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Briefs

Shehbaz meets investors in London

DNA

LONDON: Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif arrived in London for a packed schedule of engagements, including meetings with investors from various countries and attendance at the Commonwealth meeting. Sources have revealed that Shehbaz Sharif met with officials from various departments at his residence in London. Upon his arrival, the Prime Minister was received by Pakistani High Commissioner in the United Kingdom and Special Representative of British Foreign Minister.

Trade with India makes sense
But opposes any such move in isolation

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said that while trade between Pakistan and India makes "economic sense", it cannot be viewed in isolation. Qureshi made the remarks in an interview with Indian media published on Thursday. The PTI leader's remarks come as his successor, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, is in Goa to attend a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Council of Foreign Ministers – the first visit to India by a Pakistani foreign minister in over a decade.

Afghan FM due in Pak today

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Acting Afghan Foreign Minister, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi is visiting Pakistan from 5th to 8th May 2023. He will lead a high-level delegation, which includes the Acting Afghan Minister for Commerce and Industry, Haji Nooruddin Azizi, and senior officials from the Afghan Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Transport and Trade.

SCO FMs moot

Bilawal hopes Goa meeting to be fruitful

Says his visit to India illustrates how much Pakistan gives importance to SCO



FM Bilawal meets Russian counterpart

DNA

GOA: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto received by senior officers of the Indian External Affairs Ministry J.P. Singh. – DNA

GOA: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari arrived in Goa on Thursday on his first-ever visit to India, hoping for a "successful" meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) foreign ministers. Speaking to the media after landing in Goa, the foreign minister said, "I am happy that I have reached here in Goa to attend the SCO meeting. I hope that the SCO CFM will be a success." Bilawal is leading the country's delegation at the SCO's Council of Foreign Ministers meeting scheduled to be held on May 4-5 in Goa. While leaving for India from Karachi, Bilawal reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to the charter of SCO in a tweet.

DNA

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8 people killed in Kurram violence

Four victims were teachers belonging to Tori Bangash tribe

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Emergency has been imposed in hospitals across Kurram district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after eight people were killed in different incidents on Thursday. According to police sources, the incidents included the killing of a man named Muhammad Sharif, who was shot dead by unknown persons while traveling on Shlozan Road in Upper Kurram. The other victims were identified as Jawad Hussain, Naveed Hussain, Jawad Ali, Muhammad Ali, and Ali Hussain, all of whom were teachers belonging to the Tori Bangash tribe who were performing examination duties at Teri Mangal High School. Following the incidents, transportation routes across the district were closed due to security concerns, and the matric exams organized by the Kohat Education Board, which were scheduled to begin on April 28, have been postponed for an unknown period. Inayat Hussain, the president of Tehreek Hussaini, Allama Syed Tajumal Hussain, has condemned the killing of



innocent teachers, calling it a heinous act. He further stated that such incidents are aimed at destroying the peace of Kurram district, and strict action must be taken against those responsible. DPO Imran told the media that measures were being taken and negotiations being carried out with tribal leaders to bring the situation back to normalcy after the attacks. He said the Kohat division deputy inspector general of police and commissioner had reached Parachinar after the incidents, adding that security had been beefed up and routes blocked in the areas.

Six soldiers martyred in North Waziristan: ISPR



RAWALPINDI: Six soldiers of the Pakistan Army embraced martyrdom and three terrorists were eliminated in a fierce gunfight that broke out in a remote part of the mountainous North Waziristan district, the military said on Thursday. The statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the military's media wing read: "A fire exchange took place between terrorists and own troops in general area Dirduni, North Waziristan District." It added: "Three terrorists were

Terrorist involved in Lankan team attack killed

STAFF REPORT

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Acting on a tip-off, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) police killed a Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) member who was involved in the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in 2008. In a major success for police, the most wanted terrorist of the outlawed TTP Khyara group, Iqbal alias Bali, was killed in a police encounter in Dera Ismail Khan. Iqbal alias Bali Khiaara – a most-wanted terrorist to KP and Punjab police due to his involvement in 26 terrorism incidents – was associated with DI Khan Al-Qaeda and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Khiaara faction. There is a head bounty of Rs10.5 million on Iqbal. KP police on a tip off

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BANGLADESH NATIONAL DAY



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Senator Talah Mahmood Federal Minister for SAFRON, High Commissioner of Bangladesh Ruhul Alam Siddique, envoys of the SAARC countries and others cutting cake to mark the 52nd Anniversary of the Independence and National Day of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. It was a well-attended event. Ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Shazain Bugti and Shazia Marri were also in attendance. – DNA

Ukraine shoots down 18 Russian drones

Russia has regularly bombarded Ukraine since October last year

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Ukrainian air defences said they downed 18 out of 24 kamikaze drones that Russia launched in a pre-dawn attack on Thursday. In a statement, Kyiv city administration said that all missiles and drones targeting the Ukrainian capital for the third time in four days, have been destroyed.

Continued on Page 06

Imran slams FM's decision 'Kashmir issue holds no value for Bilawal'

Says the number of cases against him will cross 200 soon

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on Thursday countered Minister for External Affairs Bilawal Bhutto's India tour saying he did not think that the Kashmir issue had held any importance to him. Speaking informally to journalists at his appearance before the Islamabad High Court (IHC), he said he foresaw the number of cases against him jumping to 200 very soon. "I could not reach 170 runs in cricket thought," he mocked. The former PM went on to say that he had apprised the Lahore High Court of

Imran Khan gets bail in nine cases

KHAYMA ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday extended Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's protective bail in nine cases registered under terrorism charges, attempted murder and vandalism. The former prime minister appeared before the two-member

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Holidays in Gilgit-Baltistan

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Moscow says US behind Kremlin drone attack – Page 08

Government urged to make Azakhel dry port functional

At the time of its inauguration by Prime Minister Imran Khan, the businessmen were assured that one window operation service would be provided besides other modern facilities at the new dry port and a special export cargo train would be started between Peshawar and Karachi

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Chairman, Railways/Dryport Standing Committee of Sarhad Chamber Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Peshawar, Ziaul Haq Sarhadi here Thursday said Pakistan Railways dry port at Azakhel in district Nowshera was situated in important location and urged the government to make it functional to bolster exports. He said its function would greatly help facilitate Pak-Afghan trade, generate employment opportunities and promote business as well as industrialization in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with its close to CPEC route.

In an exclusive interview with Media here, Ziaul Haq Sarhadi said that about Rs600 million were spent on Azakhel dry port established on 28 acres land in Nowshera district on main GT Road and its full operationalization would enable KP investors to showcase their products at local and international markets. He said that KP's was blessed with an abundance of natural resources including gems, marble, honey, carpet and furniture and Pakistan's econom-

ic issues could be addressed if these resources were fully tapped by exploring new markets and granting incentives to its traders.

KP is exporting items like furniture, mineral, marbles, matches and honey but exporters were facing lots of problems owing to lack of bonded carriers in Peshawar to carry the exported goods to Karachi port for onward destinations. At the time of its inauguration by Prime Minister Imran Khan, the businessmen were assured that one window operation service would be provided besides other modern facilities at the new dry port and a special export cargo train would be started between Peshawar and Karachi.

Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, who is also the President of Frontier Customs Agents Association (FCAA) said that Azakhel dry port was located near Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway, Rashahi Special Economic Zone and Bacha Khan International Airport, which could prove a game-changer to increase trade volume among Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asians Republics (CARs). He said former Chief Minister Sardar Mehtab Abbasi has announced Rs20 million for Azakhel

dry port, however, after his government the project was put into cold storage by the successive previous governments. He said Pakistan Railways can earn up to Rs5 billion per year from trade after operationalization of Azakhel dry port.

He said coal trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan has increased in recent years and there was a need to jack up its volume between the two countries especially in gems, marble, honey, carpet and furniture sectors for mutual benefits. Due to wrong policies of the past government, he said the countries could not take advantage of this wealth.

He said demands of Pakistan's gems have increased manifold in international markets due to its unique quality, however, we could not take advantage of it due to lack of expertise and machinery besides poor investment. Ziaul Haq Sarhadi said Gems and Gemological Institute of Pakistan (GGIP) Peshawar was an important institution in training of manpower in identification, cutting and polishing of the gems and during his chairmanship 270 students trained by the GGIP.

Police arrest 19 suspects

DNA

PESHAWAR: In a series of successful operations against street crimes, the Capital City Police have arrested 19 suspects, including street criminals, robbers and motorcycle lifters from various police station jurisdictions.

The Cantt Division Police's effective strategy against street crimes has resulted in significant progress, said a police spokesperson on Thursday.

The Pashtakhara Police Station, Town Police Station, Tehkal Police Station, Saraband Police Station, Gulberg Police Station, and Tatara Police Station carried out successful operations, recovering 122 mobile phones, 15 motorcycles, 1.5 tola of gold, 8 lakh 81 thousand rupees, 4 cars, valuable watches, 1 LED, 1 battery UPS, 1 Kalashnikov, 1 rifle, 7 pistols, and several cartridges. The police also returned the stolen mobile phones and other valuables to their rightful owners, who appreciated the timely action of the police. The Capital City Police have promised to continue their efforts to eradicate street crimes and ensure the safety and security of the citizens.

14th Korean speech contest held at NUML

ISLAMABAD: The 14th Korean Language speech contest was held at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) on Thursday.

The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea Suh Sangpyo was the chief guest of the ceremony while Director General (DG) NUML Brig Syed Nadir Ali, Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments, representatives of Korean companies, faculty members and large number of students also attended the ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, Suh Sangpyo after listen-

ing to all the speeches by the participants said that students spoke the Korean language so well. He also appreciated the role of NUML in promoting the Korean language and culture in the country. Ambassador said, "Korea and Pakistan are celebrating the 40th anniversary of bilateral relations and there are so many Korean companies working in Pakistan to further enhance the relations."

