



# Islamabad POST

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**Scottish leader accepts invitation to visit Pakistan**

Detailed News On Page-01

**Japanese PM in S. Korea for historic summit**

Detailed News On Page-07



**Klopp hails Salah as an all-time great**

Detailed News On Page-06



## CPEC a landmark project

# Pak indebted to China for support: COAS

Foreign Minister Qin Gang underscored the importance of the longstanding strategic relationship between the brotherly nations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT / DNA

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, COAS met Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang at his office. Matters of mutual interest including regional security and defence cooperation came under discussion during the meeting. During the meeting, COAS reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to China-Pakistan Strategic relationship. COAS also pledged full support for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, which is a vital component of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). He also appreciated China's unwavering support for Pakistan on regional and international issues. Foreign Minister Qin Gang underscored the importance of the longstanding strategic relationship between the brotherly nations and expressed his satisfaction over the progress made on the CPEC while reiterating China's commitment to its timely completion. He also appreciated Pakistan's efforts in maintaining regional peace and stability, especially the support of Pakistan Armed Forces for provision of security to Chinese Nationals and projects in Pakistan. The two dignitaries also discussed the evolving security situation in the region. COAS acknowledged China's role in promoting peace and stability in the region, and both sides agreed to enhance their existing cooperation in defence and security domains to effectively counter common security challenges. The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both sides reiterating their resolve to further strengthen the time-tested, all-weather friendship between Pakistan and China.

## Afghan FM meets COAS Gen Asim Munir

NEWS DESK / DNA

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, COAS, met Acting Afghan Minister for Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi, at his office. COAS and Afghan Acting FM discussed issues of mutual interest including aspects related to regional security, border management, and formalisation of bilateral security mechanisms for improvement in the current security

environment. COAS stressed the need for enhanced cooperation between the two brotherly neighbours to effectively tackle the common challenges of terrorism and extremism. He reiterated the need for full support and commitment from the Afghan Interim Government in matters of mutual interest. Foreign Minister Muttaqi appreciated Pakistan's

Continued on Page 06



RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, COAS in a meeting with Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang. - DNA

## Imran Khan greenlights campaign in Lahore

Urges the candidates to involve all factions

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan urged on Sunday the ticket holders from Lahore to speed up the election campaign. The ticket holders from Lahore participated in the meeting presided over by the deposed prime minister, in which issues related to the election campaign for the Punjab Assembly elections were discussed. Mr Khan directed the ticket holders to intensify the election campaign through rallies and door-to-door campaigns in their respective constituencies. He urged the ticket holders to spread PTI's narrative to as many people as possible.

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## Mediators seek end to Sudan conflict

FOREIGN DESK

KHARTOUM: Fighting could be heard in south Khartoum on Sunday as envoys from Sudan's warring parties were in Saudi Arabia for talks that international mediators hope will bring an end to a three-week old conflict that has killed hundreds and triggered an exodus. The US-Saudi initiative is the first serious attempt to end fighting between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF)

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# Parliament will assert supremacy at all costs: PM

Says elections will take place on the same day

DNA

LONDON: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called out former chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar for being an "agent" of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), claiming that he served Imran Khan-led party as an activist during his tenure at the Supreme Court. The premier claimed that the audio leak of ex-CJP's son Najam Saqib implicates him in a conspiracy to bring PTI chief Khan to power. PM Shehbaz's comments came while talking to journalists in London where he is currently on a visit due to his attendance for the coronation of King Charles III. The prime minister also met his brother and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif during his visit. The premier said that Nisar had played a key role in the disqualification of the PML-N supreme on completely baseless and false allegations and ran a vindictive campaign against their party in order to bring Khan into power through a rigged election he presided over.

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## PM invites Scottish leader to visit Pakistan

NEWS DESK



LONDON: First Minister of Scotland, Humza Yousaf called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in London. The Prime Minister extended a cordial invitation to Mr. Yousaf to visit Pakistan, which he happily accepted. Felicitating the First Minister on his election to this important position, the Prime Minister observed that Mr. Yousaf's election underscored

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## FM's remarks over G-20 meeting Indian propaganda unfounded, says FO

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD, The Foreign Office Spokesperson on Sunday said that any insinuation, associating Foreign Minister's remarks over G-20 meeting in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) with a threat of violence, was not only mischievous but also highly irresponsible. "It is an attempt to shift focus from the Foreign Minister's key message of conflict resolution through dialogue and in accordance with international law and UN security



ty council resolutions," the spokesperson said in a press statement in response to media queries regarding a video clip insinuating that Foreign Minister of Pakistan Bilawal Bhutto Zardari threatened India over conduct of a G-20 meeting in IIOJK. "In a number of public pronouncements during his recent visit to India, the foreign minister

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## Briefs

### Imran Khan responsible for violence

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb has termed Imran Khan responsible for inciting intolerance and violence. Responding to Imran Khan's statement on Sunday, she said problems of the country can be solved if Imran Khan is jailed and sentenced for his lies and conspiracy. She said that Imran Khan is using India, Kashmir and Islam for his political interest. She said Imran Khan is upset due to resumption of work on China Pakistan Economic Corridor and his protest call at a time when Chinese Foreign Minister was visiting Pakistan, was aimed at creating chaos.

### Qureshi slams Indian FM remarks

OUR CORRESPONDENT



MULTAN: PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi strongly condemned Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's statement after the departure of Pakistan's FM Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, stating that it was against diplomatic etiquette to ridicule the Pakistani foreign minister. "Although I disagree with Bilawal, I am talking about the foreign minister of Pakistan," he said while speaking to the media in Multan. "Bilawal Bhutto went there on the invitation of the Indian foreign minister and Pakistan is a member of this forum; Bilawal was his guest, but he ridiculed the Pakistani foreign minister."

## Punjab elections 90 days means 90 days, says CJP

Says if truth is avoided then justice is avoided

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Umar Atta Bandial, the Chief Justice of Pakistan has said when Constitution says elections should take place after dissolution of assemblies within 90 days then it means 90 days. That is the constitutional position and there is no escape from that. The Chief Justice was speaking at a Minorities Forum. He appreciated the services of minority Chief Justice A.R Cornelius for his great contribution towards upholding the rule of law and the Constitution. He further said the political parties are holding consultations regarding the May 14 elections. The Court has not asked them to do so. They are doing it on their own, which is a good thing and implies the political parties duly care about what the Constitution says. CJP Umar Atta Bandial further said our May 14 elections verdict is final. It may not be implemented now but it would go deep in the annals of the history and will be implemented one day.



Without naming the PTI, the Chief Justice said that an individual must not be praised or supported, rather the entire institution needs to be supported. He said if someone wants to extend any support then he should do it for the entire institution. He said in his individual capacity he was nothing. He said the judgments delivered as per the Constitution carry huge moral authority adding judges should not go into the technicalities of the case. If they do so they might lose attention. The cases should be heard and decided on merit, he added.

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# FM Bilawal's India visit: will it make any difference?

COMMENT

ANSAR M BHATTI



FOREIGN Minister Bilawal Bhutto to Zardari's visit to Goa, India in the wake of SCO foreign ministers summit held on May 4-5, has evoked a mixed reaction, especially at home. While the leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf continue to take a dig at the foreign minister for 'earning disrespect' for the country, others would give him full marks for not only aptly representing Pakistan at the highest forum but to respond befittingly to the India narrative in which it tried to build a terrorism case against Pakistan. Those who laud Bilawal's Indian sojourn as a landmark event tend to quote his interview with the India Today, in which Bilawal said, "This wolf whistling around the word terrorism which is ultimately an Islamophobic wolf whistle not only to whip up Hindu sentiment in India but also to brow beat Pakistan, that might be election strategy for some but not effective terrorism strategy". FM Bilawal's visit may be a good omen in

terms of easing of tensions between the two arch rivals, nevertheless it may not be construed as a big success with regard to resumption of diplomatic and political relations at a full scale. We have to keep in mind that it was not a bilateral activity. It was an SCO event and as an active member of the Organisation Pakistan was supposed to be there physically. Contrary to the PTI contention that Bilawal would have participated in the meeting online and thus avoided 'embarrassment inflicted on him by his Indian counterpart by not shaking hands with him', let us be optimistic that the visit may augur well with regard to future bilateral interactions provided it is reciprocated by the Indian side in the same fashion. Pakistan rightly believes that India should take occupied Kashmir status back to pre-August 5 position in order to pave way for normalization of relations, however if India finds it difficult to immediately go back to that position, it needs to give a word that it might re-think about its policy towards IOJK, which may ultimately lead to pre-August 5 position. The Indian media perhaps was not fair in its comments when it said that FM Bilawal Bhutto visited India just to appease the Pakistani Establishment and he lacked public support for this visit.

This presumption does not hold any ground for the majority of Pakistani people wanting to have normal relations with India as they strongly believe that easing of relations would ultimately benefit peoples of both countries. However, for such contacts to take place on a regular basis the Indian government needs to show flexibility and willingness. The way the Indian foreign minister received his Pakistani counterpart with no traces of smile on his face; no hand shake and even no warmth, in no wise, can help contribute to building bridges. But at the same time, there is no denying the fact that Pakistan and India direly need each other at this critical juncture when the world is passing through the worst kind of recession and economic downturn. Pakistan appears to have been hit hard, first because of weak economic policies and secondly due to political instability. Then floods did the rest of the damage. It was perhaps the time when trade with In-

dia, though at a small level, could have mitigated sufferings of especially the flood-hit people. India must understand that the Pakistani side needs to have valid excuses in order to engage in any bilateral activity including trade, while the Pakistani side needs to shelve differences, at least during odd times such as floods and other natural calamities, for the sake of its people. At the end of the day it is Pakistan and India who have to sit together to sort out their differences. If we expect that the US or Russia or any other power would help us iron out our differences, it may not be a rational approach. China, however, can be a sincere facilitator as it has huge stakes in Pakistan and India as well. But for this to happen China and India perhaps have to mend fences first, which, at this moment seems to be a daunting task, but not impossible indeed. If Saudi Arabia and Iran, the two deadliest enemies, can reach a rapprochement then why not China and In-

dia and India and Pakistan? Given the complex relations between Pakistan and India the spate of accusations and even protests should be a normal thing. The BJP activists held demonstrations against FM Bilawal simply because Bilawal, in the past, had dubbed Modi as the 'Butcher of Gujarat'. Even before the start of the SCO meet, there was a consensus among the intelligentsia on both sides that no breakthrough would be achieved at Goa with regard to Pakistan, India bilateral relations. Analysts are of the view that India has missed an opportunity of mending fences with Pakistan by extending lukewarm hospitality to FM Bilawal. India would be hosting the SCO leaders' summit in July. A positive interaction at Goa would have paved the way for some fruitful engagement during the leaders' summit. As a host, India should have planned one-on-one meetings between the FMs of two countries. Things can still be put on the track as we still have some more months before the SCO leaders' conference. Ball is in India's court. Let us see how it conducts itself in these months to make sure that during the leaders' summit some breakthrough is achieved with regard to easing of tensions and resumption of full scale diplomatic ties.





ICCI calls for community policing to make Capital crime-free city

He thanked Chamber President Ahsan Bakhtawari and his team for hosting a ceremony in his honor and said that it would encourage the young police officers to perform well and gain more respect of society

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry emphasized the need to promote community policing, which would improve relations between police and citizens and help make Capital a crime free city.

more effectively. He highlighted the key role of the police in the society as its better performance was important to establish peace in the city, promote business & investment and bring prosperity.

