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'Work has to continue' on Ukraine's EU bid, says Ursula Leyen

Detailed News On Page-07

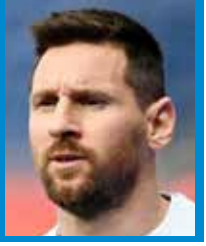
Türkiye ready to host talks for Sudan: Erdogan

Detailed News On Page-07



Messi's move to Saudi a 'done deal'

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

People won't take to streets: Marriyum

APP

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Tuesday that the masses would not come out in support of Imran Khan if he was arrested. Giving her reaction on Imran Khan's statement through her twitter handle, she said Imran would be arrested in connection with prohibited foreign funding case, Toshakhana gifts theft case and for not revealing his daughter. Many cases against Imran Khan were registered and he was guilty in all of them, she maintained.

Pakistan to strengthen ties with neighbors

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch Tuesday said that Pakistan would continue its support for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and focus on strengthening bilateral relations with its neighbouring countries. "Pakistan is a peace-loving country and wants good relations with all its neighbours, including, East Asia and the Middle East," she said while speaking to PTV news channel. Highlighting the importance of a peaceful and stable neighbourhood, she lauded the efforts of FM Bilawal Bhutto.

Karachi police arrests Ali Zaidi

DNA

KARACHI: Police has arrested several Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders including PTI Sindh president Ali Zaidi in Karachi. As per details, the police fired tear shells and aerial firing against the protestor on Shahrah-e-Faisal Karachi. The PTI leaders Ali Zaidi, Sindh Assembly MPA Adeel Ahmed and 23 other workers on Kala Pul. Earlier in the day, the PTI chairman, who was arrested in the Al-Qadir Trust case.

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IHC terms arrest legal; contempt notice to IGP, others Imran Khan arrested

PTI Chairman arrested from Islamabad High Court; NAB Chairman says moved according to law

Why Imran Khan was arrested today?

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Al-Qadir Trust case against Imran Khan pertains to land allegedly belonging to the trust which was allegedly taken over by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government during Imran Khan's tenure as the chief minister of the province. The case was filed in the Peshawar High Court by a petitioner who claimed to be a member of the Al-Qadir Trust. The petitioner alleged that the land was illegally taken over by the KP government without the consent of the trust and that Imran Khan was responsible for the takeover. The petitioner also claimed that the land was worth billions of rupees and that the trust suffered financial losses as a result of the takeover. Imran Khan and his lawyers have denied the allegations and argued that the land was legally acquired by the KP government for the construction of a hospital. They also argued that Imran Khan had no personal interest in the matter and that the decision to acquire the land was made by the provincial government. The case has been ongoing since 2017, with both sides presenting their arguments and evidence. The court has yet to issue a final verdict on the matter. Today Rangers arrested Former Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad.



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The country's restive politics is likely in for a flare-up as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan was arrested by Rangers personnel from Islamabad High Court (IHC) - acting on National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) warrant. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) termed the arrested of Imran Khan legal. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq announced the reserved verdict. The IHC also issued notices to the Islamabad inspector general of police and the interior secretary over contempt of court. The chief justice ordered the high court registrar to get a first information report (FIR) registered over the circumstances of the arrest, which included manhandling the lawyers present nearby as

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Section 144 imposed in major cities

DNA

ISLAMABAD - Administrations in Punjab, Baluchistan and the federal capital have imposed section 144 in the territory after the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan from Islamabad High Court. The Islamabad Police have warned of strict action against anti-social elements for violating Section 144 imposed in the federal capital. The police also advised the people to use alternate routes to reach their destinations. It said that traffic congestion was observed between Korla and Khanna Bridge Stops at the Islamabad Expressway therefore Lehtar Road and Peshawar Road can be used alternatively. The Punjab Home Department says that the main purpose of imposing Section 144 in the entire province is to maintain law and order in the province. Reports say that the Punjab government has also written a letter to the federal government to request more Rangers in the province. In Punjab also, Section 144 has been implemented in order to maintain law and order. According to the Punjab Home Department, upholding peace and order throughout the province is the primary goal of enforcing Section 144.

Continued on Page 06

'Imran arrested on merit': Govt says
Rana says NAB is "independent" and not controlled by the govt



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah detailed on Tuesday Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan's arrest in the Al-Qadir Trust case, said the PTI chief's arrest was in accordance with law. The former prime minister was arrested by Rangers officials from the Islamabad Judicial Complex a couple of hours ago, the IG Islamabad confirmed. He was arrested in the Al-Qadir Trust case, the federal capital's top cop had informed at the time. "Situation is normal. Section 144 is in place and violations will result in police action," said IG Islamabad. Addressing a presser after the PTI chief's arrest, Sanaullah said that Imran was arrested by the National Accountability

Continued on Page 06

PM calls out Imran for maligning state institutions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday called out the politics of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan, saying his blatant lies were all about maligning the army without proof, running a media campaign against martyred troops and using religion for political gains. "I have no doubt that your [Imran Khan's] politics is defined by blatant lies, untruths, U-turns, and vicious attacks on institutions," he said in a detailed tweet where he put counter-questions to Imran Khan against his earlier tweet. PM Sharif said Imran Khan while on a trial for corruption was claiming legitimacy to overturn the legal and political system. "Bending the judiciary to your whims and behaving as if rules don't apply to you," he said. He pointed out that maligning Pakistan Army as an institution was a recurring pattern in

Continued on Page 06

PTI lashes out at authorities over Imran Khan's arrest

Qureshi says Khan abducted from the court's premises
PTI holds protest

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership strongly condemned the abduction and illegal detention of PTI Chairman Imran Khan from Islamabad High Court's (IHC) premises and urged the nation to come out across the country immediately against the rising state fascism, as it is a 'make and break moment'. PTI senior leadership, in their strong worded-reaction to the PTI Chairman's

Continued on Page 06

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers took to the streets on Tuesday after the party leadership's call for nationwide protests against the arrest of party chief Imran Khan by Rangers personnel from the Islamabad Judicial Complex. The former premier was arrested in the Al-Qadir Trust case, added the federal capital's top cop. "Situation is normal.

Continued on Page 06

Gaza: Israeli air strikes martyr 13 Palestinians

Israeli army claimed that the operation targeted three leaders of Islamic Jihad

GAZA CITY: Israel launched pre-dawn air strikes on Tuesday against the Palestinian group Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip, its military announced, with the health ministry of the Hamas-controlled territory saying 13 people were killed. The ministry said that women and children were among the dead, but did not give further details as to the identity of the victims. Witnesses in Gaza reported the sight of a blazing building and the swift evacuation of casualties. The Israeli army claimed that the operation targeted three leaders of Islamic Jihad, whom they classify as members of a terrorist organisation. The group confirmed three senior officials were killed, naming them in a statement as Jihad Ghannam, secretary of the Al-Quds Brigades military council, and Khalil al-Bahtini, also of the council and commander of the military wing in northern Gaza. The third, Tareq Ezzedine, was described by Islamic Jihad as "one of the heads of military action" in the occupied West Bank who operated from Gaza. "We mourn the leaders and their wives and a number of their children who were killed in a cowardly

Zionist crime," Islamic Jihad said in a statement, vowing "the blood of martyrs will increase (the) resolve" of the movement. The air strikes, which began a little after 2am, were still going nearly two hours later, according to journalists, with a new explosion heard in the east. The operation comes less than a week after Islamic Jihad announced a truce around Gaza - brokered with help from Egypt - following a fresh flare-up in violence. Israel and Gaza fighters traded cross-border fire following the death in Israeli detention of Khader Adnan, who had been on hunger strike for 87 days following his arrest over ties to Islamic Jihad. On Tuesday, the Islamic Jihad said Israel had "scorned all the initiatives of mediators" and vowed it would "avenge the leaders" killed in the latest air strikes. In separate statements detailing each of the Islamic Jihad figures killed, the Israeli army affirmed it would "continue to operate for the security of the civilians in the state of Israel". The military presented Ghannam as "one of the most senior members of the organisation"

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Holidays in Gilgit-Baltistan

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Contempt of Parliament Bill introduced in NA

ISLAMABAD: Rana Muhammad Qasim Noon of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Tuesday introduced 'The Contempt of Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) Bill 2023' in the National Assembly, aimed at punishing those involved in the contempt of Parliament or a committee or breach of privilege of a House or a member. On the advice of Minister of State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan and Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi, Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf referred the bill to the committee concerned for further deliberation with the directive to submit the report within seven days. Minister Shahadat Awan viewed that the House must adopt a proper procedure to unanimously pass the important bill. The standing committee would further fine-tune the bill and remove lacuna if any, he added. Appreciating the PTI MNA for introducing such an important bill in the House, the minister said the amendment in the Constitution was the right of the Parliament and it also had the discretion to pass or reject any bill. He said this bill would further help to establish the writ of the Parliament, urging the other state institutions to work within their own constitutional domains.—APP

ANP announces party tickets to candidates

PESHAWAR: The Awami National Party (ANP) on Tuesday announced party tickets to candidates for seven more provincial and two national assembly seats. According to Bacha Khan Markaz here, from NA-11 Shangla, Aurangzeb Khan has been allotted the party ticket while from NA-19 Swabi, Khanzada Shah Nawaz Khan will contest on the ticket of ANP. The party has allotted the tickets for provincial assembly seats PK-7, Swat to Ifthikhar Ahmad, PK-9 Swat to Zahir Shah Khan, PK-22 Malakand to Irshad Momand, PK-48 Swabi to Sikandar Irfan, PK-49 Swabi to Tauseef Ejaz, PK-50 Swabi to former district Nazim Muhammad Zahid and PK-93 Hangu to former MNA Pir Haider Ali Shah. Chairman Provincial Parliamentary Board, Aimal Wali Khan after consultation with other members.—APP

Murad inaugurates resumption of Ethiopian airline operation

The chief minister cut the cake to formally inaugurate the airline operation and presented Ajrak and Sindhi caps to the visiting ministers.

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that Ethiopian Airlines has resumed its Karachi operation after a lapse of four decades, which has opened new vistas of trade and commerce, investment, and tourism between Pakistan and African countries.

He said this while talking to the media shortly after receiving the inaugural flight of Ethiopian Air which landed at the Old Terminal on Tuesday morning with 110 passengers including three Ethiopian state ministers.

He was accompanied by provincial ministers, Sharjeel Memon, Jam Ikram, Syed Nasir Shah, and Advisor Murtaza Wahab. The CM received the three Ethiopian state ministers of Foreign Affairs Mesganu Arga, Technology Foza Amin, and Commerce Kassahun Gofe and their senior officers. The Ambassador of Ethiopia, Jemal Beker Abdulla was also present on the occasion.

Chief minister told the media that it was a great breakthrough that the Ethiopian airline started its commercial operation in Karachi on May 9. "This commercial operation of the airline is bound to boost trade between the two countries, promote tourism and help to explore



investment opportunities," he said and added this airline has opened the gate to African countries. The State Minister of Ethiopia for Foreign Affairs Mesganu Arga thanked the chief minister for personally inaugurating the airline operation and hoped this

would open new avenues for co-operation, and increase trade and commerce, and tourism. The chief minister cut the cake

to formally inaugurate the airline operation and presented Ajrak and Sindhi caps to the visiting ministers.

Arrest of Imran not big issue: Kundi

PESHAWAR: Secretary Information PPP, Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday said the arrest of PTI Chief Imran Khan was not a big issue as he had been arrested on the orders of the court. He said in the past the top leadership of PPP including Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto were also arrested and faced the courts. He said that after the martyrdom of Benazir Bhutto, Asif Ali Zardari raised the slogan of 'Pakistan Khappay' (we want Pakistan) to save the country and did not issue negative statements like that of Imran Khan. He said that the arrest of Imran Khan did not mean that the PTI workers come out on roads and damage public and private properties.—APP

Google offers 44,500 career certificate scholarships Pakistanis

ISLAMABAD: Google here on Tuesday announced to offer 44,500 new GCC scholarships to more Pakistanis wanting to gain access to in-demand digital skills by the end of 2023. Country Director Pakistan, Google Farhan Qureshi, while addressing official launch of Google Career Certificates said "Google is committed to help build an inclusive digital economy in Pakistan through its programs, products and services, and to invest in equipping Pakistani talent with the digital skills needed to grow and succeed." He said that as the number three freelance economy of Pakistan in the world, digital skills are highly sought after in Pakistan. "Our goal is to enable Pakistanis to seize that opportunity. We want to help people get qualifications online for jobs that are in demand, high growth, and well paying. That's why beyond the 6 courses we launched last year, today we're adding three new courses and are committing to distribute 45,500 Google Career Certificates to women and young graduates by the end of 2023." —APP

Islamabad Security Dialogue kicks off on Wednesday

ISLAMABAD: The third iteration of the flagship two-day Islamabad Security Dialogue (ISD) 2023 will kick off here at the Pak-China Friendship Centre on Wednesday to debate important and pressing challenges and opportunities being faced by the country and the region.