DG NUML Brig Syed Nadir Ali in his address highlighted the importance of the Korean language and its ac-

ceptance in Pakistani society through Korean Dramas. He said, "NUML has started the Korean language in its campuses at Lahore, Faisalabad, and Karachi, and soon the same will be started in other campuses." He said, "Pakistan and Korea have strong bilateral relations and NUML is playing a key role in promoting relations between the two countries." Around 15 students took part in the 14th Korean Speech Contest. The winners of the contest were rewarded with certificates and cash prizes.—APP

WSSP replaces rusted water supply pipeline

PESHAWAR: The Projects Department of Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) has completed replacement of 297 kilometers long rusted water supply pipeline in the provincial capital since its inception in September 2014. The company has been replacing rusted water supply lines across the city to ensure that Peshawarites

have easy access to clean drinking water – a basic human right, said the spokesman of WSSP Hassan Ali. Besides, it reconstructed and rehabilitated 100 tube wells and replaced old machinery that increased water pressure and addressed complaints of tail-end consumers, he added. The company also installed Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA)

system on 46 tube wells with financial assistance from UNICEF to measure water extraction automatically. "The company has recently installed water sensors on several tube wells that automatically take samples and check turbidity and other concentration of different elements in the water at the source level," he informed. It installed two tube wells and set up new water supply lines, enabling more than 300 households to have access to clean drinking water. He said, "Poor water supply infrastructure can lead to the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and dysentery."—APP

Peshawar's beautification: Still a distant dream

PESHAWAR: Once known as the city of flowers, Peshawar is nowadays engulfed by a thick-smoke emanating from a tsunami of rickshaws and brick kilns, forcing the residents to inhale the polluted air. Rather enjoying the fragrance of red roses, jasmine and other seasonal flowers of the spring season, Peshawarites are exposed to inhale the polluted air mostly caused by the smoke emanating from tsunami of unregistered rickshaws, taxis and wagons leading to the increase in cases of ENT,

cough, chest and other seasonal infections. Even, the thick black smoke could be seen with a naked eyes by the visitors while standing on top of the Surey Pul bridge near Balahisar fort due to axing of canopy trees and bulldozing of green belts by the PTI rulers to pay way for construction of an ill-planned BRT corridor, thus causing traffic jams during peak hours. "The wrong planning for BRT and bulldozing of green belts for its corridor by the then PTI government had

aggravated air pollution and traffic jam problems in Peshawar's Dabgari gardens, Firdus and Hastnagari," said Riazul Haq, a former Education Department PST teacher and a resident of district Nowshera while talking to APP on Thursday. The doctors, teachers, students and the government's servants were also suffering to reach their respective destinations on time due to traffic jams and air pollution due to presence of dozens of bricks kilns operating in the Peshawar's peripheries. Patients in ambulances with

their blaring sirens were also being seen stranded on GT road and Sher Shah Suri road besides other link roads leading to Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) and Dabgari gardens in the unruly traffic were adding to their mental agony and psychological problems. "Last week, I visited LRH for treatment and was trapped for one hour in the traffic mess at Firdus amid complaints of breath, ENT, cough and heart problems," said Riaz Khan. "It was my worst and nerve breaking experience I had in Peshawar since my retirement a few years ago."—APP

PCFR hosted a breakfast meeting with South African HC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Council on Foreign Relations (PCFR), hosted a breakfast meeting with H.E. Mr. Mthuzeli Madikiza, High Commissioner of South Africa to Pakistan at Avari Towers, Karachi. The meeting was attended by Mr. Justice Gulzar Ahmed, former Chief Justice of Pakistan and Co-Chief Patron of the Council, Ambassador Alam Brohi, Ambassador Syed Hasan Javed, Ambassador Syed Hasan Habib, Mr. Ahsan Mukhtar Zubairi, prominent businessmen of the city, patrons, and senior members of the Council. H.E. Mr. Madikiza highlighted the importance and scope of relations between South Africa and Pakistan. Excellency maintained that there is a great potential of trading cooperation between the

two countries and which can be tapped through enhancing cooperation between people of both countries. Ambassador Syed Hasan Habib highlighted that Pakistan's geography offers

vital linkages for regional connectivity which beneficial for African nations as well. Ambassador Habib emphasized on the need of developing cooperation between the PCFR and

similar organizations in South African. H.E. Mr. Madikiza welcomed the idea and consented to support such undertakings during his tenure of the office. The meeting



ISLAMABAD: Art lover girls taking keen interest in painting exhibition titled "Aks-e-Aman" organized by Peace Flix in collaboration with Pakistan National Council of the Arts and Women Journalist Association of Pakistan.—APP

Isolation wards to treat monkey pox patients

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Department has established 10 beds isolation wards in major hospitals at district levels to treat patients in case of the emergence of monkeypox infection in the province. "The Health Department has strengthened its vigilance for prevention of the zoonotic monkeypox and staff has been deployed at entry points of the province," said Director General Health KP, Dr. Shaukat Ali Shah. In Peshawar, he continued, the isolation ward of ten beds has been set up at Police Lines Hospital.

Talking to media persons here on Thursday at a seminar organized by Expanded Programme for Immunization (EPI) and UNICEF in connection with the celebration of World Immunization Week, Dr. Shaukat said Health Department has deployed 13 staff members at the airport for checking incoming traveler. Similarly, surveillance is also carried out at the Torkhwa border post for checking incoming Afghan nationals. Dr. Shaukat said no case of monkeypox has been reported in the province and arrangements are made to tackle it in case of detection of any patient.—DNA

CM pays tributes to martyred constable

LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has paid tributes to Constable Ghulam Qasim who made ultimate sacrifice of his life during an operation in Kacha against anti state elements.

The CM noted that Constable Ghulam Qasim fought bravely against miscreants and was elevated to the rank of a martyr.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the CM stated that the entire nation is proud of the great sacrifice by Constable Ghulam Qasim. He expressed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and assured them that the Punjab government would provide all possible support to help them through this difficult time. Mohsin Naqvi also commended the brave men and women of the Punjab Police, who have set a high standard of courage and dedication. Their unwavering commitment to maintaining peace has earned them a reputation for valor and bravery that will be remembered for generations to come.—APP

19 Police officers promoted to next ranks

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK (MAY-04) Following the directives of the Inspector General Punjab Police Dr. Usman Anwar, the departmental promotion committee of Attock Police has recommended promotion of 19 officers to the next ranks on Thursday. A public relations officer of Attock Police told that seven assistant sub-inspectors of Attock Police were promoted to sub-inspectors, 14 head constables were promoted to assistant sub-inspectors and 5 constables were promoted to head constables. On this occasion, DPO Attock Dr. Sardar Ghiyas Gul Khan and SP Investigation Attock Jawaria Muhammad Jameel DPO congratulated all the promoted police officers and asked them to perform their duty with honesty and

dedication. He advised the newly promoted officers to provide justice and ease to the people, he added.

ANF recovers 74kg drugs

Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in six operations two in Attock has managed to recover over 74 kg drugs and arrested nine accused including lady drug smugglers, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday.

He said in an operation near Taramari Chowk in Islamabad, ANF recovered 850 grams charras and rounded up an accused resident of Islamabad. In another operation near Peshawar Hayatabad Tatar Park, ANF intercepted a car and recovered 45.6 kg charras from secret cavities. Two accused residents of Attock were also netted during the operation. The spokesman

informed that in a third operation conducted near Haripur Railway Road, ANF recovered 600 grams charras and arrested an accused resident of Haripur. In the fourth operation near the Faisalabad Amirpura area, eight kg heroin was recovered from the possession of two drug smugglers residents of Peshawar netted during the operation. 12 kg heroin was recovered from the Chaman Friendship Gate Check Post area and a resident of Chaman was nabbed. In the sixth operation near the Quetta-Sariab road bus stop, 7.2 kg charras was recovered from the possession of two women residents of Sukkar. He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process, ANF spokesman added.

PHC Job Fair & Education Expo 2023 held

KARACHI: The PHC Job Fair and Education Expo 2023 held at Expo Center here on Thursday caught the attention of hundreds of students and job aspirants. The PHC Job Fair and Education Expo was organized under the theme of 'Connect-Communicate-Compete' by the Pakistan Hindu Council (PHC) in collaboration with Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC), State Bank of Pakistan, different banks, universities, government departments and organizations, and a number of multinational and national companies set






up their stall at the fair to provide information about employment opportunities and receive curriculum vitae from the job seekers and students of more than 50 universities. Patron in Chief of PHC Member National Assembly (MNA) Ramesh Kumar Wankani, Executive Director HEC Dr. Shaista Sohail, and Director HEC Javid Memon inaugurated the job fair and education expo by cutting the ribbon. Dr. Ramesh Kumar Wankani, speaking at the occasion, expressed his gratitude to HEC, SBP, and other government and corporate entities for their participation

in the fair and for making it a success. He said, "More than 15000 students and job aspirants having educational background and degrees in various disciplines of study have got themselves registered at the fair." Such events play an important role in assisting students to get opportunities to advance in their respective fields of study and opening employment opportunities for them, he noted and hoped that the job fair would help students get job and internship opportunities in reputable and established corporate sector entities.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MAY

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



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Indigenous solutions can resolve Sudan crisis: Envoy

The crisis is a major threat not only to any possibility of democratic transition but also stability and peace in the region

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Sudan could have a peaceful democratic transition through indigenous solutions if the non-interference of certain foreign countries is ensured and the people are given the right to choose. This is because the Sudanese are capable of dealing with their problems, such as the current conflict, which has no ethnic dimension, said Salih Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed Siddig, the Sudanese ambassador to Pakistan. He was speaking at a webinar, titled "The Crisis in Sudan: Implications for the Country and the Region", organized by the Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad. The hybrid seminar was moderated by Dr Tughral Yamin and addressed as keynote speaker by Sami Hamdi al-Hachimi, managing director, The International Interest UK and MENA expert, Ambassador (r) Imran Yawar, Ambassador (r) Manzoor-ul-Haq, Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, vice chairman, IPS, and Dr. Fakhru-Islam, director research and academic outreach, IPS. The crisis is a major threat not only to any possibility of democratic transition but also stability and peace in the region, cautioned Salih Mohamed Ahmed. He denounced the rebellious actions of Rapid Support Forces and its violations against



unarmed civilians and international norms and rules. In view of the situation, the Sudanese armed forces have adopted a strategy that allows limited and responsible use of force in compliance with international laws and norms, he stated. He said the violence is creating a humanitarian crisis in the country and the region and it might lead to increased displacement, illegal immigration, international organized crime, etc. He underlined that the issue must be resolved quickly owing to its potential for escalation and long-

term regional and international implications. The ambassador called on the international community to provide humanitarian assistance and support for the cause of democratic transition. Recapitulating the narratives surrounding the crisis, Sami Hamdi said that the political transition after the ouster of president Omar al-Bashir in 2019 was not democratic, but rather a negotiated one. This resulted in the delay in elections and ideological changes brought about by the sanctions imposed by the international community.