Retired SP Farhat Abbas Kazmi in his address said that ICCI and Islamabad Police have always worked together to make Islamabad a crime-free city. He said that Islamabad Police is now facing many new challenges and the biggest challenge is to control crimes.



TEFLA:Ambassador of Nepal to Pakistan, Tapas Adhikari and Sri Lankan High Commissioner, Vice Admiral Mohan Wijewickrama taking keen interest in ancient civilization stuff during "Visak Day" event to mark the birth, Enlightenment and passing of the Buddha. - ONLINE

Vesak Day Event showcased Pakistan's rich Gandhara heritage

Director of PTDC, Dr. Nadeem Omar Tatar, Gandhara Chair at the University of Wah, led the group to the Dharamrajika Stupa in Taxila, a site renowned for its relics of Lord Buddha, graciously deposited by King Ashoka.

Federal College of Education faces turmoil

ISLAMABAD: The frequent changing in management and makeshift arrangements at Federal College of Education (FCE) has created a state of turmoil within the college, significantly impacting its efficiency.

MODENA to present in Pakistan market soon

ISLAMABAD: Indonesian premium electronic brand "MODENA" is a leading provider of high-quality home and kitchen appliances will be available in the Pakistan market soon.

FIA offloads Belgium-bound passenger over fake documents

PESHAWAR: The Federal Investigation Authority (FIA) has offloaded Belgium-bound passenger at Bacha Khan International Airport Peshawar for carrying fake travel documents.

Mushaal urges G20 to boycott Srinagar moot

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Peace and Culture Organization Mushaal Hussein Mullick on Sunday urged the G20 countries to boycott their meeting holding in the UN-designated disputed area of Srinagar of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) to send a clear and unequivocal message to blood-thirsty-Hindutva regime.

that the world powerful countries should boycott the meeting in Srinagar to foil the Indian government's nefarious designs. Mushaal went on to say that the occupation authorities were busy in renovating Srinagar ahead of the G20 meeting aimed at misleading international delegations and whitewashing the excesses committed against the people of Kashmir.

Development of metropolis top priority

PESHAWAR: Provincial leader of Quami Watan Party (QWP) Syed Fayyaz Ali Shah on Sunday said that the development of the metropolis was the first priority of our party.

Sudan Conflict KSA emerges as key player in safe evacuation of people

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Press Attaché Dr Naif Al-Otaibi on Sunday said Saudi Arabia, in a remarkable display of compassion and solidarity, had emerged as a key player in the safe evacuation of people from Sudan.

reception centres equipped with essential amenities such as food, medical facilities, and psychosocial support services. These centres served as a refuge for those fleeing the violence in Sudan, providing a safe haven where individuals could begin the process of rebuilding their lives, he maintained.

Court Notice
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ISLAMABAD: Khurshid Barlas hosts dinner at his residence in honor of Khurshid Marwat Chief Commissioner Income Tax Islamabad, Sajjad Hyder Additional Auditor General of Pakistan, Zahid Latif Khan Chairman Islamabad Stock Exchange, Luqman Afzal Chairman Monal group, Karim Ullam CEO Ali Associates, Amjad Ali Director Jang Media Group, Fahad Barlas Farmar Chairman HAP, and Tahir Sohail, Mr.Zia from USA. -DNA

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### MAY

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



### Hotels & Restaurants

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



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### Emergency

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RGH.....9290301-7
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Shifa International 4603666



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TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480
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ISLAMABAD: Wives of the ASEAN countries diplomats posing for a picture on the occasion of the open house event organized by the Malaysian High Commission.—DNA

## Pak needs fundamental change in development approach: SCCI

Economic security is necessary for every state and Pakistan needs paradigm shift to strengthen its relations with its neighboring countries China, India, Afghanistan, and Iran

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Iftikhar Ali Malik on Sunday said Pakistan needs a paradigm shift, a fundamental change in its approach to governance and economic development. Talking to a delegation led by Mian Ejaz Ahmad Arain CEO The Falcon International in Lahore, he said Pakistan is confronted with various challenges, such as political instability, corruption, poverty and terrorism, said a press release.

He said economic security is necessary for every state and Pakistan needs paradigm shift to strengthen its relations with its neighboring countries China, India, Afghanistan, and Iran and engage with regional organizations like SAARC and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) for sustainable stabilisation of its economy to offset hovering threat of default. He said in prevailing economic crunch. Iftikhar Ali Malik, an octogenarian vet trade leader of South Asia said now philosophy of globalisation turning into regional block as 18 countries

could include measures such as strengthening democracy, promoting merit-based appointments, investing in education and healthcare, promoting economic growth and job creation, and improving relations with neighboring countries. He said Pakistan's economy is in dilapidated condition, whatever the reasons may be but Pakistan for its survival has to revisit its priorities to steer the country out of prevailing economic crunch. Iftikhar Ali Malik, an octogenarian vet trade leader of South Asia said now philosophy of globalisation turning into regional block as 18 countries

including China, Russia, Turkey, Malaysia and India have jointly planned future trade in local currency by neglecting US dollar monopoly. Specifically talking about the projected economic growth of our border sharing rival country of which overall exports cross an all-time high mark of \$750 billion since gaining independence in 1947 however they are eyeing to achieve \$2 trillion goal in near future. He said after independence Pakistan economy was in better shape than India till 1970 which started dwindling gradually due to absence of wisdom based decisions. Iftikhar Ali Malik sharing his

life rich diversified experience said two factors may be considered as the prime contributors to overall national growth and stability that is why rival country foreign policy has been redefined to have a parallel influence on both super powered whether America or China. He said in contrast, Pakistan sails through much difficult and challenging economic, political, constitutional and terror related issues for welfare. He said now scenario has altogether changed with the emergence of new fronts to excel i.e. the digital and space technology, artificial intelligence, economic aspects and foreign policy domains etc.

## Exerting pressure on the US is crucial for Dr. Aafia's release'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The release of Dr. Aafia is as much a political battle as it is a legal battle. Apart from seeking legal avenues, the Government of Pakistan must do its part by creating political pressure on the US to secure Dr. Aafia's release.

For this, Pakistan's Prime Minister, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Court must demonstrate the will and undertake all necessary measures to bring her back, urged speakers during a session on "Unending Woes of the US War of Terror: The Case of Pakistani Prisoner Aafia Siddiqui" held at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). The session was held with Clive Stafford Smith, British-American lawyer for Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, her sister Dr. Fowzia Siddiqui, and Imran Shafiq Advocate, her lawyer in Pakistan. Dr. Aafia has an iconic status in Pakistan, and, at the same



time, she is a symbol of unending misery thanks to the post-9/11 US panic and the War on Terror, said Clive who has been representing her case and has also been able to get over 80 other prisoners released from Guantanamo Bay providing them with pro-bono legal aid. He said that the counts of attempted murder, assaults, and criminal charges on her and information about her being extremist are all unfounded. Deprived of her liberty, she has been a traumatized victim of US brutality, unlawful

imprisonment, and extreme injustice. According to the intelligence data, 98.5 per cent of 780 detainees in Guantanamo Bay have been subject to unlawful imprisonment where in 764 out of 780 prisoners pose no threat to the US. He said that there are a lot of difficulties and challenges in bringing Dr. Aafia back legally but, despite that, there are also several legal avenues that can be sought after including the right to be released on compassionate grounds, litigation, pardon, etc. Another significant

avenue for this pursuit is the political pressure and influence on the part of Pakistan. In this case, a big question is what's Pakistan going to offer or put forward for her.

The release of Dr. Aafia is primarily Pakistan's cause, but the will to get her back to Pakistan has been lacking in successive governments, said Imran Shafiq Advocate. This scanty amount of willingness and sincerity demonstrated over time in pursuit of her release has only exploited the issue, as no consistent and significant official efforts have been done and her case is still pending in Islamabad High Court for no reason.

The release of Dr. Aafia is as much a political battle as it is a legal battle, he asserted. There are several ways that the Government of Pakistan can opt for, including repatriation, and exchange agreements like prisoner transfer agreements. But no government in its official capacity has ever utilized them.

## Italian businessmen to visit Pak in May

ISLAMABAD: A high-level 10-member Italian and Pakistani businessmen delegation will visit Pakistan in the last week of instant month to further explore the avenues of mutual interests in various sectors. It was disclosed in Lahore on Sunday by Muhammed Sheheryar Khan Honorary Investment Counselor of Pakistan for Italy while talking to CEO Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Mian Kashif Ashfaq, said in a press release. He said the delegation will also attend the forthcoming 4th Edition of TEXPO 2023 to be held in Karachi on 26-28 May. The delegation members were briefed about the significance of the largest textile exhibition in Pakistan and informed about the details of participation. Highlighting the prospects of business and investment in Pakistan, Muhammad Sheheryar Khan urged the Pakistani business community to redouble their outreach in Italian markets to enhance Pakistan's exports in all fields, including textile, agriculture, IT, food and marble. The business community expressed keen interest in TEXPO 2023 and discussed details of participation, he concluded. Mian Kashif Ashfaq said PFC will welcome the Italian delegation to facilitate them to make their business visit a real success.—DNA

## IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Monday issued a power suspension program on Tuesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, I-11/1, I-11/3, Metro, Sohdra Road Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Noggzi, Bajnyal, Mohanpura Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Chahan, Chontra, Rajar, Chakri, SPD, SPF feeders, Jhelum circle, Mandi Bhalwal, F3 Gul Afshan feeders, from 08:00 a.m. to 01:00 p.m., Attock circle, Kala Khan feeder and surrounding areas.—APP

## Water shortage in capital feared

ISLAMABAD: With Federal Capital's population rising over two million from around 800,000 in 2008, the city managers are continuously under stress to meet the basic amenities needs of the residents. Besides cleanliness, waste disposal, pollution control and maintaining law and order, the provision of sufficient water to households has become a gigantic task as a shortfall in routine supply by the Capital Development Authority is forcing residents to purchase water from private operators. As the population grew to 150 percent during the last 15 years, the available water resources are falling short of meeting the daily needs of the residents, especially during the summer season. The main sources of water for Islamabad are the Simly and Khanpur

dams which are dependent on rainfall and snow melting in the catchment areas. The Capital Development Authority (CDA) had ignored this issue during past decades and since the construction of the Khanpur Dam in the 1990s, no new source of water was explored. Experts believe that if the present situation continues, Pakistan would fall in the list of water-scarce countries within the next few years. "Presently we are a water-stressed country and shall slip down to the water shortage category in the next few years, if prudent policies are not adopted," said a renowned water expert. "What matters the most are our water usage habits. We waste thousands of gallons of water daily in bathroom usage, car washing, floor cleaning

and watering our gardens," he stated. He said our distribution system was also not updated and a lot of water was wasted through leakage. "Moreover, we also need a proper water metering system to ensure that everybody pays as per the calculation of water usage." In recent years, the change in weather patterns has also rung alarm bells for the policymakers with rising temperatures and irregular rainfall feared to further aggravate the situation. Furthermore, rapid urbanization and illegal settlements in catchment areas have caused damage to the natural ecosystem, leading to soil erosion and reduced water storage capacity. Torrential rains and flood-like situations in the capital have also affected catchment areas as well as the water distribution system.—DNA

## PTI social media activist regrets

ISLAMABAD: A social media activist of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) team on Sunday has regretted and apologized over his conduct of propagating against Shuhada of the armed forces of Pakistan through his fake Twitter and Facebook accounts. On his Twitter handle, Abdul Rehman Kamal, a resident of Charsadda, said that he had been an active social media member of PTI operating from Dubai, UAE. He further admitted that he was indulged in posting inappropriate language and propaganda against the Shuhada of armed forces on his Twitter account registered with the fake name of Raheela Sadpara. Kamal had been residing in Dubai and was PTI's social media team member for the last six years. He had three fake Twitter accounts and one Facebook. After realizing his mistake, Kamal said, he regretted his past conduct and vowed not to use any unsuitable language or tweets in future.—DNA

## Risks to economy loom large

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As the government has been struggling to secure a bailout from the International Monetary Fund, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) on Sunday warned that the government will have to pay almost \$3.5 billion in debt payments in just two months, with the domestic economy nose-diving due to non-serious and poor policy decisions and mismanagement of the economic managers. FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar expressed the hope that the government and the IMF will reach an agreement on the program review but the risks are large to haunt the economy, reflecting that a default or debt restructuring is an increasingly real possibility, he warned. He observed that the rupee continued to remain at lower ebb while the key interest rate has been escalated by the central bank to the record historic level of 21%, which will destroy the economy completely. Anjum Nisar observed that the country is reeling from an economic crisis with inflation surging to 36.5 percent, the highest in its history and the highest in South Asia, while a bruising political battle is raging between the government and the opposition party. Though the government has removed caps on the exchange rate, imposed taxes, raised energy tariffs, and scaled back subsidies in an attempt to unlock the IMF funding, besides raising key interest rates to a record 21 percent but all in vain. Finance Minister has been claiming that there's no way Pakistan is going to default, however, the economist constantly claim that the country is on the brink of default.

