a proposal submitted by left-wing parties at the city council.

A few weeks after the decision was made, a pro-Israeli legal organization known as the Lawfare Project announced its intention to file a lawsuit against Colau because she supposedly "acted beyond the scope of her authority." It meant to communicate a message to other city councils in Spain, and the rest of Europe, that there would be serious legal repercussions for boycotting Israel. However, much to the organization's – and Israel's – surprise, other cities quickly advanced their own boycott procedures. Liege's local leadership did not try to conceal the reasons behind its decision. The city council, it was reported last week, had decided to boycott the state of Israel due to its regime of "apartheid, colonization and military occupation." That move was the result of a majority vote at the council, proving once more that a moral pro-Palestinian stance is fully compliant with democratic processes.

Oslo, meanwhile, is a particularly interesting case. It was there, in 1993, that the "peace process" resulted in the Oslo Accords, which ultimately divided the Palestinians while giving Israel the political cover to continue its illegal practices and claim that it has no peace partner.

But Oslo is no longer committed to the empty slogans of the past. Its city council last week passed a decree boycotting the import of goods from the Palestinian territories Israel seized in 1967. The Norwegian capital will also boycott Israeli companies involved in exploiting the resources in the West Bank and Gaza. In June last year, the Norwegian government declared its intention to deny the label "Made in Is-

rael" to goods produced in illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories. Though these settlements are illegal under international law, Europe did not mind doing business – in fact, lucrative business – with these colonies. In November 2019, however, the European Court of Justice resolved that all goods produced in "Israel-occupied areas" had to be labeled as such, so as not to mislead consumers. The court's decision was a watered-down version of what Palestinians had expected: a complete boycott, if not of Israel as a whole, at least of its illegal settlements. However, the decision still served a purpose. It provided yet another legal basis for boycotting Israel, thus empowering pro-Palestine civil society organizations and reminding Tel Aviv that its influence in Europe is not as limitless as it would like to believe. The most that Israel could do in response was to issue angry statements, along with haphazard accusations of antisemitism. In August 2022, Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt requested a meeting with then-Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid during her visit to Israel. Lapid refused. Not only did such arrogance make little difference to Norway's stance on the Israeli occupation of Palestine, but it also cleared the way for pro-Palestinian activists to be even more proactive, leading to Oslo's decision last week. The BDS movement explained the meaning of Oslo's move. "Norway's capital ... announced that it will not trade in goods and services produced in areas that are illegally occupied in violation of international law," it stated. In practice, this means that the city's "procurement policy will exclude companies that directly or indirectly contribute to Israel's illegal settlement enterprise – a war crime under international law."

Keeping these rapid developments in mind, the Lawfare Project will now have to expand its legal cases to include Liege, Oslo and an ever-growing list of city councils that are actively boycotting Israel. But even then there are no guarantees that the outcomes of such litigation will help Israel's cause in any way. In fact, the opposite is more likely to be true.

A case in point was the recent decisions by

the German cities of Frankfurt and Munich to cancel music concerts by pro-Palestinian rock legend Roger Waters. Frankfurt justified its decision by branding Waters "one of the world's most well-known antisemites." This bizarre and unfounded claim was rejected outright by a German administrative court, which last month ruled in favor of Waters.

Indeed, while a growing number of European cities are siding with Palestine, those who side with Israeli apartheid are finding it difficult to defend or even maintain their position, simply because the former predicate their stances on international law, while the latter's are based on twisted and convenient interpretations of antisemitism.

What does all of this mean for the BDS movement?

In an article published in Foreign Policy magazine last year, Steven Cook reached the hasty conclusion that the BDS movement had "already lost" because, according to his inference, efforts to boycott Israel had made no impact "in the halls of government."

While BDS is a political movement that is subject to miscalculations and mistakes, it is also a grassroots campaign that labors to achieve political ends through incremental, measured changes. To succeed over time, such campaigns must first engage ordinary people on the street and activists at universities, houses of worship, etc., through calculated, long-term strategies, themselves devised by local and national civil society collectives and organizations. BDS continues to be a success story and the latest decisions made in Spain, Belgium and Norway attest to the fact that grassroots efforts do pay dividends.

There is no denying that the road ahead is long and arduous. It will certainly have its twists, turns and occasional setbacks. But this is the nature of national liberation struggles. They often come at a high cost and require great sacrifice. But with popular resistance at home and growing international support and solidarity abroad, Palestinian freedom should, in fact, be possible.

Courtesy: Arab News

## Good bye my friend!

Waheed Hussain

The news of the death of former Senator Muhammad Enver Baig was shocking for me as for many his friends. I was at my native village in Abbottabad (a hill resort) in Khayber Pakhtoonkhwa province for the Eid ul Fitr when came to know about the departure of my friend. Unfortunately, I could not attend his Nimaz-i-Jinnaza (funeral) and burial

Enver Baig was a lively, sweet, loving and caring human being. He was very soft spoken but firm on his ideas and opinion. Whenever, I called him on phone or met him he shared a light joke to make me laugh and feel relax. Despite many personal troubles and difficulties, he always gave an impression that nothing is wrong with him. Especially the last few years of his political life disappointed him but he never complained. Enver Baig was a social person really loved to invite friends for dinner and exchange of views at his place frequently. Whenever there was a gap of such gatherings, I used to call him and said "Baig Sb missing your delicious food and company." His guests list included, personal and family friends, politicians, diplomats, businessmen, bureaucrats, doctors, academicians, media persons in short people from all walks of life. Like myself many journalists got the opportunity to interact with important people who were at the helm of affairs, gathering news and collecting background information. Muhammad Enver Baig was successful businessman, honest and intelligent politician. When I met him for the first time in 2004, he was serving as member senate (Federal Parliament) representing the Pakistan Peoples' Party. He was part of various standing

committees in the upper house and played a very important role in legislations and scrutinizing the decisions and policies of various ministries. As member of Pakistan Peoples' Party



he was very close to late BB Shaheed but after her death in 2007, Baig could not win the confidence of Asif Ali Zardari so decided to leave PPP and join Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz). But his experience in the PML (N) was not that good rather very disappointing. During Nawaz's government from 2013-2018 he was appointed as chairman Benazir Income Support Program for a very short period of time and removed. Later he informed that some cabinet members of Nawaz Sharif government were not happy with him they had past grudge so they poisoned the then PM ears against Enver Baig and he was sidelined not only from the government but from party as well. He always told that he was never invited for any party meetings by the leadership. He was an out-spoken politician criticized his own government policies and decisions which the PMLN leadership did not like. In our political culture leadership do not encourage disagreement. They only like flattery and praising. He could not adjust himself with the PML (N) working conditions but didn't join any other political party till his death. He will be missed by many. Let me say good bye my friend and rest in peace. May Allah give you highest place in Jannat ul Firdous Amin. He remained with Pakistan People's party from 1988-2013.