The theme for the third ISD 2023 is "Beyond Conflict? Resetting the Global Agenda in a Divided World". The ISD has emerged as a platform for critical thinking and robust intellectual discourse on some of the most important issues at the local and regional levels. The third edition of the hybrid event will be attended

by global thinkers and scholars, academicians, policymakers, renowned international media persons, Federal Cabinet members, diplomatic corps, former government officials, legal experts, representatives of think-tanks and civil society members.

Under the umbrella of its National Security Policy, Pakistan firmly believes that internal stability and regional peace based on mutual co-existence, connectivity, and shared prosperity are essential prerequisites to optimizing national security. It recognizes the unique pressures emanating from great power competition and believes that global cooperation

on shared challenges remains the most viable pathway towards a more inclusive and prosperous future.

The event will feature seven sessions, namely "Commanders' Forum: Changing Nature of War", "Economic Statecraft: Cooperation in an Era of Uncertainty", "Climate: An Existential Threat", "National Security Advisers Forum: Conversation about Afghanistan", "Challenges to International Law and Rules-Based Order in the Era of Great Power Competition", "A Transitioning Global Order: From Competition to Conflict?", and "Economic Reforms in Pakistan". —APP

President for development of merged districts

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has emphasized the need for focusing on the development of merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (erstwhile Tribal Area), adding that the tribal area of the country had been neglected in the past. The President said that the tribal areas of Pakistan had been affected the most due to terrorism. The President expressed these views while talking to the elders/Masharan of the merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The tribal elders were from districts Mohmand, Bajaur, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, South Waziristan, North Waziristan and FR Peshawar/ Kohat. Talking to the elders, the President said that priority should be given to the education and health sectors in the merged districts of KP, and all steps should be taken for the livelihood of the people of the area. He said that the people of the merged districts should be provided equal employment opportunities. While highlighting the importance of education, he said that education could bring development and economic prosperity to the area. He underscored the need for peace in the area for exploring new business and trade opportunities. The tribal elders informed the President about their issues. They said that the people of erstwhile FATA had sacrificed the most in the war against terrorism. They lost their dear ones and livelihood for the peace in the country. —APP

ISSI holds seminar on "lethal autonomous weapon systems"



The Arms Control & Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with Sustainable Peace and Development Organization (SPADO), organized a seminar on "Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS): A Regional Perspective" today. The Seminar was well attended with the participation of members of the diplomatic community, academia, experts from think tanks, officials from relevant departments representatives of civil society, and university

students. In his welcome remarks, Director General ISSI Amb. Sohail Mahmood said that the transformative potential of new and emerging technologies like robotics, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning was affecting every facet of human civilization. These technologies had now spread to over 100 countries, increasing from 60 a decade ago. States could utilize these emerging technologies for the development of LAWS. The proliferation of these technologies had raised the profile of the

phenomenon and required deeper reflection. The dual-use nature of these technologies had also led to massive commercial use and raised concerns that non-state actors could use these technologies for malicious purposes. In May 2013, Pakistan became the first country to call for a ban on fully autonomous weapons. It had repeatedly advocated for a ban on autonomous weapons and was spearheading the efforts internationally to have a legally binding instrument. In his introductory remarks, Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC-ISSI, said that increasing weaponisation of AI was generating insecurity and fear and presented complex security challenges for states. The development of these weapons had raised fundamental questions on their regulation, autonomy, accountability and state responsibility and their likely impact on human protection instruments like international human rights and Instrumental Humanitarian Law. Mr. Raza Shah Khan, Chief Executive, —APP

Forum on 'Peace education in Schools' held

PESHAWAR: PAIMAN Trust in collaboration with Qadims Lumiere organized a Forum on "Peace Education in Schools: A Panacea for Tolerant and Pluralistic Communities in Pakistan" in a local hotel here on Tuesday. The aim of the Forum was to deliberate on the importance of Peace Education in schools and Madaris in Pakistan as well as share PAIMAN's and Qadims Lumiere's joint initiative of the implementation of Peace education in selected schools and Madaris in Peshawar since 2009 and its positive outcome. Mossarat Qadeem, PAIMAN's Executive Director (ED) said, "Under PAIMAN's Peace education initiative, the capacity of 290 male and female teachers of selected private schools and Madaris is being built to impart peace curriculum using experiential learning and creative work to the students of their respective institutions." "The aim is to collectively develop an environment of tolerance, and non-violence and create awareness regarding the importance of human rights, and inter & inter-communal understanding." Bushra Hyder said, "The impact of peace education has been a positive transformation in the attitude and behavior of both teachers and students that helps in promoting healthy relationships and a peaceful school culture." Vice Chancellor (VC) the University of Engineering Pe-

shawar Dr Ifthikhar Hussain said, "The whole initiative is very innovative and he has never heard of it before." He also said that he would like UET to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with PAIMAN and Qadims Lumiere to give orientation to his students on the importance of non-violence tolerance and pluralism. Dr Ayaz Khan Chief Coordination Officer (CCO) of the KPCE-CVE congratulated PAIMAN and Qadims Lumiere for organizing the forum on an important concept of peace education as an antidote to violent extremism which was the need of the time. He said, "There is a need to create greater awareness regarding this concept and learn from PAIMAN who are the pioneer in this field, and the best practices of Qadims Lumiere." Diocese of Peshawar Church of Pakistan Priest Alexander Mehboob highlighted the importance of peace and harmony in the lives of all Pakistanis and said, "Every religion believes and values non-violence and tolerance and it is time that we expand this concept of peace education to more educational institutions so as to help build a peaceful Pakistan." Managing Director of Elementary and Secondary Education Foundation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa KPK Zareef Mani shared his own experience of how diverse communities could adopt ways of accommodation to live together peacefully. —APP

اطلاع عام

اسلام آباد کے مختلف مراکز، کمرشل سنٹر، ٹیکسٹ، کیفے، بیکری اور دفاتر کے گرد و نواح میں اوپن پیسیس برائے کارپارٹنگ، کرسیاں، ٹیبل، چیر، فریزر، چیلر، سینٹ، بلاک وغیرہ کے تمام عارضی اجازت نامے / لائسنس منسوخ کر دیئے گئے ہیں

تاجر حضرات حصول عارضی اجازت نامہ کے لیے اپنی درخواستیں مندرجہ ذیل دستاویزات کے ہمراہ ڈائریکٹوریٹ آف میونسپل ایڈمنسٹریشن 7/11-G اسلام آباد کو ارسال کریں

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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 Forces 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



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Islamabad Metropolitan

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Rawal Town.....	5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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Pakistan-Turkiye Friendship Ride



ISLAMABAD: Four members from Turkish Motorcycling Federation are on a visit to Pakistan for "Pakistan - Turkiye Friendship Ride". Mr. Ahmet Bati, Mr. Tankut Guzel, Ms. Serpil Kalayci and Ms. Seden Guzel are on visit to Pakistan on their heavy 1,100 CC twin motorbikes. They entered Pakistan last week through Taftan border and today, paid a visit to H.E. Dr. Mehmet Pacaci, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkiye. They will be visiting Chitral on the motorbikes to attend the famous Kalash Festival and several other places including Hunza, Gilgit, Skardu and Lahore.—DNA

ADB sees Pakistan prospering with momentous structural reforms

ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa while inaugurating the four-day moot had assured the bank's continued support for the incumbent government's critical and structural reforms at a time when the country recently witnessed devastating floods caused by climate change

ISLAMABAD: A top official of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has said that Pakistan could secure a brighter future despite the existing challenges on various fronts by persuading the rigorous reforms agenda and improving the public sector management. "As long as Pakistan puts its internal things in a proper order, I think there is no reason why Pakistan should not be prospering," Director General of Central and West Asia Department Yevgeniy Zhukov said while talking to APP on the sidelines of ADB's 56th annual Board of Governors meeting that con-

cluded last week in South Korean city - Incheon. He said Pakistan should be doing quite well, adding "If the public sector governance is improved and the government in place brings reforms, I think the future of Pakistan should be quite bright." ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa while inaugurating the four-day moot had assured the bank's continued support for the incumbent government's critical and structural reforms at a time when the country recently witnessed devastating floods caused by climate change. He had reaffirmed the support policy measures

to improve the economic condition of the country and fiscal space for enhanced social protection transfers. The ADB president viewed Pakistan was taking 'quick' required stabilization measures by containing spending, enhancing tax revenues and improving the financial sustainability of the energy sector. He said the bank would continue supporting Pakistan in these reforms through Policy-based lending operations to help improve the economy and financial position. Answering a question, Zhukov said the Asian

Development Bank had been extending financial assistance to the government to strengthen social security through the BISP programme. He said the bank was engaged with the BISP since 2016 while it provided assistance of \$600 million since 2021 for conditional cash transfers in the areas of health and education besides \$1.5 billion, under the Countercyclical support facility of which substantial part would be going through the BISP to provide the much-needed assistance to the people mostly affected by the ongoing difficulties. Zhukov was of the view

that Pakistan should improve revenue collection as it has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios standing at only 10 percent, whereas there are countries in the region having Tax to GDP ratio of about 20 percent to 25 percent. If the Pakistan government is collecting only 10 percent, it may not have enough money to provide support and enhance income, he cautioned. "It is important for the current and coming governments to continue working seriously on the structural reforms for the domestic-resource mobilization," he remarked.—Agencies

Complete shutdown in IIOJK & AJK

ISLAMABAD: A complete shutdown will be observed in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir on May 22 against the Modi regime's illegal action of holding G20 meeting in Srinagar. According to Kashmir media service, Kashmiris living abroad will hold anti-India rallies and protests in all major capitals of the world on the same day sending a clear message to the world that they reject G20 meeting in internationally disputed territory. Call for protests have been given jointly by All Parties Hurriyat Conference and the leadership of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Anti-India demonstrations will be held in New York, London, Washington, Brussels, Geneva and other major cities of the world to draw the attention of the international community to the ongoing human rights violations in the occupied territory. APHC leaders strongly condemned the ongoing human rights violations by the Indian forces' personnel in Pir Panjal, Poonch and Rajouri areas of Jammu region. The APHC leaders urged the United Nations to take India to task for committing war crimes in the occupied territory. A report, in connection with the International Mother's Day said, thousands of Kashmiri women continue waiting for the return of their sons subjected to enforced disappearance by Indian troops. The 8th May is also grim reminder of Srinagar's horrific massacre at Pir Dastgeer in Khanar when Indian forces opened fire thousands of people on this day in 1991 in the locality, killing 18 civilians on spot.—DNA

Pakistan needs to produce world class human resource

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday said it was the era of the knowledge economy in which Pakistan needed world-class human resources and creative minds to get solutions to the coming age of 'the greatest technological disruptions.' "We have not seen anything yet. It is just the tip of the iceberg as ChatGPT is merely a trailer. We cannot even imagine what wonders artificial intelligence and quantum computing are going to do in future," he said while addressing an event titled "Crypto Graphic Insight Tomorrow" here at the NUST Auditorium of National Science and Technology Park (NSTP). He said Pakistan was entering a 'big disruptive age' wherein the minds of 'status quo' would not work but the creative ones only. "It is an economic and very competitive world today as each country is in a cut-throat competition with another country," he said highlighting the importance of getting familiar with the modern trends to compete in the international market. He also cited examples from the glorious past of Muslim countries due to knowledge and education which was matching with today's developed nations in the West. Sharing a tutorial developed by the University of Calgary on Muslim Spain, the minister said scientific knowledge, architecture, mathematics and philosophy flourished in Spain during the rule of the Umayyads in Spain. He said the tutorial noted "Throughout the holy Qur'an there is a strong emphasis on the value of knowledge. Muslims believe that Allah is all knowing; and the human world's quest for knowledge, leads to further knowing Allah. . . . they also believe human knowledge is not perfect and requires constant exploration and advancement through research and experimentation." Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan suffered a lot during the last 75 years due to political instability and lack of continuity, adding it was unfortunate that the education projects initiated by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government during its last tenure from 2013-18 were abandoned by the PTI government, which caused billions of rupees loss to the national exchequer.—APP

China Southern Airline to resume Lahore-Urumqi flights

ISLAMABAD: China Southern Airlines is poised to resume flight operations from Lahore to Urumqi on June 13th. The flight operations were suspended when the pandemic erupted, causing a significant downturn in the aviation industry. Gwadar Pro quoting an official from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on Tuesday stated the flight service will connect Lahore with Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The flights



will be scheduled on a weekly basis, specifically on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. In terms of preparedness to smoothen the resumption of flights, he said that all mandatory SOPs from administration level to technical procedures are being put into force at Lahore Airport. Mr. Yan Yang,

Commercial Counsellor at the Chinese Consulate in Lahore, hailed the resumption of flights as a positive sign, stating that it would bring a wave of convenience to travelers on both sides. The resumption of flights from Lahore to Urumqi on June 13th, following the reopening of the Khunjerab Pass after a three-year hiatus, is expected to strengthen Pakistan-China economic and trade ties while also promoting people-to-people exchanges between the two nations.—APP



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Briefs

Lack of R&D in horticulture sector a serious threat

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Waheed Ahmed, the Patron-in-Chief of Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters Association (PFVA) pointed at the direct and indirect impacts on the lack of Research & Development (R&D) in the horticulture sector as a serious threat to Pakistan's food security and suggested for allocation of a fund of three billion rupees for the R&D. He emphasized on the need for the agricultural universities and research institutes to form a board comprising the PFVA, Federal Ministry of National Food Security and Provincial Ministries of Agriculture to develop new varieties of fruits and find remedies for various diseases in the existing crop in Pakistan.