حکومت پاکستان کے توانائی بلان کے مطابق

# اوگرا نے گیزر میں

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## Briefs

## 'Amb Tipu's appointment to bring Pak, China, Iran closer'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has appointed Muhammad Mudassar Tipu, a senior diplomat with extensive experience of working in China, as its new Ambassador to Iran. Tipu, who previously served as the Director General (China) and Consul General to Chengdu, has been entrusted with this important position.

This appointment is seen as a positive development that can foster closer ties between Pakistan, China, and Iran, particularly in the context of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Sunday. Prof. Song Zhihui, the Director of the Pakistan Study Center at Sichuan University, expressed the significance of the appointment of the new ambassador to Iran.

He highlighted that Iran's growing geopolitical importance, particularly in light of the Saudi-Iranian reconciliation facilitated by China, makes this assignment crucial. According to him, Pakistan can play a dynamic role in this process, which could result in substantial political and economic advantages for Pakistan. The professor emphasized that Iran, Pakistan, China, and Saudi Arabia are natural partners in promoting regional economic growth, connectivity, and trade opportunities. Prof. Song emphasized the significant neighboring relationship between Pakistan and Iran, with Islamabad seeking to enhance diplomatic, economic, and security ties with Tehran. Notably, Iran holds a crucial position as an important participant in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) serving as a key point of convergence.

He further stated that by fostering greater cooperation among China, Pakistan, Iran, and other regional stakeholders, the region can experience a robust boost in economic development, positively impacting the lives of billions of people. Considering the long-term feasibility and effectiveness of CPEC, Iran has consistently shown interest in joining this major economic corridor. Recently, Pakistan and Iran have been actively working towards strengthening their energy and trade cooperation. Both countries have also agreed to establish a joint committee to expedite the implementation of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

## Elections likely to be deferred, says Ahsan Mazari

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for inter-provincial coordination Ahsan ur Rehman Mazari has said that he doesn't think general elections will be held in time.

In an interview with a private television channel, Mazari said, "As a PPP worker he thinks general elections will be put off. The matter will be deferred as per the constitution and nothing unconstitutional will happen." Ahsan Mazari said that the rule was decided that a party which will hold the portfolio would also decide appointments in that ministry. "As this ministry being held by the PPP, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) should also run by our man," he reiterated. "Najam Sethi was not appointed with the consent of the People's Party," minister said. "We have received complaints about formation of bogus clubs in two regions, given voting rights," he said. A letter has been written to the PCB seeking explanation of the complaints, he said. "We have also summoned details of financial matters and appointments in the board," he said. "We have also sought details of who has been removed or appointed in last four months," minister said.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Türkiye Mehmet Pacaci and Türkiye nationals living in Pakistan cast their votes in the Presidential election of Türkiye, at the Türkiye embassy in Islamabad.—DNA



## The number of Pakistanis facing hunger increasing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Hanif Mughal, Senior Vice President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Sunday said over eight million Pakistanis are facing hunger and awaiting relief for months but to no avail. Last year, Pakistan faced a serious food crisis which has resulted in widespread devastation and left tens of millions food insecure, he said.

Dr. Hanif Mughal said that so far nothing has been done to support the hungry and starving people as politics has taken centre-stage for months.

Pakistan is facing a significantly deteriorating situation in all provinces, especially in Sindh, where five areas that were previously classified as in crisis are now facing a serious emergency, he informed.

Pakistan has been defined by the UN as a country facing a major food crisis since 2017 when over 50pc of its analysed population was in phase three which is a crisis or above. Even before Pakistan was hit by the monsoon, fertiliser shortages and lack of irrigation water had affected 'Rabi' wheat crop yields and lowered livestock production and later flooding and landslides brought widespread destruction, disrupting the lives and livelihoods of about 33 million people in Pakistan.

Around 4.4m acres of agricultural land were damaged, prompting the downward revision of 2022 production forecasts for rice, maize, sorghum, and millet. Around 0.8m livestock were estimated to have perished. The total damage and loss in the agriculture sector was estimated at almost \$13bn, consisting mainly of crops (82pc) followed by livestock (17pc).

It is estimated that the loss or damage of agricultural inputs, including seed stocks, fertilisers, machinery and irrigation infrastructure, may result in a contraction in the area planted with a negative impact on 2023 production. Prices continued to increase until the end of the year and, by December 2022, the price of a basket of basic food items was 36pc higher year-on-year taking a toll on the masses with no respite in sight, he said.

## China's proposals in SCO way to durable solutions of disputes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China's position paper in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on the issues of Russia-Ukraine conflict and Afghanistan are termed a way forward to successful consultation process and durable solutions. According to Pakistani experts and analysts, the consensus among members will also give a message to the world community that the Global South has the will and wisdom to solve their problems peacefully, says a report published by Gwadar Pro.

Foreign Ministers of member states of SCO meet in Gao, India on Friday. The meeting happened at a critical moment of history. It is not run of the mill statement but truly depicts global dynamics. According to the political economist and expert Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, there are many important issues but at this point three issues stand out among all. First, the Russia-Ukraine crisis which is escalating with every passing day. It has shaken the world economy and poor countries are suffering immensely. Second, the de-dollarization drive has intensified economic war among major powers. Weaponization of the dollar and western financial system is catalyzing the momentum. Majority of world economies are fed up with merciless use of dollars to panelized countries, which do not bow down in front of Western powers. Third, the Afghanistan situation is complicated. Food insecurity is out of control. The World Food Program has indicated that 19.9 million Afghan people are facing challenges to secure healthy food.—DNA

## Nigeria wants US\$ 3 billion bilateral trade with Pakistan

The Nigerian Aviation Minister said that his country enjoys bilateral trade of around US\$ 15 billion with India and over US\$ 4 billion with Indonesia and it wants to further increase trade with Pakistan as both countries are a huge market of nearly half a billion people

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nigeria wants to increase bilateral trade with Pakistan to at least US\$ 3 billion as both countries have the potential to achieve this target. This was said by Hadi Sirika, Minister for Aviation of Nigeria while addressing the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Capt. Nuhu Musa Director General Civil Aviation Authority of Nigeria, Capt. Modibo Alkali Rector Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, Bolaji Alkali Director Trade and Investment Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, H.E Muhammad Bello Abio High

Commissioner of Nigeria to Pakistan and others also accompanied him on the occasion. The Nigerian Aviation Minister said that his country enjoys bilateral trade of around US\$ 15 billion with India and over US\$ 4 billion with Indonesia and it wants to further increase trade with Pakistan as both countries are a huge market of nearly half a billion people. He said that Nigeria is working for direct flights with Pakistan that would help improve people to people and business to business relations between the two countries. He said that Nigeria is also interested in strengthening cooperation with Pakistan in transportation, tourism, trade & commerce,

industry and other sectors. He said that Pakistani investors should invest in Nigeria to take advantage of its tax holidays and free economic zones. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) said that the bilateral trade of around US\$ 114 million between Pakistan and Nigeria is quite negligible as compared to the actual potential of both countries. He stressed that Pakistan and Nigeria should make efforts to increase their bilateral trade to at least US\$ 3 billion in the next few years as both countries have potential to achieve this target. He said that Pakistan can export many prod-

ucts to Nigeria and other African countries including textiles, rice, pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, electrical appliances, processed food, cosmetic & beauty products, leather goods, IT products, financial services. He said that both countries should encourage regular exchange of business delegations to explore all untapped areas of mutual cooperation and said that ICCI would consider taking a delegation to Nigeria in future. He hoped that the start of direct flights between Pakistan and Nigeria would help increase bilateral trade volume and urged that both governments should put this project on fast track to achieve its ben-

eficial results. Capt. Nuhu Musa Director General Civil Aviation Authority of Nigeria, Capt. Bolaji Alkali Director Trade and Investment Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria and H.E Muhammad Bello Abio High Commissioner of Nigeria to Pakistan also spoke at the occasion and stressed for increasing trade and investment cooperation with Pakistan. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG said that Pakistan and Nigeria are facing some common issues including terrorism, bad press and stressed that they should develop close cooperation to tackle these common issues.

## Training Courses launched for New Gwadar Airport



DNA

ISLAMABAD: In order to ensure the efficient operation of the upcoming New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA), which is expected to be operational in September, China has offered "Training Courses" for government officials. These courses aim to enhance the professional capabilities of officials in 15 different categories. The 20-day training course is scheduled to commence on July

08 and conclude on July 27. These training courses are designed to provide government officials with the necessary skills to improve their technical, administrative, and managerial expertise. According to the information available to Gwadar Pro, all expenses will be covered by China. Suitable candidates who meet the eligibility criteria will be nominated and their approval will be forwarded to the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Economic Affairs Division of the Government of Pakistan

by May 16. An official from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), who is involved in the New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA) project, informed Gwadar Pro that the construction of the airport, which is estimated to cost Rs. 51.284 billion, is progressing rapidly. This progress is a result of the renewed commitment from the government and the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders, including the Civil Aviation Authority and China Communications Construction Company (CCCC).