## Briefs

## 'Judiciary can't fix poll date'

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the contours within which the power (which vests in the public bodies) is or is to be exercised. At no instance, can the superior courts take upon themselves the role of the public body," the petition read. The electoral body reiterated that the appointing of the date for the election is "not the mandate of superior courts under the Constitution." "Such powers exist elsewhere under the Constitution but certainly not lie in a Court of law," the ECP said, citing various legalities and reasons behind its statement. The electoral body accused the Supreme Court of disregarding its constitutional jurisdiction, emphasising that it assumed upon itself the role of a public body in giving a date; "thus intervention by the Court is necessitated to correct an error which has effectively changed the settled constitutional jurisprudence of the country." The executive and the judiciary — two vital state organs — seem to be on a collision course as the Pakistan Democratic Movement-led government demonstrated its disdain over April 4's apex court's ruling, nullifying the ECP's decision to delay the election in Punjab till October 8 this year after initially announcing it to hold on April 30. A three-judge SC bench, comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar, announced the verdict on the PTI's petition challenging the ECP's move to postpone the Punjab Assembly polls till October.

## PTI to approach ECP for...

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Punjab illegal and ordered polls on May 14. The top court ruled that the electoral body carried out an unconstitutional act by delaying the polls. "With utmost deference, the appointing of the date for the election is not the mandate of superior courts under the Constitution. Such power exists elsewhere under the Constitution but certainly not lie in a Court of law. There is inherent wisdom in that. Since the Courts are not experts in assessing the ground realities in order to arrive at requisite conclusions, the framers of the Constitution did not grant the Courts a jurisdiction to assume the role of public bodies.

## Lawmakers protest against...

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The members voiced concerns against the top court's orders a day earlier as well and in an apparent tit-for-tat move, approved the formation of a committee to probe the alleged leak of a conversation between former CJP Saqib Nisar's son and another person, where the former reportedly demanded Rs12 million for a party ticket in the Punjab Assembly elections. In his speech on the floor of the house earlier, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said two institutions — the parliament and the Supreme Court — have locked horns. In a reference to the SC's infighting, he said there seems to be a difference of opinion between the people who interpret the Constitution. The defence minister proposed to form a committee which would analyse the results of orders by former chief justice of Pakistan Muhammad Munir and others.

## PM pays tribute to journalists

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the people," the prime minister wrote on Twitter. He said the environment in which the journalists worked was often full of challenges and risks and yet they never faltered in their responsibility. "The watchdog role of journalism has helped the ideas of democracy and transparent governance evolve," he commented.

## Resistance groups, Israel agree to Gaza ceasefire

The Islamic Jihad member, who Israeli and Palestinian human rights groups say was withheld medical attention, had taken the action in protest at his administrative detention

## NEWS DESK

GAZA: The Israeli military and Palestinian resistance groups in the Gaza Strip have agreed to a ceasefire after a night of Israeli air strikes that pounded the besieged coastal enclave. The truce also came after around 100 rockets were launched from Gaza toward the occupied territories following the martyrdom in prison of prominent Islamic Jihad leader Khader Adnan after an 87-day hunger strike. The "reciprocal and simultaneous" ceasefire went into effect at 3:30 a.m. local time (0030 GMT) on Wednesday, and was brought about with efforts from Egyptian, Qatari and United Nations officials, two sources

told the Reuters news agency on Wednesday. Tariq Salmi, a spokesperson for the Islamic Jihad resistance movement, said in a statement that fighting had ended by dawn on Wednesday. "One round of confrontation has ended, but the march of resistance continues and will not stop," he said. "Our brave fighters have proven their loyalty and commitment to defending their people," Salmi added. Hamas had engaged in talks with Egyptian, Qatari and UN officials to end Israeli "aggression on Gaza", the resistance group said in a statement earlier on Wednesday. Hamas said its leader, Ismail Haniyeh, held talks with officials from both countries and the world body to end Israel's attacks, which saw

Israeli fighter jets and tanks attack targets in Gaza late on Tuesday and Palestinian resistance fighters fire around 100 rockets into the occupied territories. Haniyeh also demanded that Israel return the hunger striker's body to his family. "We stress — and as we have informed all the mediators who intervened — the necessity of handing over the body of the martyr Khader Adnan to his patient family," the Hamas chief said in a statement. Adnan, 45, from Arraba town in the northern occupied West Bank, died early Tuesday after an 87-day hunger in an Israeli prison. The Islamic Jihad member, who Israeli and Palestinian human rights groups say was withheld medical attention, had taken the action in protest at his adminis-

trative detention. Over the past 20 years, Adnan had been arrested a dozen times by Israeli forces for his political and anti-occupation activities. He spent a total of eight years behind bars. He went on hunger strike four times during his detentions, the longest of which was a 67-day period in 2012 that resulted in his release and inspired other Palestinian prisoners held under administrative detention to follow suit. In 2015, he once again went on a hunger strike for 56 days to protest his detention. He did the same in 2018 for 58 days. Adnan was also arrested in 2021 and was transferred to administrative detention. He went on a hunger strike for 25 days at the time. Hundreds of the inmates have been apparently incarcerated un-

der the practice of administrative detention. Human rights organisations say Israel violates all the rights and freedoms granted to prisoners by the Fourth Geneva Convention. They say administrative detention violates their right to due process since the evidence is withheld from prisoners while they are held for lengthy periods without being charged, tried, or convicted. Palestinian detainees have continuously resorted to open-ended hunger strikes in an attempt to express outrage at their detention. Israeli jail authorities keep Palestinian prisoners under deplorable conditions without proper hygienic standards. Palestinian inmates have also been subject to systematic torture, harassment, and repression.

## Govt files reference against...

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attached with the reference along with the PTT's ticket holders list. It was adopted in the reference that complaint was being filed on the basis of moral and financial corruption because tickets were being sold for the Punjab assembly as one party did not obey the constitution and law. Proceedings should be started against the PTI for violating constitution, law and election act, it was added in the reference. The reference mentioned that the audio leak proved Saqib Nisar was involved in the deal to sell the PTT's tickets and the person involved in the leaked call (Abuzar) got the PTT's ticket so action should be taken against them.

## PTI seeks execution of SC's...

FORM PAGE 01  
Shah Mahmood Qureshi, PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry, and Senator Ali Zafar. The government's negotiating team had members from almost all parties except JUI-F. The committee included Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, PPP Senator Yousaf Raza Gilani, Railways Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique and Commerce Minister Naveed Qamar and others. It was stated in the petition that members of both the negotiating teams deliberated and held a dialogue with full sincerity on April 27, April 28.04 and May 02, 2023 during which they arrived at certain consensus.

