



Islamabad POST

Thursday, May 25, 2023

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 25

China says NATO's plan for Japan office not welcomed

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Wagner chief says over 20,000 died in Bakhmut

Detailed News On Page-08



Saka signs new long term Arsenal deal

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Pak will absolutely not default

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday asserted that the country was not on the verge of a financial crisis and "will absolutely not default". Addressing the fears during a gathering at the Federal Board of Revenue in Islamabad, the finance minister commended his economic team for its "efforts and hard work", pointing out that the country had recorded a current account surplus for months of March and April at \$750 million and \$18m, respectively.

Siraj wants people to support JJ

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Emir Sirajul Haq said on Wednesday that the people should support his party to see a corruption-free country. Addressing a seminar, Mr Haq targeted his political opponents and said, "All political parties have been exposed. The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are fighting each other for the sake of power." Speaking about the situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr Haq said, "Corruption has increased in KP. The centre has not fulfilled its promises to solve the problems faced by KP."

Govt can't ban PTI: Ali Zafar

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Senator Barrister Ali Zafar has said that even if a ban is placed on the PTI, it is likely to be declared "null and void within a day" by the Supreme Court of Pakistan as a political party cannot be banned. Talking to the media outside the Supreme Court, Zafar referred to the ban on the Jamaat-i-Islami in the 1960s that was set aside by then-chief justice of Pakistan Alvin Robert Cornelius.

PM pays tribute to Shuhada

Entire nation indebted to the Martyrs

"Will not let May 9 happen again and will keep the national flag high", vows PM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressing his resolve to bring the elements behind May 9 arson and vandalism attacks to justice, reiterated that the entire nation would not let such 'barbaric incidents' happen in future. The prime minister assured that as chief executive of the country, it was his onus to ensure legal proceedings under the law and constitution, against all those rioters and miscreants who had planned, abetted and executed attacks on different civilian and military installations across the country. The prime minister was addressing "Azmat e Shuhada Convention" held here to pay tribute to the country's martyrs. The convention was attended by a large number of families of shuhada, governors, members of parliament, ministers, provincial ministers, ambassadors, legislators, civil society members, ulema and senior officials. The prime minister said that incidents of May 9 were intolerable and unpardonable as the monuments and statues of Shuhada of armed forces and law enforcing agencies were vandalized. "We will not let it happen again and will keep the national flag high. We will not allow anyone to malign our armed forces," he said, adding that they would bring all the perpetrators of May 9 incidents to face the law. As the prime minister, he assured that the law would take its course, stressing that

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Asif says govt mulling banning PTI

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on Wednesday that the government was mulling banning the PTI over the events of May 9, when violent protests erupted across the country following former prime minister and party chairman Imran Khan's arrest. The government has previously said that banning the PTI was the only solution, but concrete measures in this regard have not been taken yet. Talking to media persons in Islamabad, the defence minister said: "A decision has not been taken yet [on the ban], but a review is surely underway." He also stated that when the government takes a decision in this regard, the matter would be referred to the Parliament for approval. Recalling the events of May 9, Asif claimed that the "violence and vandalism of military installations were 'co-ordinated attacks planned by Imran'". "There is a lot of evidence and their

Continued on Page 06

'Democracy derailed' Imran Khan ready to negotiate 'with anyone' in power

PTI chief calls on SC judges to save Pakistan's democracy

Asad, Fawad also leave Imran Khan

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: PTI chief Imran Khan on Wednesday said he was ready to form a committee to negotiate with "anyone" in power. Addressing via video link, he said the committee would discuss two points with first on what benefit it would bring to the country if he was eliminated. "The other point will be to gauge the advantages of holding elections in October," he added. He would announce the committee, he said, on Thursday. He went on to say that the oppression would not eliminate the PTI and such tactics would instead boost the party. "If he starts distributing PTI tickets, anyone who gets it will win," he added. A political party ended, he said, when its vote bank ended. He asked if an ideology could be crushed with such cruelty. "If this was so, Kashmir would have

Continued on Page 06



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In another major blow to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), senior politician and former federal minister Chaudhry Fawad Hussain and Asad Umar on Wednesday parted ways with PTI chairman Imran Khan. The Secretary General of PTI also

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Two soldiers among four martyred in suicide blast

Six terrorists also killed during an IBO in the Kot Azam area



NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Two soldiers were among four people who embraced martyrdom in a suicide explosion in North Waziristan, confirmed the military's media wing on Wednesday. A vehicle-borne suicide bomber exploded himself in the general area of Datta Khel and resultantly two soldiers, Naik Said Ullah Shah, 33, and Sepoy Jawad Khan, 31, a policeman and an innocent civilian were martyred, a statement from In-

ter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said. The military's media wing said: "The suicide bomber intended to target a public gathering but swift response by the security forces personnel prevented a major catastrophe as the soldiers immediately intercepted the suicide bomber vehicle on suspicion, sacrificing their lives to save numerous innocent lives." Security forces and law enforcement agencies are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers and innocent citizens further strengthen our resolve, read the statement. Earlier in the day, at least six terrorists were killed during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) on Wednesday in the Kot Azam area in South Waziristan district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, the military said. According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the operation was conducted on the reported presence of terrorists.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meeting the families of Shuhada at Azmat-e-Shuhada Convention. - DNA

'No grudges: Our hearts clean' Why did ECP not inform president of situation, asks CJP

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial remarked on Tuesday that the apex court had a "clean heart" and would not use the past against the government. The CJP's remarks came as the Supreme Court resumed the hearing of the review petition filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) challenging its order directing polls in Punjab on May 14. The plea was heard by the same bench that issued the initial order on April 4, comprising CJP Bandial, Justice Mu-

nib Akhtar and Justice Ijazul Ahsan.

At the outset of the hearing, Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan came to the rostrum and began to present his arguments. He said that some of the court's remarks day earlier left a "wrong impression". "It was asked in the court yesterday why the Election Commission did not raise the points earlier," he said, adding that the bench had also remarked that the federal government had previously been arguing that the decision to hold elections was a "minority verdict". In response to these issues, the attorney general said: "The point that

the election of the National Assembly will be affected if there are elections in a province was raised earlier." He added that the point that the federal government considered the 4/3 verdict to be a minority verdict was also raised beforehand. Hearing these remarks, CJP Bandial said: "We were happy yesterday that legal points were presented before the court, yesterday. You do not need to panic." He assured the attorney general that the apex court would consider any reasonable point raised before taking a decision.

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Imran should be banned, not PTI

LAHORE, May 24 (APP): Former PTI MPA Mian Jail Sharaupuri has said that Imran Khan should be banned due to his violence based politics instead of banning the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

Addressing a press conference along with Ulema and Mushayekh at the Press Club here on Wednesday, he said that the PTI was founded by Imran Khan and he himself demolished it. He condemned the May 9 incidents and alleged that Imran Khan created anti-state narrative.

He said that after successful no-confidence move against him, Khan first blamed the United States and then the state institutions, adding that he witnessed that the institutions remained clearly neutral during the no-trust process. He said that it was purely incompetence of the PTI and Imran Khan that no-confidence move got successful against him, but he (Imran) had put the responsibility of his incompetence on others.

He said that every patriotic Pakistani citizen was in grief over the incidents took place on May 09 in which several buildings, vehicles and symbols of martyrs were destroyed and burnt. "It is unfortunate that miscreants damaged symbols of martyrs and installations," he added.—DNA

Nepra further jacks up electricity tariff

KARACHI: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has approved an increase in the price of electricity by Rs1.25 per unit under quarterly tariff adjustment. According to the regulatory body, the new tariff will come into effect immediately. The increase in electricity tariff will be applicable to all the consumer categories except lifeline consumers and KE users. The increase in power tariffs will put Rs46.28 billion additional pressure on the already burdened masses, who are struggling to make ends meet amidst rising inflation and a weak economy.

On Thursday, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) approved Rs1.55 per unit increase in electricity price for consumers of K-Electric (KE). According to details, the power regulatory authority approved Rs1.55 per unit hike in electricity tariff in the wake of the previous fiscal year's second quarterly adjustment.

The additional amount will be received from KE consumers from May to July 2023. The NEPRA announced the decision on a petition filed by the federal government seeking equal tariff across the country.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Members of Christen Community holds rally at G-7 Markaz to show solidarity with Pak Army.—Online

Analytical thinking must for joining competitive world

DNA

TAXILA: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday emphasising the promotion of analytical thinking, said that the highly competitive world necessitated Pakistan to enhance access to education and enrollment in schools.

The president, addressing the first convocation of HITEC Institute of Medical Sciences, said Pakistan was faced with a crisis of 27 million out school children. He said comparatively, the ratio of children's school enrollment in India and Bangladesh stood at 98-100 percent. He told the gathering that through a dedicated focus on education and health sectors, Pakistan could excel within eight years, citing the case study of China. The president, who earlier distributed medals and degrees

among the graduates of medicine and dentistry, said the country could not afford the women giving up their careers after getting higher education and called it a "tremendous wastage". However, he said it was incumbent upon the state to provide women a safe working environment as the institutions like Federal Mohtasib were already functioning for the purpose. He said in Pakistan, only nine percent youngsters enroll for higher education which needed to be increased by introducing modern education tools like online education. Citing nine percent prevalence of hepatitis and almost 40 percent stunting, the president said the country direly needed medical professionals to cope with the challenge. He urged the new graduates to focus more on preventive care as Pakistan could not afford the curative treatment.

Pakistan already achieved remarkable success during the COVID pandemic by promoting preventive methods, he recalled. Calling it a beautiful culture of Pakistan, President Alvi advised the youngsters to always remain thankful to their teachers and parents for their efforts to brighten their future. He said obtaining the degree was just an opening of the door to knowledge as the new trends and innovations were being introduced in the medical field particularly after the artificial intelligence. He predicted that within a span of ten years, AI would enable the display of human thought within no time as tremendous knowledge already existed in the cloud technology. He also advised the new graduates to never let greed overpower their humanity and that they should always be compassionate to their

patients in accordance with Islamic as well as the cultural values. Earlier, Principal of HITEC Institute of Medical Sciences Professor Major General (ret) Hamid Shafiq congratulated the students and their parents over the graduation. He said that starting in 2016, the Institute was counted among the A Grade medical colleges of the country. He said the Institute had also obtained the ISO certification, providing high standard education to the students as well as the house job facility to them after the graduation. Principal HITEC Dental College Dr Irfan Shah said that with the convocation, the seven years long efforts have come to the fruition. He said the college was now a well established institute with certain distinctions including the top ranking by Pakistan Medical and Dental Council. He said besides

studies, the college was also actively engaged in the social welfare works by providing dentistry services to the people living in the suburbs. At the convocation, MBBS and BDS degrees were awarded to a total of 87 medical and 46 Ddental graduates. These were the institution's pioneer batches since its inception in 2016. Vice Chancellor NUMS, Lt Gen Wasim Alamgir, and the Chairman HIT Board Maj Gen Shaker Ullah Khattak, HI (M) were also present at the occasion. Dr Muhammad Ali (MBBS) was declared the best graduate of the session 2016-2021, with 16 gold, two silver, three bronze medals and nine distinctions. Dr Arooba Mehmood (BDS) was declared the best graduate of the session 2018-2022 with 16 gold medals, three silver, two bronze medals and eight distinctions.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Qatar to Pakistan, Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, meets with the Ambassador of EU to Pakistan, Dr. Riina Kionka. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest were discussed.—DNA

Over 100 illegal housing societies established in Capital

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Wednesday were informed that some 111 illegal housing societies had been established in the federal capital without fulfilling legal formalities and in violation to the law. The committee meeting was held here under the chairmanship of Member National Assembly (MNA), Nuzhat Pathan and took stock of briefings on Real Estate and Regulatory Authority (RERA) Act, details of Housing Societies in Islamabad causing severe damage to the environment and sewage system in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), report regarding attack on Director General, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2019 at Savour Foods, comprehensive briefing on all Restaurants located in Margalla Hills causing severe damage to the environment with poor sewage system specially the complete case study of Monal Restaurant with previous follow up. The chairperson expressed her resentment on the absence of Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Noor-ul-Amin Mengal. She said the CDA chairman was asked to attend the meeting prior to the start of the committee and should attend the next committee's meeting. She queried the CDA officials, "How do you authorize housing societies and keep an eye on the changing climate? How are the slum dwellers destroying Islamabad?" —APP

ISSI holds seminar on Pakistan's nuclear journey

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Arms Control & Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a Seminar on "25 Years of Youm-e-Takbeer: Promoting Peace, Stability, and Development." In his welcome remarks, Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood stated that Youm-e-Takbeer was always an occasion for national pride as well as thanksgiving. He paid rich tributes to the leaders, scientists, engineers, technicians, security personnel, strategists and diplomats who had made invaluable contributions over the decades in Pakistan's nuclear journey. He added that Pakistan's nuclear programme, supported by complete national consensus, remained the bedrock of our impregnable national security and an invaluable source for accelerated socio-economic

progress. In the 25 years since crossing the Rubicon, Pakistan had maintained a robust operationalized deterrent capability accompanied by an impeccable nuclear safety and security regime. Pakistan's credentials as a responsible nuclear state had been reinforced internationally. Also, active nuclear diplomacy continued to project Pakistan's policies of restraint and responsibility internationally and make efforts for mainstreaming in the nuclear order. In introductory remarks, Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC-ISSI, said that the Pakistanian commemoration commemorates "Youm-e-Takbeer" as a day when it conducted nuclear tests and restored the balance of power in South Asia. Pakistan's nuclear capability has not only augmented national security but had ensured survival against aggression by a large and more powerful adversary, India. Over the years, Pakistan developed a robust command and control structure, stringent

export control law, rules and regulations and a national nuclear safety and security regime, which was in line with international law and best practices. Pakistan had pursued peace, stability and development through its nuclear programme. Lt. Gen. (Retd) Khalid Kidwai, Advisor, National Command Authority, and former DG, Strategic Plans Division (SPD), in a special message paid tribute to the founding fathers of Pakistan's nuclear programme in the political, scientific, strategic and diplomatic fields and salute those whose collective determination, political wisdom, vision and scientific expertise allowed Pakistanis today to live and breathe in an environment of relative peace and stability without fear of external aggression. He stated that Pakistan's deterrence capabilities were well-balanced and comprised of a triad of land, air and sea forces, which operate under the umbrella of a strong command and control system.