## IRSA releases 157,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 157,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 144,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1438.01 feet and was 40.01 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 37,700 cusecs while outflow as 48,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1122.10 feet, which was 72.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 41,900 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 75,100, 59,100, 38,300 and 9,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 43,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 12,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

## Do not delay IMF's call to increase interest rates'

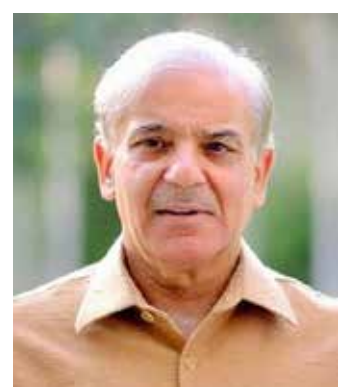
ISLAMABAD: Former Vice President of FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh on Sunday said the demand of the IMF to hike interest rates should not be delayed as it will annoy the lender. IMF believes the interest rate hike is necessary for containing inflation however it will also significantly increase the debt burden, he said. Atif Ikram Sheikh who has also served as President ICCI and Chairman PVMA said in a statement issued here today that IMF has asked Pakistan and some other countries to further increase interest rates to stabilise inflation. For the current fiscal year, the World Economic Outlook has projected 27.1 percent average inflation rate while the forecast is 21.9 percent for the next fiscal year, he added. He said that SBP has already increased the interest rates to the highest ever level of 21 percent which has failed to contain inflation but it caused a significant surge in the government's debt servicing cost, which is now estimated at around Rs5.3 trillion as against the budgeted figure of Rs3.95 trillion. Since the start of the IMF programme in July 2019, Pakistan has doubled the policy rates but it has done little to improve the situation. IMF has projected our foreign exchange reserves at \$11.7 billion while the growth rate is expected to slow materially from 6 percent in 2022 to 0.5 percent this year. Growth in the region will accelerate to 4.4 percent in 2024 but it will hover around 3.5 percent in Pakistan. The business leader said that the IMF hoped that Pakistan is expected to start meaningful fiscal consolidation, including subsidy reforms which will compromise growth. The global lender thinks that Pakistan will miss the fiscal and debt reduction targets of this fiscal year and the situation will become worse in the next fiscal year with a budget deficit peaking at 8.3 percent, he said.—DNA

## PM Shehbaz interest in Gwadar, CPEC brings new life to port city's projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Soon after assuming office, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif took keen interest in the development of Gwadar and personally visited the port city last year, where he announced a 100 billion development package for the Balochistan province with a sizable amount fixed for the city besides inaugurating some key infrastructure projects including Eastbay Expressway. During his visit to the city in June last year, the prime minister ordered to complete all the ongoing development projects of water, electricity and infrastructure in Gwadar in the stipulated time. He warned of zero tolerance on any further interruption in the projects of water and electricity saying that the 1.2 million gallons of desalination plant in Gwadar should be completed as soon as

possible. PM Shehbaz said the network of pipelines for the provision of water in houses should be immediately improved and also ordered an inquiry to identify those responsible for delaying the projects. Shehbaz directed the relevant authorities to begin dredging at the Gwadar port besides taking practical steps for breakwater. He further directed that the construction of Gwadar Hospital should be completed in September instead of December. He also ordered to include all 16,523 poor families of Gwadar in the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). The prime minister also broke ground for the Gwadar Seawater Desalination Plant by China Aid, Jingtang Gwadar Private Limited, Hangmei Lubricant Plant, Hangeng Agricultural Industrial Park, Gwadar Expo Centre and Gwadar Fertilizer Plant, besides distribution of



3,000 solar panels. As a result of the prime minister's special directives, remarkable progress has been made so far on several projects in Gwadar. According to official sources, some 20 new projects are on the way of completion in 2023 and onward years as per their scheduled timeframes. The 1.2 million gallon water per day desalination plant which is

in the final stage, would be operational in a few weeks while the progress of Gwadar international airport is also on track and is likely to be completed in 2023. The other ongoing projects in Gwadar include Gwadar Free Zone North (Phase 11), the Gwadar Safe City Project, three electricity projects, the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan, Gwadar Tourism Project, New management model of Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute (PCT & VI), State of Art Shipyard Project, Oil Refinery project, Green Gwadar Project, Pak-China Friendship Hospital, fisher community projects, Gwadar Port dredging project, Export-oriented projects, Fishing industry, Warehouse industry, and Gwadar Hua-fa Exhibition and Trading Center. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif inaugurated a component of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the

six-lane Eastbay Expressway connecting the Gwadar Port with the Makran Coastal Highway, also providing a link to Karachi. The Eastbay Expressway is a major infrastructure project in the city of Gwadar. This construction of the 19-kilometer highway runs parallel to the coastline, and has four interchanges, two bridges, and a toll plaza. The expressway is designed to handle heavy traffic, and is expected to significantly reduce transportation costs and time for goods moving to and from the Gwadar port. The completion of the Eastbay Expressway is a major milestone in the development of Gwadar as a major port city. The Gwadar Port. Which is the centerpiece of the CPEC, is strategically located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, and has the potential to become a major hub for trade and commerce in the region.



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## Coronation of King Charles III

How many of us said it? And, of those who mouthed or de-claimed the words of the coronation oath, in sitting rooms and at picnic tables, to car radios or pub TV screens, how many did so with a sense of fingers crossed behind their backs? The innovation of the people's declaration of allegiance to King Charles III had been designed, in the words of the archbishop of Canterbury, to offer "the general public" what for centuries had been the preserve of "national figures". The idea was that this would not just be a behind-abbey-doors head-nodding of ladies of the thistle and knights of the garter to acknowledge the new king, but a "great cry" of loyalty "around the nation and across the world".

Over the course of the past week, commentators have been highlighting the demographics of declining support for the institution; the young aren't overly bothered with the late-life king. The institution has survived poor ratings on and off for centuries, of course. But what Saturday's ceremony emphasised was that some of the foundations of royalty are also in steep decline. The sonorous liturgy and soaring music still move the heart. But the words do not carry the awesome weight they did at the late queen's coronation in 1953, and certainly not when they were promoted by James I to unite his kingdom and its warring Christian factions with the Bible of 1611. To his great credit, King Charles III has never been shy of using his birth-given status to address some of the tougher questions of the world beyond his own privilege. His instinctive and informed defence of the natural environment, and of rural communities, has been profound and prescient; as have his initiatives to offer skills and hope to young and challenged people across the country. It is now in his gift to employ that empathic spirit to shape the tone and relevance of his reign.

The events in Westminster Abbey were designed to mark a new chapter in nation and commonwealth. That celebration of new beginnings must find sensible ways to involve and explore the question of whether Britain still wants this hereditary institution at the centre of power; and, if it does, whether it should persist in all its current grandeur.



## Don't close the chapter on COVID

For those who have already received news that the WHO announced that the COVID-19 pandemic was no longer a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, it should be noted that its Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned, too, that "However, that does not mean COVID-19 is over as a global health threat."

By ending its state of global emergency, the WHO seeks to support nations globally to downgrade their control over this pandemic. Cross-border population flow will hopefully resume, while the complicated procedures of traveling will end. The measures to be taken by nations globally will be like what China has done since Jan 8, namely to suspend the class-A pandemic measures applied on COVID-19 and take class-B measures that match it. The just-concluded May Day holiday has witnessed 274 million tourists with a considerable consumption volume that indicates the potential of free travels in boosting the economy back to its right track. The world has yet to be like what it was before the pandemic, but we are working toward that direction.

Yet the past three years, which have already become an untearable page in human history, should not be simply closed and covered with dust. There are quite a few lessons to be learned from the three years. Had the two successive sessions of US administrations, one Republican and one Democratic, fought the pandemic in a science-guided rather than politicized manner, a large part of the 1.12 million lives lost could have been saved.

Had the US and certain other Western nations better governed their societies, it would not have been a so fierce quarrel on whether to wear a mask, during which lives had already been lost. There are many more. The COVID-19 pandemic will pass, but no one can be sure whether a new challenge named after a new number might come in whichever year. The lessons to be learned today will grant mankind better capability to cope with that tomorrow.

# Pakistan's political landscape and constitutional ambiguity

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



In short, Pakistan is facing a complex political situation where the government and opposition parties are at odds over the holding of elections. The postponement of the provincial elections has raised constitutional concerns, and the involvement of the military establishment has further complicated the issue. The role of the judiciary

Pakistan is currently facing a political deadlock as the federal government and opposition party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), continue to face off over the holding of elections. The PTI held a meeting at Lahore's Minar-e-Pakistan Tower grounds, where Imran Khan addressed a large gathering of supporters, announcing a program to save Pakistan's failing economy as part of his year-long campaign to return to office. However, the ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif is determined to hold off polling for as long as possible for provincial and national assembly elections, citing the country's unpreparedness for the elections, especially the threat of terrorist attacks by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militant group in the coming months. The Electoral Commission of Pakistan announced its inability to conduct fair and just elections in light of the security situation and financial problems, postponing the mandatory provincial elections from late April to early October. This move, ignoring the constitution, came after the army announced its failure to provide security for the polls due to continued engagement in counter-terrorism operations.

Imran Khan sought the intervention of Pakistan's highest courts, filing a suo-motu notice to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, accusing the Election Commission and the Sharif government of engaging in treason to break the constitution. The government has gone to the Supreme Court to provide legal support for its extra-constitutional measures.

Chief Justice Umar Atta Bandial is now in a central role in trying to break the political deadlock in Pakistan. Against a backdrop of deep politicization of bar associations, seemingly divergent sympathies among senior judges, and questions about the impartiality of the judiciary, the chief justice has emerged as a key character in a political drama. Many believe that the result will eventually be written as per the wish of Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir. Even if Khan prevails in the Supreme Court, there is a real possibility that the government and the security establishment may choose not to implement his decision.

For the first time in Pakistan's history, the ruling coalition government appears to be trying to implement the country's infamous "ideological neces-

sity" without formally announcing it or seeking the approval of the Supreme Court.

The military establishment and the responsible political elite will determine when a situation amounts to a criminal offense, without justifying the breach of constitutional obligations.

Behind this argument lies a fundamental constitutional dilemma for Pakistan: under what circumstances and by whose authority should national security concerns take precedence over constitutional obligations and the rule of law? The conflicting views intensified when the Electoral Commission of Pakistan announced its inability to conduct fair and just elections in light of the security situation and financial problems.

In short, Pakistan is facing a complex political situation where the government and opposition parties are at odds over the holding of elections. The postponement of the provincial elections has raised constitutional concerns, and the involvement of the military establishment has further complicated the issue. The role of the judiciary in resolving the deadlock will be crucial, and it remains to be seen how the situation will unfold in the coming days and weeks.

# Israeli govt pushing a divided country toward civil war

Yossi Mekelberg

Instead, rattled by the daily protests against their anti-democratic legislation and rhetoric, the government is continuing to inflame the situation and even went so far as to organize its own rally. This was not designed merely to advocate for what it misleadingly describes as "judicial reforms," but to plainly incite against those who oppose the government, pushing Israeli society one step closer to political violence. Optimistically, although unrealistically, the supporters of the coalition government and the champions of the judicial overhaul ploy branded their march and rally as the "March of the Million," under the slogan

There is nothing about the current Israeli government to instill confidence that it has any intention of upholding the liberal-democratic system, or that it has any idea of where it is leading the country.

Not only are Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his colleagues causing anxiety among millions of people, but their distress is showing too. Common sense would dictate that this should make them more conducive to backing down from their misguided and miscalculated assault on their country's democratic institutions and processes.

Instead, rattled by the daily protests against their anti-democratic legislation and rhetoric, the government is continuing to inflame the situation and even went so far as to organize its own rally. This was not designed merely to advocate for what it misleadingly describes as "judicial reforms," but to plainly incite against those who oppose the government, pushing Israeli society one step closer to political violence. Optimistically, although unrealistically, the supporters of the coalition government and the champions of the judicial overhaul ploy branded their march and rally as the "March of the Million," under the slogan

In actuality, estimates of the crowd size ranged between 150,000 and 200,000, similar to the number of people that take to the streets in Tel Aviv every Saturday in the weekly protests against the judicial overhaul, and about half the number of protesters across the country as a whole who reject the weakening of the judiciary among other anti-democratic measures planned by the governing coalition. This could hardly be regarded as a ringing endorsement. One of the most disturbing features of the event was the deliberate misrepresentation of the substance of the rejection of the government proposals, and the smearing of those who lead the opposition to them. To begin with, there has been no attempt whatsoever by anybody to "steal the election." To reiterate: Last year's election was won by those who eventually formed the current coalition government and there is no question about the validity of the election result. However, there is a huge difference between the legitimacy of the outcome of the election, and the legitimacy of the actions of those who have come to power as a result. This Israeli government is trying to destroy the very system that allowed it to take power, and

by doing so prevent any alternative political grouping to lead the country in the future. At the same time, it is harming the social and legal mechanisms that have long been in place to protect the political and civil liberties of the people.