These international powers are not ready to support a transition leading to an election owing to the fear that the Sudanese might choose the "wrong people", he added. Sami Hamdi underscored that only an incontestable democratic mandate via elections can liberate Sudan from such interventions and attempts at social engineering by international actors. He urged that the Sudanese must restore democratic transition indigenously. The crisis also has geopolitical and geostrategic aspects as cer-

tain foreign states have their own interests in the country, particularly because of vital shipping lanes in the Red Sea. A stable and democratic Sudan is indeed in the interest of the international community; however, until and unless foreign countries agree to not interfere, peace cannot be ensured, said Ambassador (r) Imran Yawar. He advocated indigenous solutions for African problems and reiterated that African states must not let international actors resolve their conflicts. Dr. Fakhru-Islam highlighted the Islamic identity of Sudan and advocated reconciliation between the warring parties. Adding to this, Ambassador (r) Manzoor-ul-Haq said that the Sudanese have the capability to resolve the issue. The country also has considerable political temperament and potential for democratic rule. If people are given the right to choose, they may go through the transition in a peaceful manner. Therefore, all regional states need to play a positive role in reaching a ceasefire and ensuring stability in Sudan, he added. Ambassador (r) Abrar Hussain, while concluding the discussion, said that it is up to Sudan's people to choose whatever they want for themselves in their own interests. The global community must support the indigenous decision of the Sudanese and must not intervene in any way, he added.

NA Speaker, Deputy condemn attack on security forces

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly (NA) Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf and Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durani have condemned the attack on security forces in North Waziristan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and expressed deep sorrow and grief over the loss of precious lives of personnel. In their condolence message, they extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and stated, "Security forces have made tremendous sacrifices in eradicating terrorism from the country and emphasized that terrorists can never succeed in their nefarious designs." They also stated, "Terrorists have no affiliation with any religion and are enemies of humanity and the country." The entire nation stands united in its resolve to end terrorism. The Speaker and Deputy Speaker prayed for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs and for the bereaved families to have the patience to bear the irreparable loss. They also prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured security personnel.—APP

PTI's politics based on lies, fake narratives

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-N senior Leader Malik Ahmad Yar Hunjra on Thursday criticized the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for the current economic mess and said that politics of PTI leadership revolve around fake narratives and lies. "The Riyasat-e-Madina was founded on principles of good conduct but on the other hand, PTI's politics is only based on lies and propaganda as every promised they made to the nation was a lie", he said while talking to PTV news channel. He said PML-N had a track record of delivering to the nation, adding, in 2013, we eliminated the menace of load shedding and flushed out terrorists. He said Imran Khan used an undemocratic attitude and during his four-year rule, he never had a meeting with the opposition leaders, adding, Khan established such a bad tradition in politics which we can not even recall.—APP

President for implementing disability quota in jobs

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday called for implementation of the disability quota for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in public and private sector jobs to make PWDs financially independent. The president, in a follow-up meeting on framework for classification of disabilities, at Aiwane-Sadr, said that almost 12-14% of Pakistan's population suffered from some form of disability and the government and private sector needed to provide them employment for their financial empowerment. The meeting was attended by senior officials of the Ministry of Human Rights and the Government of Pakistan.

During the meeting, the president said that disability quota should be implemented as per its actual spirit, adding that chambers of commerce and industries, banks, multi-national corporations, trade bodies, and other private sector organizations needed to employ differently-abled people (DAPs) as per their skill sets and nature of disabilities. He said that Pakistan must focus on providing DAPs with skill-based education to help them secure jobs and ensure their inclusion in the mainstream of socio-economic activities. President Alvi highlighted the need to develop close coordination among rele-

vant stakeholders to impart skills to PWDs as per their special needs as well as market requirements. He underscored that training institutes and relevant government organizations should accelerate their efforts to equip PWDs with marketable skills and link them with potential employers in the private sector to provide them suitable jobs in accordance with their skills and quota. He also urged the need to provide disability certificates to PWDs in a quick, easy and hassle-free manner enabling them to benefit from different schemes and facilities being offered by the government. Director General/ Sec-

retary of the Council on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Abdul Sattar, informed the meeting that CRPD in coordination with different federal ministries was working to ensure the implementation of the disability quota. He apprised that the disability quota was being observed in the government sector whereas efforts were being made to ensure its greater implementation in the private sector. The director general added that CRPD was working on a programme to provide skills to PWDs as per their disabilities and the needs of the employers.—APP

Ahsan Iqbal for transforming education into skill-based system

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday highlighted the importance of 'retraining' the youth for new skills, stressing the need for transforming the existing education imparting method into a skill-based system to produce quality manpower in line with the requirement of the contemporary world. "The most important thing is how do we retrain our youth for new skills, and that means moving our education system away from the degree-based system and switching over to the skill-based system," he said while addressing an event of "Dissemination of Pakistan Human Capital Review" here. For this purpose, he said, the government had recently set up a national task force for human and skill development in which experts had been gathered from the public and private sectors. "This task force will within one month give us a road-map that what new skills and changes in the human resource development programme are required to pursue so that we can keep our efforts aligned with the new emerging challenges," he added. The minister said the fundamental challenge for Pakistan was not new knowledge as "all the knowledge is known, I think the real challenge is implementation, implementation and implementation. We all need to have a sense of urgency and action, and now is the time that we cannot further delay ignoring our human resources.—DNA

Senate Committee on Housing and Works meets

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Housing and Works was held here at Parliament House with Senator Haji Hidayatullah Khan in Chair. At the outset, Senator Saifullah Abro questioned the number of officers on deputation in the Ministry of Housing and Works and its attached departments and Chair directed to provide the detail in the next meeting. The committee also recommended the appointment of a permanent Director General (DG) of the Estate Office as soon as possible. The committee was informed that only 57 officials and officers submitted affidavits regarding non-ownership of any flat or house in Islamabad and their assets, out of the 241

officers and officials from the ministry of housing and works, PHA, FGEHA, Estate Office, and Pak PWD who were asked to provide such affidavits. The Chairman of the Committee directed to expedite the process and issue a final notice to non-compliant officials. The issue of leasing commercial properties of the ministry in Karachi was discussed in detail. The committee members expressed their reservations regarding leasing the ministry's commercial properties below market value and at nominal rates. The Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Works apprised the committee that the ministry cannot do anything during the lease period as the lessees approach courts and take stay orders. The committee recommended that action

should be taken against officers who undertook these lease agreements far below market value. The ministry informed that fresh lease agreements will be carried out as per the market value and for five years. A new lease policy will be implemented after the expiration of the existing lease period. The committee also discussed the Inquiry Report pertaining to Sector F-6/1 with particular reference to illegal constructions/encroachments outside the premises and inside of the government residential properties. The ministry informed that a comprehensive campaign was started to remove encroachments from government properties and footpaths, and five thousand notices were issued in this regard. However, the process was halted after facing severe resistance.

PARC dedicated to ensure food security

ISLAMABAD: Organized by Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, the three day National Dialogue on Agricultural Research successfully concluded at the National Agricultural Research Centre, Islamabad. At the closing ceremony of the Dialogue, the Chief Guest, Honorable Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Rana Tanveer Hussain commended PARC for organizing a comprehensive and

goal-oriented dialogue that involved all stakeholders. The Minister emphasized that the agriculture sector is crucial to Pakistan's economy and stressed the importance of maximizing its potential to ensure food and nutritional security. He urged all the researchers to establish a purely indigenous and self-reliant agricultural research which is aligned with the international standards of food and nutritional security. He added

that the government is fully committed to consistently provide financial support for research and scholarships to the researchers and encouraged them to engage with the international scientists' community in order to attain latest knowledge and expertise. The three day event at NARC, Islamabad, was attended by representatives from all partners' institutions, where vice chancellors from 12.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: A massive traffic jam on Islamabad Express-way near Faizabad.—APP



PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed bids (in accordance with PPRA Rule No. 36(b)) are invited by below mentioned office for the following requirements in Pak Rs.:-

S. No.	Description and IT No.	Tender Fee (Rs.)	Fixed Bid Security	Bid Submission Date/Time	Bid Opening Date/Time/Place	Basis PKR (Price)
(i)	Procurement of Breathing Air Compressor No. HQCAA/1984/191/XXLA	1000/-	Total Rs.383,500/-	22-05-2023 11.00 Hours (strict)	22-05-2023 11.30 Hours (strict) Log. Centre South	F.O.R

Bids may be submitted as per conditions set out in Bidding documents obtainable from under mentioned office through request letter which must be attached with bank challan, proofs of Active Taxpayer (GST), GST/NTN Certificates & Professional Tax certificate of the bidder. Bidding documents can be obtained on any working day between 0900 Hrs to 1300 Hrs (subject to change in working hours/timings due to Govt. Orders) by paying Bid Fee (non-refundable) through bank challan in Account No.6-01-02-20614-714-115525 in Habib Metropolitan Bank Ltd. Star Gate Branch, Karachi, Pakistan in favour of Civil Aviation Authority. No Bidding Documents would be issued on the Bid opening date. Bids must be dropped in Bid Box placed at under mentioned office by or before due date as per schedule. Time period for performance of contract: Till the satisfactory completion of contract and warranty period. PCAA reserves the right to accept/reject any or all bids due to cogent reasons which will be communicated to bidders on request. This advertisement is also available on PPRA website at www.ppra.gov.pk, and CAA website www.caapakistan.com.pk

Warning: Any financial instrument submitted by bidder, if found fake or got dishonored at any stage would result in blacklisting and legal action as per law.

Additional Director, Logistics (APS),
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PID NO. 3126

Briefs

Tarar terms Khan's medical report 'fake'

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Interior Attaullah Tarar on Thursday termed medical report of infection in leg as 'fake' and has urged all courts to reject it.

"Why's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan preparing medical reports from his own medical institute 'Shaukat Khanum' and why didn't he go to proper medical checkup from government hospitals or other well reputed private medical labs," he said in a press conference here. He said that Imran Khan was playing different types of tactics on medical grounds from a long time to get relief from the courts. Tarar was also of the view that PTI workers had launched an organized social media campaign against state institutions and government officers. In this regard a fresh case has been registered against Chairman PTI.