The Patron-in-Chief of Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters Association participated in the national dialogue on agricultural research under the National Agriculture Research Council in which the stakeholders including the relevant ministries discussed the potentials in the agriculture sector for the economic development of the country. The Federal Minister for National Food Security Chaudhry Tariq Bashir Cheema, Federal Secretary Agriculture Zafar Hasan, Chairman Pakistan Agriculture Research Council Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali and national and international experts from public and private sectors participated in the national dialogue. Waheed Ahmed shared with the participants, the ill-effects of climate changes, water scarcity, difficulties in acquiring capital for farmers, issues in adopting high value horticulture and lack of technology and research are the major challenges the horticulture sector is confronted with. Waheed Ahmed informed that Pakistan is at the top of the agricultural regions being the most affected by the climate change, where agricultural production is likely to decrease by 50% by 2025 in case of a three percent increase in global temperature. Pakistan already has 16 to 62 percent less per hectare production of fruits than the leading countries.—DNA

MPs denounce IK's accusations

ISLAMABAD: The parliamentarians on Tuesday denounced Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's alleged accusations against senior officers of the security institutions and termed his conduct as unprecedented in the country's history.

Talking to APP outside the Parliament House, Member National Assembly (MNA) Ramesh Lal of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) said the remarks of Imran Khan for sitting army officers were regrettable, whereas he had been disrespecting state institutions for the past one year and should be taken to task.

MNA, Tahira Aurangzeb of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) said Imran Khan should respect the state institutions and should stop hurling concocted accusations against the institutions. MNA, Qadir Khan Mandokhail of PPPP said the great sacrifices rendered by the armed forces of the country have been esteemed throughout the country's history. But Imran Khan, he said was reluctant and fighting to get his power back by reprimanding the national institutions. Mandokhail said Imran Khan should not be given more compensation for his baseless accusations and allegations against security institutions. MNA Usama Qadri of Muttahida Qami Movement-Pakistan (MQMP) said the security institutions that are responsible for the protection of the country could not be ridiculed as it was similar to "enmity with the nation". He added that the PTI's criticism of security institutions was regrettable and jeopardizing national security. Qadri said Imran Khan's allegations had no precedent and were a breach of national security. MNA, Shakila Luqman of PML-N said it was very unfortunate that Imran Khan was using disrespectful language against the state institutions.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Chairman, BOG ISSI Amb. Khalid Mahmood giving away shield to a participant in a seminar on "Lethal Autonomous Weapon System (LAWS): A Regional Perspective" organized by Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) in collaborations with Sustainable Peace And Development Organization (SPADO) at ISSA.—AP

Think-tanks moot for collective thinking, collective Actions

There is a huge need for this community to develop an indigenous agenda for change, Our universities and Think tanks are important stakeholders in policy and must have a seat at the table

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Think Tanks and universities of Pakistan had a meeting to discuss common research agenda and agreed to set up a worthy meet-up to develop a conversation on reform and key policy issues. PIDE presented an agenda for change that we hope features in the coming election. Researchers agreed that they need to lead conversations of change and develop ideas for change in their research. All agreed that there is a huge need for this community to develop an indigenous agenda for change. Our universities think tanks are

important stakeholders in policy and must have a seat at the table. Participants unanimously agreed to conduct a monthly roundtable conference to discuss and promote Ideas of Change and Reforms. HSA, IPS, PIDE, RADS, PRIME, and Arid Agri University will host the next six conferences respectively. Earlier PIDE VC Dr. Nadeem Haque and Pro VC Dr. Durra Nayab in their opening remarks said that the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) believes that there is a dire need for a knowledge network in Pakistan, to act as a pressure group to push for reforms. The Institute has initiated a mul-

ti-pronged approach to strengthen this knowledge network. The Institute has recently organized an EconFest (Economy Festival) – the first time in Pakistan, with more than a dozen local partners, as well as a wide-ranging outreach program with universities across the country. It is PIDE's honor who organize the first-ever Think Tank's Moot today in Islamabad. Participants based in cities other than Islamabad/Rawalpindi joined it via Zoom. PIDE expects that the platform would serve for sharing of research agendas of all the partners, as per the relative expertise. The idea is to have a collective intellectual capital

and action, instead of working in silos, with minimum to zero influence over policy-making. This would culminate into a regular meet-up (in-person or virtual) giving the opportunity to each think tank to present its agenda followed by a detailed discussion. A number of County's Think-Tanks and Universities representatives, including Air University, Bahria University, Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies, Centre for Law and Security (CLAS), COMSATS, CRSS, Federal Urdu University, Health Services Academy, Institute of Policy Studies, International Institute of Islamic

Economics Islamabad (IIE-IUI), IPRI, National Commission on Rural Development (NCRD), National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS), NRSP, NUML, PATTAN, PMAS, Arid Agri Uni, Policy Research Institute for Equitable Development, PPAF, PRIME, QAU, Research and Development Solutions (RADS, TabadLab, BUTEMS, The Pakistan institute of international affairs, Social Policy and Development Centre, Punjab economic research institute (PERI), Punjab Resource Improvement and Digital Effectiveness Program, ISSI, IRS and Kashmir Institute of International Relations participated in the historical MOOT.

Sherry issues Heatwave guidelines for Southern Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Senator Sherry Rehman on Tuesday advised provincial and local institutions to take necessary precautions to safeguard public health and minimize the impact of extreme weather on vulnerable communities amid predicted heatwave in the Southern parts of the country. Minister Rehman's call to action comes in response to the latest weather forecast from the Pakistan Meteorological Department's (PMD) for May, which predicts a higher likelihood of heatwaves starting from the second week of the month, particularly in the southern half of the country, a news release said. To mitigate the potentially disastrous consequences of heatwaves,

she is calling on institutions to follow the ministry for Climate Change's recently issued 'Heatwave Guidelines – Urgent Preparatory Measures'. These guidelines offer a proactive approach to prevent the spread of heat-related illnesses and provide critical information on how to prepare for and respond to extreme heat events. Key short-term measures specified in the Guidelines, included, "the activation of Union Council level heat wave response units (HRU) and establishing provincial level control rooms for coordination to protect vulnerable segments of the urban population." The minister also outlined several medium to long term measures to address the underlying causes of heatwaves such as climate-induced dis-

aster management to school curriculums, increasing green spaces by planting more trees in urban areas, establishing 'Cool Centers' at easily accessible public locations, and developing an early Heat-Health Warning System (HHWS). These steps, she emphasized, would help build the country's resilience to extreme weather events and protect the health and safety of its citizens in the long run. The minister elaborated, "The effects of climate change, especially with increasing greenhouse gas emissions globally are contributing to more frequent, highly severe, and longer lasting heatwaves across the region and the country. Pakistan is a negligible emitter yet our most vulnerable pay the price for the overheated climate. It is not

easy to switch to a resilient development model, which costs four times as much as regular reconstruction, while you are still rebuilding from the last shock, but we have to try." She highlighted that "Pakistan is listed among the ten most vulnerable countries to climate change in the world, experiencing frequent climate induced disasters. Over the past decade, the frequency of hot days has been three times higher than the frequency of cold days at the global scale. Pakistan has recorded the hottest temperatures on the planet consistently for the last three years, and with El Niño expected to return this year which could push global temperatures past the 1.5°C mark with devastating impacts on ecosystems & vulnerable countries.—DNA

Annual sports galakicks off at WMDCR

RAWALPINDI: Annual sports week has been kicked off here at Watim Medical and Dental College Rawat (WMDCR) in a festive and jubilant manner. The grand inauguration ceremony marked the commencement of a thrilling journey filled with a competitive spirit, teamwork, and athletic excellence. The purpose of these competitions is to encourage the students to take part in extracurricular and healthy activities. The ceremony witnessed an impressive gathering of students, faculty, staff and guests. Dr. Maj. Gen. (ret'd) Abdul Khaliq Naveed, principal of NUST School of Health Sciences, graced the occasion as the chief guest. Distinguished academic personalities including Maj. Gen. (ret'd) Tahir Khadim, Principal Fazaia Medical College, Dr. Faisal Basheer, Principal Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical College, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Prof. Asad, Principal Rawal Dental College were the guests of honour. Addressing the participants the speakers shared their experiences and emphasized the values of sportsmanship, discipline and perseverance. The ceremony was further elevated by captivating performances showcasing the college's rich heritage and talent. "We are delighted to kick start this year's college sports season, which embodies our college's commitment to holistic development and nurturing the talents of our students," expressed Chairman Sports Committee Prof. Noor-us-Sami on the occasion.—DNA

DET Dubai hosts 'Byers Program'

ISLAMABAD: Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) Dubai during the 30th edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM) hosted the 'Byers Program', which attracted over 450 buyers from 31 different markets and countries. The ATM was held from May 1-4 at the Dubai World Trade Centre in which more than 122 public and private sector establishments held a large number of business meetings on the Dubai stand. This year's ATM held under the theme 'Working towards Net Zero' focused on responsible tourism and coincided with UAE's Year of Sustainability, said a press release issued here on today. During the four-day event, DET highlighted the pivotal role being played by the city's tourism industry towards supporting the strategic UAE Net Zero 2050 initiative including activities that have been rolled out by Dubai in the area of sustainability. The ATM's sustainability theme also steered the conversation towards yet another milestone event that Dubai will host later this year, COP28, the UN Climate Change conference, while stimulating further interest in Dubai's remarkable multi-pronged blueprint for sustainable growth, aligned with the goals of the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33. The Dubai stand also welcomed visiting dignitaries, and senior diplomats. In addition, ATM visitors enthusiastically took part in the Dubai Landmark Challenge, an interactive game for visitors installed on the Dubai stand, further highlighting the city's diverse destination proposition. Dubai's successful participation at ATM 2023 follows the strong performance of its tourism sector in the first quarter of 2023 which saw the city welcome 4.67 million international overnight visitors from January to March, compared to 3.97 million tourists during the same period in 2022.—DNA

'Business community should work for welfare of special persons'

RAWALPINDI: First lady Begum Samina Alvi on Tuesday called upon the business community to play role in welfare of the persons with disabilities and raising awareness to prevent breast cancer among women. Speaking as chief guest at an awareness session about breast cancer among the women organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) here, Begum Alvi said promotion of awareness about breast cancer was the need of the hour because timely diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer can prevent this fatal disease. She said the business community had a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of any country. After the collective efforts, she said a substantial success had been achieved in awareness against breast cancer. She said women should be aware of any abnormal changes in the body and consult a doctor immediately. "Women empowerment is a welcome process that should continue. Due to



awareness, the chances of preventing breast cancer are 90 per cent. Availability of breast cancer diagnostics facilities also has to be ensured in far-flung areas of the country," she added. Begum Samina Alvi said that persons with disabilities were also an important part of society who should be given special attention. "Steps are being taken on the government level for rehabilitation of the special persons," she said adding that people from all walks of life especially the business community should play role in welfare and the

rehabilitation of special persons and to make them useful citizens of the society. She urged the private sector and the NGOs to fix a special quota for them. The government, she said is taking sincere steps to empower special persons as well as the women. She also stressed the youth of the country to play their role in the development of the country by fully utilizing their capabilities. On the occasion, the RCCI President Saqib Rafique said that due to the efforts of the business community, the Rawalpindi Devel-

opment Authority (RDA) has made it mandatory for all commercial buildings to build ramps for special persons. He said the RCCI with the help of the business community, is playing its role in raising awareness about breast cancer prevention, rehabilitation of the special persons and mental health growth. He said the Chamber has ensured practical participation in the government's efforts in breast cancer prevention, mental health growth, rehabilitation, and welfare of persons with disabilities.—APP

Sherry Rehman slams IK

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Tuesday berated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan for leveling concocted accusations against senior military and intelligence officers.