## 'Show up in court', IHC warns Khan

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equal for all. There was no precedent of exemption from appearance during hearings in a bail petition, Justice Farooq remarked. "Even if the PTI chairman was granted the exemption, how would his refusal to become part of the investigation be dealt with?" he asked. Separately, a division bench comprising Justice Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb heard Imran Khan's bail pleas in seven cases related to vandalism at the Islamabad Judicial Complex during the PTI chairman's appearance registered under terrorism clauses. During the hearing, Khan's lawyer Salman Safdar filed an application requesting the court to grant the former exemption from today's hearing and stated that it was the first time the application was being filed on medical grounds.

## Israeli airstrikes on Gaza...

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groups have blamed Israel for his death, accusing prison authorities of medical negligence. Palestinian militants in Gaza fired 100 rockets into southern Israel late Tuesday, seriously wounding a foreign worker at a construction site. The Israeli military said its warplanes struck tunnels, arms production sites and military installations belonging to the ruling Hamas militant group in Gaza. The Israeli strikes sent shrapnel slicing through the house of 58-year-old Hashil Mubarak in Gaza City, his son Hatem said. As their roof collapsed, shards of metal struck Mubarak's chest, killing him, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

## US envoy assures Dar of support

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the minister exchanged views on remarkable bilateral relations and apprised the envoy of the current challenges being faced by the country, especially on the economic front. Ishaq Dar further communicated about the difficult policy decisions recently being taken by Pakistan aimed at stabilizing the economy that resulted into an upward curve ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth.

ANATOLIAN EAGLE-2023  
Flight Tactical Exercise kicks off in Konya

THE opening ceremony of Anatolian Eagle 2023, International Flight Tactical Exercise was held in Konya, Turkey. Pakistan Air Force contingent, consisting of F-16 fighter jets along with the air and ground crew is also amongst the exercise participants. Anatolian Eagle is an annual exercise which is being hosted by the Turkish Air Force. The exercise is one of the largest and most complex joint air force exercises in the world which aims at promoting interoperability between participating nations while providing an opportunity for shared learning. The exercise mimics a realistic aerial war and provides a real-time opportunity for the participating Air Forces to test their operational readiness. Other than Pakistan and Turkey, Air Forces of five other countries, including Azerbaijan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom are participating in the seventh consecutive edition of the exercise. In the face of challenging contemporary strategic situation and growing complexity in the security environment, such exercises will leverage PAF an opportunity to enhance its interoperability with friendly nations. — DNA



## Deontay Wilder arrested on gun charge

LOS ANGELES: Former world heavyweight boxing champion Deontay Wilder was arrested in Los Angeles early Tuesday for possession of a concealed weapon, police said. The Los Angeles Police Department said Wilder was detained in the early hours of Tuesday after being stopped by police while driving his Rolls Royce car in Hollywood. He was subsequently booked on suspicion of carrying a concealed firearm in the vehicle. He was released at around 6:35 am after making bail set at \$35,000, the LAPD and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said. According to the TMZ.com entertainment news website, Wilder was pulled over by police who alleged the windows of his car were illegally tinted and his license plate was obstructed. Officers subsequently reported smelling "burnt marijuana" coming from the vehicle and conducted a search, which uncovered a firearm. — APP

## Arsenal back on top of Premier League

LONDON: Martin Odegaard fired Arsenal back to the top of the Premier League as the Norway midfielder's double inspired a 3-1 win against woeful Chelsea on Tuesday. Mikel Arteta's side lost control of the title race after last week's 4-1 defeat at Manchester City. But the Gunners signalled their intention to push City all the way to the wire with a much-needed first win in five games. Odegaard's brace was followed by a Gabriel Jesus strike as the hosts raced into a three-goal before half-time at the Emirates Stadium. Noni Madueke's second half goal was no consolation for Chelsea's wretched performance. Arsenal are now two points clear of second-placed City and while Pep Guardiola's men remain favourites to win the title, the north Londoners have at least applied a little pressure on the champions. City will go back into first place if they beat West Ham at home on Wednesday in the first of their two games in hand on Arsenal. "The first 60 minutes, I thought we played really well. That was everything I want to see from our team," Arteta said. "Speed, quality, movement, two beautiful goals, we connected with our crowd and created an incredible atmosphere. We wanted to earn the right to be top of the league. We are happy to be there." After 10 weeks at the top, Arsenal were knocked down to second place by City's win at Fulham on Sunday. Three successive draws, including two blown two-goal leads, and the calamitous loss at City have led Arsenal to be written off as title race chokers. But Arteta insisted this week that the title was still winnable and his players responded to the Spaniard's rallying cry. Troubled Chelsea were ideal opponents for Arsenal to get back on track before a tricky trip to Newcastle on Sunday. The Blues have now lost all six games since Frank Lampard returned as caretaker boss to replace the sacked Graham Potter. Languishing in 12th place, Chelsea are on an nine-game winless run in all competitions and face the prospect of failing to finish in the top half of the table for the first time since 1996. — Agencies

## Late Alba strike takes Barca to brink of title

BARCELONA: Jordi Alba struck a late winner for Barcelona in a 1-0 win over 10-man Osasuna on Tuesday to move the Catalans a step closer to their first La Liga title since 2019. Xavi Hernandez's side climbed 14 points clear of second-placed Real Madrid, who lost 2-0 at Real Sociedad. The visitors had debutant Jorge Herrando sent off in the first half for a professional foul on Pedri, as they sat deep and tried to frustrate hosts Barcelona. Visiting goalkeeper Aitor Fernandez kept the leaders at bay in the second half but eventually substitute Alba, who has had reduced minutes this season, sliced home a volley to snatch a late victory. "We're going to wait and see, but it's a giant step forward," said Xavi. "We suffered too much. We missed some very clear chances, the kind where you can just push it in. And then came Jordi's goal, which sometimes makes it better to win like that." Osasuna coach Jagoba Arrasate rotated heavily to rest players ahead of the Copa del Rey final against Madrid on Saturday, while Barca started with the same side which crushed Real Betis at the weekend. The Catalans failed to carve out many clear opportunities in the first half against their defensive opponents. The best chance fell to Pedri after left-back Alejandro Balde found him a few yards out from goal but he did not connect with the ball well, scuffing a shot wide. Osasuna were reduced to 10 men before the half hour mark when Herrando pulled down Pedri as he ran in on goal. Xavi brought on Ansu Fati after 35 minutes for Gavi, who appeared to take a knock, and the forward came close at the start of the second half but Fernandez denied him. — Agencies

## Messi's PSG future in doubt after suspension over Saudi trip

PARIS: Lionel Messi's future at PSG was plunged into doubt on Wednesday after he was suspended by Paris Saint-Germain after travelling to Saudi Arabia without the club's permission. A source with knowledge of the disciplinary procedure told AFP that Argentina's 35-year-old World Cup-winning captain, who is out of contract at the end of the season, lined for "several days", media in France reported he would be suspended for two weeks. "He cannot play, cannot train, cannot play, and disciplinary measures the source added. Another source, also speaking on condition they were not identified, indicated that the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner would "probably" be sidelined for a fortnight, noting that "nobody is more important than the club". Messi played the whole game in PSG's 3-1 home defeat by Lorient in Ligue 1 on Sunday. He then travelled to Saudi Arabia to fulfil commercial commitments in his role as a tourism ambassador for the Gulf state. The Saudi Tourism Authority said in a press release on Wednesday that Messi had "returned to Saudi for a second time, this time with his family" and had been treated to a demonstration of palm weaving and had fed Arabian gazelles.