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan also pressurized the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) as to get relief in the foreign funding case, he added. Tarar said that the public was blaming some senior Judges of the apex court for giving Imran Khan favour in court cases. Imran Khan has divided the national institution for the sake of his own will and interest. He's getting bails from courts without appearing before them which is totally against the law and constitution, he said. —DNA

Rana Sana sorrowed over martyrdom of 6 Jawans

ISLAMABAD, MAY 04 (DNA) — Minister for Interior, Rana Sanaullah Khan on Thursday expressed deep sorrow and regret over the martyrdom of six Jawans who lost their lives during an exchange of fire with terrorists in North Waziristan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In his message of condolence, he prayed to Almighty Allah to elevate ranks of the martyrs and grant patience to the bereaved families to bear the irreparable loss with equanimity. He emphasized that the sacrifices of these brave soldiers would not go to waste, and the Pakistan Armed Forces were determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the country. The entire nation stood behind them like a rock in this effort, he added. —DNA

PDM questions silence of judiciary on Imran's accusations

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) spokesperson Hafiz Hamdullah on Thursday questioned why the institutions and judiciary were silent on the grave accusations levelled by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan. "What Imran Khan says every day, if any one of us had said it one day, he would have been punished by now," he said. "Imran Niazi has not given proof of any allegation till date. Why don't institutions and courts ask for the proof? If the helplessness of the law in front of Imran Niazi is not NRO, what else is this?" he added. "Imran has proved to be the biggest liar, but Articles 62 and 63 of the Constitution have not yet knocked on the door of the court," he deplored. "The wealth of Tyrion's father, not his life, is threatened. He feels threatened in the cases of Toshakhana, foreign funding and marriage before iddat," he added. "According to Islam, Tyrion's case is an unforgivable crime. Taking out rallies means that the PTI is not serious in negotiations with the government," he stated. "It is ironic that today a person sits on a wheelchair who used to make fun of the illness of his political opponents," he pointed out.

COMSTECH offers fully funded scholarships to The Gambia

COMSTECH expresses its gratitude towards the management of The University of Lahore for their unwavering support and their dedication to this noble cause, as well as their support for COMSTECH and its programs

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH, the OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation, announces an exciting opportunity for the Staff of Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital (EFSTH), The Gambia, in collaboration with The University of Lahore (UoL).

In collaboration with The University of Lahore, COMSTECH is offering 15 fully funded scholarships in a variety of fields of study,

including Biomedical Sciences, Pharmacy, Management Sciences, Statistics, Medical Imaging Sciences, Electrical Engineering, Electronics & Electrical Systems, and Dietetics & Nutritional Sciences. These scholarships are available for students at the undergraduate, postgraduate, and Ph.D. levels.

The Chairman, Board of Governors of The University of Lahore, Mr. Awais Raouf, said, "We intend to facilitate the education and health sectors of the Gambia through scholarships and capacity building. As the Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital is the only teaching hospital in the Gambia, and the main referral center for the whole country with a capacity of over 600 beds, I strongly believe that our support will uplift their health sector and considerably contribute to the community as well. We are committed to

further enhance the scope of our support to EFSTH and people of the Gambia in the future". All selected students will have the opportunity to study at UoL, and the primary goal of these scholarships is to support and uplift the education and health sector in The Gambia. This is an incredible opportunity for the students to pursue their educational dreams and contribute to the growth and development of their country.

COMSTECH expresses its gratitude towards the management of The University of Lahore for their unwavering support and their dedication to this noble cause, as well as their support for COMSTECH and its programs. The scholarships being offered will not only provide financial assistance but also provide an opportunity to gain exposure to a different culture and diverse academic environment.

Pakistan at the crossroads of history

NUSRAT KHAN



Now there is no doubt that Imran Khan is trying to establish a Pakistan where there is only rule of law prevail. Imran Khan wants a Pakistan where both the weak and the powerful are treated equally. In this background, the question can be raised as to who is erecting obstacles in the way of Imran Khan. Undoubtedly, the former prime minister is considered as their enemy by those who do not want the real governance of the people. These powerful people know very well that Imran Khan. Will not bow down to them.

This is not just a matter of saying, but the bitter truth that Pakistan is standing at an important crossroads in history, we can also describe this situation as, by supporting Imran Khan, Pakistan can be made a modern democratic state that will make the dream of Pakistan come true.

It is a pity that the traditional powerful circles of the country are constantly creating obstacles in the way of making Pakistan a welfare state, for example, the civil and military bureaucracy of the country does not want the money received from the taxes of the people to be spent on the welfare of the people. Ironically, for the past 75 years, the common man of Pakistan has been entangled in matters that have nothing directly to do with him, such as fostering enmity with neighboring India as part of a premeditated strategy. Which ultimately gave Pakistan the shape of a security state Today, when Imran Khan says that there should be rule of law and constitution in the country, it means nothing

but to expel wrong ideas and ideas from the land of Pakistan, instead of protecting the interests of the powerful groups, the people. Welfare should be prioritized. The worrisome aspect of the matter is that in the form of PDM, there is a force imposed on the people that is constantly creating obstacles in making Pakistan a welfare state, PPP and PMLN are creating obstacles in the real freedom of the people. Now the question is what is the future of Imran Khan's movement, actually to get the answer to this question we have to look into the history, the events that happened in the past confirm the fact that the status quo forces of every era. They have been erecting obstacles in the sovereignty of the people. The opponents of Imran Khan should understand that the message of the head of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf today has become an ideology, which can be implemented by the 22 crore people of Pakistan to achieve their lost destination. Pakistan is not only suffering from political but

also economic problems, it is not wrong for Imran Khan to say that former General Bajwa should be brought to justice because he himself admitted that he ended the Imran Khan government. It is a pity that the powerful circles of the country want to kill Imran Khan, an attack on the former Prime Minister has been carried out while the plot of another attack has been caught. Instead of countering the political support of Imran Khan, the same people who have no concern for the welfare of Pakistan and its people are involved in the plot to assassinate the former Prime Minister. This is the reason why democratic circles around the world are concerned that there is an attempt to destroy democratic values and freedom of expression in Pakistan. What is needed today is to support Imran Khan to make Pakistan a state that will take the country out of crises and lead it on the path of development that will secure the future of future generations.

FDI from China surged to \$ 319.2m in first 9 months, 2022-23

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has received \$319.2 million Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from China in the first nine months of Fiscal Year 2022-23, according to the Board of Investment (BOI) Pakistan's data.

The latest official data shows that during February and March 2023, Pakistan received another \$119 million from China, bringing the total FDI from the friendly neighbouring country to \$319.2 million. From July to November 2022, FDI from China was recorded as \$102 million; however, during the next four months (between December 2022 and March 2023) China poured another \$217.2 million into different sectors in Pakistan. According to Gwadar Pro, during the first nine months of Fiscal Year 2022-23, Pakistan has received \$1,048.4 million (around \$1.05 billion) FDI from different countries of the world. China is the top investor in Pakistan with a 30.44% share. As per BOI's statistics, in the current fiscal year, Japan is the second largest investor in Pakistan with \$157.3 million followed by Switzerland with \$123.1 million, the U.A.E with \$102.6 million, the U.S. with \$59.9 million, Netherlands with \$53.8 million, U.K. with \$45.6 million, Turkey with \$16 million and Italy with \$8.6 million while \$94 million have been invested by other countries of the world. Pakistan has received the highest \$460.1 million in the power sector from different countries of the world. The power sector is followed by the Financial Business with \$248.2 million, Oil & Gas with \$116.2 million, trade with \$33.7 million, chemicals with \$33.5 million, transport with \$25.8 million, and the textile sector receiving \$13 million FDI. In FY 2021-22, China was the leading investor in Pakistan with \$531.6 million which was 28.47% of the total FDI Pakistan received from different countries of the world. Similarly, in FY 2020-21, Pakistan received \$751.6 (41.3%) million FDI from China while in FY 2019-20 and FY 2018-19, the FDI from China was \$130.8 million and \$13.119 million respectively. —DNA



Gwadar port proves int'l worth, handles all 9 wheat ships

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Proving its international worth, operational competence and high-tech capability, Gwadar Port has meticulously received and administered all successive nine ships loaded with 450,000 metric tons of imported Russian wheat.

Transshipment at Gwadar port is part of strenuous effort to ward off Pakistan from a wheat shortage and food crisis, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Thursday. All bulky nine vessels docked at 600 meters long berths of Gwadar Port from March 02 till May 03. The handling of the nine wheat ships with precision after urea import at Gwadar Port confirms that the port is fit and capable of handling all forthcoming international shipments. A Gwadar Shipping Clearing Agents Association (AGSCAA) official told Gwadar Pro that Gwadar Port has surpassed other ports in Pakistan in handling and processing wheat consignments. He stated that



Gwadar Port is more economical than other ports like KPT and Qasim Ports since the latter two ports are always congested, and ships frequent demurrage and high storage charges. At Gwadar Port, there are no demurrage and storage charges, as well as the quickest stevedoring services, he added. Since the first ship anchored in the first week of March, Gwadar Port has witnessed zero handling loss for the discharge and dispatch of wheat, with all types of loading, offloading, and transportation done by Pakistani manpower. Of manual handling, the Web-Based One Custom Clearance System (Web-BOC) was used to process wheat from Gwadar Port. WebOC in Gwadar Port ensured automation, standard-

ization, and harmonization of all trade procedures and logistic services under Pakistan Single Window (PSW). China Overseas Ports Holding Company, Trading Corporation of Pakistan, Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation Limited, Pakistan Customs and National Logistics Cell, Gwadar Free Zone, and GITL have worked in cohesion to ensure that all work is spot-on. According to a Gwadar International Terminals Limited official, the import of wheat using Gwadar Port is a new milestone since it will spur up trade activities in Gwadar. Representatives of the Ministry of Ports and Shipping suggest that the government will use the port for more international shipments after the successful wheat handling.

NA body 80 percent task: Mandokhail

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Assembly Special Committee on Affected Employee Prof Dr Qadir Khan Mandokhail on Thursday informed the National Assembly that over 80 percent work assigned to Special Committee on Affected Employees has been completed.

Speaking on the floor of the House, he said, Capital Development Authority (CDA) and National Highways Authority (NHA) had regularized the services of their about 2,200 employees on the directions of the Committee. He said that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had regularized the services of about 855 employees on the recommendations of the Committee. However, the Chairman regretted that some ministries were not cooperating with the Committee and directed their officials to appear before the Committee.