In a series of tweets, the federal minister said that Imran Khan's accusations against serving military and intelligence agency officials were regrettable and condemnable.

Senator Rehman said, "Imran Khan is repeatedly making accusations against sensitive institutions which is very dangerous. With such baseless and outrageous allegations, he is inciting his workers. He is making allegations without evidence." She took exceptions to Imran Khan's narrative saying, "On the one hand, he is accusing the institutions and on the other hand requesting meetings with them." Imran Khan was attacked on 3rd November last year which we all condemned, she said, adding, by January 12th, his government was established in Punjab. "What did his provincial government investigate regarding this attack?" she queried.—APP

ETPB Chairman given charge of additional secretary

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Religious Affairs Talha Mehmood on Tuesday informed the National Assembly (NA) that the acting charge of office of the Chairman of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) was given to the additional secretary of the ministry after the resignation of incumbent Chairman Habib ur Rehman Gillani. Responding to a calling attention notice raised by Saira Bano regarding allegedly compelling to resign the ETPB Chairman, the minister said he moved a summary to the Cabinet after receiving the resignation of Habibur Rehman Gillani on May 2, the cabinet accepted his resignation on May 3, he added. The minister said, "One month's salary has also been paid to the former chairman as per the rule." As the Chairman seat was lying vacant, an additional charge was given to the additional secretary of the ministry, he added. Earlier, moving the calling attention notice, Saira Bano said there were rumors that the former chairman was forced to resign. The former chairman was doing a good job and had recovered Rs 25 billion besides retrieving precious land of ETPB, he added. Meanwhile, the house also adopted amendments to the rules of procedure and conduct of business in the NA, 2007 moved by Dr Nafisa Shah. Under the new amendment, now the House would have a committee of the whole and the assembly hall could be used for the meeting of the committee of the Whole.—APP

SECP, ICAP hold capacity building session

ISLAMABAD: The SECP in partnership with Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) holds an awareness and capacity building session on Sustainability disclosures and reporting in perspective of evolving international framework for corporate sustainability reporting. The session was a full day event attracting huge interest from diverse stakeholders comprising of representation from companies, multilateral institutions, professional bodies, capital market institutions and business forums. Ms. Musarat Jabeen, Executive Director (SECP) in her opening remarks stated that SECP has remained strong proponent of robust disclosure-based regime and therefore, a cohesive sustainability reporting framework by International Sustainable Standards Board (ISSB) shall facilitate inclusive economic growth. Further, this session is an opportunity for synergizing with key stakeholders around a cohesive strategy and tangible action plan shared by SECP. Mr. Farrukh Rehman, Council Member (ICAP) and Chairman Accounting Standards Board in his speech emphasized on need for continued efforts.—APP

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Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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

Korean and Japan diplomacy

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to Seoul came less than two months after ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol's visit to Tokyo. It marks the resumption of the "shuttle diplomacy" between the two neighbors after a 12-year suspension caused by their different views on Japan's colonial occupation of Korea and subsequent war crimes.

It is the Yoon government's relinquishing of the Republic of Korea's stance that Japan must apologize for those crimes and compensate for the ROK's losses that has enabled the apparent improvement in bilateral ties. Yet the widespread public protests against the Yoon government's "revisionism" and reckless deviation from the principled diplomacy the country has adhered to for decades, as well as the strong opposition the Yoon government has subjected itself to for that, expose the "reconciliation" between the ROK and Japan for what it is: a temporary success in the geopolitical schemes of Washington, rather than a true rapport being struck between the two nations.

The different reactions that the move has triggered from different stakeholders – praise from Washington, opposition from the ROK public, hesitation from Japan, and uneasiness from the region – demonstrate the true nature of the breakthrough the Yoon government has made. It is nothing more than a political expediency orchestrated by Washington, which wants to engage the ROK deeper in its geopolitical games in the region targeting China, Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Tokyo's refusal to reflect on the historical issues, which are also concerns of other countries in the region that fell prey to Japan's militarism, should never be taken as a small matter, as it directly reflects how the Japanese public has been constantly misled in viewing its past. And by controlling the public view of the past, the dominating right-wing politicians in the country also control the public perception of the future with the aim of reviving the country's militaristic spirit. Speaking to the media before departing Seoul, Kishida said that he hoped to further strengthen his personal relationship with Yoon and they would "work together to carve out a new era". The US' indulgence of Japan pursuing its remilitarization path stems from its need for a faithful follower in the region to spearhead its strategy to contain China. In Washington's eyes, the ROK is also a useful tool in this endeavor. On Monday, Yoon called for officials to map out specific steps to deepen security and economic cooperation with Japan, saying that Seoul, Tokyo and Washington are engaging in talks to implement their earlier agreement on a faster exchange of information on the missile tests of the DPRK, and hinted at Japan's possible participation in future nuclear deterrence consultations between Washington and Seoul. By sacrificing the ROK's strategic autonomy in this way, the Yoon government has revealed its lack of foresight, wisdom and principle and thus increased the risks and uncertainties in the region.



Summit to focus on C. Asia's solidarity

The upcoming summit between the leaders of China and the five Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on May 18-19 in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, will help bolster the consensus on strengthening regional cooperation. The summit, the first to be held offline, indicates the growing significance of the region in China's diplomacy and heralds the leaders of the six countries meeting on a regular basis to exchange views on regional and other issues of mutual concern. China was among the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the five countries following their independence, and exchanges between China and the five countries have subsequently flourished.

Statistics show trade between China and the five Central Asian nations hit a high of \$70.2 billion in 2022, a growth of 40 percent year-on-year. In the first two months of this year, bilateral trade continued to sustain a strong momentum, increasing by 22 percent year-on-year.

Agricultural products, energy products and minerals topped China's imports from the five countries last year, while mechanical and electrical products garnered the lion's share of those countries' imports from China. The two sides have also carried out a number of joint projects in such sectors as energy, mining, manufacturing, connectivity and digital science. The upcoming summit will build on the current good momentum and chart the future course for bilateral cooperation in many fields including trade, investments, culture, infrastructure and energy.

The leaders are also expected to discuss ways to implement the Global Security Initiative and the Global Development Initiative in a bid to consolidate regional stability and promote shared development. The Global Development Initiative calls for coordinated action in areas such as healthcare, protection of the environment and natural resources, and the development of inclusive digital technologies, while the Global Security Initiative calls for upholding the principle of indivisible security and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations. The inclusive and cooperative nature of these initiatives is in stark contrast to the bloc politics trumpeted by some Western countries. And on a broader scope, by striving to fully release the cooperation potential among the six countries, China and the five Central Asian countries can also set a good example of multilateralism and help to address the many pressing and formidable challenges that confront the world today.

Is Central Asia and the Caucasus the Indo-Pacific's next stop?

James Dorsey

The US mediation comes as relations between Azerbaijan and Iran are deteriorating quickly while the former Soviet republic's ties to Israel are expanding.

Mukhtar Mammadov arrived in March in Tel Aviv to take up his post as Azerbaijan's first ambassador to Israel, even though the two countries established diplomatic relations 30 years ago. On a visit to Baku last month, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen announced that his country would supply Azerbaijan with two satellites worth US\$120 million. Israeli drones are believed to have played a crucial role in Azerbaijan's victory in the 2020 war. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute identified Israel as Azerbaijan's second-largest arms supplier after

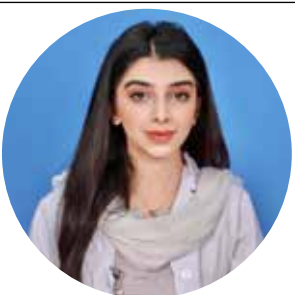
America to the rescue. In a twist of irony, that may be Central Asia's only alternative, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine upsetting the region's security apple cart. The question is whether the United States, already rejiggering its commitment to security in the Middle East, has the will and wherewithal to engage. Depending on one's analysis of the Middle East's strategic importance, the glass is either half full or half empty. With the US wanting to focus on the Indo-Pacific, it has reduced interest in the Middle East. Yet, there is no cohesive Indo-Pacific strategy that fails to include the Arabian Sea, the Western mouth of the Indo-Pacific. A similar argument could be made for Central Asia, a potential land-based counterpart to the maritime Indo-Pacific in Russia's soft underbelly and China's western flank. The notion of an enhanced US security role in Central Asia and the Caucasus may seem far-fetched but no longer are the days when a Central Asian leader would invite Russia or the Russian-led Central Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) to quell domestic unrest. That's what Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev did in January 2022, a month before Russia invaded Uzbekistan. The invasion has put in a different perspective long-standing Russian assertions that Kazakhstan is not a nation but "a Russian-speaking country in the full sense of the word." That is President Vladimir Putin's way of saying that Kazakhstan is part of the Russian world. As a result, Central Asian leaders no longer see Russia as a trustworthy security guarantor and, worse, a potential threat. At the same time, regional leaders are hesitant to depend more on China than they already are economically. Theoretically, that leaves the United States as their only option. Russia's failure to secure free transit along the Lachin corridor linking the disputed autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia, a fellow CSTO member, has deepened a lack of confidence in Russia. Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war in the 1990s. That conflict also left large chunks of surrounding lands in Armenian hands. In 44 days of fighting in September 2020, the Azerbaijani military routed Armenian forces. This forced Armenia to accept a Russia-brokered peace deal that saw the return of a significant part of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan. Russia deployed nearly 2,000 peacekeepers to ensure safe transit across the region and monitor the peace deal. But travel through the Lachin corridor has been blocked since December by Azerbaijanis identifying themselves as environmental activists and the opening last month of an Azerbaijani military checkpoint. The Russian refusal to force the reopening of the corridor paved the way for renewed US mediation. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last week that US-hosted talks in Washington between the Armenian and Azer-

baini foreign ministers had "discussed some very tough issues over the last few days and they've made tangible progress on a durable peace agreement. We really are within reach of an agreement." The effect of a successful mediation would ripple far beyond the southern Caucasus even if Russia has indicated that it would not accept an agreement that was not based on the 2020 Russian-brokered ceasefire. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was scheduled to visit Moscow this week to participate in celebrations of Russia's victory in World War Two. The US mediation comes as relations between Azerbaijan and Iran are deteriorating quickly while the former Soviet republic's ties to Israel are expanding. Mukhtar Mammadov arrived in March in Tel Aviv to take up his post as Azerbaijan's first ambassador to Israel, even though the two countries established diplomatic relations 30 years ago. On a visit to Baku last month, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen announced that his country would supply Azerbaijan with two satellites worth US\$120 million. Israeli drones are believed to have played a crucial role in Azerbaijan's victory in the 2020 war. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute identified Israel as Azerbaijan's second-largest arms supplier after Russia between 2011 and 2020. Haaretz newspaper reported in March that Azerbaijan's Silk Way Airlines had operated 92 flights to the Israeli southern airport of Ovda in the past seven years. The cargo airline is one of few operators authorised to transport explosives through Israeli airspace. Iran sees the deepening of relations with Israel as part of a strategy to further isolate the Islamic republic by disrupting its trade with Russia and Central Asia. Russia and Iran are both seeking to evade crippling US sanctions. It also fears that Azerbaijan may allow Israel to use its airbases and/or airspace for a potential strike against Iranian nuclear facilities. In his first interview after arriving in Tel Aviv, Mr. Mammadov denied that Azerbaijan would facilitate an Israeli attack. Days later, Mr. Cohen said at the opening of the embassy in the presence of his Azerbaijani counterpart, Jeyhun Bayramov, that the two countries had agreed to form a "united front against Iran." Iran also worries that Israeli agricultural companies that have created 'smart villages' in areas close to its border captured by Azerbaijan during the 2020 war can eavesdrop on the Iranians. In March, the Israel Institute of Technology or Technion helped Azerbaijan establish a cybersecurity center in Baku. Iran is further concerned that a planned corridor connecting Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan enclave inside Armenia to Russia and Turkey could change the Iranian-Armenian border. "This corridor crosses the border of Iran with Armenia, and its implementation means removing Iran from the geopolitics of the Caucasus," said a Tehran-based foreign policy analyst. "Iran's way to Europe is through

Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. If Armenia's (Nakhchivan) province also falls into the hands of Azerbaijan, it will officially become a big leverage... Iran will lose the whole of Central Asia, and this is a catastrophe for Iran," the analyst added. Iranian concerns are fuelled by hopes that closer cooperation with Russia will revitalise a two decade-old effort to create a 7,200 kilometre North-South transport corridor, dubbed the International North-South Trade Corridor (INSTC), that would link India and the Gulf to Central Asia, Russia, and Europe. Last month, Russia began exporting fuel to Iran by rail through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. In addition, trains have ferried 12 million tonnes of Russian grain via Iran to India. Nevertheless, Azerbaijani-Iranian friction delayed plans to complete a 170-kilometre rail line that would link the Iranian provincial city of Rasht to the Azerbaijani border town of Astara, a key node in a trans-Caspian Sea route. Meanwhile, Iran's Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line Group has invested in a Russian port on the Volga River. At the same time, Iran is finalizing rules governing Iranian right of passage on the Volga and Don rivers. To underscore its concerns, Iran has deployed troops and held military exercises on its border with Azerbaijan. Heightening tensions, Azerbaijan and Iran expelled some of each other's diplomats last week. The expulsions followed an attack in January on the Azerbaijani embassy in Tehran in which a security guard was killed. In addition, there was an assassination attempt in March on Jan Fazil Mustafa, an Azerbaijani parliamentarian critical of Iranian influence. Last November, Azerbaijan arrested several people on charges of spying for Iran. On a visit to Central Asia in March, Mr. Blinken sought to capitalise on concerns about Russia and China and breathe new life into America's relations with the Central Asian republics. "We remain committed to standing for the sovereignty, the territorial integrity, the independence not only of Ukraine, but for countries across Central Asia and, indeed, around the world," Mr. Blinken told journalists in the Uzbek capital Tashkent. To make that commitment credible, the United States will have to do more than the US\$50 million it allocated in 2022 and 2023 "to expand regional trade routes, establish new export markets, attract and leverage greater private sector investment." US\$50 million pales compared to China and Russia's billions of dollars invested in recent decades. The US strategy seems to involve a division of labour in which the United States focuses on geopolitics while Europe is expected to increase its economic engagement with Central Asian states. "Washington's role as a powerful but distant and supportive friend to the region can help Central Asian countries achieve their stated goals of regional cooperation and a balanced, 'multi-vector' relationship with the outside world," said Central Asia scholar Gavin Helf.

Cognitive and mental health awareness for sound workplace environment

Hani Zaraft Ali



Data from distinct nations around the world point out that mental health problems are a cause of a variety of personnel dropping out of work. In the Netherlands, round 58% of the workrelated disabilities are associated to intellectual health. In the UK, it is estimated that around 30-40% of absenteeism is attributable

Mental Health is recognized as a crucial element in achieving a healthy lifestyle. In the present day, emphasis has been placed on the role of mental health in achieving global development and is therefore, one of the main aims of the sustainable development goals SDGS laid down by the WHO. Data from distinct nations around the world point out that mental health problems are a cause of a variety of personnel dropping out of work. In the Netherlands, round 58% of the workrelated disabilities are associated to intellectual health. In the UK, it is estimated that around 30-40% of absenteeism is attributable to some structure of mental illness. People with extreme mental disturbances die upfront due to preventable bodily conditions. According to the WHO statistics, globally, there is an increase in mental health issues. In the past ten years (through 2017), there has been a 13% increase in mental health illnesses and substance use disorders, primarily due to demographic shifts. In the present day, 1 in 5 people live with a disability due to mental health issues. In post-conflict environments, one in five people suffer from a mental illness. Depression is one of the leading causes of cognitive decline whereas suicide is the 4th leading cause of death among 15-29 years old. All aspects of life, including school or work performance, relationships with family and friends, and participation in society, can be significantly impacted by mental health issues. Both depression and anxiety, two of the most prevalent mental health illnesses, cost the world economy \$1 trillion annually. Despite these numbers, less than 2% of global government health spending is allocated to mental health. It is now significant to empower communities and men and women to acquire the highest levels of mental & physical health, which can solely be performed when their intellectual fitness and well-being is ensured, and their rights respected. The president of the WHO Special Initiative for Mental Health is that all human beings acquire the highest standards of mental health & wellbeing. Human rights abuses, stigma, and discrimination against

those who have mental health disorders are commonplace. Stress at work is a significant contributor to occupational illness, low productivity, and human error. This entails increased absences owing to illness, significant personnel turnover, subpar performance within the companies & hospitals, and perhaps an increase in accidents brought on by human error. In addition to physical symptoms like heart disease, back pain, headaches, gastrointestinal problems, or other minor ailments, work-related stress can also have psychological repercussions like anxiety and depression, lack of attention, and poor decisionmaking. Challenging coworkers or colleagues can be a contributor to stress. Dealing with a competitive coworker can be a little more challenging because their performance is frequently compared to one's own. Once more, this must be settled through a cordial conversation that is followed by consent. One can convey to the coworker how working as a team has much more merits than engaging in rivalry. However, if matters start to spiral out of control, the relevant supervisor should be informed. Unrealistic expectations can be a major source of stress and suffering, especially during times when the employee may occasionally feel unhealthily and unreasonably pressured. An employee may genuinely get physically and emotionally exhausted because of an increased workload, extraordinarily long workdays, and strong pressure to perform at the top of one's game constantly for the same compensation. An employee's concerns may also include excessive travel and time spent away from family. In the present day, families are finding it difficult to navigate an ever-more complex environment. People struggle to strike the correct balance between their obligations to their families and their jobs. Workplace concerns can have an impact on home life, so finding a balance and making time for both might help you feel less stressed. The development and execution of workplace mental health strategies will improve

employee wellbeing, boost business productivity, and improve community wellbeing overall. Psychosocial interventions, stress management instruction, and health promotion initiatives have been demonstrated to improve mental health. A healthy population is an economically productive population. Mental health protection thus should be a strategic objective in any workplace environment, which is imperative for human beings and a need of the hour. To improve the mental health of individuals and society at large, WHO collaborates with Member States and partners. This includes actions taken to promote mental health, prevent mental illnesses, and broaden accessibility to high-quality mental health care that upholds people's human rights. Alas, bear in mind that we are not defined by our mental health conditions, and that it is Okay to not feel okay since so many people, including myself, are right there alongside you. Check in on yourself and others. Consider both your own and others' needs. Tell your tale in a way that feels natural to you. By talking about it, we encourage others to share their experiences and normalize discussions about mental health. Respecting and accepting people helps them overcome a major obstacle to successfully manage their breakthroughs.

For someone who is having mental health issues, it can make a huge difference when people perceive you as an individual rather than as having a medical condition. It is possible to ensure that these people have the same rights and opportunities as other members of your family, school, and community by advocating within our spheres of influence. Understanding mental health better enables us to offer beneficial support to people impacted in our families and communities and reduces the heightened burden on those who're battling mental issues.

—The author is a final year medical student & a member of students' research society. Her aims revolve around interventional cardiology & public health.

Briefs

Imran Khan arrested

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well as damage to the court building. He also instructed the registrar to conduct an inquiry and submit a report by May 16. The PTI chairman was arrested as part of NAB's investigation in the Al-Qadir Trust case ahead of his appearance before the IHC to seek bail in multiple FIRs registered against him. Rangers personnel driving a black Toyota Hilux Vigo took Imran Khan away to NAB Rawalpindi. It appears Khan got wind of his arrest hours earlier as before leaving for the court the PTI chief said: "If someone has a warrant, they should directly bring it to me. Bring the warrant, my lawyer will be there. I'm ready to go to the jail myself." The former premier, while demanding that he be approached through a warrant, urged against staging any drama. "There is no case against me. I'm mentally prepared to be arrested. If I have to go to jail, I'm ready," Khan said. The cricket-turned-politician said that the nation knows him for the last 50 years. Khan's dramatic arrest, in which paramilitary troops had to break several doors, jump through smashed windows, and scuffle with PTI supporters and lawyers to reach the legally beleaguered firebrand politician, has sparked protests across the country. Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan confirmed the development and said that the situation was under control.

According to Geo News, the PTI chairman was in the IHC's biometric verification department when he was nabbed by paramilitary men. The NAB officials had arrest warrants. Khan's warrants were issued on May 1 by NAB chairman Lt Gen (ret'd) Nazir Ahmad Butt. NAB in a statement said Khan was booked under Section 9A of the National Accountability Ordinance 1999. "The arrest was ordered and implemented by the NAB," the accountability watchdog said in a statement, adding, "Rangers troops were deployed for the action on the orders of the Ministry of the Interior".

The statement made it clear that the Rangers did not detain Khan, while Section 144 was already imposed in the federal capital. Khan's lawyer Barrister Ali Gohar told media personnel that the Rangers personnel "tortured" the party chairman during the arrest.

PTI lashes out at...

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unlawful arrest and abduction, appealed that entire nation should come onto the streets in support of their beloved leader, as it was a decisive moment. They said that the Rangers broke into IHC to abduct Imran Khan, which was unacceptable. PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi urged that people across the country should come out in support of Imran Khan who was abducted from the court's premises in a false and fabricated case. "Great Pakistanis, today you people have to come out from your homes with your children and families for your great leader Imran Khan to show solidarity with PTI Chairman who is fighting war of your future generation," Qureshi appealed. He said that no one should be sitting at home today if they wanted real freedom. PTI Central Secretary General Asad Umar reacted that Pakistan's biggest political leader was arrested after attacking IHC. "The whole world is being shown that there is no law left in the country," he added. Asad stated that a 7-member committee headed by Qureshi, which was formed by Imran Khan, would announce the plan of action. In his strong reaction, PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry said that former PM Imran Khan has been abducted from court's premises, scores of lawyers and general people have been tortured. He urged the people to come out of their homes, as IHC has been attacked. He said that Imran Khan has been whisked away by unknown people to an unknown location, adding that Chief Justice IHC has ordered Secretary Interior and IG police to appear within 15 minutes in the court.

PBBF announces 25 players for national training camp



Pakistan Basketball Federation is grateful to Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) for the patronage and support as well as thankful to all the coaches, referees and administrators who played their part in making these trials successful

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) has called 25 players for the national training camp starting from May 10th at Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad. The three days trials were held to select the probable players for the Pakistan Basketball Team under the supervision of Pakistan Basketball Federation as around 80 players were nominated by the affiliated units of PBBF to take part in these trials. The selection committee headed by

Col. (ret'd) Shujaat Ali Rana, while the members of the committee included Muhammad Riaz Malik and Maudood Jafri, who shortlisted the names of the players for the training camp of the national basketball team. Imtiaz Rafi Butt Senior Vice President PBBF, Khalid Bashir Secretary General PBBF, Ouj E Zahoor Associate Secretary PBBF, Former Pakistan Coach Maj. (R) Asad Pervaiz, former National Player Malik Mutahir were also present to witness the trials. "The selection of basketball players for the national team is a complex process that involves a

variety of factors", said Pakistan Basketball Federation Secretary General, Khalid Bashir, adding that selected players will go through extensive training plans to enhance their skills and fitness standard during national camp. He said that the Pakistan team will participate in the four-nation championship to be held in Maldives this year and our main target is to earn a position in an international event as the Pakistan team will take part in any international championship after a long time. Khalid Bashir said that the group includes both experienced

and novice players. They have been advised to report to camp commandment and head coach Malik Riaz on May 10 at Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad. The players Selected for the camp includes Hamza Bin Javed (Army), Muhammad Shahbaz Ali (Army), Atif Shah (Army), Muhammad Shahid (Army), Imad Ahmed (Army), Rana Haris Ahmed (Faisalabad), Sameer Khan (Hayderabad), Sammar Abbas (Islamabad), Ali Hamza Kazmi (Islamabad), Zain Ali (Karachi), Safi Ullah Khan (Lahore), Ibtisam Murtaza (Lahore), Muhammad Hamza (Multan), Zia

Ur Rehman (Navy), Muhammad Umair Jan (PAF), Saqib Ullah Khan (PAF), Naeem Ullah (Peshawar), Abdul Wahab (Peshawar), Izhar Ullah (POF), Rana M Usman (Police), Muhammad Usman (Police), Muhammad Hammad (Rawalpindi), Muhammad Sajawal (Sargodha) and Zain ul Hasan Khan (Wapda). Pakistan Basketball Federation is grateful to Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) for the patronage and support as well as thankful to all the coaches, referees and administrators who played their part in making these trials successful.