As a result of the trip, Messi missed a training session scheduled for Monday following the weekend defeat. The PSG squad were given a day off on Tuesday and Messi did not take part in training on Wednesday either. PSG are due to return to league action away at struggling Troyes on Sunday, a game that Messi may now miss. If he were to be sidelined for two weeks he would also sit out a home match against Ajaccio on May 13. The disciplinary measures make the prospect of Messi staying in the French capital after his two-year deal expires at the end of this season even more remote. Having at one point looked set to extend his stay for another year, a source close to the club told AFP last month that he was now "much more likely" to depart. Messi arrived from Barcelona, the club where he had spent the majority of his career, in 2021 but has struggled to reproduce his best form at Qatar-backed Paris. — APP

## Raisi in Syria; visit hailed as 'strategic victory'

Raisi's deputy for political affairs, Mohammad Jamshidi, told the state-run news agency IRNA prior to departure that the visit is a sign of "Islamic Republic of Iran's strategic victory in region"

DAMASCUS: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has arrived in Syria and is expected to meet with President Bashar al-Assad in what Tehran has described as a sign of its "strategic victory" in regional affairs. Raisi landed in Damascus on Wednesday for a two-day trip and received an official welcome to kick off the first state visit by an Iranian president to Syria in 13 years. He was accompanied by his ministers of foreign affairs, roads and urban development, petroleum and economic affairs and Iran's central bank chief. Raisi's deputy for political affairs, Mohammad Jamshidi, told the state-run news agency IRNA prior to departure that the visit is a sign of "the Islamic Republic of Iran's strategic victory in the region". After supporting al-Assad during the Syrian war, Tehran is now positioning itself to have a stronger foothold in the country's economic future, aiming to expand trade and secure an entry point for its

state and private companies. Jamshidi said the trip is taking place after more than a decade of turmoil in the Middle East, which included the war in Syria, the war in Yemen, the rise of ISIL (ISIS) and the propagation of "terror-

ism". He also mentioned the United States policy of "maximum pressure" starting in 2018 after the US unilaterally abandoned a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers and reimposed sanctions on Tehran.

The same Arab nations that supported Iran's isolation, Jamshidi said, are now repositioning themselves and preparing to welcome Syria back into the Arab fold after rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia, with Chinese mediation, agreed to re-

store diplomatic ties. He said this development represents a failure of US policies in the region. Iran and Syria are expected to sign several agreements during Raisi's visit, some of which are centred around expanding economic cooperation. Raisi arrived a day after Israel launched air raids targeting the international airport in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo, killing one soldier and putting the airport out of commission. Israel, which has promised to fight the rise of Iranian influence in neighbouring countries, has carried out hundreds of attacks on government-controlled areas of Syria in recent years and many attacks in recent months. In March, US and Iran-backed forces in Syria traded fire in air attacks that killed at least 20 people. Tehran continues to support al-Assad's position that US forces need to end their presence in the country, which Washington said it undertook to fight ISIL. — Agencies





## Briefs

## New Zealand increases support for Ukraine

AUCKLAND: New Zealand on Wednesday announced increasing its support for Ukraine and extended the deployment of its defense forces for another year. In a statement, Prime Minister Chris Hipkins and Defense Minister Andrew Little said the deployment of 95 New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) personnel training and supporting Ukrainian armed forces has now been extended until June 30, 2024.

"For more than a year, New Zealand has stood with the people of Ukraine as they have been subject to a brutal, unrelenting, and illegal invasion by Russia," Hipkins said during his visit to the Salisbury Plain Army Training Area outside of London, where NZDF personnel are based.

New Zealand also announced around NZ\$5.3 million (approximately over \$3.3 million) of additional humanitarian support for Ukrainians.

"Since February last year, New Zealand has taken significant and unprecedented actions to support Ukraine, including the deployment of NZDF troops into Europe and passing the Russia Sanctions Act that has enabled us to impose targeted sanctions for the first time outside of the UN framework," said the prime minister. —APP

## Germany, Italy clamp down on Italian mob

BERLIN: Police across Europe on Wednesday arrested dozens of people, raided homes and seized an estimated 25 million euros in assets in a massive joint effort to crack down on Italy's 'ndrangheta organized crime syndicate, one of the world's most powerful, extensive and wealthy drug trafficking groups.

In Italy, carabinieri police backed by police helicopters said arrest warrants were served on 108 people, who were accused, among other things, of mafia association; possession, production, and trafficking of drugs and weapons; and money laundering.

The operation, coordinated by European Union judicial cooperation agency Eurojust, aimed to dismantle a network of contacts linking the 'ndrangheta, Colombian drug producers, paramilitary groups and Europe-based operations that move tons of cocaine to and around Europe and Australia each year. Drug proceeds were then laundered through restaurants, ice cream shops and car washes. One of the key figures in the network was a former powerful boss, Rocco Morabito, who was arrested in 2021 in Brazil after nearly 20 years as a fugitive. —Agencies

## UN relief chief arrives in Sudan

KHARTOUM: UN Humanitarian Affairs Coordinator Martin Griffiths arrived in Sudan on Wednesday amid clashes between the Sudanese army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). "Just arrived in Port Sudan to reaffirm the UN's commitment to the Sudanese people," Griffiths said on Twitter. The UN official hailed humanitarian efforts provided in Sudan amid the ongoing fighting. "In awe of the unwavering dedication of the humanitarian community & local volunteers doing their best to help," he said. Griffiths, however, didn't provide further details about his mission in Sudan or with whom he would meet. At least 550 people have been killed and more than 4,900 injured in the fighting between the Sudanese army and RSF since April 15, according to Sudan's Health Ministry. The two warring rivals are set to start a 7-day cease-fire mid-night Wednesday. A disagreement had been fomenting in recent months between the army and the paramilitary force regarding the RSF's integration into the armed forces, a key condition of Sudan's transition agreement with political groups. Sudan has been without a functioning government since October 2021, when the military dismissed Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's transitional government. —Agencies

## Controversial Monument

## Türkiye shuts its airspace to Armenian flights

The deadly campaign began in 1973 with the assassination of Türkiye's Consul General in Los Angeles Mehmet Baydar and diplomat Bahadır Demir by a terrorist named Gourgen Yanikian. ASALA was the first Armenian terrorist group to attack Türkiye and it not only targeted Türkiye, but also other countries

## NEWS DESK

ANKARA: Türkiye has closed its airspace to Armenian flights heading to a third destination in response to the unveiling of a controversial monument in Yerevan last week, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said Wednesday. The monument glorifies the assassinations of Ottoman and Azerbaijani officials in the early 1920s. Speaking to broadcaster NTV, Çavuşoğlu said Türkiye would take further steps if the monument is not removed.