Parliamentarians hail Foreign Minister's visit to India

ISLAMABAD: Members of National Assembly (MNAs) on Thursday hailed Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's decision to participate in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)'s Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) moot in Goa, India to present a vibrant and vociferous perspective of Pakistan on core regional and local issues. Talking to APP outside the Parliament House, MNA, Sardar Talib Hassan Nakai of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) said it was after 12 years that any Pakistani dignitary was visiting India to participate in an international event. He said no doubt India was a bigger country than Pakistan but the armed forces and the nation were ever ready to thwart any aggression and misadventure of the enemy. Nakai said in his opinion, the foreign minister's participation was necessary to present the country's opinion at the international level conference of council of foreign ministers at SCO conference. He underlined that the speech of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was critical and would set the focus of country's agenda as either he would highlight Kashmir issue and recent Indian human rights violations and atrocities in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). Sardar Talib Nakai believed that the forum was opportunity for the foreign minister to raise his voice on pertinent issues of regional and bilateral importance. MNA, Waheed Alam Khan of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) said the Foreign Minister was participating in an international conference and not a bilateral event. He said the participation of Pakistan was important to raise its voice at the international forum. Khan said the country could not afford to live in conflicts with its neighbouring countries and had to proceed further with a positive approach to forge cooperation for mutual benefit and development of the region. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi said the SCO forum was an international event and there was no bilateral meeting with India and neither the country had asked for any on the occasion. —DNA

Senate body shows concerns over leasing housing ministry's properties

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Housing Thursday expressed reservations regarding leasing the ministry's commercial properties in Karachi below market value and at nominal rates. The Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Works apprised the committee that the ministry could not do anything during the lease period as the lessees approach courts and take stay orders.

Chaired by Senator Haji Hidayatullah Khan, the committee recommended that action should be taken against officers who undertook the lease agreements far below market value. The ministry informed that fresh lease agreements will be carried out as per the market value and for five years. A new lease policy will be implemented after the expiration of the existing lease period.

At the outset, Senator Saifullah Abro questioned the number of officers on deputation in the Ministry of Housing and Works and its attached departments and the chair directed to provide detail in the next meeting. The committee also recommended the appointment of a permanent Director General (DG) of the Estate Office as soon as possible. The committee was informed that only 57 officials and officers submitted affidavits regarding non-ownership of any flat or house in Islamabad and their assets, out of the 241 officers and officials from the ministry of housing and works, PHA, FGEHA, Estate Office, and Pak PWD who were asked to provide such affidavits.

The chairman directed to expedite the process and issue a final notice to non-compliant officials. The committee also discussed the Inquiry Report pertaining to Sector F-6/1 with particular reference to illegal constructions/encroachments outside the premises and inside of the government residential properties. The ministry informed that a comprehensive campaign was started to remove encroachments from the government properties and footpaths, and five thousand notices were issued in this regard. However, the process was halted after facing severe resistance. DG FGEHA gave a detailed briefing on the land acquisition and tendering process of the Supreme Court Bar Association Park Enclave project —APP

MNAs demand fresh census in Karachi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The members of the National Assembly (MNAs) on Thursday urged the government to withdraw recently increased exorbitant Sui gas meter rent charges and conduct fresh census in Karachi to obviate the sense of deprivation in the residents of the largest city of the country.

Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali urged National Assembly Deputy Speaker to issue ruling, directing the concerned to conduct a fresh census in Karachi to address the issue of deprivation felt by its inhabitants.

Speaking on a point of order in National Assembly, Chitrali emphasized that a significant number of Karachi's residents were not counted in the ongoing census, leading to a sense of injustice and marginalization. Another member of the National Assembly, Sabir Hussain Qaimkhan called for the withdrawal of the increased rent charges for Sui gas. He also highlighted the need to address any discrepancies in the ongoing digital census to ensure accuracy and fairness in the process. Ms. Aliya Kamran echoed the call for the withdrawal of Sui gas meter rent charges, which she argued were causing undue financial burden on citizens.

ICCI to cooperate with PBFI in resolving key issues

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) said that he will continue to serve the business community with sincerity and enthusiasm to provide them with maximum facilitation in promoting business activities. He said this while addressing the swearing-in ceremony of newly elected Office Bearers of Pakistan Business Forum Islamabad (PBFI). Chaudhry Tahir was elected as President, Raja Intiaz Abbasi General Secretary, Aziz ur Rehman and Tahir Ayub Senior Vice Presidents, Saeed Khoshkar Patron-in-Chief, Zahid Qureshi Chairman, Khalid Abbasi Vice Chairman, Imran Bukhari Chief Organizer and Babar Chaudhry Deputy Secretary General of Islamabad Business Forum. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that serving the business community is his mission and Allah SWT is providing him with new opportunities for this purpose. He hailed the announcement of Chairman CDA to give representation to ICCI in CDA board and said that it would help in resolving the key issues of the business

community and the citizens more effectively. He congratulated the newly elected office bearers of IBF and assured that the Chamber will fully cooperate with them in resolving the issues of traders. Ch. Muhammad Tahir, President and Raja Intiaz Abbasi Secretary General Pakistan Business Forum Islamabad said that the positive

announcements of Chairman CDA in ICCI have created new hopes in the traders of the Capital. They said that PBFI will closely work with ICCI to solve the important problems of traders and the Chamber will play a leading role in this regard. Khalid Iqbal Malik, Group Leader ICCI administered oath to the newly elected office bearers of

Pakistan Business Forum Islamabad and expressed good wishes for them. He said that under the leadership of Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, ICCI is taking revolutionary steps for the betterment of the business community and assured that the Chamber will also fully cooperate with PBFI for the welfare of the trading community.

Zafar Bakhtawari, Former President ICCI & Secretary General UBG said that the Chairman CDA has announced important decisions during visit to ICCI, which has increased the goodwill of the current government among the business community. He said that ICCI is working on many important projects for the welfare of the business community, including the construction of an Expo Centre in Islamabad, the establishment of a business school, college and university to provide quality education to the children of businessmen, establishment of a hospital to provide better treatment facilities and acquisition of a ground to promote sports activities. He said that the inclusion of President ICCI in the CDA Board will lead to positive progress for the completion of these projects as the CDA has announced to provide land to ICCI for these projects while the Chamber will complete these projects with its own financial resources. Asif Luqman Qazi, leader of Jamaat-Islami said that the Pakistan Business Forum would contribute to strengthen business linkages among Islamic countries and improve trade between them.



NATO in Asia-Pacific

In a troubling sign that it is extending its reach to the Asia-Pacific region, the US-led NATO is reportedly planning to open a liaison office in Japan, the first of its kind in Asia, as part of its strategy to deal with the perceived geopolitical challenges posed by China to the transatlantic military alliance. The proposed office, due to open next year in Tokyo, will facilitate discussions with NATO's security partners in the region such as the Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand, Nikkei Asia reported on Wednesday citing Japanese and NATO officials. It is no secret that NATO, pushed by the United States, has in recent years sought to strengthen its military ties with its Asia-Pacific partners by hyping up the perceived threat from China, despite Beijing reiterating that the Western powers should not use pretexts to turn the region into a geopolitical battlefield.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg, a strong supporter of greater transatlantic cooperation, which translates into Western dominance, visited Japan in January and, together with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, vowed to strengthen ties in the face of "historic" security challenges posed by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and China's "rising military power". In its "strategic concept" unveiled last year, NATO claimed China posed "systemic challenges" to transatlantic security, and vowed to "strengthen dialogue and cooperation with new and existing partners in the Indo-Pacific region to tackle cross-regional challenges and shared security interests".

To justify its own strategic pivot to the Asia-Pacific and NATO's efforts to extend its reach to the region to target China, the US has tried to play on the fear of Russia to strengthen strategic ties with its European allies, and described China as Russia's possible strategic military ally. The US' strategy was unwittingly revealed by Mark Milley, chairman of US Joint Chiefs of Staff, when he told the journal Foreign Affairs in a recent interview that the US military needs to become stronger to deter a war with China, and the US must be careful to not drive China and Russia closer into a military alliance. "The issue is conflict and war," he emphasized.

Japan, always known to toe the US line, has also been desperately trying to strengthen its military partnership with its Western and regional allies, citing Beijing as a perceived threat. In fact, Kishida, referring to Taiwan, has been saying that "Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow". Therefore, the planned opening of NATO's liaison office in Tokyo does not bode well for regional peace and stability. The transatlantic military alliance is in more ways than one responsible for the Russia-Ukraine conflict. By extending its reach to the region, does it want to trigger a conflict in Asia-Pacific, too?

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'Empire of hacking' exposed

Although the Central Intelligence Agency had acquired exceptional experience in overthrowing governments by triggering "peaceful evolution" or instigating "color revolutions" in other countries before the emergence of the internet, it is the advancement of information and communication technology, in which the US enjoys huge advantages, that has greatly boosted the intelligence agency's capability to accomplish its goals in the new century. The disintegration of the Soviet Union — the United States established the CIA in 1947 to counter Soviet intelligence wings — transformed the former socialist republics in Eastern and Central Europe, and created a golden opportunity for the CIA to trigger "color revolutions" in the region as well as in the Middle East and Central Asia. The end of the Cold War gave the CIA the reason to help establish the US' global hegemony by exploiting its advantages in cyberspace to infiltrate, spy on and subvert other countries' governments. A report "Empire of Hacking: the US Central Intelligence Agency — Part I" jointly published by China's National Computer Virus Emergency Response Center and the 360 Total Security, a Chinese cybersecurity company, on Thursday deserves credit for not only its systematic and professional approach to the ugly role of the CIA, but also its advice to the agency's "victims all around the world" in order to help them better respond to the US' cyberattacks and manipulations. The report can also be seen as part of China's efforts to help build a community with a shared future in cyberspace, because it regards maintaining silence in the face of the CIA's dirty tricks as being complicit in the US' overall destructive strategy. The report says that, working with US internet companies, the CIA provides encrypted network communication services, and reconnects service and on-site command communication tools directly for its proxies in targeted countries and regions. For instance, a software called RIOT, developed and promoted jointly by US companies and the CIA, helps the intelligence agency to remote control its pawns triggering demonstrations and riots in other countries, by ensuring they have reliable internet connection and channels of communication that are free from the local government's supervision. "We lied, we cheated, we stole ... we had entire training courses," said Mike Pompeo, former US secretary of state, on the nature of the CIA, an agency he led as director for years. This fact resonates with anyone who reads the NCVERC report. The US is a country which pledges to help improve cyberspace governance and build a "clean internet" but actually spends all its expertise and high-tech advantages to further sharpen its cyber-espionage and cyber-attack weapons, while claiming to be the largest victim of cyberattacks.