9/5 attacks were orchestrated

LAHORE: Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori said on Wednesday that the May 9 vandalism was planned. Speaking to media, Mr Tessori berated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, saying, "Imran Khan and his party have betrayed the people." Heaping praise on the army, Mr Tessori said, "The army has foiled the conspiracy attempts." "It is important to highlight the truth behind the May 9 mayhem. — APP

KP Governor visits Jail, checks barracks, food items

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali has visited the Central Jail Peshawar and inspected various barracks. According to an official handout issued on Wednesday, he also met the prisoners and checked the food items being provided to them. Caretaker provincial ministers Justice (Retd) Irshad Qaiser, Abdul Halim Kasuria, Advisor to the caretaker Chief Minister on Prisons Haji Hidayatullah Khan and former provincial minister Ziaullah Khan Afridi also accompanied him on his visit. On their arrival at the Central Jail Peshawar, the governor and provincial ministers were received by Inspector General Jail Usman Masood, Superintendent Jail Maqsood ur Rehman and presented a bouquet to him. On this occasion, the Superintendent of the Jail gave a detailed briefing to the governor and the ministers about the number of prisoners in the jail and the nature of the crime, the available resources, the security system and the number and services of the jail staff. They were also briefed on details regarding the Skill Development Center in the jail for the prisoners, rehabilitation center for the drug-addicted prisoners, treatment facilities, and a dental chair for female prisoners. The jail administration also presented demands to the governor regarding the shortage of medical supplies in the jail, the installation of jammers, the installation of a water filtration plant, the establishment of a conference room and computer laboratory, and construction of road. — APP

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

PAKISTAN PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

No.PEM/AB/Advt/1048 Dated Islamabad, the 23/05/2023

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

Sealed tenders are invited from the Contractors registered with having PEC Category on percentage rate basis who possesses valid renewal with PEC upto **30-06-2023**. Tender documents can be purchased from the Office of the undersigned during office hours till **08-06-2023** with written request on letter accompanied with attested copy of CNIC, income tax Registration Certificate as active Taxpayer (filer). Tender will be issued to the proprietor of the firm / company or their legally authorized representative having registered power of attorney (duly attested) The tenders in sealed cover should be dropped in the tender box kept in the office of undersigned on **09-06-2023 upto 02:00 P.M.** The respective tenders will be opened on the same day at **02:30.P.M** in the presence of contractors or their authorized representatives. Other terms & conditions can be seen in office of the undersigned during office hours on any working day.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- No tender will be sold/issued on the date of opening of tenders and in case of public holidays the receipt and opening of tenders will be the next working day.
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- According to PPRA Rules-25, fixed Bid Security in the shape of a bank instrument from the Firm/Company's own account from any Scheduled Bank of Pakistan shall be provided in the name of the Executive Engineer Project E/M Division Pak PWD Islamabad. No tender will be entertained without bid security.
- Under Rule 33(1) of Public Procurement Rules, 2004 the procuring agency reserves the right to reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of bid or proposal.
- The submission of tenders by the contractor implies that he is fully conversant with the site of work, scope of work and terms and conditions as laid down in the tender documents.

S.No	Name of work	Earnest Money	Period of completion	Cost of tender
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Executive Engineer
Project E/M Division, Pak PWD Islamabad

PID (I) No. 7195/22

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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
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RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

ECC allows fertilizer plants to operate till August 31

The ECC also approved the following technical supplementary grants/ supplementary grants including Rs 2.5 million in favour of Ministry of Climate Change and Environment Coordination to meet its expenditures.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet allowed Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) Based fertilizer plants to operate beyond May 31 to August 31 on indigenous gas with no subsidy. The ECC met with Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar in a chair, adding that SNGPL-based fertilizer plants include Fatima Fertilizer (Sheikhupura) and Agritech, said a press release on Wednesday. Ministry of Industries and Production submitted a summary of Urea Fertilizer requirements for the year 2023 and briefed on the urea fertilizer situation in the country.

Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination submitted a summary on the participation of Sindh's Mangroves projects in voluntary carbon markets and presented that Sindh Forest Department is implementing two Indus Delta Mangrove projects viz Delta Blue Carbon-I (DBC-I) and Delta Blue Carbon-II (DBC-II) to generate carbon credits and trade with international entities on Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM). The ECC after discussion approved the proposal of the Ministry that the DBC-I and DBC-II projects as these were initiated prior to the commitment made under NDCs in 2021 and these projects are expected to generate around US\$ 200 to 220 million till 2043 with additional benefits of creating green jobs.

The ECC also considered a summary of the Ministry of Energy (Power Division) on payment mechanisms and agreements with M/s Uch Power (Pvt) Limited.

ECC approved the proposals of the Ministry for a Novation Agreement, Master Agreement, and PPA amendment that would result in savings of Rs. 33 billion over a period of seven years. The ECC also approved the following technical supplementary grants/ supplementary grants including Rs 2.5 million in favour of Ministry of Climate Change and Environment Coordination to meet its expenditures. The ECC approved Rs. 263.988 million in favour of the office of Controller General of Accounts (CGA) for the implementation of online billing solutions in Fed-

eral and Provincial Accountant Generals whereas Rs 497.261 million in favour of the Ministry of Housing and Works for the execution of development scheme titled "Construction of Railway underpass Gojra, district Toba Tek Singh".

Rs 420 million in favour of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to meet its budgetary shortfall for Informa-tion Services abroad while Rs 10,746.216 million in favour of the Federal Directorate of Immunization (FDI) to procure vaccines and syringes for uninterrupted supply to the provinces. Rs 20 billion in favour of Cabinet Division for Sustainable Development Goals Achievement Programme (SAP), Rs 25 million in favour of the President Secretariat for ERE ex-

penditures, Rs 208 million in favour of the Intelligence Bureau to meet its Employee Related Expenses, and Rs 4000 million in favour of Ministry of Defence to meet its expenditures.

Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar, Federal Minister for Power Khuram Dasgiri Khan, Federal Minister for Industries and Production Syed Murtaza Mahmud, Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Dr Aisha Ghouse Pasha, SAPM on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Coordinator to the PM on Economy Bilal Azhar Kayani, Coordinator to PM on Commerce & Industry Rana Ihsan Afzal, Federal Secretaries and other senior officers attended the meeting.



ISLAMABAD, MAY 24: Deputy Minister of Defence and Chief of General Staff of Azerbaijan Army, Colonel General Karim Valiyev presenting a shield to Minister of Defence, Khawaja Asif on Wednesday.—DNA

'Population control possible with incentivized NFC award'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday stressed the need for reviewing the formula of resources distribution under the NFC award, giving incentives to provinces for the successful execution of the population control programme. Addressing a ceremony organized in collaboration with the British High Commission to promote awareness in tackling the challenge of population control, he said it was unfortunate that 80 per cent weightage was given to the size of the population while distributing resources under the National Finance Commis-

sion (NFC) award. "The time has come; we need to seriously review the NFC formula for distribution of resources, while there ought to be some weightage for the population but equivalent to demographic efficiency or successful population control programme," he said. He said there was a big contradiction itself in the efforts that there was no incentive for provinces to successfully carry out the population control programme. "... it is a sad thing that we have persisted with a formula that is very negative for the population control programme." The minister questioned how a province could effectively execute the population control programme when it knew that a "reduced number

of the people means getting less financial resources." Highlighting the importance of a controlled population, Ahsan Iqbal said developed nations in the world had achieved progress and prosperity by creating a balance between resources and population needs. Unfortunately, the minister said Pakistan could not make any noteworthy success in its population control programme due to some socioeconomic, cultural and educational barriers. He said national consensus should be evolved in reviewing the NFC award formula, urging the experts to put forward suggestions to the policymakers, accordingly. The minister said the census should not be limited

only to the population count but also collecting the development and economic data of provinces. Without controlling the fast growth of the population, he said the country would not be able to judiciously distribute national resources and provide basic facilities like health and education to its citizens. "Our future is linked with that how fast we control our population growth." Ahsan Iqbal said the field operation of the 7th population and housing census had been completed and now the digitally collected data was being verified by the experts. Sharing some initial results of the census, he said, "There is no such country in Asia that has that kind of population growth rate."

Pak to tap trade opportunities in Shanghai economic city

Islamabad : Pakistan actively explores trade and investment cooperation opportunities with Chinese enterprises and welcomes direct Chinese investment in Pakistan, including manufacturing operations for sales within Pakistan or duty-free export, said Hussain Haider, the Pakistani Consul General in Shanghai, during the Pakistan International Promotion Conference. During his presentation on trade and investment opportunities in Pakistan, the consul general provided an overview of unique Pakistani products, top exports, Pakistan's foreign trade, preferential investment policies in Pakistan, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, foreign investment incentives, and priority sectors for investment, among other topics, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Wednesday. "Pakistan, situated at a crucial juncture of the Belt and Road, possesses a unique geographical location and abundant natural resources," added the consul general. He further highlighted that "with its substantial market potential, youthful workforce, and agricultural advantages, Pakistan holds significant development potential in the fields of economy, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), tourism, and culture, thus attracting Chinese investment and tourists." According to the Board of Investment, Pakistan, net Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows from China reached USD 847,000,000 in 2019-2020 and USD 758,000,000 in 2020-2021. The consul general mentioned that "Shanghai-based companies that have invested in Pakistan have achieved significant success and serve as exemplary Pak-China collaboration cases. We anticipate further investments from the Shanghai economic zone in the post-pandemic era."—DNA

People-to-People exchange: 8-member delegation departs to China

ISLAMABAD: In collaboration with the Consulate General of China in Lahore, Pakistan, an 8-member delegation comprising scholars, international affairs experts, senior media practitioners, and heads of think-tanks departed for China. Chinese Consul General in Lahore, Zhao Shiren, told Gwadar Pro that this is the first media and think-tank delegation organised by the Chinese Consulate General in Lahore to visit China after the Covid-19 pandemic. "It's high time to resume people-to-people exchanges," he added. "The past three years have witnessed tremendous changes in China. This week-long visit will present our Pakistani friends with a true, multi-dimensional, and panoramic picture of China, further promoting the friendly relations and understanding between the two peoples. I sincerely wish all members of the delegation a pleasant, fruitful, and constructive trip," he added. During their visit to China, the delegation will tour Chinese public and private enterprises, the China Railway Group, engineering corporations, and media houses. The delegation will also get a comprehensive opportunity to witness and explore the marvels of Shenzhen, a fast-emerging hub of trade, industry, and economic power in China. This activity is taking place at a watershed moment as Pakistan and China are celebrating the 72nd anniversary of Sino-Pak diplomatic relations, in addition to commemorating 10 years of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a signature project of the Belt and Road Initiative.—DNA

8 held in crackdown against drugs peddlers

WAH CANTT: The police during the operation clean up against the drugs mafia on Wednesday, nabbed eight drugs dens including a den operated by a female member of the intercity racket of drugs suppliers, and recovered over 15 kilograms of contraband from their possession. According to a Police spokesman, a team of Wah Sadder Police led by station house officer Inspector Rana Kashif during a crackdown launched against the drugs-selling mafia in the rural and urban areas of the Wah arrested and arrested eight drugs peddlers working for various drugs-selling rackets in the area.—APP

NA passes two govt bills

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly (NA) on Wednesday took up most of its agenda and passed two government bills.

Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain moved the National Skills University Islamabad (Amendment) Bill, 2023 which was passed by the House. He moved another bill - the NFC Institute of Engineering and Technology Multan (Amendment) Bill, 2023 - into the House which was also passed. The House also passed a motion for consideration of the Control of Narcotics Substances (Amendment) Bill, 2022 in the joint sitting of Parliament. The Half Year Report of the Board of Directors of State Bank of Pakistan on the State of Pakistan's Economy for the year 2022-2023 was also laid in the House. The House considered two calling attention notices and also took up the question hour. Later, the House was adjourned to meet again on May 30, 2023 (Tuesday) at 01:00 p.m.—APP

DC reviews mock Rescue-1122 exercise

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema on Wednesday inspected mock exercise of Rescue-1122 organized at Rawal Dam to deal with the flood situation.

The DC also checked Rescue 1122 preparations made to handle flood situation and other administrative issues including relief activities.