Previously, low-cost Armenian airline FlyOne Armenia said the country closed its airspace to

their planes on Saturday, "without warning." "For reasons incomprehensible to us and with no visible grounds, Turkish aviation authorities canceled the permission previously granted to the FlyOne Armenia airline to operate flights to Europe through Turkish airspace," the domestic Armenpress news agency cited the carrier's board chairperson as saying. Ankara earlier condemned the inauguration of the monument.

"We strongly condemn the opening of the 'Nemesis Monument' in Yerevan, which is dedicated to the perpetrators of the assassinations against Ottoman political and military leaders in the early 1920s, and



Azerbaijani officials of the time, as well as even some Ottoman citizens of Armenian origin," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "The opening of this shameful monument

glorifies a bloody act of terror that led to heinous terrorist attacks in which 31 of our diplomats and their family members were murdered," it said. The statement also under-

lined that the way these events were portrayed by Armenian media indicated that a distorted and unacceptable understanding of history persisted among some people.

"Such provocative steps, which are incompatible with the spirit of the normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia, will in no way contribute to the efforts to establish lasting and sustainable peace and stability in the region, on the contrary, they will negatively affect the normalization process," it said. According to data compiled by Anadolu Agency (AA), a total of 77 people — 58 of them Turkish citizens, including 31

diplomats and members of their families — were killed in attacks from 1973 to 1986 carried out by terrorist groups, including the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), Justice Commandos of the "Armenian Genocide" (JCAG) and the Armenian Revolutionary Army (ARA).

The deadly campaign began in 1973 with the assassination of Türkiye's Consul General in Los Angeles Mehmet Baydar and diplomat Bahadır Demir by a terrorist named Gourgen Yanikian. ASALA was the first Armenian terrorist group to attack Türkiye and it not only targeted Türkiye, but also other countries.

## Serbia School Shooting

## Teenage shooter kills 8 children and guard

BELGRADE: A teenager opened fire at his school in Serbia's capital Wednesday, killing eight children and a school guard before being arrested in the school yard, police said. Six more children and a teacher were hospitalized.

A father of a student at the school in central Belgrade said the shooter entered his daughter's classroom, firing at her teacher and then her classmates as they ducked under their desks. Most students were able to flee through a back door, according to a local official. Police said the shooter, whom they identified by his initials, K.K., was a student at the Vladislav Ribnikar school and was born in 2009. They said he used his father's gun.

Local media footage showed a commotion as police removed the suspect, whose head was covered as officers led him to a car.

Police sealed off the blocks around Vladislav Ribnikar, which is what's known as a primary school, whose students would typically range in age from 6 to 15. Authorities later carried body bags to a waiting van.

Mass shootings are extremely rare in Serbia and in the wider Balkan region; none were reported at schools in recent years. In the last mass shooting, a Balkan war veteran in 2013 killed 13 people in a central Serbian village.

Experts, however, have repeatedly warned of the danger posed by the large number of weapons in the country after the wars of the 1990s. They also note that decades of instability stemming from the conflicts as well as the ongoing economic hardship could trigger such outbursts.

Police said they received a call about the shooting

at around 8:40 a.m. on the first day that classes resumed after a long weekend for the May 1 holiday.

"I was able to hear the shooting. It was nonstop," said a student who was in a sports class when gunfire erupted elsewhere in the building. Her mother asked that her name be withheld because of her age. "I didn't know what was happening. We were receiving some messages on the phone."

The student described the suspect as a "quiet guy" who had good grades.

"He was not so open with everybody. Surely I wasn't expecting this to happen," she said. Milan Nedeljkovic, the mayor of the Belgrade area of Vracar where the shooting happened, said that most of the students were taken out a back door of the school. "We have video surveillance, but now this is a lesson, we need

metal detectors too," he said. "It is a huge tragedy ... something like this (happening) in Belgrade. Such a tragedy at an elementary school." Four students and a teacher were sent to University hospital, according to the hospital's director, who said one child and the teacher were in serious condition.

Milan Milosevic, who said his daughter was in a history class when the shooting took place, told N1 television that he rushed to the school when he heard what had happened. He received a call from his daughter who had gotten out of the building and was unharmed.

"He (the shooter) fired first at the teacher and then the children who ducked under the desks," Milosevic said. His daughter told him. —Agencies

## Press freedom 'under attack' in every corner of the globe

NEW YORK: Press freedom is under attack in every corner of the globe, with journalists continually harassed, jailed and killed, UN officials and media outlets warned Tuesday. Speaking ahead of World Press Freedom Day on Wednesday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued a rallying cry for journalists and media worldwide. "All our freedom depends on press freedom," he said in a video message, calling it the "foundation of democracy and justice" and the "lifeblood of human rights."

"But in every corner of the world, freedom of the press is under attack," Guterres added, addressing a conference held at UN headquarters in New York.

Highlighting the problem, UNESCO awarded its 2023 World Press Freedom Prize to three Iranian women, two journalists and a human rights activist, who have been jailed. While Guterres did not cast blame on specific countries, other speakers highlighted individual cases, such as that of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, detained in Russia on espionage charges he has rejected. "The fight for press freedom, the fight for Evan's release is a fight for everybody's freedom," Wall Street Journal publisher Almar Latour told the forum. Dozens of news organizations have denounced the charges against Gershkovich as unfounded, while US President Joe Biden has called his imprisonment "totally illegal." Other journalists hit upon the rising dangers of the profession.