The accusation that those protesting against the government's undermining of the system of democratic checks and balances are refusing to accept the election result was at the heart of the speeches during the pro-government rally led by Justice Minister Yariv Levin, who is the driving force behind the judicial overhaul.

For some unfathomable reason, he harbors a deep-seated resentment of the Supreme Court. Together with his sidekick, Simcha Rothman — a member of the Knesset who is treating with contempt its Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, which he chairs — Levin has given us a clear indication of what would happen should the coalition succeed in its blitz of anti-democratic legislation.

Disingenuously, he claimed during the rally that the public backed the judicial overhaul "in a referendum six months ago," referring to the coalition's election victory. But this is a newly invented narrative that has little to do with the events as they actually unfolded.

Many of the proposals currently before the Knesset were not presented to voters during the election campaign. On the contrary, they were deliberately concealed, especially from the soft right within the Likud party. As a consequence of this coalition's deception, the latest opinion polls indicate that were a general election to be held today, the coalition would lose 15 of its 64 seats, leaving it with 49, while the parties that formed the previous coalition, led by Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid, would win 62 seats, compared with the 51 they currently hold. This is the Israeli public's verdict on the government's attack on the country's democracy. At the same time President Isaac Herzog was discussing, a stone's throw from the rally, a possible compromise with representatives of both camps, Yariv, Rothman, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich were deliberately inflaming the situation to derail any chance of finding an acceptable formula to end the standoff. They played to the gallery, many of whom were religious hard-liners and from the illegal settle-

ments in the occupied West Bank, who are inclined to support vicious attacks that depict Supreme Court judges as elitists who put themselves above the law, not to mention the leftists who oppose the settlements and settlers. Every time the Supreme Court was mentioned, the crowd booed. But it didn't stop there. Speakers at the rally drew oversimplified battle lines, as have other members of the Knesset and the mobilized right-wing media, between those they described as "first-class citizens," privileged, mainly Ashkenazi Jews who are those opposing the government, and "second-class citizens," the Mirzhai Jews the government claims it is trying to support and protect. Nothing could be farther from the truth — and there is no Ashkenazi elite more privileged than Levin, Rothman and Netanyahu, who have done nothing to help low-income families better themselves in all the many years during which Likud has been in power. In an attempt to remain in power, and promote their agenda, the government is seeking to divide Israeli society and polarize the debate. To paraphrase Michelle Obama, when those involved in the protests against the government go higher and higher in their standards, the government's supporters go lower and lower. In a passage of sheer incitement directed against the Supreme Court, with no shred of evidence or truth to support his distorted worldview, Levin scolded the judges and claimed that they safeguard the rights of the families of terrorists rather than their victims; that they protect rapists instead of punishing them; and do not even defend the lives of Israeli Defense Forces soldiers in face of terrorists. He could have saved himself the bother of spreading these lies by proceeding straight to accusing the judges of treason. Do not be surprised if a judge, or anybody else who supports the judiciary, should soon find themselves in harm's way because of this incitement. At a time when the country desperately requires a prudent government that can quench the flames of conflict, it instead has the misfortune to be led by those who thrive on discord and polarization, and do not care if they leave scorched earth behind them when they eventually depart.

I am quite confident that by the end of this battle they will be kicked out of office, and democratically so. I just hope that this happens before they push a very fragmented society into civil war.

Courtesy: Arab News



## Briefs

## Afghan FM meets COAS Gen Asim Munir

FROM PAGE 01  
traditional support for the people of Afghanistan and acknowledged the important role that Pakistan continues to play in facilitating peace and development in Afghanistan. He also expressed his desire to work closely with Pakistan to promote regional stability and prosperity. Both sides agreed on the importance of maintaining regular contacts to strengthen bilateral ties and address issues of common concern. The COAS reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to a stable, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

## 90 days means 90 days...

FROM PAGE 01  
The Chief Justice quoted many Quranic verses in order to make it clear that laws are made for the welfare of people and Islam protects rights and religious independence of minorities. Constitution of Pakistan also protects rights of the minorities. He said, also recognized services of the former chief justice Tassaddiq Jilani and others.

## Parliament will assert supremacy..

FROM PAGE 01  
PM Shehbaz said ex-  
judge of the apex court used suo motu notices for his personal and political interests and not for public interest. The prime minister added that the audio leak of the former CJ's son is a proof that a conspiracy was hatched to bring the PTI chief to power in which Nisar himself was also involved. He further stated that the House committee had called the ex-chief justice and his son to answer questions about their involvement in the sale of tickets for Rs120 million. PM Shehbaz said that elections in the country will take place on the same day and parliament will assert its supremacy at all costs. "Elections will take place on one day. In Punjab, in the past, there was a wrong impression that it is the big brother of the provinces. All provinces are equal. Conducting elections in Punjab on one day is not in Pakistan's interest," he said. The premier added that the parliament's constitutional rights will be protected and it has one voice on this matter. "There is no doubt that parliament, within its limits, will assert its authority. The whole parliament stands united. Parliament will get itself asserted within its legal remit," he asserted.

## PM invites Scottish leader...

FROM PAGE 01  
the important and positive contribution of the British Pakistani community to the progress and development of Scotland and across the UK. He wished him success in the discharge of his responsibilities. The two leaders agreed to further strengthen historic ties between Pakistan and Scotland, including in the domains of trade, investment, education, water management, wind & solar technology and people to people links. The two sides agreed to work collaboratively to promote joint ventures in education, skills development and renewables. They also explored ways to leverage the Scottish Pakistani entrepreneurs to promote investment in Pakistan. They also agreed to work collaboratively to address the challenge of climate change. In this regard Pakistan suggested holding an Investment Conference in Scotland and separately arrange a road show to showcase Pakistan's renewable energy potential in Scotland. The Prime Minister further thanked the Scottish government for its generous contribution to floods relief last year. Mr. Yousaf leads the Scottish National Party, and was elected in March by the Scottish Parliament to head the Scottish government. He is the first British national of Pakistani heritage to hold the coveted position.

## PTDC showcasing Pakistan rich tourism potential at Korea's fair

The KOTFA is the only international travel fair in Korea where the official tourism organizations at home and abroad are participating and sponsoring



DNA

SEOUL: The Pakistan Tourism Development Cooperation (PTDC) is showcasing Pakistan's rich tourism potential at the biggest tourism fair of Korea "Seoul International Travel Fair 2023"

scheduled from 4 to 7 May. The fair was continuing in collaboration with the Pakistan Embassy at Seoul and Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), said a press release received here on Sunday. Pakistan Embassy in the Republic of Korea, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan

Trip Trails, Pakistan Sitara Travel and Tours to Central Asia were participating from the country. Tourism stakeholders are exploring the beauty and diversity of our country at the Pakistan Pavilion along with great business opportunities. The Korea World Travel Fair (KOTFA) is,

with its 34-year history, the largest international travel fair in Korea where 70 countries are participating to promote their tourism resources and cultures. The KOTFA is the only international travel fair in Korea where the official tourism organizations at home and abroad are participat-

ing and sponsoring. The KOTFA is supporting to strengthen the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Korea by combining inbound, outbound, and intraband tourism together and providing a marketplace for the mutual relationships among tourism businesses at home and abroad.

## Milan clubs win ahead of Champions League showdown

DNA

ROME: AC Milan and Inter Milan secured matching 2-0 victories over Roman clubs as they briefly swapped places in Serie A ahead of their Champions League semi-final clash. Milan briefly jumped from sixth to fourth, leapfrogging Inter, with a home victory over second-place Lazio in the early game. "We played a great game. Now there is plenty of time to recover ahead of the semi-final against Inter," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli. "Now let's think about the Champions League." Inter then jumped back to fourth when they won away at Roma, keeping Jose Mourinho's team outside the European places. Inter coach, Simone Inzaghi said the Champions League

semi-final would be "a showdown played over 180 minutes." "We know what we have to do," he added. At the San Siro, Ismael Bennacer pounced on a loose ball in the Lazio area and thrashed his shot home to give AC Milan the lead in the 17th minute. After 29 minutes, wingback Theo Hernandez collected a roll-out from goalkeeper Mike Maignan on the edge of the Milan box. After shrugging off an early challenge, the Frenchman ran unhindered deep into the Lazio half before thumping a dipping 30-metre shot past Ivan Provedel. Lazio did not manage a shot on target, although Toma Basic scuffed a close-range chance in the

dying seconds. The two Milan clubs meet in the first leg of a Champions League semi-final on Wednesday and both seemed to have an eye on that match. Milan withdrew Rafael Leao after 10 minutes. The winger indicated to the bench that he had a thigh problem and, after a discussion, was replaced. "He stopped in time," said Pioli. "We'll see tomorrow. At the end of the game he was serene, he felt good, I don't think it's something particularly serious. We are able to play a great game even without him." Inter left several regular attacking starters on the bench against injury-hit



Roma. Edin Dzeko and Henrikh Mkhitaryan remained spectators throughout while Lautaro Martinez appeared for the last 30 minutes. Left-back Federico Dimarco gave Inter the lead after 33 minutes and Romelu Lukaku added the second in the 74th minute. Inzaghi said that his changes reflected the health of his squad. "Now I have the chance to choose and rotate both in midfield and in attack," he said. Roma also have an eye on Europe. They stayed seventh, five points behind Inter in the last Champions League place, but have another route into that competition if they win the Europa League. Roma host Leverkusen in the first leg of a semi-final on Thursday. Mourinho gathered his players on the field at the final whistle.

## Alvarez calls out Bivol after Ryder win

GUADALAJARA: Undisputed super middleweight champion Saul "Canelo" Alvarez retained his titles in style with a unanimous victory over Britain's John Ryder in front of a home crowd in Guadalajara, Mexico, on Saturday. Alvarez was the significantly busier fighter in the early exchanges, leaving Ryder with blood seeping from his nose in the third round before sending the Briton to the canvas in the fifth with a big left-right combination. Ryder grew into the contest as it wore on but was unable to offset the punishment he was dealt in the first half of the bout, with Alvarez receiving scores of 120-107, 118-109 and 118-109 from the three judges to seal the win. "It's a historic moment for me. I'm blessed to be here with my people who have supported me from the beginning," said Alvarez, who was born in Guadalajara and grew up in the neighbouring town of Juacatlan. "He's a very strong fighter, man. When they're going for everything (all the championship belts), they turn it on. They become more difficult than usual. But I know that. I'm in this position a long time and I know. "I respect my opponents because I know they're coming for everything." Saturday's fight, which bettered Alvarez's record to 59-2-2, was the 32-year-old's first since undergoing hand surgery after beating rival Gennady Golovkin last year. Asked about his hand, Alvarez said it felt good, adding: "Not in the beginning. I needed a couple rounds, three rounds, to start punching to know I was good with the hand." Right after his win, Alvarez called for a rematch with Dmitry Bivol, who inflicted the second of only two losses on Alvarez's resume when the pair clashed in a light heavyweight bout last year. - DNA

## Klopp hails 'all-time great' Salah

LIVERPOOL: Mohamed Salah's landmark goal sealed Liverpool's 1-0 win against Brentford to keep their Premier League top-four hopes alive on Saturday. The Egypt forward's first-half finish made him the first player in Liverpool history to net in nine successive games at Anfield, with his strike taking him to 100 career goals at the stadium. He also moved level with Steven Gerrard's Liverpool tally of 186 goals, sitting in joint fifth place in the club's all-time scoring list. For the third season in a row, Salah has reached 30 goals in all competitions. "Mohamed Salah is special. A lot of people don't appreciate players when they are still playing. For us, it's clear. He is an all-time great," Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said. "I can't see him stopping, that's just his nature. You need to have this desire to score goals. He works hard to close players down. We all know some world class players don't do that, but he does. I'm really proud of him." Klopp's fifth-placed team climbed within one point of fourth-placed Manchester United after their sixth successive league victory. - Agencies

ISLAMABAD: Star Olympian Shahnaz Sheikh believes with rapid changes happening in the international hockey, Pakistan needs to take all-out measures to improve the national game. There were times when Pakistan was the most successful team in World Cups, Olympics and Champions Trophy with winning four World Cups in 1971, 1978, 1982 and 1994. Pakistan also has three gold medals in Olympic Games field hockey tournaments in Rome 1960, Mexico City 1968 and Los Angeles 1984. Then the downfall began and an always-winning team that played all World Cup editions, could not qualify for 2014 and 2023 mega events. Sheikh pleads to blend young players with experienced hands for forming a squad that owns the potential to beat any team in the world. "Players need to improve their movements and points marking in the D area. They should avoid counterat-

## Pakistan needs to take all-out measures to improve hockey: Shahnaz Sheikh

tacks and improve the conversion of four penalty corners at least two must be utilized," Shahnaz told APP. "We need to strongly work on all these things if we want to improve our game. Our players must play with unity and avoid individual point scoring in any game," he commented. At present, the Pakistan national hockey team holds the 16th spot in International Hockey Federation (FIH) rankings, further suggesting measures for improvement, he said, there were around 28 Education Boards in the country with hundreds of schools affiliated with each Board.