The DC was briefed about the equipments being used to deal with the flood situation. He said that all the departments concerned were alert to cope with any flood situation. A system to give timely information to the public had been devised, he said adding, all the equipments should be kept fully functional besides maintaining their complete record. Regular duty roster of the staff should be made and all necessary staff should be directed to ensure their availability in case of emergency, he added.—APP

IBCC, PSF to foster STEM education in country

ISLAMABAD: The Inter Board Coordination Commission (IBCC) and the Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) jointly enhance Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education throughout Pakistan. In a meeting held here at the PSF headquarters, Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah, Secretary of IBCC, met with Dr. Shahid Baig, Chairman of PSF and discussed strategic collaboration and outline key initiatives. Recognizing the critical importance of STEM education for the nation's progress and development, both organizations have pledged their commitment to work together to promote and strengthen STEM learning opportunities across Pakistan. The partnership will leverage the support of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) to ensure the effective implementation of STEM programs.—APP

MAY 2023

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Briefs

Minister unveils plan to attract foreign investment

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin Ul Haque Wednesday said the incumbent government was working on a strategy to attract more and more foreign as well as domestic investment in Artificial Intelligence (AI), considered a key element in strengthening economies in the modern world.

In a statement, he said, at least 60 countries, including India and Sri Lanka, have adopted the AI laws and policies since 2017. The minister said Bangladesh's draft policy has recently been opened for public feedback and consultation.

The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication has also uploaded a draft of the Artificial Intelligence Policy (AIP) on its official webpage, seeking public feedback and suggestions from public and private sector organizations, academia, civil society, and industry to finalize the document. Artificial Intelligence Policy is a pivotal milestone for transforming Pakistan into a knowledge-based economy as it spells out a national strategy to establish an ecosystem necessary for AI adoption. The policy will harness an agile framework to address different aspects of unique user journeys encompassing different market horizontals and industry verticals by ensuring the responsible use of AI. The Ministry of IT&T is also forming a Policy Committee that will lead the policy consultation process and finalize the draft of the National AI Policy.—APP

VC AIUO visits regional campus

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor (VC) of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIUO) Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood has said the university was taking various steps to further improve the quality of education. The VC said, "Consultation with all stakeholders is necessary to achieve the goals."

He made these remarks during his visit to the AIUO's Regional Campus Sargodha yesterday. He met with the tutors, examiners, and staff and said, "Providing all possible facilities to the students and improvement of the academic quality of AIUO are my top priorities." Dr. Nasir Mahmood said, "The faculty members, principal officers, regional directors, employees, tutors, resource persons, examination, and other staff are the stakeholders of the university, and we all must work together to raise the quality of education of AIUO." He was accompanied by the Director General (DG) of Regional Services Dr. Malik Tauqeer Ahmad Khan, and the Head of Sargodha Regional Campus Dr. Zubair Ahmad Shah. Dr. Nasir along with his team visited the under-construction building of the University's Regional Campus. He inspected the construction work and directed the early completion of the project.—APP

Rupee gains one paisa against Dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee gained 01 paisa against the US Dollar (USD) in the interbank trading on Wednesday and closed at Rs 287.13 against the previous day's closing of Rs 287.14. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs306 and Rs308, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 72 paise to close at Rs 309.51 against the last day's closing of Rs 310.23, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 2.07, whereas an increase of 71 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 356.77 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 356.06. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham witnessed no change to close at Rs 78.19 whereas the Saudi Riyal went down by 01 paise to close at Rs.76.56.

Malik hands over SCCI presidency to Bangladesh

ISLAMABAD: After the completion of his tenure, Iftekhar Ali Malik, outgoing President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry has formally handed over the prestigious portfolio of presidency of the SAARC Chamber to Jashim Uddin from Bangladesh for a term of two years. Through a video link, he extended best wishes to the new president and assured full cooperation from the Pakistan side to make the fo-

rum a real success, said a news release on Wednesday. In this regard, a ceremony was held in Dhaka wherein the new president expressed his gratitude to Iftekhar for extending greetings on assuming the coveted post. Malik during his term had made significant contributions to the chamber, particularly in his capacity as a leader and advocate for business and trade promotion within the SAARC region. He

played a crucial role in shaping the chamber's policies, initiatives, and strategies. Malik has actively promoted trade and investment opportunities besides being instrumental in organizing trade exhibitions, business conferences, and forums to facilitate business interactions among the member countries. Through these efforts, he has worked towards enhancing economic cooperation and regional integration. As a respected

leader in the business community, Iftekhar Malik has been actively involved in policy advocacy at the SAARC Chamber. He has represented the interests of businesses from Pakistan and other SAARC member countries, addressing issues related to trade barriers, investment facilitation, and regional economics. He has also played a key role in fostering bilateral relations between Pakistan and other SAARC

member states. Malik has led business delegations and participated in high-level meetings, promoting cross-border collaborations and partnerships. His efforts were aimed at enhancing economic ties and fostering goodwill among SAARC nations. Malik has actively supported programs aimed at poverty alleviation, education, health-care, and environmental sustainability.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Advocate Sawal Nazir Minister Local Government Elections & Rural Development Khyber Pakhtunkhwa presenting Shield to Madam Pang Chunxue Officiating Ambassador of China after a meeting to further enhance Khyber Pakhtunkhwa & China relations.—DNA

NDMA team attends World Bank partnership days event

ISLAMABAD: A two-member delegation comprising of Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik and Member Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Idrees Mehsud on Wednesday attended the Partnership Days Event of Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) on the invite of World Bank in Washington DC.

The Chairman as a panellist highlighted the requirements for making Pakistan a resilient country, a news release said. The NDMA Chairman said, "Developing economies critically need innovative DRR approaches based on local challenges and necessities". The Chairman unveiled the way forward for a remodelled NDMA that will be able to tackle upcoming challenges owing to multiple hazards,

particularly climate change induced. He emphasized the need for collaboration to incorporate community-centric AI-based/tech-driven early warning capabilities to forecast disasters, which also could be a key solution to minimize time and again financial assistance by donors in affected regions. The Chairman, during panel discussion also suggested that the World Bank financial strategy developments for DRR and other frameworks must include spontaneity and shared DRR instruments. Pakistan has demonstrated default resilience and adaptation, which requires support in value addition of protocols, he added.

In the later part of the day, the delegation also held productive sessions with Areeen Akhter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs at the US

State Department and Marcia Wong, Deputy Assistant to the Administrator, in USAID HQs Washington.

During meetings, the NDMA delegation discussed the crucial need to collaborate with academia and DM responders of vulnerable countries with global universities, for building forward on existing knowledge and capitalization of existing indigenous capabilities.

They further specified the requirement to formulate and connect a team of all DM stakeholders including local/global partners working in silos, for pre-identifying risks and preparation of plans of action for foreseeable potential disasters. NDMA delegation is currently representing Pakistan in sessions/meetings about disaster risk management and financing, organized by global partners/stakeholders.—APP

Tourism minister congratulates leadership

ISLAMABAD: Minister of Tourism Ahmed bin Aqeel Al-Khateeb extended congratulations and appreciation to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, over the progress achieved by the tourism sector in the Kingdom. The Saudi Cabinet highlighted on Tuesday the positive results achieved in the tourism sector in the two indicators of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) for the number of international tourists and tourism revenues for 2022. In this regard, the Minister of Tourism stressed that such achievement reflects the leadership's follow-up and interest in strengthening the tourism sector and raising its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) in line with the Saudi Vision 2030. He also commended the achievement as an addition to the successes being achieved by the Kingdom in various fields and came as a culmination of the directives of the Kingdom's leadership to seek to strengthen the Kingdom's position on the global tourism map. Al-Khateeb also indicated that the development of visas and facilitating their procedures, the promotional campaigns in the targeted countries, and the diversity of tourism options and destinations in the Kingdom were among the reasons for achieving these achievements,

affirming the Ministry ongoing efforts in cooperation with all partners from the public and private sectors to move forward in achieving the aspirations of leadership by making the Kingdom a global tourism destination. According to the UNWTO report, the Kingdom has made a massive leap in the ranking of the countries that received the most international tourists in 2022, advancing 12 places to reach 13th place, compared to 25th place in 2019. The Kingdom received 16.6 million international tourists for all purposes in 2022. Thus, the Kingdom advanced 16 places in the International Tourism Revenue Index, reaching 11th place in 2022, compared to 27th place in 2019, according to the World Tourism Barometer report issued in May 2023 by the UNWTO. During the first quarter of 2023, the Kingdom received about 7.8 million international tourists for all purposes, representing the highest-ever quarterly performance, achieving a growth of 64% compared to the same period in 2019. Accordingly, the Kingdom occupied second place among the list of the most developed countries worldwide during the period, according to the latest data received by the UNWTO. Also, the Kingdom has achieved a new achievement within the Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) issued by the World Economic Forum (WEF), as it jumped to 33rd place worldwide, advancing ten places at once, compared to 2019.—APP

Sanallah condemns terrorist attack

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Rana Sanallah Khan Wednesday strongly condemned the terrorist attack on a security forces' check post in North Waziristan, which resulted in tragic loss of lives and left several others injured. In a statement issued here, he paid tributes to martyred security personnel, acknowledging their ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. "The martyrdom of our brave security forces is an irreparable loss for the nation. Their courage and dedication to protecting our homeland will always be remembered," he added. He also extended heartfelt condolences to the families of those embraced martyrdom in the terrorist attack. Promising swift action against the perpetrators, the minister assured that no stone would be left unturned in bringing the terrorists to justice. "We will take full account of each martyrdom caused by the terrorists.—APP

PAF pays tribute to 1965 war hero Alauddin Ahmed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: While paying tribute to its Ghazis and Martyrs, Pakistan Air Force has released a special promo on 1965 War hero Squadron Leader Alauddin Ahmed Shaheed. Sqn Ldr Alauddin Ahmed Shaheed demonstrated exceptional bravery and led his Squadron in twenty combat missions against enemy forces. Throughout the operations, his leadership was characterized by composure, courage, and unwavering determination, inspiring great confidence among pilots in his formations and resulting in the destruction of numerous Indian war fighting assets. In his final sortie, he fearlessly attacked and destroyed a significant ammunition train at the Gurdaspur railhead, displaying complete disregard for his personal safety. During this attack on 13 September, 1965 his aircraft was damaged and was reported missing over enemy territory. Subsequently, it was confirmed that the officer had embraced Shahadat in this action. The war hero was honored with the prestigious 'Sitara-e-Jurat' for displaying exemplary leadership, courage and valour.



ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of China Studies (PICS) and Confucius Institute celebrate students' accomplishment

PICS, Confucius Institute celebrate students' accomplishment

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of China Studies (PICS) and Confucius Institute celebrate students' accomplishment in Chinese language courses, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Wednesday. They hosted a certificate awarding ceremony at the University of Sargodha. The event celebrated the accomplishments of students who had successfully completed the HSK-1 and HSK-2 Chinese language courses. Speaking at the ceremony, Professor Dr. Qaisar Abbas emphasised the vital role of learning foreign languages, particularly Chinese, for personal development, national benefit, and career progression.—APP

NEPRA concludes public hearing

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Wednesday concluded a public hearing into XWAPDA Power Distribution Companies (DISCOs) for quarterly adjustment about the 3rd quarter of the current fiscal year 2022-23.

The hearing was presided by the NEPRA Authority comprising of Chairman NEPRA, Mr Tauseef H. Farooqi, Member (Technical), Engr. Rafique Ahmad Shaikh, Member (LICENSING), Engr. Maqsood Anwar Khan and Member (Law), Ms. Amina Ahmed. The XWDISCOs sought an amount of Rs. 46.28 billion on account of the quarterly adjustment for the said period. The Authority heard the petitioners and would decide the matter after due diligence and considering the comments of all stakeholders. The allowed quarterly adjustment will be recovered on a uniform basis from all consumers except for Lifeline. The hearing was attended by a large number of representatives and senior officials of XWDISCOs, CPPA-G, NTDC/NPCC as well as a business community, Journalists and the general public.—APP

Mobile phone imports decreases


ISLAMABAD: The import of mobile phones into the country has witnessed a decrease of 73.84 percent during the ten months of the current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

Pakistan imported mobile phones worth US \$ 473.287 million during July-April (2022-23) as compared to the imports of US \$ 1809.219 million during July-April (2021-22), showing a decline of 73.84 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

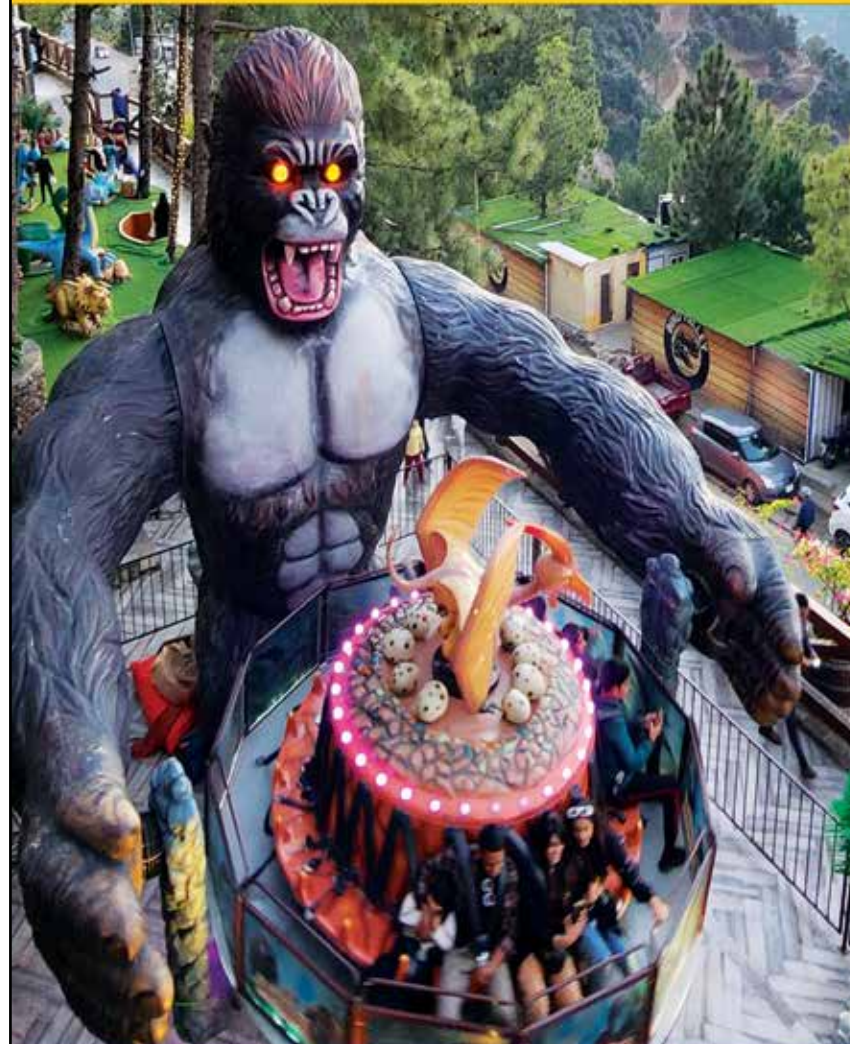
Meanwhile, on a year-to-year basis, the import of mobile phones also dipped by 95.03 percent during the month of April 2023 when compared to the same month of last year.