Babar is following Arthur-led management's decisions: Afridi

DNA

LAHORE: Former Pakistan captain, Shahid Afridi, opened up about the team's management decisions and the current captaincy of Babar Azam. While speaking in an interview with a local media channel, Afridi stated that the team's current management led by Mickey Arthur is in charge of all decisions regarding the team, including the captaincy of Babar. Afridi noted that the current management is giving all players a fair chance to prove themselves and that they are all on the same page regarding the upcoming World Cup 2023 scheduled to take place in India. "We always talk about giving players a chance, and they have been given a chance. I think at the moment, Mickey and his management team are controlling all these things," he said. "Babar is also following what the management is saying at the moment because the World Cup is coming up, and we will have to make some experiments. Therefore, in my opinion, all the management, coaches, and captain are on



the same page," he concluded. Afridi's comments come at a time when there has been some speculation in the media regarding the team's selection and the role of the captain. Previously, during the post-match press conference after the fifth ODI, Babar was asked a question about his captaincy future and he replied that he has not received any information regarding whether he will continue as the captain until the World Cup, which

is scheduled for later this year. He stated, "I have not been informed about this." Earlier this month, Chairman of the PCB Management Committee, Najam Sethi, had announced Babar as captain only for the New Zealand series. Sethi in recent interviews offered conditional backing to Babar and said that Pakistan captain will not be changed as long as the team keeps winning, and final decision will be made in consultation with Mickey Arthur.

Fate of Asia Cup 2023 hangs in the balance

LAHORE: The next 48 hours are deemed crucial to decide the fate of the Asia Cup 2023, which is set to be hosted by Pakistan. The chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Management Committee, Najam Sethi, has arrived in Dubai and will hold talks with officials of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) to resolve the issue regarding the venue of the event. It must be noted that Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has refused to send their team to Pakistan for the Asia Cup and is keen on ensuring that the event is held at a neutral venue. However, the PCB is not keen on hosting the event outside Pakistan since it would affect its efforts with regards to the return of international cricket in the country. The BCCI is also unlikely to accept the hybrid model proposed by the PCB, which would have given India the option to play their matches at neutral venue. Earlier, the chairman of the PCB Management Committee, Najam Sethi, called for a rational approach to solve the looming crisis that threatens the successful hosting of the Asia Cup and the country's participation in the ODI World Cup this year. Talking to the media on the occasion of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) meeting, Sethi said the Pakistan team's chances of traveling to India for the ODI World Cup are low. "In case of India's refusal to travel to Pakistan to compete in the Asia Cup, chances are there that the Pakistan government would not allow the Men in Green to cross the borders for their World Cup participation. In that case, cricket will be the ultimate sufferer," Sethi said. "There should be a middle way to solve problems that surely threaten the smooth hosting of ICC and ACC events. In case of India's refusal to travel to Pakistan for the Asia Cup, the government will not allow us to travel to India to figure in the World Cup matches," he added. - DNA

Section 144 imposed in major cities

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Rangers have reportedly been called to Lahore, and it has also been decided to halt cellular service there, according to Additional Chief Secretary for the Home Department. Some media reports suggest that Punjab government has also requested additional Rangers for the province in a letter to the federal government. Meanwhile KP government has also enforced Section 144 in Peshawar, Deputy Commissioner Peshawar has issued a formal declaration for implementation of Section for 30 days. Police have warned of action in case of the violation of Section 144.

Gaza: Israeli air strikes...

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who "was entrusted with coordinating weapons and money transfers between the Hamas terrorist organisation" and his movement. Bahtini was "responsible for the rocket fire toward Israel in the past month", Israel said. Ezzedine was recently "planning and direction (sic) multiple attacks against Israeli" civilians in the West Bank, where he was from and which has been occupied by Israel since the 1967 Six-Day War. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison by Israel for his involvement in suicide attacks in the 2000s, before being freed in a 2011 prisoner exchange and transferred to Gaza, according to the army.

'Imran arrested...

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Bureau (NAB) officials in the Al-Qadir Trust case and that there were "dozens" of other corruption cases against him. He continued that the man who was sloganeering against the government and creating "false allegations of corruption" was caught in a "corruption scandal himself". The minister said a laundered amount of 190 million pounds (Rs70 billion) belonging to a "property tycoon" was caught in the United Kingdom. Sana maintained that former special assistant to the PM (SAPM) Shehzad Akbar was the key person involved in the case, as he and Imran misled their cabinet by concealing the facts and documents related to the settlement agreement. He stated that money was received under the settlement agreement and was supposed to be deposited in the national exchequer, which Sana claimed "belonged to the people".

PM calls out Imran...

FROM PAGE 01

Khan's politics after his ouster from power. "Did you not resort to constant mud-slinging of the leadership of the army & intelligence agency much before the Wazirabad attack?" he questioned. The prime minister said the PTI chief refused the offer of cooperation from the federal government and boycotted the legal proceedings. He said Imran Khan was never interested in finding the truth about the attack but used the condemnatory incident for petty political objectives. "What legal route did you adopt other than hurling threats & making baseless allegations almost on a daily basis?" he said. Sharif questioned at whose behest the savaging social media campaign against the martyrs of the armed forces launched after the helicopter crash.

PTI holds protest

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Section 144 is in place and violations will result in police action," said IG Islamabad. In several cities in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the workers blocked the roads, causing difficulty for the citizens. Workers from the PTI's Karachi chapter also gathered around Insaf House on Sharea Faisal to record their protest, and blocked traffic. The blockage caused long queues on the road, and bitter exchanges by frustrated commuters and PTI workers were also reported. Video footage showed police resorting to tear gas shelling to disburse the protests.

PFF NC to be grilled over elections delay

ISLAMABAD: The officials of the Pakistan Football Federation's (PFF) Normalisation Committee (NC) are expected to be grilled over failure to hold free and fair elections of the federation in accordance with the mandate given by the FIFA and the agreement reached with the Ministry for Inter-Provincial Coordination. Agenda item No.5 in the May 10 meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee is to consider the matters of the PFF and action taken against the NC for delaying the elections under the guidelines of the FIFA and inquiry report on the participation of the federation in international events without NOC of the ministry. It has been observed by the ministry that despite a clear instruction that has now virtually become a requirement, the NC has been sending teams abroad without government's approval and knowledge. The NC officials, who have been summoned to appear before the committee, will be asked to furnish their point of view on this gross negligence on their part. "We are highly concerned about the repeated delay by the NC to hold free and fair elections and at the same time even more concerned over the NC's gross violation of the laid down rules that require NOC from the ministry before embarking on any trip abroad." - APP

Haaland may stay at Manchester City for longer than expected

LONDON:

Manchester City's striker Erling Haaland is enjoying his best season at the club where he has scored 51 goals in all competitions. The 22-year-old Norwegian signed a five-year deal with the Premier League (PL) champions in 2022, which would make him stay at the club till 2027. However, the initial plan for the Norwegian was to stay at the City for three seasons, instead of five as per his contract, after which he would be looking to switch deals. However, as per the new developments, Haaland might stay

at the club for one more year which would keep him at the club till 2026. According to English journalist Paul Hirst, the reason for the Norwegian's stay because he is enjoying his life in Manchester. Haaland, 22, who has made his habit of breaking records, will be looking forward to break another PL record. In terms of most goal contributions, which includes goals and assists, in a Premier League season, Andy Cole and Alan Shearer have 47 against their name and are at the top of the list. Haaland currently has 42

goal contributions and has five more matches to break the record of Cole and Shearer. Earlier, Haaland broke the record for most goals scored in a single season of the Premier League (PL) in his debut season. Haaland, aged 22, bagged his 35th league goal in a Manchester City's win over Fulham, breaking the record of two former English strikers Andy Cole and Alan Shearer, who both scored 34 league goals in 41 and 42 matches while playing for Newcastle United and Blackburn Rovers respectively.

"It's a special night and a special moment. I'm really happy and proud. I don't know what else to say," Haaland told Sky Sports. "I knew about the record, of course, but we tried to create chances to score and it wasn't easy because they wanted to defend. We struggled in the first half but they eventually came." Haaland will be facing the European champions Real Madrid in a UEFA Champions League (UCL) semi-final on May 9, Tuesday for the first time in his career. - Agencies

Lionel Messi's move to Saudi a 'done deal'

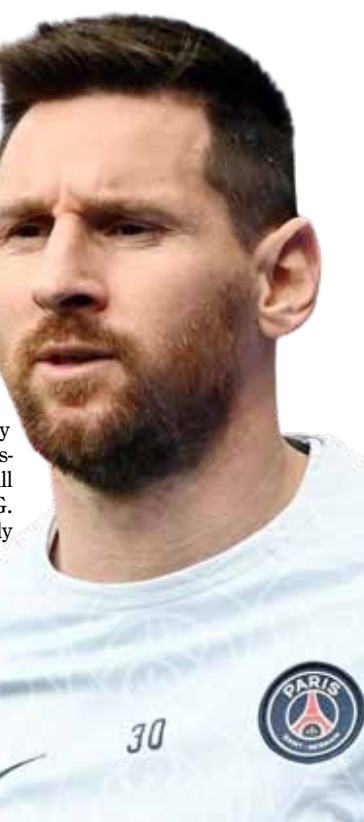
The record seven-time world player of the year, joining a mouth-watering attack featuring Kylian Mbappe and Neymar, scored just 11 goals in his first season as he helped PSG to a routine Ligue 1 title

RIYADH: Argentine superstar Lionel Messi will play in Saudi Arabia next season under a "huge" deal, a source close to the negotiations told AFP on Tuesday. "Messi is a done deal. He will play in Saudi Arabia next season," said the source, speaking on condition of anonymity and without naming the club. "The contract is exceptional. It's huge. We are just finalising some small details," added the source, who is not authorised to speak to media. Asked about the comments, Messi's current club Paris Saint-Germain simply noted he remains under contract until June 30. A separate PSG source said: "If the club had wanted to renew his contract, it would have been done earlier." The 35-year-old World Cup winner was suspended by Qatar-owned PSG last week for an unauthorised trip to Saudi, where he is a tourism ambassador. Messi's expected arrival in the

oil-rich kingdom follows in the footsteps of his arch-rival Cristiano Ronaldo, who joined Saudi Pro League club Al Nassr in a massive deal in January. Ronaldo's agreement to June 2025 is said to total more than 400 million euros (\$439million), making him the world's highest paid athlete according to Forbes. Both deals are being bankrolled by the Public Investment Fund (PIF), one of the world's biggest sovereign wealth funds with more than \$620 billion in assets, the source said. "The negotiations didn't take as much time as the ones with Ronaldo. As we now know the recipe to contract world-class players," said the source. "It's Saudi Arabia that brought him not a specific club. The Money comes from one place - PIF." Ronaldo's arrival has not had the impact Al Nassr would have hoped for on the pitch.

They have lost top spot in the Saudi Pro League table and are out of the running in the King's Cup and Super Cup. French coach Rudi Garcia departed in April. Messi, who turns 36 in June, has had two lacklustre seasons in Paris after a glorious era at Barcelona where he won four Champions League and 10 La Liga titles, and is still worshipped by the fans. The record seven-time world player of the year, joining a mouth-watering attack featuring Kylian Mbappe and Neymar, scored just 11 goals in his first season as he helped PSG to a routine Ligue 1 title. But PSG have got no closer to a coveted maiden Champions League victory, bowing out twice in the last 16 even with the illustrious Argentine in the line-up. Frustrations boiled over last week when black-clad PSG protesters let off flares and sang hostile chants targeting the underperforming

Messi, Neymar and Italian midfielder Marco Verratti. The angry scenes contrasted with Messi's career-crowning moment in December, when he led Argentina to a breathless World Cup final victory over Mbappe and France in Doha to fill the biggest gap in his resume. Qatar's emir draped him in a traditional bisht robe at the trophy ceremony, a reminder of the fossil-fuel riches pouring into football and Messi's bank account via PSG. However, Messi is also a highly paid tourism ambassador for Qatar's neighbours and sometime rivals Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter that is expected to diversify its largely single-stream economy. - Agencies



Briefs

Uzbekistan to continue reforms

TASHKENT: Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on Monday said the country will continue its economic reforms and aims to double its gross domestic product (GDP) from the current 80 billion U.S. dollars to 160 billion dollars in the coming years. "This means that the GDP per capita will reach 4,000 dollars," the president said while addressing members of the parliament, the government and other state bodies following the results of the referendum on the renewed constitution held on April 30. The state will continue to support the private sector, simplify the tax administration and reduce the state's participation in the economy, the president said. Uzbekistan will continue its peaceful foreign policy, "develop friendly ties with countries near and far abroad, as well as mutual cooperation in all areas," he added.—DNA

Thousands march in silence in Serbia

BELGRADE: Thousands marched in silence on Monday in Serbia in a major outpouring of grief and anger against the populist government and how it reacted after two mass shootings last week that left 17 people dead and 21 wounded, many of them children.