"I'm coming from a country, Iran, where being a journalist is a crime... (and) can land you in jail, can get you killed, can get you tortured," said Masih Alinejad, an Iranian-American journalist living in exile. According to Reporters Without Borders, 55 journalists and four media workers were killed in the line of duty in 2022. "Truth is threatened by disinformation and hate speech, seeking to blur the lines between fact and fiction, between science and conspiracy," Guterres said. —APP

## NATO to open its 1st Asian office in Japan

TOKYO: In its outreach to Asia Pacific, NATO will open its first Asian office in Japan, a media report claimed on Wednesday. The one-person liaison office in Tokyo, said Nikkei Asia in a report, "will allow the military alliance to conduct periodic consultations with Japan and key partners in the region, such as South Korea, Australia and New Zealand as China emerges as a new challenge, alongside its traditional focus on Russia." It added that NATO has already "circulated a draft proposal among its 31 members" regarding the opening of the office which was "first" discussed by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida with NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg when the latter visited Japan in January. Tokyo and NATO are also working to upgrade their cooperation, aiming to sign an Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) before the NATO Summit in Lithuania in July, the report added. NATO has liaison offices at the UN in New York, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Vienna in Europe, Georgia, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, and Kuwait. Japan is already part of the US-led Quad, a loose security alliance with Australia and India as other two members against China's expanding economic and military influence in the wider Asia-Pacific region. While the NATO chief advocated strengthening ties with the Asia-Pacific region, China has pushed back such attempts. "China firmly opposes certain elements clamoring for NATO's involvement in Asia-Pacific, or an Asia-Pacific version of NATO on the back of military alliances," Beijing told the UN Security Council last June while discussing the Ukraine conflict. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Andrew Schofer, Charge d'Affaires of embassy of United States of America called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, at Finance Division. —DNA

## UK readies pomp for King Charles III's coronation

LONDON: The crown has been resized. The troops are prepared for the biggest military procession in 70 years. The Gold State Coach is ready to roll. Now it's time for the show.

King Charles III will be crowned Saturday at Westminster Abbey in an event full of all the pageantry Britain can muster. Enrobed clergymen will hand over the medieval symbols of power — the rod, the scepter and the orb. Brass bands and soldiers in bearskin hats will troop through the streets. And the new king and queen will presumably end the day on the balcony of Buckingham Palace to wave to the cheering crowds. But don't be too dazzled. There's purpose behind the pomp: to buttress the crown's foundations and show that the people of the United Kingdom still support their monarch. Royal historian Robert Lacey compares the event to a U.S. presidential election and an inauguration

rolled into one — a celebration as well as a test of how the public sees the new sovereign.

"The king obviously is not subject to the vote and so these big public rituals are the closest royal people get to that sort of test," said Lacey, author of "Battle of Brothers: William & Harry — The Inside Story of a Family in Tumult." "Its basic purpose is to attract the loyalty and interest of British people to demonstrate that crowd outside Buckingham Palace waving at the balcony." But, while TV screens around the world will be filled with flag-waving fans, Charles' coronation comes at a difficult time for the royals.

Opinion polls show that support for the monarchy has weakened over time. Britain is gripped by double-digit inflation that is eroding living standards and making some people question the expense of the coronation. And the royal family is riven with controversy as Charles' younger son,



Prince Harry, lobs criticism from his base in Southern California. More fundamentally, some in Britain's increasingly diverse society want a re-examination of the monarchy's links to the trade in enslaved Africans and its role in the former British Empire, which ruled over large parts of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Kehinde Andrews, a professor of Black Studies at Birmingham City University, questions whether the people of Britain and the Empire's successor, the Commonwealth,

really want a 74-year-old white man as their representative.

"If that isn't the biggest celebration of white supremacy, I can't think of what is, especially when you think about the lengths, the pageantry, the jewels and all this stuff, right?" Andrews said of the coronation. "So if you really were serious about saying, look, there is absolutely no place for this terrible institution." The king has tried to address some of those concerns by promising to open the royal archives to researchers studying the family's links with slavery. But the coronation will be a broader, more symbolic effort to show the monarchy still has a role to play. The crowning of Charles and Camilla, the queen consort, will feature many of the elements of coronations past — the hymns, the prayers, the anointing with oils — all of which are designed to remind the world of the history, tradition and mys-

tery embodied by the monarchy. But the festivities have been tailored to better reflect modern Britain, where about 18% of the population describe themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority. That compares with less than 1% when Charles' mother, the late Queen Elizabeth II, was crowned in 1953. For the first time, religious leaders representing Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh traditions will play an active role in the ceremony. The music will feature pieces written and performed by artists from each of the U.K.'s four nations and throughout the Commonwealth. Symbolically, Charles will open the service by facing a young choirboy and pledging to serve — not to be served — and he has scrapped the centuries-old tradition of having the most senior members of the aristocracy pledge their loyalty to him. Instead, the congregation and those watching at home will be invited to pledge allegiance to the king. —DNA

## Pardon frees 2,100 Myanmar prisoners

BANGKOK: Myanmar's ruling military council on Wednesday said it was releasing more than 2,100 political prisoners as a humanitarian gesture. Thousands more remain imprisoned on charges generally involving nonviolent protests or criticism of military rule, which began when the army seized power in February 2021 from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. State-run MRTV television reported that the head of Myanmar's military council, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, had pardoned 2,153 prisoners on the most important Buddhist holy day of the year, marking the birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha.

In a separate report, it said Min Aung Hlaing had commuted the death sentences of 38 prisoners to life in prison. The report provided no details about them.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, there were 112 prisoners on death row as of Tuesday who had been put there since the army takeover. The group keeps detailed tallies of arrests and casualties linked to the repression of the military government. At least four executions have been carried out since the military seized power.

The prisoner releases began Wednesday, but may take a few days to be completed. The identities of those released were not immediately available, but would not include Suu Kyi, who is serving a prison term of 33 years on more than a dozen charges her supporters say were trumped up by the military. —APP

## US, Mexico agree on tighter immigration policies

WASHINGTON: U.S. and Mexican officials have agreed on new immigration policies meant to deter illegal border crossings while also opening up other pathways ahead of an expected increase in migrants following the end of pandemic restrictions next week.

Homeland Security adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall spent Tuesday meeting with Mexico President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and other top officials, emerging with a five-point plan, according to statements from both nations.

Under the agreement, Mexico will continue to accept migrants from Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba and Nicaragua who are turned away at the border, and up to 100,000 individuals from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador who have family in the U.S. will be eligible to live and work there. —DNA

## Unclear who would aid Taiwan in a war

CANBERRA: Taiwan intends to fight for itself in any armed conflict with China and is unclear as to what countries might stand beside it, the self-governing island's foreign minister said.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory, to be brought under its control by force if necessary, and concerns are rising about a possible armed conflict. In an interview last Friday with Sky News Australia, Joseph Wu said Taiwan, with a population of 23 million compared to China's 1.4 billion, has to defend itself and is not asking other countries to fight for it. However, asked who might fight alongside Taiwan in the event of a war with China, Wu answered, "This is a very good question."

"A lot of people are debating strategic ambiguity or strategic clarity, but to us, we know our own responsibility," Wu told the news channel from Taipei.