The import of mobiles into the country during April 2023 was recorded at \$ 10.587 million against the exports of \$212.881 million in April 2022.

On a month-on-month basis, the imports of mobile phones also witnessed a decrease of 28.69 percent during April 2023, as compared to the imports of US \$14.846 million during March 2023, according to the data.—APP



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Industry's difficulties compounded by costs

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Wednesday said the production cost of the industrial sector should be significantly reduced in the coming budget. Otherwise, he said, the future of industries in the country will be uncertain hitting production, exports, employment and revenue. Mian Zahid Hussain said that thousands of industries have closed in the country, many are operating at half or less capacity, while millions of people have become unemployed, and if this situation continues, the country's economic condition will further deteriorate. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that due to the increased value of the dollar, a surge in bank markup, depreciation of the rupee, unsustainable inflation exceeding 36 percent, import restrictions and political instability, the industrial sector is in dire straits. This important sector has deteriorated and if it was not supported, the revenue target of FBR will not be met while the default of banks will also increase, he added. To revive the industrial sector, it is necessary to reduce its cost of production, he said, adding that the SMEs play a fundamental role in the development of any country, but this sector is also being neglected in Pakistan. There is a need for easier financing, less tax and reduced audit burden for this sector so that it can play its role in the development of the country and provide employment to the people. Mian Zahid Hussain said that textile, auto, pharma, steel and many other industrial sectors are on the verge of collapse and they need to be bailed out immediately. The previous government allowed more industries to be set up in tribal areas than needed for political gains and gave them tax exemptions due to which their production cost is low and they pose a threat to industries in other parts of the country. Competition between the industries of the regions should be ensured for the sake of a level playing field, he added. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that the supply of imported raw materials for the industries should be ensured. While the requirement of ID cards for purchase should be made effective or abolished.—APP

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 03 Issue: 248

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China-Russia ties

Although some Western countries have expressed their disapproval of Sino-Russian cooperation and seek to distort the economic and trade ties between the two countries as proof that China is supporting Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, this is part and parcel of the "evil empires" guff they are peddling to the gullible. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning stated categorically that "China-Russia cooperation does not target any third party, nor is it subject to disruption or coercion by any third party."

Her back-in-your-face response was a rebuttal of the disapprobation voiced by the usual parties at China hosting a delegation led by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin. The visit is intended to give substance to the agreement reached between the two heads of state to promote greater complementarity and joint development of traditional trade and emerging areas of cooperation.

China is Russia's largest trading partner, with trade between the two sides reaching a record \$190 billion last year, according to Chinese customs data. Energy is an obvious lubricant for greater cooperation. Russia has it to sell and China wants to buy it. China became Russia's top energy customer last year. But trade between the two countries is more than just energy. Thanks to their complementary trade structures, the value of China-Russia imports and exports soared 41.3 percent on a yearly basis to \$73.15 billion in the first four months of 2023, indicating a bright prospect for the two countries to realize the goal of \$200 billion for bilateral trade, a target set by the two leaders for this year. In today's turbulent world, that China and Russia are making efforts to expand their cooperation and strengthen ties should be perceived as a contribution to world peace, stability and development. Only those with a narrow world view and clinging to the Cold War mentality would question its purpose.

Guided by the two heads of state, China and Russia have blazed a path of major-country relations featuring strategic trust and good neighborliness, setting a good example for international relations.

But China, like the majority of the countries in the world, has adopted a different stance than the West over the Ukraine conflict, which forms a stark contrast to what the US-led Western countries have been doing in imposing sanctions on Russia and constantly fanning the war flames in Ukraine. For this reason, the US-led clique is trying to stigmatize China's relations with Russia.

Despite all the brickbats, China will continue to strengthen its cooperation with Russia while at the same time pushing for a lasting diplomatic resolution of the Ukraine crisis.



Ukraine's counter offensive

As the wait for the long-anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive continues, two strikingly different developments in the war have seized attention. The first is that Russia appears to have all but taken Bakhmut after a long, slow and brutal fight which has reduced another thriving community to rubble, cost a staggering number of lives and consumed huge quantities of ammunition. Each side is thought to have suffered tens of thousands of casualties in the battle for a city that is more important to Moscow symbolically than strategically. Both sides have referred to the combat there as a "meat grinder". The second development is the startling raid into Belgorod, a Russian border region – claimed by ethnic Russian, anti-Kremlin partisans, who Kyiv says act independently; Moscow blamed the incursion on "Ukrainian militants". Unlike previous attacks on an oil depot, munitions store and railway bridge in Belgorod, this does not appear to be about a major strategic target. But it has shifted attention from Russian military success to Russian military humiliation.

What matters in this war is not only the damage inflicted on supply lines or the precise territory commanded by troops, but the narrative it fosters or sustains, boosting or diminishing not only domestic morale but external support. Western aid has helped Ukraine to hold off a much mightier foe; but it is Ukraine's success against the odds that has kept that support flowing. Its victories – first in fending off the assault upon Kyiv, then snatching back Kherson and occupied territory in Kharkiv oblast – may have raised the bar. In achieving what seemed highly unlikely or even impossible, it has raised expectations of what it can or should achieve next. It will embark on its counteroffensive armed with large quantities of weaponry from the US and Europe, including air defence systems and tanks. But questions remain about maintaining supplies of the enormous quantities of ammunition being consumed. Its troops have the motivation, but experienced personnel are dead or wounded, and the numbers are on Russia's side. Joe Biden's agreement to an international effort to train Ukrainian pilots in F16s appears in part designed to signal that US support is not conditional upon the counteroffensive, and to help prepare Ukraine to defend itself in the longer term. The reality is, however, that Kyiv's backers want to see results in exchange for their investment – and that, with next year's presidential election looming, American support cannot be counted on indefinitely. Whatever happens in the coming weeks may well be followed by another long and bloody stalemate, with more Bakhmuts. A war of attrition exhausts not only troops, but those battling poverty and power shortages on the home front. Territory regained will have ruined homes, shattered hopes and traumatised civilians. Ukraine needs this counteroffensive to renew a sense of momentum for both domestic and diplomatic purposes, but it is likely to be only one more stage in a long and punishing conflict.

Erdogan: Pushing to make Turkiye a global actor

Murat Aslan

Since these conceptual frameworks are not static but subservient to changing events and circumstances, they can influence the scholarly work on international politics over time. In this sense, Turkish foreign policy and the Western 'Turkiye' policy may be rooted in the existing works of thinkers. As conceptual explanations, influenced by repeated events, shape political narratives, Turkish foreign policy and the West's Turkiye policy have also emerged in light of a fast changing geopolitical landscape. On an appropriate examination, American political scientist, the late Immanuel Wallerstein

Scholars often use a variety of established facts and theoretical concepts to better explain the patterns of international politics. Since these conceptual frameworks are not static but subservient to changing events and circumstances, they can influence the scholarly work on international politics over time. In this sense, Turkish foreign policy and the Western 'Turkiye' policy may be rooted in the existing works of thinkers. As conceptual explanations, influenced by repeated events, shape political narratives, Turkish foreign policy and the West's Turkiye policy have also emerged in light of a fast changing geopolitical landscape. On an appropriate examination, American political scientist, the late Immanuel Wallerstein – one of the fiercest critics of the global elite – deserves an appreciation for analysing and synthesising Turkiye's struggle to expand its seat in the international realm and the western efforts to impede it. Wallerstein tells us about the 'world system theory' with his original contribution to Lenin's 'core-periphery state' explanation of imperialism. The theory argues that the 'core states' build supremacy over the 'periphery ones' – terms he uses to denote the developed and under-developed nations – while the semi-periphery states serve the core ones as a bridge to the peripheries. For Wallerstein, semi-peripheries cannot be a member of the core community in terms of holding control of the world system. In other words, a core-states club is about setting consensus to jointly dominate the international realm where the semi-peripheries and peripheries are subjected to the imposed order. This explanation may be applied to the G7 and G20 summits, where the first group represents the core states while the second bloc provides the foundation for the meeting of the core and periphery states. The roles of the semi-peripheries, for the sake of limited and regional incentives, are determined through the consensus of the core – G7. The West, or core states, regard Turkiye as a semi-periphery one in the designated 'world system'. More precisely, the core states expect Turkiye to rely on their 'order' and observe the fruits afforded to them. The expectation is to have Turkiye not challenge their order in a vehement manner. Moreover, rising anti-Muslim sentiments after 9/11 and the strained relations between the US and Turkiye complicate the offers and expectations between the two sides. The decision of Turkiye on March 1 2003, not to allow American soldiers deployed to Iraq en route Turkiye to set foot in the war-affected country, marked a turning point as it resulted in Turkiye being punished for non-compliance with US demands and

to serve as an example. In parallel with the decision of the Parliament, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's policy of expanding Turkiye's capacity to be a regional power was the first alarming bell for the dominating core states. The thriving economy of the 2000s reminded us that a prospering Turkiye could intervene in the regional issues that could harm the interests of them. Then, a semi-periphery state like Turkiye is expected to have a favourable pro-government and comply with the imposed order of the core states, say the USA, as stated by Joe Biden in a meeting with the New York Times editorial board. The course of achieving such an end was to encourage internal political factions and proxies to challenge the Erdogan government. In this sense, there happened a series of events to topple the democratically elected Turkish government which were the Gezi incidents of 2012, the plots against the able Turkish Armed Forces through the 'arranged' Balyoz and Ergenekon lawsuits, the 2013 plots on the Erdo-an-led government by the hands of FETO judges and prosecutors, the 2015 wide scale attacks in the cities of Turkiye by the hands of the PKK cells, and finally the July 15th coup attempt of FETO, which failed due to people's resistance. The response of the Erdogan leadership has been to drive strategic autonomy for the sake of 'survival' through a 'self-help' system. In this context, Erdogan responded to the internal and external challenges and pursued a policy of promoting Turkiye as a regional power independent from the core states. Once the West imposed an order urging Turkiye to accept their demands, Erdogan commenced a wise balancing strategy. The Eastern Mediterranean issue has been a significant case to observe in terms of understanding the attitude of the core states and semi-periphery – the West and Turkiye. The political and military escalations of 2019 underlined the competing interests of both parties and their competition across the region with the coverage of Syria, Cyprus, Libya, and Greece. The response of the West to the policies of the Erdogan government had been to apply underhand and overt sanctions on Turkiye while isolating the Turkish government in the Western hemisphere. The counter response of Turkiye was twofold. The initial course was to pursue a new foreign policy that adopts the normalisation with the other semi-peripheries to prevent the infiltration of external diffusion. Turkish foreign policy has gained new momentum, competing and cooperating with others. The Turkish leadership has started diplomatic efforts bar-

gaining in the halls of Washington, Brussels, and Moscow while militarily confronting the interests of these states in Syria, Libya, or Karabakh. The second course was to eradicate dependency on the other states. For instance, the US had rejected selling the Patriots to the Turkish Armed Forces during the tense period of the Iran and Syria tensions. Turkiye purchased a more efficient air defence system from Russia and started the air defence program to manufacture the locally made short-range HISAR A+, medium-range HISAR O+, and long-range SİPER air defence systems. The American response was to expel Turkiye from the F35 program, despite Turkiye being the founding partner of the program. The Erdogan government enhanced the Turkish aviation program with HURKUS, HURJET light attack aircraft, and 5th generation KAAAN fighters other than a wide spectrum of precise ammunition. Anadolu Amphibious Warship informed the global public about the capability of force projection to remote crisis-laden regions. The Turkish defence industry proved that Turkiye can find alternatives manufactured in Turkiye through the dedicated efforts of Turkish engineers to reach the capabilities of a core state. Military and defence have been the primary success stories in repelling the sanctions of the core states, though; the essential challenge is about manufacturing such Turkish commodities with high-tech solutions to find room in the global competition. The TOGG – a Turkish e-automobile has taken its seat across the streets of Turkiye, most probably to replace the flags of the Western automobile industries. The nuclear energy plant in the city of Mersin is proceeding well to distribute cost-efficient energy to Turkish homes and industries. The natural gas, discovered in the Black Sea, is now heating the homes of Turkish citizens. The new oil reserve identified in Gabar Mountain will reduce oil imports by 10 percent annually. The low-interest policy of the government prevented unemployment after the Covid-19 pandemic and the low exchange rate boosted exports. Turkiye augmented its regional leadership status-quo to expand toward the surrounding regional systems. After these achievements, it may be too early to claim a global status, though; Turkiye is advancing well and committed to being a global actor. This reality has been perceived as a risk for the supremacy of the core states specifically in the neighbourhood of Turkiye. Consequently, this pattern reflects the intention of being 'independent' rather than being a mere subject in the world system.