The gatherings in Belgrade and the northern city of Novi Sad were dubbed "Serbia against violence." They were called by opposition parties, which demanded the resignations of government ministers and the withdrawal licenses to the state controlled mainstream media that promote violence and often host convicted war criminals and crime figures on their programs. After the protest officially ended, some of the protesters chanted slogans against Serbia's increasingly autocratic president, Aleksandar Vucic, demanding that he step down, as they passed by government headquarters in Belgrade. The president later dismissed the protest as "shameful" during an interview on pro-government Happy television. He accused the opposition of abusing people's grief for their political ends and inciting violence.

"It's pure politics," said Vucic, also describing the organizers as "vultures." The shootings — on Wednesday in Belgrade at an elementary school, and on Thursday in a rural area south of the capital — left the nation stunned. They triggered calls to encourage tolerance and rid society of widespread hate speech and a gun culture stemming from the 1990s wars.—DNA

Azerbaijani, Armenian to hold talks in Brussels

BRUSSELS: Leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia will hold talks on the normalization of relations in Brussels later this week, the European Council announced late Monday. Charles Michel, the head of the European Council, will host Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on May 14, Michel's office said. Michel has been "in close contact with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to advance the EU's efforts to promote stability in the South Caucasus and normalization between the two countries," the statement said. Pashinyan and Aliyev have "also agreed to continue to meet trilaterally in Brussels as frequently as necessary to address ongoing developments on the ground and standing agenda items of the Brussels meetings," it added. Moreover, the three leaders will have a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron at the margins of the European Political Community summit in Chisinau, Moldova on June 1. Michel, who presides over meetings of EU leaders and represents the bloc in international affairs, has made significant diplomatic efforts for reconciliation between Armenia and Azerbaijan following their conflict in 2020.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A large number of vehicles are stuck in massive traffic jam at Faisal Avenue in Federal Capital.—Online

'Work has to continue' on Ukraine's EU application

"This tool will be a last resort and it will be used cautiously, following a very diligent risk analysis and after approval by EU member states. But there should be no doubt that we work against sanctions circumvention

NEWS DESK

KIEV: Ukraine's application to join the bloc is dependent on the completion of seven key reforms, including the fight against corruption. Marking Europe Day, Ursula von der Leyen travelled to Kyiv on Tuesday and met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to demonstrate the European Union stands "shoulder to shoulder" with the war-torn nation as it fights to repel the invading Russian forces. "Courageously, Ukraine is fighting for the ideals of Europe that we celebrate today," the European Commission president said during a joint press conference. "In Russia, (Vladimir) Putin and his regime have destroyed these values. And now they are attempting to destroy them here in Ukraine because they are afraid of the success you represent and the example you show. And they are afraid of your path to the European Union." Zelenskyy used the occasion to insist on one of his country's top priorities: EU accession. The Ukrainian leader urged the EU to move forward with Ukraine's application to join the bloc, which is still in the early stages and remains contingent on the completion of seven reforms, such as the fight against corruption and the protection of national minorities. Kyiv wants accession talks to start sometime this



year, an ambitious timeline that has privately caused concern among diplomats and officials in Brussels who worry the country is not yet ready. "It's high time to remove artificial political opacity in the relations between Ukraine and the European Union," Zelenskyy said. "It is time for a positive decision to open negotiations on

Ukraine's membership in the European Union." On this request, von der Leyen trod carefully and said a preliminary "oral update" on Ukraine's progress will be presented to member states in June, followed by a detailed report in the autumn. The conclusions contained in this report will be the main basis

for leaders to decide, by unanimity, their next step. "It is impressive to see that despite a full-blown war, Ukraine is working hard, tirelessly and intensively on the seven steps. A lot of progress has been made, but work has to continue," von der Leyen said. "It is very important that we have progress. But

I'm very confident because we had very good discussions on the different topics that are being addressed by these seven steps." During the press conference, the Commission chief also unveiled more details of the upcoming round of EU sanctions against Russia, which are meant to address circumvention of the extensive list of penalties the bloc has imposed to cripple the Kremlin's war machine. Brussels has grown increasingly concerned about a "growth of highly unusual trade flows" of EU-made goods towards China, Turkey, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, which are suspected of being re-routed to Russia in a breach of the existing prohibition. "We are proposing a new tool to combat sanction circumvention: if we see that goods are going from the European Union to third countries and then end up in Russia, we could propose to the member states to sanction those goods export," von der Leyen explained. "This tool will be a last resort and it will be used cautiously, following a very diligent risk analysis and after approval by EU member states. But there should be no doubt that we work against sanctions circumvention." The sanctions will also target "shadow entities" that are set up in Russia and other countries with the purpose of enabling the evasion of bans.

ASEAN at a 'crossroad' as Myanmar violence escalates

LABUAN BAJO: Southeast Asian nations are at a "crossroad", a senior Indonesian minister warned Tuesday, as escalating violence in junta-controlled Myanmar loomed over a regional summit. Myanmar has been ravaged by deadly violence since a military coup deposed Aung San Suu Kyi's government more than two years ago and unleashed a bloody crackdown on dissent. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — long-decried by critics as a toothless talking shop — has led diplomatic attempts to resolve the crisis. Those efforts have been fruitless, as the junta ignores international criticism and refuses to engage with its opponents, which include ousted law-

makers, anti-coup "People's Defence Forces" and armed ethnic minority groups. An air strike on a village in a rebel stronghold last month that reportedly killed about 170 people sparked global condemnation and worsened the junta's isolation. It also fuelled calls for ASEAN to take tougher action to end the violence or risk being sidelined. "ASEAN is at a crossroad," Mahfud MD, Indonesia's coordinating minister for politics, legal and security, warned Tuesday, the first day of the summit. "Crisis after crisis is testing our strength as a community. And failure to address them would risk jeopardising our relevance," he said according to a copy of his remarks, listing Myanmar among the emer-

gencies facing the bloc. Human Rights Watch said Tuesday that last month's air strike in the central Sagaing region was a "likely war crime", and urged ASEAN to "signal its support for stronger measures to cut off the military's cash flow and press the junta for reform". Pressure on the regional bloc increased Sunday after a convoy of vehicles carrying diplomats and officials coordinating ASEAN humanitarian relief in Myanmar came under fire. Few details have been released about the shooting in eastern Myanmar's Shan State, but Indonesia and Singapore both confirmed that members of their embassies in Yangon were in the group.—APP

Turkiye ready to host talks for Sudan

ANKARA: Turkiye is ready to host comprehensive talks for peace in Sudan if the stakeholders agree, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Sudan's army chief on Tuesday. In a phone call with Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Erdogan said Turkiye will continue its efforts in coordination with the UN to ensure that the urgent humanitarian needs of the Sudanese people are met, Turkiye's Communications Directorate said in a statement. Erdogan also expressed his sadness and concern over rising casualties from the "fratricidal fight" in Sudan. The evacuation and security of Turkish citizens in Sudan were also discussed, according to the statement. Separately, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Tuesday that Turkiye had moved all its employees, especially security guards.—DNA

NATO Air Police on high alert

WARSAW: NATO Air Policing troops have been put on high alert after a Russian fighter jet approached a Polish Border Guard aircraft over the Black Sea, the Polish press agency PAP reported on Tuesday. The Polish crew reportedly lost control of the aircraft for a moment but landed safely, said Polish Border Guard spokeswoman Anna Michalska. The plane landed safely at Mihail Kogalniceanu Airport and none of the crew members on board were injured as a result of the incident, she said. The Turbulet L-410 aircraft belonging to the Border Guard was intercepted. Citing a statement from NATO Headquarters, PAP reported that the aircraft was approached three times on Friday by a Russian fighter jet, which "performed aggressive and dangerous manoeuvres." The plane, in cooperation with the Romanian services, was performing routine patrol missions under the auspices of Frontex over the Black Sea in international airspace. The incident occurred around 13:20 (1020GMT), 60 kilometers (37 miles) east of Romanian airspace. NATO Air Policing troops have been put on a heightened state of alert and "remain vigilant." The Ministry of National Defense of Romania reported that the "aggressive and dangerous maneuvers" repeatedly performed by the fighters of the Russian Federation in the vicinity of the Polish aircraft caused high turbulence and difficulties in controlling the machine.—DNA

Illegal mining booms in Brazilian Amazon

CANAA DOS CARAJAS: Working under an improvised shed hidden in the rainforest, Webson Nunes hears a shout and flips on his winch, hauling a colleague up from deep inside a giant hole with a bucket full of riches.

Nunes, 28, and his four colleagues are "garimpeiros," illegal miners who dig for precious minerals — in their case, at a wildcat copper mine outside Canaa dos Carajas, a small city at the edge of the Brazilian Amazon that has become a boom town in recent years thanks to mining. Canaa — Portuguese for Canaan, the Biblical "Promised Land" — is a place of extremes: At one end of the spectrum sits mining giant Vale, which runs one of the world's biggest open-air mines here. Known as S11D, the iron-ore mine made the city the richest in Brazil in 2020 in GDP per capita. At the other end are an estimated 100 illegal mines like the one where Nunes is employed, bootstrap operations where "garimpeiros" — Portuguese for "prospectors" — make a living digging holes in the earth, living on constant alert in case of a raid.—APP

EU's sanctions against Russia 'will not be last'

BRUSSELS: The European Union's next sanctions package "will not be the last" targeting those responsible for the war in Ukraine, the German chancellor said on Tuesday. Speaking to reporters in the European Parliament, Strasbourg, Olaf Scholz confirmed that the EU is "already on track always to discuss further improvements of the sanction regimes" against Russia. "The next will be not the last," he added, stressing that "this is a constant work." Scholz is due to speak later to the European Parliament, marking May 9, Europe Day. EU ambassadors on Wednesday are set to discuss details of the EU's 11th sanctions package on Russia after the European Commission presented a draft last week. The new measures are expected to target other countries' exports to Russia, including seven Chinese companies that sell equipment used by the Russian army.—DNA

EU lawmakers eye ambitious AI regulation

Brussels, May 9 (AFP/AP-P): The sudden popularity of ChatGPT and other AI tools is injecting urgency into Europe's drive to regulate the sector, which this week gets rolling seriously with an ambitious text to be voted on by EU lawmakers. The European Union aims to be the global pioneer in creating a comprehensive legal framework that would rein in possible online harm while still protecting innovation in the field of artificial intelligence. The massive complexity of the systems, and their ability to produce text and images that at times mimic human output, is proving as fascinating as it is concerning. Faced with the risk of AI being used to make dangerous content, manipulate opinion, conduct mass surveillance or other perils yet to emerge, even tech leaders such as Twitter boss Elon Musk have called for a pause in its development. The burgeoning use of AI by the public and corporations is outstripping action by Brussels, which two years ago proposed initial draft legislation to tackle the issue. EU member states only fixed their position in that process at the end of 2022 — just as ChatGPT was taking off. Now MEPs will set out their own stance in a committee vote on Thursday, after which the parliament, the commission and the member states will begin what promises to be thorny negotiations to reach agreement on a revised draft law. "I really hope that we can have the first meeting of the political negotiation before summer so that we can end it this year," Commission Vice President Magreth Vestager said.—APP