"Taiwan has to defend itself, the people have to defend Taiwan, this country, and we are determined to defend ourselves and we are not asking other countries to fight for Taiwan," Wu added. President Joe Biden has repeatedly said American forces would help defend Taiwan, although U.S. official policy remains ambiguous over whether forces would be dispatched. In comments Tuesday evening, American Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns said Washington has been consistent in its approach toward Taiwan. —APP



## Briefs

### Caretaker CM meets Ch Shujaat

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday ordered an inquiry into the police action at Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain's Lahore residence last week. Last week, police and Anti Corruption Establishment (ACE) teams conducted a late-night raid at PTI President Parvez Elahi's Gulberg residence and arrested 12 people. The raiding party used an armoured vehicle to break down the main gate of the residence after allegedly facing resistance. However, the ACE team could not find Elahi, even after thoroughly searching the house. The police officials had also tried to force their way into the adjoining residence of Shujaat, but they were resisted by the PML-Q leader's sons. The PML-Q president said the police had shattered the glass at the main entrance of his house, injuring two of his sons.

### India to abolish cantonments

WEB DESK

NEW DELHI: India has initiated a plan to abolish 62 cantonments around the country in order to convert them into "exclusive military stations", it emerged on Wednesday. The Times of India (TOI) reported on Monday that the plan was to carve out the military areas in all cantonments and convert them into "exclusive military stations" with the Indian army exercising "absolute control" over them. The publication went on to say that the civilian areas would be merged with local municipalities, which would then be responsible for their maintenance. "The process will be faster in cantonments where demarcation between civil and military areas is easy. Others will take time," the report quoted an unnamed official as saying. Meanwhile, the Hindustan Times reported on Monday that the first cantonment to be renamed a military station was Yol in India's northern Himachal Pradesh state, with Secunderabad in Telangana and Nasirabad in Rajasthan among the cantonments set to shrink. However, the report said that not all cantonments were likely to become military stations.

### Israel says discussing direct Haj flights to Saudi

MONITORING DESK

TEL AVIV: Israel voiced hope on Wednesday that Saudi authorities would admit direct flights for its Muslim citizens who want to make the Haj pilgrimage, which begins next month, in what would mark another step toward normalising relations. Saudi Arabia signalled approval for Israel's US-sponsored forging of ties with Gulf neighbours United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in 2020 but has held off on following suit, saying Palestinian goals for statehood should be addressed first. Any such prospects have been further clouded, however, by Riyadh's strains with US President Joe Biden, its recent fence-mending with regional rival Iran - a foe of Israel, and the rise of Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-right Israeli government. Netanyahu's centrist predecessor, Yair Lapid, said on March 10 that, as prime minister last year, he secured Saudi consent for what would be the first direct Haj flights from Israel, some 18 per cent of whose population are Muslim. Asked whether the direct flights would happen for the coming June-August pilgrimage to the holy Saudi city of Makkah, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said a request had been submitted.

## 100th birth anniversary of Heydar Aliyev

# Azerbaijani artists present a beautiful musical performance

### Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov says relations between two countries excellent

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Azerbaijan Ambassador to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov has said that Pakistan and Azerbaijan have very good and friendly relations and these ties are based on ancient historical traditions of both countries. Addressing an event arranged to celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of Heydar Aliyev, the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people, he said, "President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev attaches great importance to Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations, which were constructed by Heydar Aliyev. The ties between the two brotherly countries are at a high level in all fields." Ms. Almakhanim Ahmadli - Mugham singer, Mr. Masim Islamov and Mr. Elvin Novruzov traveled all the way from Azerbaijan for this concert. The traditional Azerbaijani music provided a real feast to people of Islamabad. A large number of people hailing from various walks of life attended the concert. The ambassador further said that Pakistan was one of the first states to recognize Azerbaijan after it declared independence. Heydar Aliyev, he said, was the "architect of the development of Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations". He attached great importance to Pakistan.

On April 9-11, 1996, Heydar Aliyev paid an official visit to Pakistan and during his stay, several documents were signed between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. "That visit played an irreplaceable role in the development of relations between the two countries," he noted. While sharing about Heydar Aliyev, the envoy said, 2023 was declared the "Year of Heydar Aliyev" and the day would be celebrated solemnly in Azerbaijan and abroad. He said Heydar Aliyev proved that he was a visionary and decisive politician when he first led the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic from 1969-1982. As a result of the intense activities of Heydar Aliyev, great successes were achieved in the economy, industry, agriculture, education, and culture, the envoy said. The adoption of the Constitution of the Azerbaijan SSR in 1978 and the establishment of the Azerbaijani language as the state language are the services of national leader Heydar Aliyev.

At that time, when the totalitarian Soviet regime ruled, the determination of the legal basis for the preservation and development of the moral wealth of the Azerbaijani people, especially the language, in the supreme law of the republic was considered a very brave step, the envoy added. In 1991, Heydar Aliyev was elected as chairman of the Supreme Assembly of the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan. In May-June 1993, when Azerbaijan was on the verge of civil war and loss of independence, the people of Azerbaijan demanded to bring Heydar Aliyev to power. On June 15, 1993, Aliyev was elected as chairman of the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan, and on June 24 took the office of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. On October 3, 1993, in a nationwide voting which saw a high turnout, he



ISLAMABAD: Minister Israr Tareen in a group photo with the artists and guests. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Defence Production Israr Tareen witnesses photo exhibition. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Almakhanim Ahmadli - Mugham singer, Mr. Masim Islamov - playing Tar, Mr. Elvin Novruzov - playing Kamancha. - DNA

was elected as President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. When Heydar Aliyev came to power, he eliminated chaos and anarchy, economic and political difficulties in the country. The Agreement of the Century, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, and other internationally important projects are connected with the name of Heydar Aliyev.

It may be mentioned here that the first frets of Mugham - one of the main genres of Azerbaijani folk music - sounded in ancient times. Its performance art goes back to the tradition of Koran

recitation or even earlier - to Avesta hymns. The meaning of the word "Mugham" is interpreted as "God sent music". And for its numerous admirers - it is not only a beautiful lyrical melody but also a state of mind, a way to merge with the world, and a kind of cosmic philosophy.

Mugham is normally performed by three musicians - a tar player, a kamancha player, and a singer - khande, who leads the main theme decorating it with improvisations and emotional shades. For the Azerbaijani people, mugham is music,

philosophy, and a kind of meditation, which helps to uncover spiritual bases in people, having a healing effect on the soul and mind and forming a cosmism of thinking and everything that laid the basis of multiculturalism - the modern progressive policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In 2003, Azerbaijani Mugham was proclaimed as a masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Azerbaijani Mugham was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008.

## Germany vows €120m for Pakistan climate change

DNA

BERLIN: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Senator Sherry Rehman held a bilateral meeting with a delegation from Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), led by Federal Minister Svenja Schulze, at the sidelines of the Petersberg Climate Dialogue happening in Berlin, Germany.