—Courtesy: TRT World

Israel's government of Netanyahu, by Netanyahu and for Netanyahu

Yossi Mekelberg

It has been said on so many previous occasions, including by Netanyahu himself, that someone who faces criminal charges cannot and should not serve in the most powerful position in the country, because then it becomes impossible to discern, possibly even for that very person, whether their decisions are being taken in the interest of the country or to save their own skin. This concern has become even more marked since Israel last week initiated another military confrontation in Gaza, this time with the militant Islamist group Palestinian

From Day 1 of the current Israeli coalition government, it was beyond obvious that, for the one who formed it – Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – it was merely an escape route from his corruption trial. This was much more than a matter of his usual hubris, which has always led him to believe that no one but himself is worthy of leading the country. It has been said on so many previous occasions, including by Netanyahu himself, that someone who faces criminal charges cannot and should not serve in the most powerful position in the country, because then it becomes impossible to discern, possibly even for that very person, whether their decisions are being taken in the interest of the country or to save their own skin. This concern has become even more marked since Israel last week initiated another military confrontation in Gaza, this time with the militant Islamist group Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Netanyahu has no other means of staying in power except to be a partner in government with the most extreme ultranationalist and racist elements in Israeli politics; and, to a large extent, he is being held hostage by them. It was clear from the very inception of this government that the far-right Religious Zionism alliance would pressure him to act in Gaza, and with uninhibited force, as part of its irresponsible strategy of maximum confrontation with the Palestinians. That opportunity arose for them after an escalation in the security situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This led to Religious Zionism's leaders, Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, threatening to withdraw their support from the government unless it ordered the Israel Defense Forces to embark on another deadly operation in Gaza. Hence, when such a military operation took place, its link to the threats of the far-right members of the coalition appeared to be rather straightforward. But this not only oversimplifies the current and convoluted decision-making process, but also partially exonerates Netanyahu. The ultimate responsibility for any government deci-

sion lies with the prime minister. However, there is no doubt that, in the current administration, there are no responsible adults who can hit the brakes when necessary. This government's far-right elements lack strategic judgment and have an infantile level of understanding of complex issues, which sets it on the path of confrontation in both its domestic and international affairs. Let us focus for a moment on the decision to assassinate Palestinian Islamic Jihad's leaders. Could anyone argue with any great conviction that previous Israeli administrations, not least those of Netanyahu, would have refrained from taking exactly that course of action with or without the support of ultranationalists at the heart of government? Targeted assassinations of Palestinian militants, or of Iranian military personnel and nuclear scientists or Hezbollah members, have been taking place for many years, regardless of the orientation of Israel's government. It is part of the country's security psyche. However, in a country where so many decisions are literally a matter of life and death, the public must be entirely reassured that such decisions, at least in the heart of hearts of the decision-makers, are taken with no hint of ulterior motive or serving their political or personal interests. Truth be told, unless one is privy to the decision-making process, it is almost impossible to tell what was discussed before the latest military operation in Gaza, or any previous operation. Yet, the very fact that Ben-Gvir and his colleagues could go around telling the world that targeting Palestinian Islamic Jihad was thanks to their pressure on Netanyahu, without threatening the stability or the very existence of the coalition, leaves everyone guessing about the real motivations behind the confrontation. Advisers close to Netanyahu made sure to brief the media that Ben-Gvir, the minister of national security, was not involved in the decisions leading to the recent operation in Gaza in any way. But this is baffling, considering the implications for the security and safety of Israelis if the minister in charge of internal

security was not consulted, even if in this case it was a blessing in disguise. Moreover, whether Ben-Gvir and Smotrich were or were not consulted, or had any say in the launching of this most recent futile round of bloodshed, there are very few who believe that this is an accurate account of what happened. At the very least, Netanyahu must have been mindful of the thinking and possible reaction of his far-right coalition partners when sanctioning the operation. Netanyahu, in the autumn of his political career, while facing extremely serious corruption charges and with mounting evidence that he is under the spell of his close family and their unhealthy influence, which further distorts his judgment and subsequent decisions, is putting the entire country in jeopardy. Inevitably, one is bound to question whether Netanyahu himself can tell whether his decisions are being taken for the good of the country or are merely cynical decisions intended to keep him in power and thus avoid spending his later years behind bars. A complex country such as Israel cannot afford for the person at the top of the political pyramid to have his attention split between the myriad challenges the country is facing and sneaking his way out of a corruption trial. Netanyahu has already made it clear that he is prepared to trample all over the democratic system and, in doing so, severely damage the country's economy, in order to save his skin. So, what can assure us that, when the noise of his trial – figuratively speaking of course – tightens further around his neck, he will not embroil Israel in yet another misjudged and miscalculated episode of military adventurism against Iran or Hezbollah in Lebanon, or even send ground troops into Gaza, not for national security reasons but simply to distract from his legal predicament? The recent hostilities in Gaza were another alarming wake-up call that should alert the country to the dangerous uncertainties stemming from a government that is of Netanyahu, by Netanyahu and for Netanyahu, and to hell with the consequences for Israel.

—Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Entire nation indebted to the Martyrs

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people behind the incidents would not be given any concession and would not be pardoned as 'they had crossed the red line'. He said, those elements also hurt sentiments of the families of shuhada. A heart wrenching spectacle was never witnessed in the past.

Asif says govt mulling banning PTI

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people are telling themselves that they were briefed about this beforehand," he said. "I feel that Imran's struggle of a year... all his plans failed and this was his last resort against the country's army." He claimed that Imran had started seeing the army as his "adversary" and called out the PTI chairman for his "hypocrisy". "His entire politics was done in the lap of the army and today he has suddenly decided to stand against it... and whatever I am saying is being said by all the people leaving PTI," Asif said. Responding to a question about the grounds for banning PTI, the minister asked, "Is there any crime that was not committed on May 9?"

"The ISI office was attacked, they tried to enter the Cantonment in Sialkot but that attack was repulsed... they also set fire to the Lahore Corps Commander's house. The PTI challenges the foundation of the state by attacking defence installations."

Two soldiers among four martyred...

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It stated that intense fire exchange occurred between security forces and terrorists, resulting in the killing of six terrorists during the conduct of the operation. "Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists who remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces as well as extortion and targeted killing of innocent citizens," it added. ISPR further said that a sanitisation of the area is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area. Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism, it further said. With a long history of valour and commitment to the nation, the army has played a critical role in protecting Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Imran Khan ready to negotiate...

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been in India's hands," he added. The party leadership was detained, he said, and the magical words of "leaving the PTI" got them out. He went on to say that he was surprised to see all this, adding that had been asking my PTI members to stay inside their homes to avoid such environment. "An impression is created that you will be relieved of all difficulties if you quit," he added. Mr Khan said a time was about to come when democracy would end in the country. "Democracy ends when fundamental rights are not given," he added. At one point, he said only those would survive who bowed down to power, he added. He questioned the human right champions if they could see what was happening now in the country. "Our democracy is being derailed," he added. PTI chief continued by saying that he thanked that Ms Mazar said goodbye to save herself from cruelty she had been facing, adding that it harmed the politics of Pakistan. He lamented that the internet cut down around my house to control social media, adding that media had been under control. "More than 10,000 PTI supporters have been detained," he added. "I do not know how to contact the party," he said. Mr Khan said no one wanted to do investment in the country, adding that the country was reeling under inflation.

Erdogan slams continued PKK support for Kilicdaroglu

Addressing the masses in Sivas, Erdogan further slammed Kilicdaroglu over plans for a "Turkic Silk Road" that would connect Turkiye to China through Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and non-Turkic Iran, excluding Azerbaijan

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Be it through videos or statements, ringleaders of the PKK terrorist group in the Qandil Mountains are publicly seeking votes for Kemal Kilicdaroglu who remains shameless about banking on terrorists, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday as he lashed out at his main challenger ahead of the presidential face-off this Sunday. With days left until the critical vote, a controversial video has sparked another spat between the two leaders. The footage featuring Kilicdaroglu with PKK ringleaders in Qandil, a northern Iraqi region home to the group's stronghold from where it plans and launches attacks on Turkiye, as well as nearby cities and towns, appeared in Erdogan's campaign videos but it was later revealed to have been heavily edited from two separate videos. Kilicdaroglu, the leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP)

and joint contender of a six-party opposition bloc, has condemned the video and Erdogan for "using fake footage" in his campaign but Erdogan did not backtrack. "The video is the product of a couple of witty youths but the message is clear," he said at a rally in the central Sivas province on Tuesday. "The terrorists continue their support to Kilicdaroglu. They're openly asking for votes for him and no one in their alliance has ever been ashamed of it, while PKK ringleaders called for bloodshed and revenge," Erdogan said. "But everything they have been trying to cover up has now been exposed. No matter what they do, they cannot hide their collusion with divisive terrorists to assume power and gain seats. The deals they struck with terror groups encouraged by the imperialists they rely on will not do them any good," Erdogan said. For months leading to May 14's presidential and parliamentary elections, the PKK has been vocal

in its eagerness to see Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AK Party) "gone." Several so-called senior members have expressed open support for Kilicdaroglu, and championed him in "ending the AK Party fascism." Moreover, the group's propaganda network, as well as the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), which is widely known for its alleged links to the PKK, worked tirelessly calling for support to Kilicdaroglu and vowing to free HDP leader Selahattin Demirtas and PKK ringleader Abdullah Ocalan, both facing terrorism charges of various degrees. Their alliance has since sparked fury from CHP and AK Party supporters alike. Presidential Spokesperson Ibrahim Kalin too dismissed the opposition's remarks over the debated video. "PKK ringleaders have videos openly endorsing Kilicdaroglu candidacy. We didn't film these. This support has been ongoing for months. Why wasn't the CHP sensitive over this before?"

Kalin said. "President Erdogan rightfully wants to know whether Kilicdaroglu is taking a clear stance against terrorism or not. Kilicdaroglu says he is but doesn't the HDP's attitude on this issue make matters obvious?" he asked. Kalin argued that the elements brought together in the video were "real" and the question that must be asked is, "Did the PKK cadres issue these statements or not?" Addressing the masses in Sivas, Erdogan further slammed Kilicdaroglu over plans for a "Turkic Silk Road" that would connect Turkiye to China through Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and non-Turkic Iran, excluding Azerbaijan. Pointing out to his administration's ongoing projects to connect a high-speed railway from central Turkiye to the Baku-Tbilisi route, Erdogan declared, "We will launch a globally strategic windpipe with this route called the Iron Silk Road." The said railway will enable some-

one setting out from London to travel "all the way to Beijing through our country," Erdogan said. "We will accomplish this not by bypassing our brother nation Azerbaijan like the CHP leader but side by side with our Azerbaijani brothers and sisters." Similar to how Turkiye helped Azerbaijan liberate its Karabakh region from three decades of illegal Armenian occupation and transformed itself into an energy hub straddling the east and the west, Turkiye will also bolster its transport infrastructure with Azerbaijan, Erdogan elucidated. "We will achieve this despite the CHP chair who overlooks Karabakh and the Zangezur Corridor just to look cute for certain people," he said. Zangezur was part of Azerbaijan, but in the 1920s the Soviets gave the territory to Armenia, severing Azerbaijan's link with the Nakhchevan region. During the first Karabakh War in 1992, the railways Azerbaijan built in the region were rendered unusable.