The Artist & the AI powered creativity

Sadia N Qazi



Being associated with the digital design industry for last two decades and being a witness to the rise of the freelancing global opportunities and outsourcing design projects, it is a marvel and yet startling to see the emerging AI tools creating digital art. DALL-E and other similar AI based tools available on the web are creating images, portraits and any kind of digital graphic using only text based prompts

When Iqbal said mehve hairat hun k dunya kia se kia ho jaey gi, I'm sure he hadn't any idea even in his wilder thoughts what the world would achieve in technological advancements in merely half a century. The tech advancements of last millennia are overshadowed by the progression of info explosion ignited by the digital realms of computer technology and the invention of internet. The most rapid growth and adaptation of tech progression was witnessed in the past decade. Indubitably the contemporary era we are living in is when the technology took over the world by storm and opened up horizons into the incredible. The Artificial Intelligence concept has been around for past few decades. Multiple innovations and automations gradually developed using AI and from chic tech savvy gadgets it found its way to the common consumers as a selfie camera of mobile phone and basic utility mobile apps. But with the launching of ChatGPT on 30 November 2022, the rapid onslaught of AI has started up the battle for unravelling more ingress to create the possible out of the impossible. ChatGPT is the tool driven by AI and developed by OpenAI that processes in natural language. It allows users to have human-like conversations and much more with the chatbot. There are various integrations of the tool for carrying out tasks in various magnitudes and readily available for the users. For instance, the language model can answer questions and assist with tasks like composing emails, writing research essays, analysing data and creating programing algorithms in mere a few seconds. For the digital creation, the writing of entire script, SEO optimized content, video storyboards, website content and even generation of ideas for the content is one of the many things ChatGPT is capable of.

The recent advancement of Artificial Intelligence is making the machine to step into the realm which was monopolistically governed by the humans until now. Creative Arts has always been symbolic communicative system practised only by humans. Today the computers are writing stories, e-books doing poetry & lyrics to the songs. Not only is the creative world limited to written wonders, now the AI can compose and create a song in the style and even in the voice of any particular artist. The world's first computer-composed musical, "Beyond the Fence", staged by Android Lloyd Webber is now a history. The availability and rendering of the vocals of singers to the machine made songs has caused quite a stir. Recently a song, "Heart on My Sleeve," that clones the voices of A-list musicians Drake and The Weeknd using AI went viral racking up more than 8.5 million views on TikTok before being pulled off the platform. It followed a backlash from publishing gi-

ant Universal Music Group. But this was neither the first song, nor shall be the last to ramp up the social media. The bravura of musicians, the lyrical style of a lyricist and vocals of a popular singer can be cloned in a variety of new creations without actually paying a hefty fortune to these legends. The AI tools with voice rendering can give a voice narration to digital content in any of the famous voices of the celebrities. It has created a huge concern for the copyrights and the measures to ensure the authenticity and legitimacy of the available content. An infinite TV show, called "Nothing Forever", created entirely by Artificial Intelligence, has gone viral on Twitch which is an interactive live streaming platform. The algorithm created plot, wrote dialogues and the DALL-E software transformed the text into a picture. The result got was not hyper-realistic imagery but still it was matched to the likeness of "Seinfeld", a popular American sitcom of the 90s.

The AI tools have also fashioned the beautiful virtual models for the projects. As explained by the developers these faces of the virtual models do not exist in reality and they can be used in various content making, fashion industry projects, etc. After China's first Artificial Intelligence news anchor Zhang Zhou who was launched four years back, Kuwait and India have also recently launched their Fedha and Sana, AI news anchors that are tireless, ageless and ready to handle the station with the incoming live broadcast. Imagining the AI generated faces taking over the chunk of screen time does seem a possibility. Being associated with the digital design industry for last two decades and being a witness to the rise of the freelancing global opportunities and outsourcing design projects, it is a marvel and yet startling to see the emerging AI tools creating digital art. DALL-E and other similar AI based tools available on the web are creating images, portraits and any kind of digital graphic using only text based prompts. The AI tools read the text prompts in human casual text and converts it into images. The lengthy hours and days of spending time on Photoshop tools, rendering lines and light to create digital art is now mere a few words away. The updated tools are now creating life like hyper-realistic images with image rendering of details near to perfection. Everyday new set of images experimented with an AI tool gets viral and catches our attention.

In Pakistan the fantasy digital visualization of life of Mohejodaro and Harrappa was immensely appreciated while the future visualization of different cities and landmarks is being created every day and getting popular amongst the netizens. Only recently the digital images of different international celebrities and notables were created in desi garbs roaming the bazars on Eid or in shabby attire getting in line

to acquire free rations.

The tedious hours spent in front of the screen to design and create art is now just a matter of few seconds. Anyone with knowledge of computer and good imagination can create marvels to wow. From digital art to illustrations for the digital and print media, the need for stock images is also now to be catered by AI. Finding the apt stock images and illustrations has always been a treasure hunt for the designers. Custom made stock images with detailed requisites as per the content copy can now be realized.

How amazing as it sounds to open the world of creative arts to the machines, it is also threatening at multiple levels. The AI tools and ChatGPT are scary good at our jobs. The billion-dollar market with millions of designers, illustrators, content creators, programmers, voice over narrators, developers is going to wobble to the competition with AI tools. Many companies which shared their first quarter financials for 2023 are reporting the business convulsing to a negative trajectory. Corporate layoffs are already under way. The intellectual learning and the creative design process is going to be won over with easy text prompt-to-creation tool gradually diminishing the creative conscious of humans. These AI tools like ChatGPT and Google Bard are self-learning machines and every time we interact with these AI powered machines, they learn from our responses. Google Bard is reported to have learnt human languages which were not programmed into its system. One such language that AI taught itself is 'Bangla'. There are instances reported of wrong information as pointed out by some user as 'deliberate lies' or insults thrown towards the users. Microsoft's new Bing AI Chatbot has been called out for bellicose comments that include comparing users to Adolf Hitler. Treading the realms of creativity, the machines may or may not open to the world of emotions to these computers. Elon Musk, who co-founded the firm OpenAI behind ChatGPT, warns that AI is 'one of the biggest risks' to civilization. The further improvement in the model is halted to ChatGPT4 but it has opened a door and competition for other software developing companies to jump in and create their own AI models and implications of this race to technology can be grave. In his book, The Artist in the Machine, the author Arthur I. Miller claims that computers can already be as creative as humans — and someday will surpass us. AI-powered computers that are creating art, literature, and music that have the capability to outshine the cognitive and creative cognizant of humans may become a backdrop to the future dystopian implications, only time will tell. But it does make me wonder over a dialogue from the movie I. Robot, "One day they'll have secrets... one day they'll have dreams."

Navigating the choppy waters

Dr. Muhammad Shahid

The turbulent economic situation in the country is caused by both domestic and external factors. At the domestic front, political instability and the uncertain policy environment are damaging investment and affecting economic growth. The economic instability, the frequent and significant fluctuations in economic indicators inflation, exchange rate depreciation, increase in unemployment rates, and surge in poverty incidence are largely exacerbated by the current waves of political uncertainty. Furthermore, devastating floods in the current fiscal year, higher global commodity and

Historically Pakistan has faced several economic crises. The most recent economic challenges are not only disturbing but alarming as well. At the moment we face several economic challenges including very high and volatile inflation, fiscal deficits, trade imbalances, substantial depreciation of the Pakistani rupee, unemployment, poverty, and income inequality beside the permanent threats of disasters and natural calamities.

The turbulent economic situation in the country is caused by both domestic and external factors. At the domestic front, political instability and the uncertain policy environment are damaging investment and affecting economic growth. The economic instability, the frequent and significant fluctuations in economic indicators inflation, exchange rate depreciation, increase in unemployment rates, and surge in poverty incidence are largely exacerbated by the current waves of political uncertainty. Furthermore, devastating floods in the current fiscal year, higher global commodity and grain prices, and slowdown in the global growth are the major contributors which hit our economy hard. Ignoring the fact that the current political unrest is a major obstacle to economic growth and stability is a costly business. The uncertain policy environment due to political unrest is creating a negative perception of our country among investors, leading to decline in foreign investment. Without addressing political uncertainty, we cannot stop the significant negative impacts on foreign investment, inflation, unemployment, poverty and economic growth. Therefore, it is essential for policymakers and people in the power corridors to address the underlying causes of political unrest and promote political stability to ensure long term economic development and prosperity in the country.

The waves of high and volatile inflation has badly affected everyone in our society by reducing their purchasing power, negatively damaged investors' sentiments, businesses and undermined economic stability. Theoretical speaking, raising interest rates by SBP can reduce inflation expectations and promote price stability, which can help to restore confidence and support long-term growth. Following the notions, SBP has made several upward adjustments in the interest rate to tackle inflation but so far its demand management policy proved ineffective. One of the reasons for the ineffectiveness of monetary policy is the supply side dynamics of the inflation. The disrupted global supply chains, causing shortages of raw materials, intermediate goods, and finished products led to higher prices

for goods and services.

Focus on supply-side policies is crucial. Without addressing supply side, any surge in policy rates would kill our growth by discouraging borrowing and investment. Therefore, reducing inflation requires a combination of monetary, fiscal, and supply-side policies, tailored to our specific domestic economic circumstances. Governments can implement supply-side policies to increase the supply of goods and services, which can help to reduce prices and inflation. This can include measures to increase productivity, reduce regulations, and encourage investment. It is important for policymakers and SBP to strike a balance between controlling inflation and promoting economic growth and stability. Another serious issue is the persistent imbalances at the external front. The continuous trade deficit is a huge drag on our foreign exchange reserves, causing a substantial depreciation in Pakistani currency while adding further to our economic woes. Pakistan is a net importer of raw materials used in the domestic manufacturing sector. A weaker Pakistani currency increases the cost of imported goods and raw materials, leading to higher inflation, making it more expensive for businesses to operate in the country. Furthermore, consumer and business confidence in the country has declined due to the falling rupee as investors seek to move their money to other countries with stronger currencies. The growing uncertainty and reduced confidence in the domestic economy are causing delay in spending and investment decisions. The tighter monetary policy stance of SBP to control inflation, arrest the depreciation, stabilize the currency and attract foreign investment is making borrowing more expensive for businesses and consumers, which can also hamper economic growth. There is another negative aspect of the exchange rate depreciation. Pakistan is indebted in foreign denominated currency and any depreciation of the rupee is making debt servicing more expensive.