"Therefore, if each government school is allowed to participate in tournaments, the total number of participating teams would be in hundreds. This practice would be a sort of talent hunt bringing new players to the national squad." He also suggested designated hockey fields to promote the game as he recalled, "in our times plentiful of national and district tournaments were held annually for improvement of players mental and physical strength." "Then there were different departments, offering jobs to players. But, rapid changes in the hockey setup affected the game badly," he said. - APP

## Real Madrid win Copa del Rey for 20th time

MADRID: Rodrygo Goes fired Real Madrid to Copa del Rey glory with a clinical double in a 2-1 victory over Osasuna in Seville on Saturday, with Brazilian compatriot Vinicius Junior playing a part in both goals. Carlo Ancelotti's Madrid earned their 20th Spanish Cup at La Cartuja in their 40th final, ending a nine-year wait to lift the trophy again. Osasuna, who have never won a major trophy, fought well but ultimately fell short against the reigning Spanish and European champions, who face Manchester City on Tuesday in the Champions League semi-finals. Madrid have now won all six of the trophies available to them during Ancelotti's second reign at the club, after the Italian returned in 2021. Rodrygo fired Madrid ahead inside two minutes after Vinicius' run down the left, and Ancelotti's team had the better chances in the first half. However, Lucas Torro levelled for Osasuna in the 58th minute to give them hope of an upset in their first cup final since 2005, and second ever. Rodrygo whisked it away, firing home after a rebound fell his way following another Vinicius charge, ensuring Madrid would take the trophy back to the capital. "They made the difference, Vini unbalanced them and Rodrygo scored the two goals," said Ancelotti of his Brazilian wingers. Madrid beat both Atletico Madrid and then rivals Barcelona

to reach the final and Ancelotti said it was time to celebrate, but not too heavily ahead of the clash with City. "This Copa arrived at an important moment, we came through very tricky ties, it's a deserved prize against strong opponents," added the coach. "This night we will celebrate, a little bit, not too much, and then we will get back to work for Tuesday." Osasuna coach Jagoba Arrasate deployed midfielder Jon Moncayola at right-back to try and stop Madrid winger Vinicius. It didn't work. Vinicius broke in down the left in the second minute and his dangerous cut-back was missed by Fede Valverde but slammed home by Rodrygo. The Brazilian, in sparkling form,



scored the earliest Copa del Rey final goal since 2006 - a year after Osasuna finished runners-up to Real Betis. Karim Benzema should have doubled Madrid's lead but Sergio Herrera saved brilliantly to deny the forward after another lightning Vinicius break. Osasuna earned a foothold in the game and came inches from equalising when on loan Barcelona winger Ez Abde broke through on goal but Dani Carvajal cleared his effort off the line. Madrid continued to push for their second goal - David Alaba struck the crossbar with a free kick and Vinicius went down in the box under pressure from Osasuna defender David Garcia. His appeals were waved away and Vinicius clashed with Garcia, who attended the 2005 final as a childhood supporter, who ruffled his hair to annoy him further. Vinicius was booked just before half-time for complaining, and exchanged heated words with Osasuna substitute Chimy Avila as the players walked in at half-time. Torro drilled Osasuna level from the edge of the box when Abde's deflected cross fell into his path. The club's passionate supporters celebrated wildly, including letting off a flare which needed to be extinguished, and one fan was taken away on a stretcher, although he appeared to be smiling. - Agencies

## Indian propaganda unfounded, says FO

FROM PAGE 01  
emphasized the critical importance of relevant UN Security Council resolutions for a peaceful settlement of Jammu and Kashmir dispute. Clearly, he based his case on international law," it was reiterated. The spokesperson further stressed that the journalistic norms must be respected while reporting on sensitive inter-state matters. The ministry of foreign affairs, the spokesperson further said, had already articulated Pakistan's position on the G-20 Tourism Working Group meeting in IIOJK in its press release on April 11. Pakistan had already expressed its strong indignation over India's decision to hold the G-20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar on 22-24 May. Scheduling of two other meetings of a consultative forum on youth affairs (Y-20) in Leh and Srinagar in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) was also termed as 'equally disconcerting'. "India's irresponsible move is the latest in a series of self-serving measures to perpetuate its illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir in sheer disregard of the UN Security Council resolutions and in violation of the principles of the UN Charter and international law. Pakistan vehemently condemns these moves," the earlier press release on April 11 maintained. Such events could not hide the reality of Jammu and Kashmir being an internationally recognized dispute that had remained on the agenda of United Nations Security Council for over seven decades. "Nor could such activities divert the international community's attention from India's brutal suppression of the people of IIOJK including illegal attempts to change the demographic composition of the occupied territory," it was added.

## Imran Khan greenlights campaign in Lahore

FROM PAGE 01  
He also directed the candidates to address the concerns of the factions in their respective constituencies to persuade them to join the election campaign. On Saturday, Mr Khan he would keep on staging rallies, starting from next week till May 14, and would not take rest until elections were held. Addressing a pro-CJP rally at Lakshmi Chowk, he said caretaker governments in Punjab and KP had lost their terms and constitutional standings adding that he would demand the courts to hold elections in KP too. "This government has brought sensitive price index to half," he added. He said the way Indian FM Subrahmanyan Jaishankar behaved with our FM Bilawal Bhutto [at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting] was "shameful for all of us". "Mr Bhutto, do you even think before spending money on your foreign trips," he asked.

## Mediators seek end to Sudan conflict

FROM PAGE 01  
that has turned parts of the Sudanese capital Khartoum into war zones and derailed an internationally backed plan to usher in civilian rule following years of unrest and uprisings. Battles since mid-April have killed hundreds of people and wounded thousands of others, disrupted aid supplies and sent 100,000 refugees fleeing abroad. While mediators are seeking a path to peace, both sides have made it clear they would only discuss a humanitarian truce, not negotiate an end to the war. Confirming his group's attendance, RSP leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, commonly known as Hemedti, said he hoped the talks would achieve their intended aim of securing safe passage for civilians. Hemedti has vowed to either capture or kill army leader Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, and there was also evidence on the ground that both sides remain unwilling to make compromises to end the bloodshed.



## Briefs

## Death toll rises to 200 in Congo's flood

KIGALI: The death toll from flooding and landslides in eastern Congo hit more than 200, an official said Saturday as search efforts continue. The disaster in Kale territory in South Kivu province occurred overnight Thursday with the villages of Bushuhu and Nyamukubi being the most affected. "At least 203 bodies have been recovered so far but the death toll could rise as the search efforts continue for more people missing," Kalehe Administrator Thomas Bakenge told reporters. Flooding was triggered by heavy rains which caused the Chibira River to burst its banks, destroying buildings and burying victims under the rubble. South Kivu Governor Theo Ngwabidje said the provincial government dispatched medical, shelter and food supplies. —Agencies

## Israel releases Jordan lawmaker

TEL AVIV: Israeli authorities released a Jordanian lawmaker to his home country on Sunday, Israel's domestic security agency said, after he allegedly tried smuggling dozens of rifles and handguns through an Israeli-controlled border crossing. Legislator Imad Al-Adwan's arrest threatened to further strain ties between Israel and neighboring Jordan, which have had tense relations recently despite a nearly three-decade-old peace treaty. Israel viewed the incident as serious, but Al-Adwan's release signaled it was hoping to put the potentially combustible affair behind it.

Al-Adwan was arrested on Apr. 22 with bags full of more than 200 guns, the Shin Bet agency said in a statement. It said its investigation revealed that Al-Adwan carried out 12 separate smuggling attempts since early 2022, using his diplomatic passport to bring in anything from electronic cigarettes to gold to birds. The Shin Bet said that since the start of the year, he made numerous successful attempts to smuggle in arms. The smuggling was done in exchange for unspecified amounts of money, the Shin Bet said. The agency said he was released for "further investigation and pursuit of justice" by Jordanian authorities. Jordan's Foreign Ministry, as well as a brother of Al-Adwan, could not immediately be reached for comment. Jordanian state media reported that authorities were taking steps to bring Al-Adwan to trial based on evidence made available to them. Those steps included lifting his parliamentary immunity and referring his case to judicial officials. —APP

## 14,600 people killed in gun violence in 2023

WASHINGTON: A total of 14,600 people have died from gun violence in the US so far in 2023, the Gun Violence Archive said Saturday. Of those killed, 521 were teens and 93 were children. A total of 199 mass shootings have occurred as of Saturday. Suicides continue to make up the vast majority of gun deaths, according to the tracker. While officer-involved shootings left 487 people dead, 515 others died in unintentional shootings. The latest mass shooting took place in the US state of Texas. Eight people were killed Saturday during a mall shooting in Allen, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) north of Dallas. The gunman was also killed by police. At least seven victims between the ages of 5 to 61 years old were hospitalized with injuries. Three are in critical condition and four are in stable condition, according to officials. Texas was also hit by another mass shooting late last month when a gunman killed five of his neighbors, including a 9-year-old boy, with an AR-15 rifle in the victims' home in Cleveland on April 28. The suspected gunman, Francisco Oropesa, 38, was arrested Tuesday after a four-day manhunt. —APP

## We need to prepare according to changing dimensions of tech

## DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has urged the stakeholders to prepare themselves according to the changing dimensions of science and technology. "The education policy should be shaped according to the demand of the industry; the knowledge economy is currently leaving the sub-sectors behind." Tools like artificial intelligence and ChatGPT have revolutionized the world and we have noticed that human resources have been replaced by machines i.e. robots. RCCI President Saqib Rafiq expressed these views at the "Education Excellence Recognition" ceremony arranged by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) at the Aiwan-e-Sadr Islamabad. President Dr. Arif Alvi was the chief guest of the ceremony. The aim of awarding shields to institutions and personalities who have demonstrated outstanding performance in the educa-

tion sector. A large number of industrialists including foreign ambassadors, academia from across Pakistan, personalities representing the social sector, officials of chambers of commerce, small chambers and women chambers were present on the occasion. President Saqib Rafiq said that if we look at the data,

nine out of ten companies in the world used to be oil companies, now there is only one, while the rest have been replaced by IT and science. We need to make joint efforts and strong commitment to deal with new challenges. Where we are the fifth largest population in the world, we can also become

the fifth largest economic power, he added. Group leader Sohail Altaf said that unfortunately our literacy rate is the lowest in the region and the education budget is also less than other countries. Continuity of policies is imperative for the progress and development of all sectors,

especially education, he added. Chairman Waqas Bin Mehmud said that to move forward we have to encourage creative thinking. Prominent personalities in the promotion of education and awareness and in social services include Shahzad Roy (Zindagi Trust), Dr. Amjad Saqib (Akhawat), Zamurd Khan

(Sweet Homes), Anwar Masood (Education and Literary Services), Kinaird College, University of Azad Kashmir, Forman Christian College. The President Dr Arif Alvi presented the shields to those who have played outstanding performance and role in the provision of services in education.