Saka signs new long-term Arsenal deal

LONDON: Bukayo Saka has signed a new long-term contract at Arsenal, saying the Premier League club is the "right place to make the next step" in his blossoming career. The England forward played a pivotal role in the club's unsuccessful title push this season, scoring 14 goals in all competitions and providing 11 assists. Saka joined Arsenal as an eight year old and has featured in all of the team's Premier League matches over the past two seasons. The 21-year-old said he was at the ideal club to improve even further after emerging as one of Arsenal's key players. "I think I have everything I need to become the best player I can be, and that's why I'm happy to stay here and be here for the future, because I really believe that we can achieve big things," he said on Tuesday. "For me, it's about achieving my personal ambitions



– how much I push myself and demand from myself each game, week in, week out. "Then I have all the right people around me in terms of family, and when I come to the training ground, my teammates, the coaching staff." London-born Saka, who

made his Arsenal debut in 2018, said the club were moving in the right direction despite missing out on the Premier League title this year. The Gunners topped the table for much of the season but stumbled in the home stretch as Manchester City collected their

third consecutive title. They are guaranteed to finish second and will play Champions League football next season for the first time since the 2016/17 season. "Time is on our side," said Saka. "You can look at our team and a lot of the players are young. We're hungry, and a lot of us haven't won trophies at Arsenal so we want to achieve big things." Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta welcomed the new deal, which will reportedly keep Saka with the Gunners until 2027. "Retaining our best young talents is key to our continued progress and Bukayo represents such an important part of our squad now and for the future," said the Spaniard. "As well as being a fantastic talent, Bukayo is a special person, he's loved by us all and he is a credit to himself and his family for the hard work and commitment they have all made to get to this level today." – Agencies

Saudi league could become top five in the world: Ronaldo

"Step-by-step I think this league will be among the top five leagues in the world but they need time, players and infrastructure

JEDDAH: Portuguese soccer great Cristiano Ronaldo believes the Saudi Pro League he joined this season could in time become one of the top five leagues in the world. The Portugal skipper joined Al-Nassr in January on a contract estimated by some media reports to be worth more than 200 million euros (\$220.16 million). Ronaldo has played in three of the world's top leagues with stints at Real Madrid in Spain's La Liga, Manchester United in the English Premier League and Juventus in Italy's Serie A. The 38-year-old said the quality of the Saudi competition had improved even in his short time in it. "We are much better and the Saudi league is getting better and the next year will be even better," he told Saudi SSC channel on Tuesday. "Step-by-step I think this league will be among the top five leagues in the world but they need time, players and infrastructure. "But I believe that this country has amazing potential, they have amazing people and the league will be great in my opinion," he added. The Saudis do not lack ambition and a source told Reuters earlier this month that Riyadh club Al-Hilal had made a formal offer to secure the services of Lionel Messi, Ronaldo's rival for the title of best player of his generation. Ronaldo scored a stunning winner on Tuesday as Al-Nassr fought back to beat visitors Al-Shabab 3-2 and put Al-Hilal's Saudi Pro League title celebrations on hold. – Agencies

Valencia slapped with 5-match partial spectator ban

Vinicius was initially shown a yellow card for lashing out at Hugo Duro during a scuffle. Upon inspection by the VAR, the card turned into a direct red in the 97th minute

MADRID: Valencia's Mestalla stadium will be partially closed for the next five matches over racist abuse by the club's fans against Real Madrid player Vinicius Jr., the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) announced on Tuesday. In a statement, the federation singled out the stadium's southern Mario Kempes stands, where it said fans hurled objects and racist slurs against Vinicius during the Spanish La Liga match on Sunday between the two sides. A €45,000 (\$48,525) fine was also imposed on the home team. The RFEF also rescinded the red card against Madrid's Brazilian star, who was subjected to racist taunts for almost half an hour during the game. Under the new decision, Vinicius will be able to play in Wednesday's La Liga game against Rayo Vallecano. After the 67th minute in Sunday's game, the stands began to chant racist taunts at Vinicius, who had won a free kick for Real Madrid. The match had to be stopped for nine minutes as the insults continued. Vinicius was initially shown a yellow card for lashing out at Hugo Duro during a scuffle. Upon inspection by the video assistant referee (VAR), the card turned into a direct red in the 97th minute. – APP

Barcelona veteran Alba leaving club after 11 years

BARCELONA: Jordi Alba will leave Barcelona at the end of the season after 11 years at the club, the Catalan side said Wednesday. "Barcelona and Alba have reached an agreement to release the player from the contract that he had until the end of the 2023-24 season," said Barcelona in a statement. "Barcelona publicly expresses its gratitude to Jordi Alba for the professionalism, commitment, dedication and always positive and warm treatment he has always shown towards everything that makes up the Barcelona family." Alba joined Barcelona from Valencia in 2012 and won six La Liga titles and one Champions League among 19 trophies with the Catalan giants. The 34-year-old veteran Spanish left-back lost his place in the team to teenager Alejandro Balde this season. Alba had one more year left on his contract, which expires in 2024, and Spanish reports say he will waive a significant percentage of the money due to help the club amid financial struggles. The Spaniard follows in the footsteps of captain Sergio Busquets, who is also leaving the club this summer. The pair will play their final home match at Camp Nou against Real Mallorca on Sunday. Alba has played over 450 times for Barcelona, scoring 27 goals and providing 91 assists as a vital outlet on the left flank. The defender's recent goal against Osasuna earned Barcelona a 1-0 win and took them to the brink of the title. He also won the 2012 European Championship with Spain, scoring in the 4-0 win



over Italy in the final. One of his finest seasons came in 2015 under Luis Enrique, when he helped Barcelona win the treble. The left-back has been linked with a move to Saudi Arabia like Busquets and Lionel Messi, the former Barcelona playmaker who is leaving Paris Saint-Germain in the summer. Alba joined Barcelona's academy as a teenager before leaving for Cornellà and then Valencia, returning to Camp Nou for 14 million euros (\$15 million). – APP

Iga Swiatek eyes back-to-back French Open titles

PARIS: Iga Swiatek can become the first back-to-back women's champion at the French Open in 16 years if she can shake off a worrying injury. Elsewhere, rivals battle inconsistent form and bruised confidence ahead of the season's second Grand Slam tournament which gets underway in Paris on Sunday. AFP Sports looks at three talking points in the women's singles: World number one Iga Swiatek is already a three-time major winner after capturing the 2020 and 2022 French Opens as well as the 2022 US Open. Now the 21-year-old Pole attempts to become the first back-to-back women's champion at Roland Garros since Justine Henin won three on the bounce from 2005-2007. It is a challenge which has defied some of the greats. Maria Sharapova was champion in 2012 but then ended runner-up 12 months later. Serena Williams swept to the title in 2015 before falling short in the 2016 final. Since Henin's triple, Francesca Schiavone also joined the near-miss club as her 2010 championship was followed by a runners-up spot the following year. Before Henin, defending the women's title appeared a lot more straightforward – Steffi Graf achieved it in 1987 and 1988 and again in 1995 and 1996. Monica Seles racked up three in a row from 1990-1992. Chris Evert went back-to-back three times – 1974-1975, 1979-1980 and 1985-1986. Swiatek suffered a thigh injury which forced her to retire from her Italian Open quarter-final against eventual champion Elena Rybaki-

na in Rome last week but said she was "positive" about her chances of playing in Paris. However, the French Open rarely reads the room. Swiatek's 2020 title defence ended a year later in the quarter-finals. Her successor as champion Barbora Krejickova lost in the first round when she returned in 2022. As part of its deal with Amazon Prime Video, the French Open introduced night sessions for the first time in 2021. Six of the first seven sessions that year featured men's singles, leading to former women's world number one Victoria Azarenka to highlight the obvious imbalance. "It's just honestly a bit frustrating every time you're trying to deal with the organisation here, it's becoming 'pas possible' (not possible)". Everything you hear is 'pas possible'." In

2022, only one of 10 night sessions featured a women's singles clash. Tournament director Amelie Mauresmo, a former Wimbledon and Australian Open champion, then compounded the controversy by suggesting men's matches have "more attraction". She later apologised, insisting her comments had been taken out of context. Despite her injury worry, Swiatek remains favourite to defend her Roland Garros title having won the Stuttgart clay tournament last month before finishing runner-up to Aryna Sabalenka on the faster, higher-altitude clay of Madrid. World number two Sabalenka won her maiden Grand Slam title in Australia in January but on clay the big-hitting Belarusian remains a work in progress. She has never got beyond the third round in Paris despite making at least the semi-finals at all of the other three majors. Furthermore, her title win in Madrid this spring was followed by a first-up exit at the hands of 134th-ranked Sofia Kenin in Rome. Kenin, a former Australian Open champion and runner-up in Paris in 2020, in turn lost in the opening round of qualifying for the French Open on Monday, knocked out by French world number 278 Margaux Rouvroy. Amongst the remainder of the top 10, Coco Gauff was runner-up last year while Maria Sakkari, Daria Kasatkina and Petra Kvitova have all made the semi-finals. Wimbledon champion Rybakina arrives in Paris having won the Italian Open although three of her six opponents in the Rome draw retired with injury. The Russian-born Kazakh has yet to get past the last-eight at Roland Garros. – Agencies

Asad, Fawad also leave Imran Khan

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announced to quit party. He made this announcement while addressing a press conference in the National Press Club. He however made it clear that he has only resigned from the party position and core committee membership. He will still be part of the PTI. "[With reference] to my earlier statement where I unequivocally condemned 9th May incidents, I have decided to take a break from politics, therefore, I have resigned from party position and parting ways from Imran Khan," he wrote on his official Twitter handle. Fawad joins a long list of PTI leaders who have announced quitting PTI following the May 9 vandalism and violent protests across the country – hours after the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) arrested PTI chief Imran Khan in the AlQadir Trust corruption case. So far Dr Shireen Mazar, Fayyazul Hassan Chohan, Malik Amin Aslam, Mahmood Moulvi, Amir Kayani, Jai Prakash, Afab Siddiqui and Sanjay Gangwani among many others have left Imran Khan's party. Shireen, while speaking to the media in Islamabad on Tuesday, announced that she was not only leaving the party but also saying goodbye to active politics, saying that her health and daughter Imaan Mazar suffered significantly during her 12-day incarceration.

'No grudges: Our hearts clean'

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"Legal points were raised earlier in the court but not discussed," he said, adding that there was a discussion on the jurisdiction of review in the court yesterday. "The past will not be used against the government," he said, stressing the court's impartiality. "You tell your colleagues not to speak so harshly at our door [...]" the largest House. We work for Allah, that's why we are sitting quietly," the CJP remarked. He then told the AGP to tell "whoever" had asked him to give a clarification, that the court is sitting with a "clean heart". "The statements given in other contexts were reported in a way that they gave the wrong impression," he said, regretting that the court's remarks were reported incorrectly. CJP Bandial remarked that it was reported that the court had given Imran Khan a Mercedes. "Mr, I don't even use a Mercedes," he said, adding that the PRO also told that the police arranged a bulletproof Mercedes for Khan but the matter was twisted into something else. ECP's counsel Swati, during the proceedings, then presented more arguments in favour of the body's stance that the scope of the review petition is expanded. He contended that the court always interprets the Constitution as a living document. "The ultimate institution of justice is the Supreme Court; therefore, the jurisdiction cannot be limited," he argued. At this, CJP Bandial asked: "Have 150 years of judicial precedents become ineffective?" "According to 150 years of judicial precedents, there is a difference between the scope of revision and appeal," he said, adding that the ECP counsel has not answered this question since yesterday. Meanwhile, Justice Akhtar remarked: "If we accept your argument regarding the scope as correct, then the Supreme Court's rules will be annulled." He added that the top court's rules had not yet been amended. He further pointed out that should the scope be expanded, many older cases will also come for review. "How can Order 26 of the Supreme Court Rules, which relates to review petitions, not be fully implemented?" he asked, adding that if "Order 26" is not fully implemented, the period for filing revision will also expire. "Can anyone file a revision after 10 years and say that the rules are not fully applicable?" Justice Akhtar inquired. You probably have no idea of the consequences after your argument is accepted, he remarked. At this, the ECP lawyer said that the period for filing the revision should not expire. "In 70 years, you are the first person to discover this point, so tell the results," Justice Akhtar asked.

Briefs

Ukraine's top general wounded in Russian strike

KIEV: General Valery Zaluzhny, commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian armed forces, who had disappeared from the public eye in recent weeks, was seriously wounded some weeks ago in a Russian strike near the city of Kherson, a security source told RIA Novosti. Zaluzhny suffered a head trauma and numerous shrapnel wounds in early May, in a missile attack on a Ukrainian command post not far from the village of Posad-Pokrovskoe, the agency reported on Wednesday. The general had undergone a craniotomy at a military hospital in Kiev after the strike, the source claimed. The prognosis by the doctors is that the 49-year-old is going to live but won't be able to execute his duties as commander anymore, he added. Zaluzhny's condition is further complicated by the fact that he has an underlying condition namely diabetes, the agency also reported. Speculations about Zaluzhny's whereabouts emerged after he refrained from participating in a high-profile NATO meeting on May 10.—APP

Australians rally to demand release of Assange

SYDNEY: Australian protesters have taken to the streets in Sydney to demonstrate against extradition to the US by the British government of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange that was intended to coincide with the canceled visit of the US president to Australia. Leading the protest rally on Wednesday, the wife of the jailed whistleblower demanded his release from incarceration in the UK and called on Aussie Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to bring her husband back to his native Australia. "He needs to be free because the world needs press freedom," Stella Assange further emphasized while addressing the crowd of protesters. Julian's brother, Gabriel Shipton, also spoke at the rally and was undisturbed by Biden's absence, insisting: "They're hearing the message loud and clear. They know there's millions of Australians who want this brought to a close." Assange's father, John Shipton, also took part in the protest rally and emphasized, "It's time to show some sincerity of action and also to understand clearly that they need the support of the populous to enact policy, and the populous has given us whole-hearted and full support for the freedom of Julian Assange" "So it's time for them to pick up the phone and ring Biden and say, Well, better send this dad home."—DNA

'No victory for poor Ukrainians on the battlefield'

DOHA: It's obvious that there is no victory for poor Ukrainians on the battlefield, the Hungarian prime minister said on Tuesday, adding that everybody "should try to stop the escalation of the war" instead of "having a stronger involvement in it." Viktor Orban stressed: "My position is the reality, looking at the figures looking at the surroundings looking at the fact that NATO is not ready to send troops." People should rightly describe the situation that Russia invaded Ukraine, but the question is not "Who invaded?" he stressed, adding: "The question is what will be the next morning. You know, the next morning, the fact is that more and more people will die and there is no chance to have a victory." There is no chance to win this war, he repeated and noted: "So therefore what we should do more energy invest into to convince everybody that the only solution is a ceasefire." Ukraine is not a country far away, it is a neighbor of Hungary, and there are 200,000.—Agencies

"The security imperative; Pakistan's Nuclear deterrence and diplomacy"

Book Presentation at the Vienna Diplomatic Academy

DNA

VIENNA: The Embassy of Pakistan in Vienna collaborated with the Vienna Diplomatic Academy to organise a book presentation for "The Security Imperative; Pakistan's Nuclear Deterrence and Diplomacy", authored by former Ambassador Zamir Akram. The event was attended by Vienna-based ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps as well as faculty members and students of the Vienna Diplomatic Academy.