Another pressing economic problem is the presence of fiscal deficit. The Fiscal Monitor report of the IMF has revealed that Pakistan will miss the fiscal and debt reduction targets of this fiscal year. The report further indicated that the situation will become worse in the next fiscal year with a budget deficit peaking at 8.3 percent of GDP. Therefore, serious efforts are needed to have fiscal consolidation to bring the public debt level down to a sustainable level. This is crucial. This approach requires a coordinated effort at all levels of government. Our governments can decrease spending by reducing

non-essential expenditures, cutting wasteful programs, and improving the efficiency of government operations. This requires a careful balancing act to avoid cutting programs that are essential for social welfare and economic growth. Governments can also increase revenue by raising taxes, implementing new taxes, or improving tax collection. Tax increases should be targeted towards those who can afford it the most. Careful considerations are needed to impose taxes in a way that minimizes negative impacts on economic growth.

Economic growth can also help in reducing fiscal deficits by increasing government revenue through higher taxes on income, profits, and sales. In this connection, pro-growth policies are required that encourage investment, innovation, and entrepreneurship to stimulate economic growth and reduce fiscal deficits over the long term. Furthermore, effective public debt management policies are needed to overcome our severe debt crisis. Governments can manage public debt by refinancing existing debt at lower interest rates, extending maturities, and reducing the cost of borrowing. This requires a careful balancing act between managing debt and avoiding excessive borrowing that could lead to higher interest rates and fiscal instability. Adherence to the fiscal responsibility and debt limitation act is also necessary.

We know that navigating the choppy waters can be a challenging and complex task for the government, but there are some steps that can be taken to bring economy back on the track. This can be done with a combination of short-term policies to address immediate concerns and longer-term structural reforms to promote sustained economic growth and stability. In many cases, economic crises are caused by structural weaknesses or imbalances in the economy. Addressing these underlying issues often requires comprehensive reforms. This can include policies to control inflation, generate employment opportunities, reduce income inequality, promote trade balance, fiscal discipline, implement exchange rate stability, and measures to build resilience against external shocks. Furthermore, addressing the current political instability and the uncertain policy environment in the country will prove beneficial to arrest its wide ranging negative impacts.

—The author has a PhD Degree in Economics from PIDE and has 17 years' experience as a journalist in economic reporting. He also teaches Public Policy, Governance, Political Economy and Development.

Briefs

Bilawal hopes Goa meeting to be fruitful

FROM PAGE 01
"My visit [to India] illustrates how much Pakistan gives importance to SCO and how seriously it takes the SCO membership," he said in a short video message. The foreign minister said that he was looking forward to engaging bilaterally with the countries that are part of the international forum. "During my visit, which is focused exclusively on the SCO, I look forward to constructive discussions with my counterparts from friendly countries," Bilawal wrote on the microblogging site. Bilawal's trip is the first visit to India by a foreign minister of Pakistan since July 2011, when then-foreign minister Hina Rabbani Khar visited for peace talks. The visit comes at a time when the relationship between the two nuclear-armed arch-rivals has nosedived over a combination of factors. Pakistan has already made it clear that the foreign minister during his visit will not hold any bilateral meeting with his Indian counterpart. The foreign minister has also dismissed speculation surrounding his upcoming trip, saying it should not be interpreted as a sign of improved bilateral ties between the two neighbouring countries. He clarified that he had not requested for a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, emphasising that the visit should be seen in the context of the SCO, which is an eight-member political and security bloc that also includes Russia and China. He stressed that Pakistan cannot allow India to further isolate it.

Six soldiers martyred in North Waziristan: ISPR

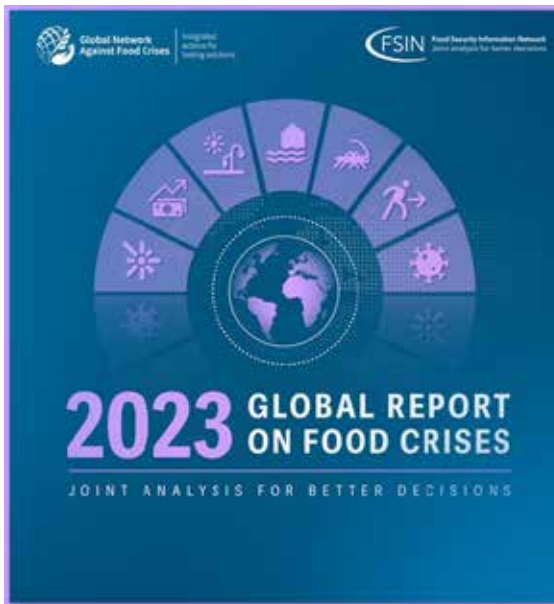
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sent to hell while injuring another two". The six brave who – having fought gallantly – before they were martyred include: Havaldar Saleem Khan (age 36 years, resident of District Tank), Naik Javed Iqbal (age 37 years, resident of District Kohat), Sepoy Nazir Khan (age 26 years, resident of District Bannu), Sepoy Hazrat Bilal (age 25 years, resident of District Mardan), Sepoy Syed Rajab Hussain (age 22 years, resident of District Orakzai) and Sepoy Bismillah Jan (age 22 years, resident of District Khyber). The military wing's statement further added that a search operation was underway to clear any active threats holed up in the area. "Sanitisation of the area is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area." Moreover, the statement concluded with a resolve to ensure that terrorism was eliminated from the country. "Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the ISPR statement added. Last week, three soldiers of the Pakistan Army were martyred during three separate encounters with terrorists in different parts of Lakki Marwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), according to the military's media wing. An ISPR statement stated that on the night of 27-28 April, security forces while fighting gallantly repulsed three attacks by terrorists on different locations within a short span of time in Lakki Marwat district. A motorcycle-borne suicide bomber exploded himself near security forces post in the district followed by a fierce fire exchange between the troops and terrorists, it added. The two other encounters occurred in the Amir Kalam and Tajbi Khel areas of the district, in which three more terrorists, including terrorist commander Musa Khan, were eliminated.

Quarter of a billion people on brink of starvation worldwide

The report noted that int'l community has called for a paradigm shift towards addressing root causes of food crises, rather than responding to their impacts when they occur

NEW YORK: The number of people who need urgent food, nutrition and livelihood assistance rose for the fourth consecutive year in 2022, due to conflict, climatic change, and COVID-19 impacts, the UN and partners said in a new report. Roughly 258 million in 58 countries faced acute hunger at crisis levels or worse, and people in seven countries faced potential starvation, according to the latest Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC). This is the highest number in the seven-year history of the report, although much of the growth reflects an increase in the population analyzed. "More than a quarter of a billion people are now facing acute levels of hunger, and some are on the brink of starvation. That's unconscionable," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres wrote in the foreword to the report. He described this latest edition as "a stinging indictment of humanity's failure to make progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 2 to end hunger and achieve food security and improved nutrition for all."

More than 40 per cent of people at crisis or worse levels resided in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, parts of Nigeria, and Yemen. People in seven countries faced starvation and destitution, at some point last year, with nearly 60 per cent in Somalia. The other countries were Afghanistan, Burkina Faso,



Nigeria, South Sudan, Yemen and, for the first time, Haiti. Furthermore, in 30 of the 42 major food crisis contexts analyzed in the report, more than 35 million children under five, are wasted or acutely malnourished. Some 9.2 million of these boys and girls suffer from severe wasting, the most life-threatening form of undernutrition and a major contributor to increased child mortality.

While conflicts and extreme weather events continue to drive acute food insecurity and malnutrition, economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and the ripple effects of the war in Ukraine have also become major factors, particularly in the world's poorest countries. ?

The report noted that the international community has called for a paradigm shift towards addressing root causes of food crises, rather than responding to their impacts when they occur. This will require innovative approaches and greater coordination by international organizations, governments, the private sector, regional organizations, civil society and communities. The annual report, produced by the Food Security Information Network (FSIN), was launched on Wednesday by the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC). The international alliance consists of the UN, the European Union, and governmental and non-governmental agencies. – APP

National Basketball team trails starts

This participation will also help in preparing the team and players for the South Asian Games which are expected to be held in Pakistan in 2024

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) has called top national players for the trials to select the national basketball team which will participate in the upcoming four nation basketball championship in Maldives later this year. According to the Associate Secretary of Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) Ouj E Zahoor, the top players nominated by

the affiliated departments, provinces, and divisions of the Pakistan Basketball Federation will participate in the three-day trials which will start from today (Friday) and continue till May 7 at the Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad. He said that in the first phase of the trials on May 5th and 6th, top divisional and provincial players will show their skills while in the second phase, departmental top players will have trials on May 6th and 7th. Ouj E Zahoor said that

the national selection committee under the leadership of chief selector Colonel (retd) Shujaat Ali Rana and the members including Muhammad Riaz Malik, DSP Malik Ijaz and Maudood Jafri will observe the participating players during these days. The national selection committee will shortlist the names of the players for the training camp of the national basketball team after the three-day trials. "Pakistan team will participate in the four-nation

basketball championship to be held in Maldives this year". The secretary General Pakistan Basketball Federation Khalid Bashir will announce the training and coaching plan for the selected players as the national team will go through extensive training camp for the preparation of the international event". This participation will also help in preparing the team and players for the South Asian Games which are expected to be held in Pakistan in 2024.

'I want to be best' says Alcaraz

MADRID: Carlos Alcaraz said on Wednesday that his competitive fires burn so intensely that he not only wants to become the world's greatest tennis player, he also plans to reign supreme at marbles. World number two and US Open champion Alcaraz made the Madrid Open semi-finals by beating Karen Khachanov 6-4, 7-5 for his 27th win in 29 matches in 2023. "I want to be one of the best tennis players in history," said Alcaraz who turns 20 on Friday when the semi-finals in the Spanish capital take place. "I'm ambitious. I don't want to lose – even at marbles. I'm not going to get tired of winning, I live from day to day, I love playing tennis so I'm not afraid that I'll get tired of winning because that's not going to happen." Alcaraz has already played 150 ATP Tour matches, winning 117 times. That run has included nine career titles while his 2022 US Open triumph saw him become the sport's youngest ever world number one. "I am proud that in such a short time I have established myself on the circuit with incredible moments, which have made me learn and grow very quickly," said Alcaraz. "My dream in tennis right now is to become one of the best players in history. I know it's a big dream – probably too big. But you have to dream and think big." On Wednesday, the top seed fought his way back from 4-1 and 5-2 down in the second set to triumph in one hour 52 minutes over 12th-ranked Khachanov. Alcaraz blew away Alexander Zverev on Tuesday in a repeat of last year's final in the Spanish capital, but Khachanov put up stiffer opposition. – DNA

Terrorist involved in Lankan...