## Eight killed in shooting at Texas shopping centre

WASHINGTON: The shooting, the latest eruption of what has been an unprecedented pace of mass killings in the US, sent hundreds fleeing in panic. A gunman at a shopping mall in the US state of Texas killed eight people on Saturday before being shot dead by a police officer who happened to be nearby, authorities said. At least seven people are being treated for injuries, including victims reported to be as young as 5 years old. After an initial search for a second shooter, authorities say the gunman, who has not been publicly identified, acted alone. Dashcam video that circulated online showed the gunman getting out of a car and shooting at people on the sidewalk. More than three dozen shots could be

heard as the vehicle recording the video drove off. Authorities did not immediately provide details about the victims at Allen Premium Outlets, a sprawling outdoor shopping centre, but witnesses reported seeing children among them. Some said they also saw what appeared to be a police officer and a mall security guard unconscious on the ground. The shooting, the latest eruption of what has been an unprecedented pace of mass killings in the US, sent hundreds fleeing in panic. Barely a week before, authorities say, a man fatally shot five people in Cleveland, Texas, after a neighbour asked him to stop firing his weapon while a baby slept. A 16-year-old pretzel stand employee, Maxwell Gum, described a

virtual stampede of shoppers. He and others sheltered in a storage room. "We started running. Kids were getting trampled," Gum said. "My co-worker picked up a 4-year-old girl and gave her to her parents." Allen Fire Chief Jonathan Boyd said seven people including the shooter died at the scene. Nine victims were taken to area hospitals, but two of them died. Three of the wounded were in critical condition in the evening, Boyd said, and four were stable. An Allen Police officer was in the area on an unrelated call when he heard shots at 3:36 p.m., the police department wrote on Facebook. "The officer engaged the suspect and neutralized the threat. He then called for emergency personnel,"

it added. Mass killings are happening with staggering frequency in the United States this year: an average of about one a week, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University. The White House said President Biden had been briefed on the shooting and the administration had offered support to local officials. Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, who has signed laws easing firearms restrictions following past mass shootings, called it an "unspeakable tragedy." Fontayne Payton, 35, was at H&M when he heard the sound of gunshots through his headphones. "It was so loud, it sounded like it was right outside," Payton said. —APP

## Senior PKK terrorist killed by Turkish intelligence

ANKARA: Türkiye's National Intelligence Organization "neutralized" Eyvaz Beyaz, a wanted senior PKK terrorist, in a cross-border operation in northern Iraq, security sources said on Sunday. Beyaz, codenamed Zerdest Karadeniz, was targeted in an operation by the Turkish National Intelligence Organization in the Duhok-Gara region, said the sources, who requested anonymity due to restrictions on speaking to the media. Turkish authorities use the term "neutralized" to imply the terrorists in question surrendered or were killed or captured. PKK terrorists often hide out in northern Iraq, near the border with Türkiye, to plot more attacks. After joining the rural establishment of the terrorist group in 1994, Beyaz attacked gendarmerie troops in Türkiye's Black Sea province of Sinop in 2010 and a police vehicle in the city of the same name in 2011. He also carried out a bomb attack against gendarmerie in the Black Sea province of Trabzon in 2012. Wanted by Interpol with a red notice, Beyaz is also on the Turkish Interior Ministry's list of wanted terrorists. He is also responsible for attacks on operations launched by Turkish security forces in the Zap region of northern Iraq, the sources added. Last Thursday Turkish intelligence forces also "neutralized" Ahmet Gumus, a so-called training officer of the PKK terror group, and then on Friday did the same to Necirvan Seven, another wanted PKK terrorist, in northern Iraq. In its more than 35-year terror campaign against Türkiye. —APP

## 12 killed in vehicle crash in Turkiye

ISTANBUL: A multi-vehicle crash in southern Turkey's Hatay province killed at least 12 people and injured 31 others, including three seriously, officials said. A truck crossed into opposite lanes after the driver lost control late Saturday, colliding with nine cars and two minibuses, the state-run Anadolu news agency reported. Many of the vehicles were parked by the roadside near a gas station as friends and relatives said goodbye to men leaving to carry out mandatory military service. Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said that fires broke out on the Iskenderun-Antakya highway. The minister tweeted that 22 ambulances and three medical rescue teams were sent to the scene in Topbogazli. "May God have mercy on our citizens who lost their lives, I express my condolences to their relatives," he tweeted. "We will do our best to ensure that the injured regain their health as soon as possible." Hatay was one of the worst hit of the 11 Turkish provinces affected by a Feb. 6 earthquake that devastated parts of Turkey and Syria. At least 50,783 died in Turkey, according to the government. —APP

## Slovakia's interim government resigns

BRATISLAVA: Slovakia's Prime Minister Eduard Heger said on Sunday he had asked the president to relieve him of his duties, after ministers' resignations weakened his cabinet that is serving in a caretaker capacity before elections in September. Heger is due to meet President Zuzana Caputova, who has the power to appoint a new caretaker prime minister, later on Sunday. Heger has faced opposition calls to make way for a technocrat administration to lead the central European country until early elections to take place in September. Polls find the public favours the biggest opposition party, which is led by former prime minister Robert Fico and has opposed increasing military aid to neighbouring Ukraine. The wrangling has paralysed politics in the NATO and European Union member that has been a strong backer of Kyiv since Russia's invasion. Its efforts to reduce the impact of high energy costs and inflation on its population have also driven political tensions. Heger said on Sunday he did not want the political crisis to drag on. "I decided to ask the president to remove my authority and to leave the president space to try with a technocrat government to stably and peacefully lead Slovakia to democratic parliamentary elections," he said in a televised news conference. —DNA

## Israel demolishes EU-funded school

OCCUPIED WEST BANK: Israeli army forces have demolished a Palestinian school in the occupied West Bank for lack of a building permit, according to a local official. Hassan Brijieh, the head of the Colonization and Wall Resistance Commission in Bethlehem, said Israeli forces and bulldozers moved into the town of Jibb Al Deeb, east of Bethlehem city, and demolished the European Union-funded school on Sunday. The al Tahadi school is located in the Oslo Accords-described Area C of the occupied West Bank, which is under Israeli army control and was first demolished by Israel in 2017 and then rebuilt. In March, an Israeli court granted an application from a right-wing Israeli organisation and ordered its demolition again. Brijieh said the school contains five classrooms and houses nearly 66 students between the first and fourth grades. The Palestinian Education Ministry condemned the school demolition and called on international and legal institutions to shoulder their responsibility towards Israeli violations. Israel widely uses the pretext of a lack of construction permits to demolish Palestinian homes, especially in Area C. —Agencies

## OIC welcomes Sudan talks in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH: The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), His Excellency Mr. Houssein Ibrahim Taha, welcomed the joint initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America to hold initial talks between representatives of the Sudanese Armed Forces and representatives of the Rapid Support Forces, on Saturday, 6 May 2023, in the city of Jeddah. Houssein Taha welcomed this initiative, which is in line with the communiqué adopted by the Organization's Executive Committee at its last meeting on Wednesday, 3 May 2023, which called for an immediate halt to the military escalation in order to preserve the gains of the Sudanese people, in view of the heavy loss of life and the destruction of the infrastructure. This makes it possible to give priority to dialogue by showing restraint and wisdom, and returning to the negotiating table as soon as possible in order to continue the peaceful efforts to resolve the Sudanese crisis. He called on the negotiating delegations of the two respective parties to work to stabilize the humanitarian truce and ensure the delivery of humanitarian and health assistance to the affected people, and to work hard to achieve an immediate and permanent ceasefire. The national interest of Sudan must thus prevail in order to preserve its unity and State institutions and to achieve the aspirations of the Sudanese people for security, peace, political stability and economic development. He once again appreciated the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the Islamic Summit, for its good offices and contacts with the Sudanese brothers and the regional and international parties concerned, with a view to reaching an immediate agreement. —DNA



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto welcomes Afghan Foreign Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. — DNA

## Japanese PM arrives in S. Korea for landmark summit

The United States and South Korea have in turn been ramping up their defence cooperation, staging a series of major military exercises including two trilateral drills involving Japan this year

## FOREIGN DESK

SEOUL: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida arrived in South Korea on Sunday as Seoul and Tokyo seek to restart their "shuttle diplomacy" and mend ties in the face of growing nuclear threats from Pyongyang. The plane carrying Kishida landed at Seoul Airport in Seongnam on Sunday – the first official bilateral visit by a Japanese leader to South Korea in over a decade. He was greeted by officials ahead of a key summit later in the day with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol. The East Asian neighbours, both key security allies of the United States, have long been at odds over historic issues linked to

Japan's brutal 1910 to 1945 colonial occupation of the Korean peninsula, including sexual slavery and forced labour. But President Yoon has made resetting ties with Japan a top priority for his administration, and was in Tokyo in March for a key fence-mending visit. Kishida said Sunday ahead of his departure that the two leaders were working to resume their so-called "shuttle diplomacy" – paused for years during a bitter trade spat linked to the forced labour issue. During their March summit, Kishida and Yoon agreed to end tit-for-tat trade curbs, with Kishida inviting the South Korean leader to a G7 meeting in Hiroshima this month. Kishida said he was looking forward to "an honest exchange of views" with Yoon,

"based on a relationship of trust". After his arrival, Kishida will visit the Seoul National Cemetery – where South Korea's war veterans are buried – to lay flowers. He will hold talks with Yoon on Sunday afternoon. Yoon is expected to host a dinner party at the presidential residence – likely serving Korean barbecue – and he may even cook for Kishida, according to local reports. In 2018, South Korea's Supreme Court ordered Japanese firms to compensate the wartime victims of forced labour, enraging Tokyo and triggering a breakdown in ties. But Yoon, who took office last year, has sought to bury the historical hatchet, earlier announcing a plan to compensate victims without direct involvement from

Tokyo. Kishida said Sunday that the leaders planned to hold "candid exchanges" on this topic. Around 100 South Koreans gathered Saturday to protest Kishida's trip, saying that Japan's wartime animosities must be on top of the agenda at Sunday's summit. Kishida "must sincerely apologise for Japan's crimes against humanity and fulfil its responsibilities," said demonstrator Kim Jae-won. The best possible outcome for Koreans would be for "Kishida to apologise in his own words," Benjamin A. Engel, research professor at the Institute of International Affairs at Seoul National University, told AFP. "Even then it probably won't be enough for many Koreans, but if Kishida has nothing new to say

compared with the previous meeting the summit will not be well received in Korea," Engel said. Efforts to mend ties come as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who last year declared his country an "irreversible" nuclear power, doubles down on weapons development and testing. Pyongyang has conducted a record-breaking string of launches in 2023, including test-firing the country's first solid-fuel ballistic missile – a technical breakthrough. The United States and South Korea have in turn been ramping up their defence cooperation, staging a series of major military exercises including two trilateral drills involving Japan this year.