Welcome remarks at the event were delivered by Mr. Emil Brix, Director of the Vienna Diplomatic Academy. The discussion was moderated by Ambassador Thomas Hajnoczi, a former Austrian diplomat who has served as Austria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva including the Conference on Disarmament. With a foreword by Lt. General Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, founding Director General of Pakistan's Strategic Plans Division, "The Security Imperative" is a detailed and well-researched ac-



count of the genesis, rationale and evolution of Pakistan's nuclear deterrent capability. It also provides a practitioner's insight into the pivotal role played by Pakistan's deft diplomacy in enabling the acquisition of nuclear

deterrent capability. The book's well-argued central thesis is that Pakistan's determined pursuit of nuclear deterrence was not motivated by considerations of prestige and great power ambitions but driven by its acute,

existential and evolving security challenges. Ambassador Zamir Akram's presentation of the book was followed by an interactive and candid discussions with the audience on not only the history and various facets of Pakistan's

strategic nuclear programme but also the current regional and global security challenges and how the UN disarmament machinery could respond effectively to them. With a long and illustrious career in the Foreign

Service of Pakistan, Ambassador Zamir Akram is an old hand at arms control and disarmament diplomacy. His last assignment was Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN and international organizations in Geneva including the Conference on Disarmament. He is presently serving as advisor to the Strategic Plans Division. The concluding remarks at the event were delivered by Ambassador Aftab Ahmad Khokher, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the Vienna-based international organizations. While thanking the Vienna Diplomatic Academy for hosting the event, he expressed the hope that the frank exchange would help promote better understanding of Pakistan's perspective on its nuclear deterrence, a capability which it wielded with the utmost restraint and great responsibility. He said that the Embassy looked forward to further enhancing such interaction with the Vienna Diplomatic Academy in future.

Iran-UAE dispute over Persian Gulf islands lingers

TEHRAN: Despite the wave of diplomacy sweeping the region with the rapprochement between Iran and some of its neighboring countries, the dark clouds of a long-running territorial dispute between Tehran and Abu Dhabi over three Persian Gulf islands continue to hover overhead. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani in a strongly-worded statement Saturday, a day after the Arab League summit in the Saudi city of Jeddah, decried the joint communique issued at the summit, referring to "accusations and false claims" in it. While "welcoming the constructive approach of some countries," Kanaani hit out at the 22-member pan-Arab organization for making "repetitive claims," asserting that Iran's actions "are in line with the exercise of sovereignty over its territory, and any claim in this regard is rejected." Although he stopped short of mentioning the three

strategic islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa located in the Strait of Hormuz, the hint was clear enough. The three islands have been administered by Iran since 1971, eight years before the Iranian Revolution, but are claimed by the United Arab Emirates as part of its territory. The territorial dispute has been a key sticking point in Iran-UAE relations over the years, with the two neighbors on numerous occasions engaging in verbal duels at international forums. While Iran maintains that the islands are an "inseparable part" of its territory, the UAE lays equal claim to them, backed by other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members. Yaseen Taqizadeh, a Persian Gulf affairs analyst, said the dispute dates back more than five decades and the recent upgradation of ties between Tehran and Abu Dhabi is unlikely to resolve the issue. "The dispute over the sovereignty of three islands

is rooted in history, with both sides making competing claims," he told Anadolu. "It will continue to be a bone of contention between them regardless of recent developments unless they agree to engage in meaningful dialogue." In February, President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Beijing, the first by an Iranian head of state in two decades, was overshadowed by a controversy related to the joint statement issued by China and the GCC during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Saudi Arabia in December. The statement backed the UAE's demand for the "resolution of the dispute" over the three Persian Gulf islands, sparking an outcry in Iran and almost creating a diplomatic row between Tehran and Beijing. Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian took to Twitter and asserted that Tehran "will not allow any country to disrespect its territorial integrity." The veiled warning in

the Chinese language was directed at Beijing. Raisi's key aide and deputy chief of staff, Mohammad Jamshidi, was particularly blunt, issuing what he called "a reminder to colleagues in Beijing." His statement came after the Chinese ambassador to Iran was summoned to convey Tehran's "strong dissatisfaction." "Raisi's visit to Beijing, although planned in advance, was an exercise in controlling the damage from the China-GCC statement, and it eventually did more than many had expected - laying the groundwork for Iran's reconciliation with Saudi Arabia and other Arab states," said Taqizadeh. Weeks after the Iranian president's China visit, Iran's then-top security official Ali Shamkhani dashed off to Beijing in March to sign an agreement with his Saudi Arabian counterpart to restore diplomatic ties between the two regional rivals. China played the peacemaker.—Agencies

Japanese PM weighs in on NATO membership

TOKYO: Japan has no plans to become a member of NATO, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has said. He told the national parliament on Wednesday that Tokyo would not be joining the US-led military bloc in any form, according to Reuters. Earlier this month, Japanese Ambassador to the US Koji Tomita told Nikkei Asia that Japan was "working" towards opening a NATO liaison office in Tokyo, which would become the bloc's first in Asia. The same outlet had earlier reported that the mission, which is scheduled to open next year, would be aimed at facilitating NATO's consultations with Japan and its other allies in the Asia-Pacific, such as Australia, New Zealand and South Korea, in light of geopolitical challenges posed by China and Russia. Kishida confirmed to MPs that NATO is considering the possibility of establishing a liaison office in the country. However, he added that he was "not aware of any decision made" within the bloc regarding the mission. The alliance has recently openly admitted its interests in the Indo-Pacific. Last June, the bloc's allies from the region participated in a NATO summit for the first time ever. Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea have also been invited to the event this year. The 2023 summit will take place in Vilnius, Lithuania on July 11 and 12. Russia, which strongly opposes NATO's expansion in Eastern Europe, has criticized the bloc's attempts to extend its activities into Asia. In March, Russian President Vladimir Putin said the push by the US and its allies to create what he called a "global NATO" resembled the actions of Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan in the 1930s before the outbreak of World War II. China has also urged its Asian neighbors to exercise "high vigilance" in response to reports of NATO planning to open its first liaison office in the region. Such a move "will inevitably undermine regional peace."—APP

South Korea's birthrate hits record low

SEOUL: The number of newborns in South Korea hit a new record low in March, worsening the population crisis which faces the fourth-largest economy in Asia, official data showed on Wednesday. In March, 21,138 babies were born only, which marked an 8.1% decrease compared to the previous year. This represents the lowest number of births recorded for March since the country's statistical agency began compiling monthly data in 1981. The declining birth trend in South Korea has been continuing for 88 consecutive months. The country is grappling with a significant crisis resulting from a low birth rate, as younger generations are choosing to delay or forgo having children due to high housing prices and economic uncertainties. In the first quarter of 2023, Korea's total fertility rate, which measures the average number of children a woman has in her lifetime, dropped by 0.06% compared to the previous year, reaching a value of 0.81, according to Statistics Korea. The current fertility rate is considerably below the replacement level of 2.1, which is necessary to maintain a stable population of 51.5 million in South Korea. To encourage parents for more children, experts suggested reforms to the current education system, which is very expensive and out of reach of many parents. "There are several factors underlying South Korea's low birth rate. First, Koreans are typically getting married at older ages due to longer schooling," wrote Andrew Eungi Kim, a professor of international studies at Korea University, in a recent article published by East Asia Forum.—Agencies

China's Xi offers Russia 'firm support'

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping offered Beijing's support on Moscow's "core interests" at a meeting with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on Wednesday. China and Russia have in recent years ramped up economic and diplomatic cooperation, growing even closer since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine despite Beijing's insistence that it is neutral in that conflict. Mishustin's trip this week is the highest-level visit by a Russian official to China since last year's invasion of Ukraine. Xi told Mishustin China and Russia would continue to offer each other "firm support on issues concerning each other's core interests and strengthen collaboration in multilateral arenas", according to a readout by the official Xinhua news agency. China and Russia should "push cooperation in various fields to a higher level", he said, and "raise the level of economic, trade and investment cooperation". Mishustin also met with Premier Li Qiang on Wednesday.—DNA

RCCI delegation presents budget proposals to Dar

ISLAMABAD: The delegation led by President of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Saqib Rafiq met with Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar at FBR House. Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Vice President Faisal Shahzad, former presidents Shaukat Altair, Dr. Hassan Sarosh, Asad Mashhadi, Raja Amir Iqbal Zahid Latif Khan, Chairman Tax Affairs Committee Faraz Fazl, among others, were also present on the occasion. During the meeting, matters related to taxation, rupee depreciation, inflation, investment, barriers to the development of the industry, and the problems faced by the exporters were discussed. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar welcomed the budget proposals given by the members of the delegation and assured that these proposals will be included in the next budget. He reiterated that 'Pakistan will absolutely not default' as the government was committed to overcome the prevailing economic challenges. He said that the government is fully aware of the difficulties faced by the business community. Commending his economic team for its 'efforts and hard work', Ishaq Dar noted that the country had recorded a current account surplus for the months of March and April at \$750 million and \$18m, respectively. He said suggestions of the business community will be given due consideration as joint efforts are required to put the country on the path of economic stability. —DNA



ISLAMABAD: RCCI President Saqib Rafiq presenting Budget proposals to Finance Minister Ishaq Dar at FBR. —DNA

Pro-business measures to be taken in upcoming budget

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Governor Kyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Gulam Ali has said that economic development is linked to political stability. The government is working seriously to get the country out of economic difficulties. Political instability in the past years has hurt the country a lot, no economic policy can be successful without the business community. Pakistan is a red line for all of us. No one is above the country. The events that happened on May 9 are nothing but hatred, violence and indecency, the entire nation is standing by the side of the Pakistan Army. He expressed these views yesterday while addressing a function held at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce, on the occasion Chairman Founder Group, Khalid Iqbal Malik, former Chairman Khalid Javed, General (ret'd) Abdul Qayyum, Samina Fazil, President of Anjuman Tajran Ajmal Baloch and others called the violence on May 9 as anti-national and demanded that No exception

should be made against those involved in these incidents Provincial Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Manzoor Afridi, Senator Hidayatullah, along with officials of business community of Islamabad and business organizations of various sectors also participated in the ceremony.

Governor KPK said that we all know that the economic conditions of Pakistan are not good, but now this matter will not last long. Things are moving towards stability. What has been done to this country in the last few years is now coming to an end. He said that I am the representative of the

business community in the government. I am raising my voice to solve all the problems. Addressing the ceremony, President Islamabad Chamber Ahsan Zafar Baktavari said that Governor KPK has made his name through the politics of nobility. He has played his role to solve the

problems of the business community on a priority basis at all levels. He said that the cooperation of the business community is indispensable to solve the current difficult economic situation of Pakistan. The government should listen to us and make the suggestions a serious part of policy making. He said that Governor KPK should make efforts for political stability in the country. Pakistan's development and political stability are inseparable. He said that the political leadership needs to sit in one place for long-term policy making for development. President Islamabad Chamber said that the events that happened on May 9 are very painful. The business community of the entire Islamabad is standing by the side of the Pakistani forces. In this regard, the Islamabad Chamber will organize a solidarity ceremony with the martyrs today. Addressing the event, Senior Vice President Islamabad Chamber Faad Waheed said that the government needs to give a clear road map to the business community, we should know what the economic policy will be for the next 10 years.



Briefs

Saudi embrace of Assad sends strong signal to US

DNA

RIYADH: Once labelled a pariah, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman took centre stage as master of ceremonies last week when Arab states readmitted Syria to the Arab League, signalling to Washington who calls the regional shots. His effusive greeting of President Bashar al-Assad at the Arab summit with kissed cheeks and a warm embrace defied U.S. disapproval at Syria's return to the fold and capped a turnaround in the prince's fortunes spurred by geopolitical realities. The prince, known as MbS, seeks to reassert Saudi Arabia as a regional power by using his place atop an energy giant in an oil-dependent world consumed by the war in Ukraine. Shunned by Western states after the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi by a Saudi hit squad, the prince has now emerged as a player whom Washington can neither disregard nor disavow, but must deal with on a transactional basis.

China says NATO's plan for Japan office not welcomed

BEIJING: The Asia-Pacific region does not welcome NATO's plan to open a liaison office in Japan, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a press briefing on Wednesday, after Japan acknowledged NATO's plan.