During the meeting, the two sides engaged in discussions aimed at exploring and enhancing bilateral cooperation between the two countries on climate adaptation and mitigation measures, a news release said. The focus of the meeting was on three main areas: better protection against flooding, enhancing Pakistan's renewable energy infrastructure, and expanding social safety support programs to assist vulnerable communities facing climate shocks.

Federal Minister Schulze pledged that Germany would provide Pakistan with €120 million in assistance to support these initiatives.

Minister Rehman expressed her gratitude to Germany for supporting Pakistan through the Climate Energy initiative. This initiative has supported a range of activities, including climate risk assessments, sub-national climate risk profiling, mainstreaming climate education into higher education, and capacity building for finance mobilization. Minister Rehman recognized Germany's contribution to these initiatives as being critical in enabling Pakistan to adapt to the impacts of climate change and build a more resilient future. Minister Schulze emphasized the importance of continuing to mobilize resources for preventive and corrective measures, as well as improving Pakistan's capacity for climate mitigation and adaptation. She highlighted that while technical solutions were critical for mitigating climate change, it was equally important to prepare societies to better cope with extreme weather in the future by incorporating social solutions into the system.

Minister Schulze reaffirmed Germany's commitment to supporting Pakistan in these efforts and expressed optimism about

the progress that can be made through continued cooperation between the two countries. The Ministers also explored opportunities for collaboration under the umbrella of the Global Shield against Climate Risks initiative. Led by Germany and introduced at COP27 in partnership with the Vulnerable Twenty Group (V20) and the G7, this initiative aims to protect vulnerable developing countries and populations from the impacts of climate change. Pakistan is one of the "pathfinder countries" where activities will first be rolled out to improve disaster response and preparedness, as well as social security systems in the event of a climate disaster. The discussion concluded with potential areas for future cooperation, including exploring the prospects of green hydrogen as a means to achieve energy security in Pakistan. The Ministers expressed optimism about the potential for continued collaboration between Germany and Pakistan to advance efforts in combating the impacts of climate change and building a more sustainable future for all.

## Sudan generals agree May 4-11 truce: South Sudan

WEB DESK

KHARTOUM: Sudan's warring military factions agreed on Tuesday in principle to a seven-day cease-fire from Thursday, South Sudan announced, as more air strikes and shooting in the Khartoum region disrupted the latest short-term truce. A statement released by the foreign ministry of South Sudan, which had offered to mediate in the conflict, said its President Salva Kiir stressed the importance of a longer truce and of naming envoys to peace talks, to which both sides had agreed. The credibility of the reported May 4-11 deal cease-fire deal between Sudanese army chief General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and paramilitary Rapid Support forces (RSF) leader General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo was unclear, given the rampant violations that undermined previous agreements running from 24 to 72 hours. Sudan's war has forced 100,000 people to flee over its borders and fighting now its third week, UN officials said earlier on Tuesday. The conflict risks developing into a

broader disaster as Sudan's impoverished neighbors deal with a refugee crunch and fighting hampers aid deliveries in a nation where two-thirds of the people already rely on some outside assistance.

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi said Cairo would provide support for dialogue in Sudan between the rival factions, but was also "being careful about not interfering in their domestic matters."

"The entire region could be affected," he said in an interview with a Japanese newspaper on Tuesday as an envoy from Sudan's army chief, who leads one of the warring sides, met Egyptian officials in Cairo.

United Nations officials had said UN aid chief Martin Griffiths aimed to visit Sudan on Tuesday but the timing was still to be confirmed. The UN World Food Programme said on Monday it was resuming work in the safer parts of the country after a pause earlier in the conflict, in which some WFP staff were killed. "The risk is that this is not just going to be a Sudan crisis, it's going to be a regional crisis," said Michael Dunford, the WFP's East Africa director.

## EU eyes 'blacklist' of corrupt individuals worldwide

The plans will need to be approved by the EU's 27 member states and the parliament

BRUSSELS: The European Union unveiled proposals on Wednesday to crack down on corruption in the bloc, including a plan to "blacklist" non-EU individuals accused of corruption worldwide. The plans come just months after a bribery scandal in the European Parliament rocked the EU and after a 2022 survey showed corruption remained a serious concern for EU citizens with 68 per cent saying they believe it is still widespread in their country.

"Over the years, I am watching what factors are decreasing the trust of people in democracy. And there are two: abuse of power and corruption," European Commission

Vice President Vera Jourova said. The proposals will bring the EU's 27 member states closer to standardising definitions of what constitutes corruption, going beyond bribery to also include trading in influence, abuse of office, obstruction of justice and illicit enrichment. They would also force member states to harmonise jail terms with minimum and maximum penalties and aim to make it easier for cross-border cooperation between member states' police forces. Another new rule goes beyond Europe and would see individuals and entities who committed "serious acts of corruption" have their assets frozen in the bloc and be banned from the EU.

The plans will need to be approved by the EU's 27 member states and the parliament. The blacklist proposal is similar to the US Magnitsky act, a law under which Washington punishes foreign government officials implicated in corruption or human rights abuses. - Agencies

## US Senate to draft new legislation to counter China

WASHINGTON: U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer on Wednesday is announcing a new effort to draft bipartisan legislation to address concerns about China including taking steps to limit the flow of advanced technology to China, aides said. The legislation will also aim to deter China from initiating a conflict with Taiwan or other U.S. allies in the region codifying an outbound investment screen to block U.S. capital from going to Chinese companies. The effort is dubbed the China Competition Bill 2.0 and follows an effort last year when President Joe Biden signed legislation authorizing more than \$170 billion over five years to boost U.S. scientific research to better compete with China and \$52 billion in new subsidies for semiconductor manufacturing and research. - Agencies

## Iran seizes second oil tanker in a week, US Navy says

DUBAI: Iran has seized a second oil tanker in a week on Wednesday in Gulf waters, the U.S. Navy said, the latest escalation in a series of seizures or attacks on commercial vessels in Gulf waters since 2019. The Bahrain-based Fifth Fleet of the U.S. Navy said the Panama-flagged oil tanker Niovi was seized by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) at 6:20 a.m. (0220 GMT) while passing through the narrow Strait of Hormuz. In Iran's first response, Tehran's prosecutor announced the oil tanker was seized on a judicial order following a complaint by a plaintiff, the judiciary's Mizan news agency said. No further details were provided. The incident comes after Iran on Thursday seized a Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker in the Gulf of Oman called the Advantage Sweet. That tanker is being held by Iranian authorities in Bandar Abbas, the Marshall Islands flag registry said on Tuesday. Maritime security firm Ambrey has said it believed the Advantage Sweet's seizure by Iran was in response to a recent seizure via a court order by the United States of an oil cargo aboard the Marshall Islands tanker Suez Rajan. - DNA