China expels Canadian diplomat in tit-for-tat response

BEIJING: China announced the expulsion of a Canadian diplomat on Tuesday in retaliation for Ottawa ordering a Chinese consular official to leave the country over alleged threats he made against a Canadian lawmaker and his family. The Foreign Ministry said China was deploying a "reciprocal countermeasure to Canada's unscrupulous move," which it said it "firmly opposes." It said Jennifer Lynn Lalonde, the top Canadian diplomat in the business hub of Shanghai, has been asked to leave by May 13 and that China "reserves the right to take further actions in response." The Canadian Embassy in Beijing had no immediate comment on the expulsion order. Canada earlier on Tuesday said that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government is expelling a Chinese diplomat whom Canada's spy agency alleged was involved in a plot to intimidate an opposition lawmaker and his relatives in Hong Kong. China took control of the former British colony in 1997, and in recent years has effectively ripped up an agreement to maintain its unique

political and civil rights for 50 years by gutting its democratic institutions and free press. China regularly uses threats against family members to intimidate critics in the Chinese diaspora, particularly those from minority groups. A senior Canadian government official said Toronto-based diplomat Zhao Wei has five days to leave the country. It wasn't immediately clear if Zhao was still in Canada. Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said in a statement that Canada declared Zhao "persona non grata" and that Canada would "not tolerate any form of foreign interference in our internal affairs." "Diplomats in Canada have been warned that if they engage in this type of behavior, they will be sent home," she said. Canada's spy service indicated that in 2021, opposition Conservative lawmaker Michael Chong and his Hong Kong relatives were targeted after Chong criticized Beijing's human rights record. Canada's spy agency has not released details publicly. Chong has been critical of Beijing's treatment of members of the Turkic Muslim Uyghur ethnic

group in China's Xinjiang region, hundreds of thousands of whom have been detained in prison-like political reeducation camps. China says attendance at what it calls vocational training centers is purely voluntary and aimed at eliminating tendencies toward Muslim extremism while teaching job skills. Chong said Zhao's expulsion should have happened years ago. "I hope that this makes it clear not just to the People's Republic of China, but other authoritarian states who have representation here in Canada, that this crossing the line of diplomacy into foreign interference threat activities is utterly unacceptable here on Canadian soil," Chong said. In a statement posted on its website, the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa said Zhao's expulsion was "based on rumors of the so-called 'China Interference' hyped up by some politicians and media." "This has seriously violated international law, basic norms governing international relations and the related bilateral agreements, and sabotaged the China-Canada relations," the statement said. It added

that "all consequences arising therefrom shall be borne by the Canadian side." "China never interferes in other countries' internal affairs," it said. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin doubled down on China's rejection of the accusations and threats to take further action against Canada. "China is unwavering in its determination to safeguard its own interests," Wang told reporters at a daily briefing. "We urge the Canadian side to immediately stop unreasonable provocations. If Canada does not listen to the advice and acts recklessly, China will fight back resolutely and forcefully, and the Canadian side must bear all the consequences arising from this." China in recent years has expelled members of the foreign media in retaliation for their reporting or limitations placed on members of the entirely Communist Party-controlled Chinese state media posted in the U.S. and elsewhere. Expulsions of diplomats are much more rare. In 2020, China ordered the closure of the U.S. Consulate in

the southwestern city of Chengdu in retaliation for Washington ordering the closure of the Chinese Consulate in Houston, which it said was a center of state-sponsored commercial espionage. China denied the allegation. The revelation about Chong is the latest in a string of foreign interference attempts allegedly made by the Chinese government in Canada in recent years, including efforts to meddle in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections. Trudeau has appointed former Governor General David Johnston to further study the issue, including whether a public inquiry is needed. China-Canada relations nosedived after China detained former diplomat Michael Kovrig and entrepreneur Michael Spavor, shortly after Canada arrested Meng Wanzhou, chief financial officer of telecoms giant Huawei and the daughter of the company's founder, at the behest of U.S. authorities who accused her of fraud. Many countries labeled China's action "hostage politics," while China accused Ottawa of arbitrary detention. —Agencies

Briefs

Duty-free vehicle import facility withdrawn

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has reversed the facility of temporary import of duty-free vehicles for overseas Pakistanis and restricted it only to foreign tourists. A series of amendments were made through a customs notification, SRO533, by amending rules for temporary import of vehicles. Over the last five years, 1000 vehicles entered Pakistan under the tourist facility, while only 900 were verified to have left the country. The Customs department is still looking for the remaining 100 vehicles, including untraceable heavy bikes. Under this facility, the government allowed tourists to bring vehicles into the country and take back to their home country. Three significant changes have been introduced in the facility. The major change was that the temporary import of vehicle facilities was withdrawn for Pakistani passport holders. Now only foreign passport holders will be allowed to bring vehicles into the country.

Turks abroad wrap up voting in landmark election

ISTANBUL: Millions of Turks living abroad wrapped up voting on Tuesday, in a tense election that has turned into a referendum on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's polarising two-decade rule. Sunday's presidential and parliamentary ballot will pass judgment on Turkey's longest-serving leader and the social transformation spearheaded by his Islamic-rooted party. The vote is Turkey's most consequential in generations and the toughest of the 69-year-old's tectonic career. Polls show Erdogan locked in a tight battle with secular rival Kemal Kilicdaroglu and his powerful alliance of six parties that span Turkey's cultural and political divide. The first votes were cast by Turks who moved from poorer provinces to Western Europe over the decades under job schemes aimed at combating the continent's labour shortage in the wake of World War II. Such voters comprise 3.4 million of Turkey's 64.1 million registered electorate and tend to support more conservative candidates. Official turnout on the morning of the last day of overseas voting on Tuesday was reported at 51 percent - a touch lower than in past elections and a possible sign of worry for Erdogan. - APP

Female employees detained since Taliban ban, UN says

MONITORING DESK

KABUL: Some Afghan women employed by the United Nations have been detained, harassed and had restrictions placed on their movement since being banned by the Taliban from working for the world body, the UN says. Afghanistan's Taliban rulers informed the UN early last month that Afghan women employed with the UN mission could no longer report for work. "This is the most recent in a series of discriminatory - and unlawful - measures implemented by the de facto authorities with the goal of severely restricting women and girls' participation in most areas of public and daily life in Afghanistan," the UN said in a report released on Tuesday. Taliban authorities continue to crack down on dissenting voices, in particular those who speak out on issues related to the rights of women and girls, it said. The UN report cited the March arrest of four women who participated in a Kabul protest demanding access to education and work and the arrest of Matiullah Wesa, head of PenPath, a civil society organisation campaigning for the reopening of schools for girls.

CEO CLUB HOSTS DINNER FOR DIPLOMATS



ISLAMABAD: Zahid Latif Khan President of the CEO Club Islamabad Chapter hosted dinner for the diplomatic corps. CEO Club books were presented to the diplomats. Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf was the chief guest and presented books to ambassadors and high commissioners. - DNA

Pak-US agree for pursuing new businesses in green energy

US side showed great interest in pursuing projects related to green ammonia, green hydrogen and renewables in Pakistan. The Minister reiterated that Pakistan in collaboration with US would like to trail blaze the transition towards clean and green energy in developing world

WASHINGTON DC: Pakistan and United States today agreed to develop a roadmap for pursuing new businesses in green and renewable energy sector both in public and private sector. The US side would provide financial and technical expertise for undertaking feasibility studies for mutually agreed projects. A delegation of Pakistani businessmen would be visiting the United States along their counterparts from Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand to study methane abatement technologies and con-

version of bio-methane into fertilizers during the first quarter of the next year. During the meeting of Energy Minister Musadik Masood Malik with Verinda Fike, Regional Director for the Indo-Pacific for the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) and Tanvi Madhusudan, Country Manager for the Indo-Pacific Region at USTDA, the two sides discussed in detail ways and means to enhance productivity in the energy sector and plugging Pakistan into global value

chain through innovative technologies and creative business models. Various ideas surrounding ensure energy security, affordability and sustainability in wake of various challenges including the phenomenon of erratic climate change and its socio-economic impact on Pakistan. The US side showed great interest in pursuing projects related to green ammonia, green hydrogen and renewables in Pakistan. The Minister reiterated that Pakistan in collaboration with the US would like to

trail blaze the transition towards clean and green energy in the developing world. The Minister invited US side to visit Pakistan at the earliest to explore possibility of undertaking joint ventures and projects in energy sector including exploration and tapping of its onshore and offshore energy assets. He assured that his office would serve as facilitator for US investors for expeditious implementation of new business ideas. "Red tapism would be turned into red carpet," the Minister said. - DNA

Chinese envoy calls on Finance Minister

ISLAMABAD: Charge'd Affairs, Embassy of China Pang Chunxue on Tuesday called on Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and conveyed best wishes and greetings from Qin Gang, the State Councillor and Foreign Minister of China. The two sides discussed various avenues, especially available for both countries in order to enhance the existing cooperation to unprecedented levels. They also discussed the progress on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects and programs in Pakistan, said a press release.

The minister also highlighted the deep-rooted historical bilateral relations between Pakistan and China and commended the Chinese support to Pakistan on multiple fronts. He also underscored the need to deepen bilateral relations further in the economic, trade, and financial sectors. Senator Ishaq Dar said that with the support of China, Pakistan would become a growing economy in the region as well as the world soon. Pang Chunxue reciprocated the sentiments and admired the friendly relations between the two countries. She guaranteed the continuous support of the Chinese government to the people of Pakistan. She praised the huge potential of Pakistan in agriculture, industry, IT, and services sectors. Chunxue said that China wishes to work together with Pakistan to bring economic prosperity to the region. - APP

Pakistan could default without IMF bailout, Moody's warns

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Pakistan could default without an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout as its financing options beyond June are uncertain, ratings agency Moody's was quoted as saying in a report published by Bloomberg on Tuesday. "We consider that Pakistan will meet its external payments for the remainder of this fiscal year ending in June," said Grace Lim, a sovereign analyst with the ratings company in Singapore. "However, Pakistan's financing options beyond June are highly uncertain. Without an IMF programme, Pakistan could default given its very weak reserves." Pakistan entered into a \$6.5 billion programme with the IMF in 2019. But the programme's ninth review for the release of \$1.2 billion is pending since October last year as the government has been unable to meet some of the pre-requisites set by the lender. The IMF tranche is critical for Pa-

kistan as it will also unlock financing from friendly countries, helping Pakistan avert default. The country has been witnessing economic turmoil since last year, with its foreign exchange reserves down to critical levels while talks with the IMF for the release of the pending tranche have remained unsuccessful thus far. A delegation of IMF was in Pakistan in February this year for talks with the government to revive the programme. After the delegation left, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said negotiations with the lender had "nearly concluded" and a staff-level agreement would happen "next week". But more than two months since then, an agreement is still not in sight. Meanwhile, reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan stood at \$4.46 billion during the week ending on April 28, enough to cover just a month's imports. Inflation has also soared to unprecedented levels. The consumer price index rose to a record 36.4 per cent in April from a year earlier, driven largely by skyrocketing food prices and rising energy costs.

Toll of northeast India clashes now 60 dead

GUWAHATI: Security measures are keeping the peace in a remote northeast Indian state where 60 people were killed and 35,000 civilians were displaced in rioting and ethnic clashes last week, officials said. Manipur state's chief minister, N Biren Singh, told reporters late Monday that around 230 people were injured and about 1,700 houses were burned by protesters after fierce fighting broke out when members of tribal groups clashed with a non-tribal group over demands of economic benefits and reservation status. Singh said thousands of civilians, es-

corted by security personnel, were now returning home after the situation was brought under control by police and army who patrolled the streets and enforced a curfew that is still in place. He said 1,041 guns and 7,460 rounds of ammunition were looted from security personnel during the violence in which some religious places were also burned by the mobs. On Monday, India's Home Minister Amit Shah told India Today news channel that the situation in Manipur was under control and appealed to the people to maintain peace. - APP

UK police 'regret' coronation day protests

WEB DESK

LONDON: British police have expressed regret over the arrests of the leader of an anti-monarchist group and five others at the coronation of King Charles, following criticism that the security response was heavy-handed. London's Met Police said they were sorry that six of those arrested at the event were prevented from protesting during the coronation on Saturday. They have had their bail cancelled and no further action will be taken, the police statement added. "We regret that those six people arrested were unable to join the wider group of protesters in Trafalgar Square and elsewhere on the procession route," said the statement issued late on Monday. Police had claimed the arrests were made because officers found "lock-on" items - devices protesters use to lock themselves in position tactically so that police find it hard to remove them.

World at 'turning point', 'war' unleashed on Russia: Putin

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday at Moscow's Red Square Victory Day parade that the world was at a "turning point" and claimed a "war" had been unleashed against Russia. He vowed victory and said Russia's future "rests on" its soldiers fighting in Ukraine. The traditional Soviet-style event celebrating Moscow's victory over the Nazis took place amid security fears, 15 months into Russia's Ukraine offensive. "Today civilisation is again at a decisive turning point," Putin said at the parade, which included elderly veterans and soldiers from Russia's Ukraine campaign. "A war has been unleashed against our motherland," he claimed. He called for Russia to be victorious: "For Russia, for our armed forces, for victory! Hurrah!" The Russian leader has increasingly portrayed the campaign in Ukraine as an existential conflict, which he says

the West has escalated by supporting the Ukrainian government. Putin told soldiers taking part in Moscow's Ukraine campaign, several hundreds of whom were present at the Red Square parade, that "the whole country is with you." "There is nothing more important than your combat effort," he said. "The security of the country rests on you today, the future of our statehood and our people depend on you." Putin also railed against "Western globalist elites", accusing them of sowing conflicts and "coups" around the world. "Their goal, and there is nothing new here, is to achieve the collapse and destruction of our country," he said. The longtime Russian leader vowed that Moscow would overcome this. "But we have rebuffed international terrorism, we will protect the people of (eastern Ukraine's) Donbas, we will ensure our security," he said. This appeared to be a reference to an unprecedented series of attacks on Russian soil in the run-up to the Victory Day parade, a central event under Putin's rule.

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11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,
G-8 Markez, Islamabad-Pakistan
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165