"We want to say that the Asia-Pacific does not welcome group confrontation, does not welcome military confrontation," Mao said. She also said Japan should be "extra cautious on the issue of military security" given its "history of aggression". Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said earlier in the day the country had no plans to become a NATO member, even though the U.S.-led military pact was planning a Tokyo office, its first in Asia, to facilitate consultations in the region. - Agencies

Zardari, Bilawal condemn terror attack

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Pakistan and President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliaments, Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman PPP Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari have expressed their profound grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of security forces and police personnel in the suicide blast in North Waziristan at a check post. Both the leaders said that the proud sons of the country sacrificed their lives while performing their duties at the check post. The security forces and policemen at the check post crushed the evil intentions of the enemies. They reiterated their resolve to eliminate the terrorists from our homeland. The terrorists, their facilitators and supporters will face a tragic end, they said.

Joe Biden nominates Air Force general to lead NSA

DNA

WASHINGTON: U.S. President Joe Biden has nominated Air Force Lieutenant General Timothy Haugh to head both the National Security Agency (NSA) and U.S. Cyber Command, a U.S. official said on Tuesday. The official confirmed a Politico report that cited an Air Force notice sent out Monday. Haugh is now the deputy commander of the military's U.S. Cyber Command, reporting to the current NSA and Cyber Command chief, Paul Nakasone.

Turkiye Cuisine Week kick-starts in the Capital

Turkish cuisine presents its distinctive and diverse flavors to the world during 'Turkish Cuisine Week' from May 21-27: Ambassador Mehmet Pacaci

CENTRELINE REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD, Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan Dr Mehmet Pacaci inaugurated 'Turkish Cuisine Week', featuring unique recipes from local dishes of Hatay province. Addressing the audience, the Ambassador said, "Shaped by more than a thousand years of cultures and traditions, social heritage, and stories, Turkish cuisine presents its distinctive and diverse flavors to the world during 'Turkish Cuisine Week' from May 21-27.

"In its second year, the cuisine introduces Türkiye's rich gastronomic culture to a broad audience at home and abroad through the representations of the Republic of Türkiye," he added. Talking about the similarity of foods between Türkiye and Pakistan, he said, "The food in some regions of Türkiye is similar to Pakistani food, especially the food of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and northern regions." Featuring more than 650 dishes, Hatay's gastronomy is a Mediterranean cuisine characterized by fresh vegetables, quality olive oil, and legumes and cereals. Hatay menu, showcased in this year's international events, includes flatbread with red pepper paste, olive salad, hummus, kisi (fine bulgur salad), oven-baked kebab, and rose syrup.

During 'Turkish Cuisine Week', numerous dishes reflecting timeless and sustainable Turkish cuisine will be prepared with local ingredients and traditional cooking techniques. Events held across Türkiye's 81 provinces will showcase all aspects of Turkish cuisine, including Turkish coffee, Turkish tea, and Turkish delight.

"Included in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in gastronomy, the city of Antakya in Hatay province has long been world-renowned for its diverse cuisine. Featuring more than 650 dishes, Hatay's gastronomy is a Mediterranean cuisine characterized by fresh vegetables, quality olive oil, and legumes and cereals. Hatay menu, showcased in this year's international events, includes flatbread with red pepper paste, olive salad, hummus, kısır (fine bulgur salad), oven-baked kebab and rose syrup", the ambassador added.

He further said, Turkish cuisine is naturally waste-free, with recipes that use every component of each product and stand out with a sustainable structure. Meals are prepared without wasting ingredients, and tables are laden with healing specialties such as vinegar and pickles that are made of food scraps. Ambassador Pacaci further said, the transformation of potential food waste into edible delicacies reveals a gas-



tronic tradition that preserves biodiversity and is ecologically sustainable. Turkish cuisine also stands out due to its cultural sustainability - featuring dining and drinking rituals formed around feelings of unity and solidarity. Tables, where the entire family gathers and guests

are accepted as guests of God, bring together people of all ages, conditions and social classes, playing an essential role in social cohesion, he added. It may be mentioned here that the traditional tables are one manifestation of the generosity of the Turkish people, their love of sharing and

solidarity, and a daily life-affirming culture that has existed for thousands of years. Turkish cuisine, also an essential component of Türkiye's intangible social heritage, guarantees the transfer and sustainability of cultural heritage to new generations in this respect.

Risk and reward as DeSantis links arms with Elon

WEB DESK

FLORIDA: Ron DeSantis is expected to launch his 2024 bid for the Republican presidential nomination in a live interview on Elon Musk's Twitter on Wednesday. In doing so, the Florida governor is bypassing more traditional methods of kicking off a campaign, such as an in-person rally, a big TV interview or a slickly produced online video. While he will eventually do all of these, opting for Twitter as his first choice makes a notable statement about the kind of campaign he will run - and the type of supporter he hopes to prioritise. The event - details of which are still unclear - is all but guaranteed to provide a friendly audience for Mr DeSantis. Speaking at an event on Tuesday, Mr Musk said he would not endorse any candidate "at this time". He said he voted for President Biden in 2020, and has described himself as a centrist, although he did say last year that he would support Mr DeSantis were he to run for president. Mr DeSantis' appearance on Twitter's live broadcast platform known as Spaces will give him the ear of Mr Musk's huge fan base. Mr Musk is viewed warmly by most conservatives after he bought Twitter and began using the platform to elevate conservative voices.

Humanitarian aid to Sudan slow despite less fighting

NEWS DESK

KHARTOUM: Clashes continued overnight in Sudan on the second day of a weeklong truce agreed between rival military factions to allow for the delivery of much-needed humanitarian aid into the devastated country. Residents in Omdurman, one of the three cities around the confluence of the Blue Nile and White Nile rivers that make up Sudan's greater capital, told news agency that exchanges of fire and the sound of heavy artillery could be heard late on Tuesday. The ceasefire, which comes after five weeks of intensive warfare in the capital Khar-

toum and other areas, including the western region of Darfur, is being monitored by Saudi Arabia and the United States.

Reporting from Khartoum, journalist Hiba Morgan said while driving on Tuesday through Khartoum North, she could "definitely smell death on the streets". Morgan said decomposed bodies could be seen strewn on the roads, as well as destroyed buildings, bullet and burn marks on some facilities and signs of artillery fire. "You can tell that many people have left the city of Bahri [Khartoum North]. Those who have remained say they are trying to guard their homes. Others say it is because of the economic situation that they can't leave,"

she said, adding that Khartoum North was once a vibrant and lively city. Fighting erupted between Sudan's army and the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on April 15, just as plans for an internationally backed political transition towards elections under a civilian government were set to be finalised. The fighting has killed at least 863 civilians, including at least 190 children, and wounded more than 3,530 others, according to the Sudanese Doctors' Syndicate. The fight has also forced more than one million people to flee their homes. The United Nations says the number of people requiring aid has jumped to 25 million - more than half population.

UN rights chief opposes military trials of vandals

NEW YORK: United Nations human rights chief Volker Türk on Wednesday condemned coalition government's decision to prosecute civilians involved in May 9 vandalism under the Army Act, terming it "disturbing". "Pakistan's plans to revive the use of military courts to try civilians is 'disturbing'," UN high commissioner for human rights said. Moreover, Amnesty International and other human rights organisations have also urged the Pakistani authorities to stop clamping down on the opposition through mass arrests, arbitrary detention, and charging people under vague anti-terrorism laws, and to release immediately all those held solely for exercising their right to freedom

of peaceful assembly. The joint statement in this connection was issued by Amnesty International, Equidem, CIVICUS and Forum Asia on Tuesday. It said media reports had quoted Punjab Caretaker Information Minister Amir Mir as saying that using video and CCTV footage, geofencing and WhatsApp surveillance, a list of 25,000 people has been compiled, of whom 5,000 will be arrested for being directly involved in the May 9 attacks on government and military property. "Those who are suspected to have committed a crime during the violent clashes following the short-lived arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan may only be charged using Pakistan's ordinary criminal laws, consistent with international human rights standards, without resorting to overly broad and vague anti-terrorism provisions, and authorities must guarantee their constitutional right to a fair trial. "A pall of fear hangs over Khan's supporters following the arbitrary arrests of many opposition leaders, some of whom have been re-arrested outside the jail after being released and others from the court premises. People's homes have been raided in the middle of the night, and people who participated in the protests have been arrested without a warrant," noted the statement. - Agencies

Russia vows 'harsh response' to border incursions

DNA

MOSCOW: Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has promised a "harsh response" to cross-border incursions from Ukraine. His comments came after Moscow said it had defeated an attack in the Belgorod region. However, regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said there had been a "large number" of drone attacks overnight. Ukraine denies involvement in the raid - and two Russian paramilitary groups opposed to Russian President Vladimir Putin say they were behind it. Attackers entered Russian territory from Ukraine on Monday. Reporting to defence ministry officials on the incursion, Mr Shoigu said "more than 70 Ukrainian nationalists" had been killed and the rest pushed back into Ukraine. "We will continue to respond to such actions by Ukrainian militants promptly and extremely harshly," he said. The two Russian paramilitary groups - the Russian Volunteer Corps (RDK) and Liberty of Russia Legion (LSR) denied that they had sustained any casualties, and said a Russian motorised rifle company had been destroyed.

NAB clears PM's son-in-law

LAHORE: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Wednesday declared Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's son-in-law, Haroon Yousaf Aziz, innocent in a money laundering case against him. An accountability court heard the money laundering reference against the premier and others, and instructed that the accused be provided with a supplementary record. The judge remarked that at the next hearing, the court will review the charge sheet based on the record. The court adjourned the hearing on the reference till May 31, while PM Shehbaz's representative appeared before the court to complete his presence. - APP

Wagner chief says over 20,000 died in Bakhmut

KYIV: The head of the Russian private army Wagner says his force lost more than 20,000 fighters in the drawn-out battle for Bakhmut, with about 20% of the 50,000 Russian convicts he recruited to fight in the 15-month war dying in the eastern Ukrainian city. The figure was in stark contrast with widely disputed claims from Moscow that it lost just over 6,000 troops in the war, and is higher than the official estimate of the Soviet losses in the Afghanistan war of 15,000 troops between 1979-89. Ukraine hasn't said how many of its soldiers have died since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. Analysts believe the nine-month fight for Bakhmut alone has cost the lives of tens of thousands of soldiers, among them convicts who reportedly received little training before being sent to the front.

Russia's invasion goal of "demilitarizing" Ukraine has backfired because Kyiv's military has become stronger with the supply of weapons and training by its Western allies, Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin said in an interview published late Tuesday with Konstantin Dolgov, a pro-Kremlin political strategist. Prigozhin also said the Kremlin's forces have killed civilians during the war, something Moscow has repeatedly and vehemently denied. Prigozhin, a wealthy

businessman with longtime links to Russian President Vladimir Putin, is known for his bluster - often spiced with obscenities - and has previously made unverifiable claims, some of which he later backtracked on. Earlier this month, his spokesperson published a video of him shouting, swearing and pointing at about 30 uniformed bodies lying on the ground, saying they were Wagner fighters who died in a single day. He claimed the Russian Defense Ministry had starved his men of ammunition and threatened to give up the fight for Bakhmut. He also said in Tuesday's interview it was possible that Kyiv's anticipated counteroffensive in coming weeks, given continued Western support, might push Russian forces out of southern and eastern Ukraine as well as annexed Crimea. "A pessimistic scenario: the Ukrainians are given missiles, they prepare troops, of course they will continue their offensive, try to counterattack," he said. "They will attack Crimea, they will try to blow up the Crimean Bridge (to the Russian mainland), cut off (our) supply lines. Therefore, we need to prepare for a hard war." The Ukrainian General Staff said Wednesday that "heavy fighting" is continuing inside Bakhmut, days after Russia said that it completely captured the devastated city.

Bakhmut lies in Donetsk province, one of four provinces Russia illegally annexed last fall and only partially controls. The head of Ukraine's ground forces, Oleksandr Syrskyi, said that Kyiv's forces "are continuing their defensive operation" in Bakhmut, and have attained unspecified "successes" on the city's outskirts. He gave no further details. Ukrainian officials have insisted the battle for Bakhmut isn't over. A Ukrainian commander in Bakhmut told The Associated Press on Tuesday that the Ukrainians have a plan to push the Russians out of all occupied territory. "But now we don't need to fight in Bakhmut, we need to surround it from flanks and block it," Yevhen Mezhevikin said. "Then we should 'sweep' it. This is more appropriate, and that's what we are doing now." Elsewhere, Russian forces shot down "a large number" of drones in Russia's southern Belgorod region, a local official said Wednesday, a day after Moscow announced that its forces crushed a cross-border raid in the area from Ukraine. The drones were intercepted overnight over the province, Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said in a Telegram post, and another one was shot down Wednesday just outside the local capital, also

called Belgorod. He said that no one had been hurt, but unspecified administrative buildings, residential buildings and cars were damaged. Ukrainian officials made no immediate comment. Gladkov, the regional governor, said Wednesday he had "questions for (Russia's) Defense Ministry" following the attack that reportedly sowed alarm among locals and embarrassed the Kremlin. During a Q&A session with residents on social media, Gladkov agreed with a participant who said that the Russian military's actions in Belgorod "raised some questions." In Moscow, Russia's defense chief, Sergey Shoigu, vowed to respond "promptly and extremely harshly" to such attacks in the future. Russia said the previous day that it beat back one of war's most serious cross-border attacks, with the Defense Ministry saying that more than 70 attackers were killed in a battle in the Belgorod region that lasted around 24 hours. It made no mention of any Russian casualties. Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said that local troops, airstrikes and artillery routed the attackers. Twelve local civilians were wounded in the attack, officials said, and an older woman died during an evacuation. - Agencies