## Briefs

**Vietnam records highest-ever temperature of 44.1C**

THANH HOA: Vietnam has recorded its highest ever temperature, just over 44C (111F) - with experts predicting it would soon be surpassed because of climate change. The record was set in the northern province of Thanh Hoa, where officials warned people to stay indoors during the hottest times of the day. Other countries in the region have also been experiencing extremely hot weather. Thailand reported a record-equaling 44.6C in its western Mak province. Meanwhile Myanmar's media reported that a town in the east had recorded 43.8C, the highest temperature for a decade. Both countries experience a hot period before the monsoon season but the intensity of the heat has broken previous records. In Hanoi, climate change expert Nguyen Ngoc Huy told AFP that Vietnam's new record was "worrying" given the "context of climate change and global warming". "I believe this record will be repeated many times," he said. "It confirms that extreme climate models are being proven to be true." - APP

**Elahi claims Khan promised him Punjab CM's post**

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi has claimed that party chairman Imran Khan had promised to give him the chief minister's post once again if their party wins the election in the province, media reported. Elahi, the former chief minister of Punjab, revealed during an interview that he had given a signed document to Khan about the Punjab Assembly's dissolution, asking the former prime minister to decide the date of the move.

"I gave him [Khan] in writing a signed document on dissolving Punjab Assembly and also attached my identity card with it and told him to write the date of dissolution of the assembly himself. We respect him and he also respects us and offered me to become the central president of the party and promised me that Moonis Elahi or I will be the next chief minister if the party wins," he stated.

# Panic as Russia evacuates town near nuclear plant

The IAEA has issued warnings previously about safety at the plant - which Russia captured in the opening days of its invasion last year - after shelling caused temporary power cuts

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russia has sparked a "mad panic" as it evacuates a town near the contested Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, a Ukrainian official says. Russia has told people to leave 18 settlements in the Zaporizhzhia region, including Enerhodar near the plant, ahead of Kyiv's anticipated offensive. The Ukrainian mayor of Melitopol, Ivan Fedorov, said there were five-hour waits as thousands of cars left. The UN's nuclear watchdog warned a "severe nuclear accident" could occur. Speaking to the BBC's Newshour programme Rafael Grossi - the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) - said the evacuation of residents near the nuclear plant indicated the possibility of heavy fighting between Russian

and Ukrainian forces around the plant. Although the plant's reactors were not producing electricity they were still loaded with nuclear material, he said. Mr Grossi added that he had had to travel through a minefield when he visited the plant a few weeks ago. Earlier, the IAEA warned in a statement that situation at the Zaporizhzhia plant was "becoming increasingly unpredictable and potentially dangerous". Operating staff were still at the site but there was "deep concern about the increasingly tense, stressful, and challenging conditions for personnel and their families". It said IAEA experts at the plant had "received information that the announced evacuation of residents from the nearby town of Enerhodar - where most plant staff live - has started". On Friday, the Russian-installed regional head Yevgeny Balitsky said that "in the past few days,

the enemy has stepped up shelling of settlements close to the front line". "I have therefore made a decision to evacuate first of all children and parents, elderly people, disabled people and hospital patients," he wrote on social media. The IAEA has issued warnings previously about safety at the plant - which Russia captured in the opening days of its invasion last year - after shelling caused temporary power cuts. In March the IAEA warned the plant was running on diesel generators to keep vital cooling systems going, after damage to power lines. Since Russia launched its invasion in February 2022 the number of staff at the plant has declined, the IAEA says, "but site management has stated that it has remained sufficient for the safe operation of the plant". Russian forces occupy much of the Zaporizhzhia region but not the regional capital

Zaporizhzhia, which lies just north-east of Enerhodar across the Dnipro reservoir. On Sunday, the Ukrainian general staff said civilians were being evacuated to the cities of Berdyansk and Prymorsk, further inside Russian-held territory. The exiled mayor of Melitopol, Ivan Fedorov, wrote on Telegram that shops in the evacuated areas had run out of goods and medicine. He also said hospitals were discharging patients into the street amid fears that electricity and water supplies could be suspended if Ukraine attacks the region. And he claimed that two-thirds of evacuation convoys - allegedly made up of civilians - consisted of retreating Russian troops. "The partial evacuation they announced is going too fast, and there is a possibility that they may be preparing for provocations and (for that reason) focusing on civilians," Mr Fedorov added.

## Russian pro-war writer hit by car bomb

MONITORING DESK

MOSCOW: A Russian pro-war writer who was seriously injured in a car bomb on Saturday is out of a medically induced coma, his spokeswoman says. Zakhar Prilepin, a vehement supporter of Russia's campaign in Ukraine, was hurt while driving in Russia's Nizhny Novgorod region. His driver died. Investigators claim that a suspect, Alexander Permyakov, has admitted working for Ukraine. Prilepin's spokesperson said the writer was "feeling well". "He is in as good spirits as can be given the situation. He's well. He passed along his thanks to his family," state media quoted his spokesperson Yelizaveta Kondakova as saying. Nizhny Novgorod Governor Gleb Nikitin wrote on Telegram that the writer's condition was "stable" and that "his mood is cheerful". The extent of the injuries Prilepin suffered in the explosion - which also killed his driver - are unclear.

## Rupee likely to remain stable

KARACHI: Owing to an anticipated increase in the supply of dollars in the foreign exchange market, the rupee is expected to remain stable against the dollar next week, trading within its current range, media reported. The supply of US dollars has significantly increased, which has contributed to an increase in the rupee-dollar three and six month forward premiums. This could result in the stability and slight appreciation of the rupee in the upcoming days. Resultantly, the difference between inter-bank and open market currency rates will shrink. During the outgoing week, the local unit gained Rs0.33 against the greenback in the inter-bank market as it moved in narrow bands. Tuesday and Friday's closing prices for the rupee were 283.92 and 283.59 respectively. - APP

## Dozens dead as ethnic clashes grip Indian state

WEB DESK

NEW DELHI: At least 30 people have been killed in ethnic clashes in the north-eastern Indian state of Manipur, officials say. The violence began earlier this week after a rally by indigenous communities against moves to grant tribal status to the main ethnic group in the state. Mobs attacked homes, vehicles, churches, and temples. Some reports put the death toll as high as 54. Around 10,000 people have reportedly been displaced. Thousands of troops have been sent in to maintain order. A curfew is in place in several districts and internet access has been suspended. Neighbouring states have begun evacuating their students from Manipur, which is in India's northeast and close to the border with Myanmar. The army says it is bringing the situation under control but the Hindu-nationalist BJP-led government in the state has been accused of not doing enough to prevent the violence. Members of the Meitei community, who account for at least 50% of the state's population, have been demanding inclusion under the Scheduled Tribe category for years. India reserves government jobs, college admissions and elected seats at all levels of government for communities under this category to rectify historical wrongs that have denied them equal opportunities. This status would give the Meiteis access to forest lands and guarantee them a proportion of government jobs and places in educational institutions.



RAWALPINDI: Afghan Interim Foreign Minister Amir Khan Mutaqqi calls on Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir. - DNA

## Arab govts vote for Syria's return to the Arab League

NEWS DESK

CAIRO: Arab government representatives in Cairo voted Sunday to return Syria to the Arab League after a 12-year suspension, according to the organization. The vote in the Egyptian capital came days after regional top diplomats met in Jordan to discuss a roadmap to return Syria to the Arab fold as the conflict continues to de-escalate, and soon before Saudi Arabia hosts the upcoming Arab League Summit on May 19. Syria's membership in the Arab League was suspended 12 years ago early on in the uprising-turned-conflict, which has killed nearly a half million people since March 2011 and displaced half of the country's pre-war population of 23 million. All 13 of the 22 member states that attended the session endorsed the decision. The Arab League generally tries to reach agreements by consensus but sometimes opts for simple majorities. There is

still no Arab consensus on normalization with Damascus. Several govts did not attend the meeting. Among the most notable absentees was Qatar, which continues to back opposition groups against Syrian President Bashar Assad's government, and continues to resist normalization with Damascus. The decision for Syria to return also includes a commitment to ongoing dialogue with Arab governments to gradually reach a political solution to the conflict, in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254. The Arab League in the decision also set up a communications committee consisting of Saudi Arabia and Syria's neighbors Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq to follow up on developments. In addition to commitments to a gradual resolution to the conflict, the decision also welcomed the Syrian government's willingness to cooperate with Arab countries to resolve "humanitarian, security, and political" crises that affected Syria and the region due to the conflict - namely refugees, "the threat of terrorism and drug smuggling."

## London police probe 3 vehicles under Nawaz's name

LONDON: The City of London Police are investigating the registration of three vehicles under the name of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif by unknown men with the intention to commit serious crimes, including terrorism. The police confirmed the investigation was initiated after Nawaz's London office reported to the police that three different vehicles were registered in his name and that someone intended to commit crimes. These vehicles were registered in March and April. Nawaz's office alerted the City of London Police as well as the Driver and Vehicles Licensing Agency (DVLA) when it received a postal communication at Avenfield flats sent by the DVLA that a vehicle number BF06NWC had been registered on the name of "Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif". When Nawaz's office in March told the DVLA that it was a fraud and not only that his name was written wrongly, but someone was trying to commit fraud and crime using Nawaz's name, an enforcement officer of DVLA replied: "Given the information you have provided we will investigate the matter further, we will write to you as soon those investigations are done." Another vehicle with registration number MM07MUB was registered in April against Nawaz's name. This was also reported to the DVLA and the police. - APP

## Wagner boss 'promised ammunition' after threat

MOSCOW: Russia's Wagner Group boss says Moscow has agreed to his demands for more ammunition, days after he threatened to withdraw his men from Bakhmut. On Thursday, Yevgeny Prigozhin attacked his Russian partners in a gruesome, expletive-filled rant, filmed among dozens of Wagner troops' corpses. The next day he said Wagner fighters would leave Bakhmut by 10 May. But on Sunday Prigozhin said Moscow had agreed to provide the supplies "needed to continue fighting" in the city. Prigozhin's apparent U-turn is not a huge surprise. He is a publicity seeker who has not followed through on previous threats. Russian troops and fighters from Wagner, a private military company, have been trying to capture Bakhmut for months - despite its questionable strategic value. Western officials believe thousands of Russian and Wagner troops have been killed in the fighting, and the eastern Ukrainian city has become a symbolic prize. Yet - although Russian troops and Wagner fighters are on the same side - it is an uneasy alliance. Prigozhin has regularly criticised Russian officials for what he claims is a lack of front-line support. - Agencies

## US recalls over 500,000 Covid tests over bacteria risk

NEW YORK: More than half a million Covid tests have been recalled by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) over bacteria concerns. The FDA said it "has significant concerns of bacterial contamination" in the test kit solution in some Pilot COVID-19 At-Home Tests. Using the contaminated solution "may pose safety concerns" as well as cause the test to give an inaccurate result. The agency warned tests should be thrown out immediately. Over 500,000 tests were distributed to the CVS drugstore and around 16,000 were distributed to Amazon. None were made available through one of the federal government's testing programmes. Contaminated tests can be verified by the lot numbers on the FDA's website. The liquid in the test kits was found to be contaminated "with organisms such as Enterococcus, Enterobacter, Klebsiella and Serratia species" that could cause illness for people with weakened immune systems, the FDA said. It urged people to be vigilant "for signs of bacterial infection", which could include "fever, discharge, red eyes, or any other concerning symptoms". - Agencies

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