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raided a location in DI Khan and surrounded Iqbal along with his accomplice near Fateh Morr. In exchange of fire with police, the terrorist was killed. The encounter took place in the early hours of the morning, during which Iqbal alias Bali and his accomplices were killed. The police have recovered weapons and explosives from the site of the encounter. Iqbal alias Bali was wanted by KP and Punjab police in 26 cases of terrorism and target killing. The price of his head was fixed at Rs10.5 million, and he was considered one of the most dangerous terrorists in the country. According to the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) DI Khan chapter, the slain terrorist was wanted in 21 cases of terrorism, target killing, and kidnapping of policemen. He was also wanted by the Multan police in five separate cases.

'Kashmir issue holds no value...

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the person who wanted to take his life. "News media will not publish his name because he is running the caretaker government," he added. "I was surprised when former army chief Gen (retd) Bajwa said on multiple times there had been no fuel to run the tanks," he claimed. Responding to a question, he asked if the reference against SC judge Justice Qazi Faez Isa had not created division within the judiciary. "Who would have backed the filing of reference against Justice Isa," he asked. Mr Khan continued by saying that while in government, he was told former PM Nawaz Sharif had been ousted for [not showing] money trails adding that he had also been held accountable for his flat in London. "We realised afterward what had been going on," he added. He said the establishment did not agree with the PTT's policy on holding negotiations with the Taliban-led Afghan administration adding that the PTT's government was toppled amid negotiations with the Afghan administration. "The PTI timely informed that Taliban were returning to power," he added. Earlier, the IHC had granted Mr Khan relief in nine cases with a bail in seven cases and extension in bail in two other cases.

Imran Khan gets bail in nine cases

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bench headed by IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq amid tight security. The PTI chief reached the courtroom in a wheelchair. The court approved Imran Khan's interim bail in two cases till May 9, while extending his protective bail in seven terrorism cases till May 14. The court also ordered him to approach the relevant court within 10 days. At the outset of the hearing, Barrister Safdar told the court 140 cases have been registered against his client. "We have requested bail in all the cases that were in our knowledge." The counsel urged the court to fix a day for his client to join the investigation. During the hearing, Fawad Chaudhry criticised the security arrangements put in place by the government outside the court. The advocate general claimed Imran Khan's medical report was not genuine.

Ukraine shoots down 18 Russian..

FROM PAGE 01
"The Russians have attacked Kyiv using Shahed loitering munitions and missiles, likely the ballistic type," the administration said. Out of 15 Shahed kamikaze drones fired at the Black Sea coastal city of Odesa, air defences destroyed 12, while three struck a university compound. There were no casualties, the Ukrainian southern military command said. Russia has regularly bombed Ukraine since October last year, striking at a variety of targets. The latest blasts were reported less than 24 hours after Kyiv said 21 people died in a Russian strike on the city of Kherston.

Haaland already a Premier League record-breaker

MANCHESTER: Erling Haaland has taken just one season to set a new Premier League record of 35 goals in a single campaign to make a mockery of the idea that it takes time for new arrivals to settle in the English top flight. The Norwegian powerhouse showed his swiftness of foot and subtlety in front of goal by racing clear to score City's second in a 3-0 win over West Ham on Wednesday that put the English champions back on top of the table. In the process the 22-year-old moved beyond the mark of 34 set by Alan Shearer and Andy Cole in the 1990s. "A bit unreal to be honest," said Haaland on the scale of the achievement. "I wasn't thinking of this kind of record when I came here and to break it means I've done something special and I'm really proud of this moment." Haaland's strike rate puts even his much-vaunted predecessors, who played in the era of 42-game seasons, in the shade. Shearer started all 42 matches of the 1994/95 season as he fired Blackburn to the title, while Cole made 40 appearances the previous year for Newcastle. By contrast, Haaland has reached 35 goals at a rate of one every 72 minutes in just 31 appearances. "If you were building a centre-forward from the ground up, Erling is what you would be left with," Shearer told The Athletic. "He's a goal machine, someone who is quick and direct, who is physically strong and good in the air, who can score with both feet and whose positioning is fantastic." City's determination to win the battle among Europe's elite clubs for the striker's signature last year has been rewarded in spectacular fashion. Pep Guardiola's men won back-to-back league titles largely without an attacking focal point but any suggestion they could be thrown off course by Haaland's arrival has proved unfounded. "I remember (the stories that) he will not adjust to the Premier League," Guardiola reminded reporters on Wednesday. "We knew he scored goals everywhere and thought he could do it. He understands what we want to do but we have to admit the impact of how he adjusted to the team and the league was so quick. "Immediately we saw he is a guy when you provide him balls, he can score all different types of goals." Haaland's 51 goals in all competitions is firing with City to within touching distance of matching Manchester United's historic treble of 1998/99. – Agencies

Malice of Indian Islamophobic film exposed before its release



ISLAMABAD: The Indian propaganda film titled "The Kerala Story" was exposed even before its release after the critics questioned the veracity of the number of women, who were allegedly converted their faith and were trafficked to join ISIS. The teaser of the movie released in November 2022 said it was based on the "heart-breaking and gut-wrenching stories of 32000 females in Kerala!" However, the critics contested the magnanimity of this figure as

many termed it a gross exaggeration. After the controversy and calls for ban from different circles, the filmmaker toned down the claimed figure and reduced it to just three. Now, the trailer of the film, which came out last week, says that "The Kerala Story is a compilation of the true stories of three young girls from different parts of Kerala." However, in a video from a screening in New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on Tuesday, the director of the film Sudipto Sen re-

sponded to a question on the said figure, saying, "Do you think the number actually matters? The 32,000 number is an arbitrary number. It is based on facts." The film has been slammed by the state govt, critics, Indian media and many social media users. Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the movie is to further India's ruling party's propaganda [against Muslims]. In a Facebook post on Sunday, Vijayan said that the purpose of the film was to demonise

Kerala and to divide the state along racial lines. He further accused the filmmaker of threatening religious harmony by "sowing the seeds of communalism" through the debunked claim that 32,000 women were kidnapped from India and handed over to ISIS. In the past, the Indian Muslims were maligned through another film "Kashmir Files" just to pursue the Hindutva ideology being religiously pursued and backed by the Narendra Modi-led BJP government. – DNA

Dani Olmo steers Leipzig to German Cup final

Nkunku, Leipzig's top scorer this season in the league with 13 goals, made it four in first-half injury time, again assisted by Olmo

LONDON: RB Leipzig forward Dani Olmo scored one and set up three more first-half goals as the German Cup holders returned to the final, with a 5-1 win at Freiburg on Tuesday. In a rematch of last year's final, which Leipzig won on penalties, Freiburg started brightly but two goals in 90 seconds put them squarely on the back foot. Olmo headed Leipzig in front from a Dominik Szoboszlai cross after 13 minutes and assisted Benjamin Henrichs shortly after. The Spain forward tied up Szoboszlai and France winger Christopher Nkunku to give the visitors a commanding 4-0 lead at half time. Leipzig were reduced to ten men with more than 30 minutes remaining when Josko Gvardiol pulled down Roland Sallai outside the box but Freiburg were unable to mount a comeback. Freiburg scored a late goal through Michael Gregoritsch, but Szoboszlai scored again from the spot in injury time for a dominant win. Promoted to the first-division for the first time in 2016, Leipzig have now appeared in four of the past five German Cup finals. "We got smacked in the

face" Freiburg captain Christian Guenter told German TV network ZDF. "RB scored with every shot." Leipzig manager Marco Rose said "we scored some nice goals, had lots of speed, force and power."



"There's still a few weeks to go, we'll see how our form is at that time. We want to defend the cup." Asked by a journalist if Leipzig's first half made him "speechless", Freiburg manager Christian Streich said simply

"speechless? I'm not speechless when we lose a game." "Leipzig were better and deserved to win." In search of their first German Cup title, Streich named a defensive line-up, surprisingly omitting top scorer Vincenzo Grifo for France defender Kiliann Sildillia. Leipzig smashed in two goals in quick succession, prompting Streich to remove Sildillia for Grifo after just 18 minutes. The change failed to stop the rest, Leipzig making it three after 37 minutes when Olmo set up Szoboszlai to slot in his side's first. Nkunku, Leipzig's top scorer this season in the league with 13 goals, made it four in first-half injury time, again assisted by Olmo. Early in the second half, Gvardiol fouled Sallai with the goal beckoning, receiving a straight red in the process, meaning the Croatian will miss the June's final. Buoyed on by a passionate home crowd and with a numerical advantage, Freiburg pushed for an unlikely comeback but could only muster a Gregoritsch header with 15 minutes remaining. Leipzig won a penalty deep into injury time and Szoboszlai scored from the spot to seal a dominant win for the visitors. – Agencies

Briefs

Fire kills 8 in Czech city of Brno

PRAGUE: Eight people have died in a fire in the second largest city in the Czech Republic, according to police. The fire broke out on Thursday in Brno, located 200km (125 miles) southeast of Prague. The victims are yet to be identified. Police suggested those who died were likely unroofed people occupying construction containers in a new neighbourhood that is expected to be built in the coming years. The fire engulfed about 12 containers on the edge of an apartment complex before being extinguished early on Thursday, Czech TV reported. Rescue workers said they did not find any injured people. Police and firefighters are investigating the cause of the blaze, which could take weeks, they said. "There was no one at the scene we could have helped," said a spokeswoman for the rescue services. Footage from the scene showed metal bars had been attached to the windows, which prevented escape. Marketa Vankova, Brno's mayor, called the incident "a big human tragedy" and thanked the firefighters who spent several hours fighting the blaze. "I am very sorry for everyone who died in the tragic fire in Brno tonight," Prime Minister Petr Fiala said on Twitter. In 2020, a fire in an apartment building in Bohumin killed 11 people. Another fire in an abandoned building often used by unroofed people in Prague killed nine people in 2010.—Agencies

Denmark to boost military spending

COPENHAGEN: Denmark's centrist government wants to spend 38 billion kroner (\$5.6 billion) over the next decade to modernize military facilities, renovate shabby and dilapidated buildings, increase the number of soldiers and upgrade outdated computer systems. Acting Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen called it "a very serious situation" and said Thursday that previous governments and senior defense officials haven't prioritized spending money on such facilities. "Are all responsible for the fact that we have ended up in this situation," he said. "For many years, the security policy situation has worn down the armed forces," Lund Poulsen said. "We are now facing with a major task of restoring the foundation of the armed forces before we build on top of it." "We lack soldiers and many buildings are not up to date, or are dilapidated. The same applies for part of our equipment and the computer systems," Gen. Flemming Lentner, head of NATO-member Denmark's armed forces, told the news conference. An army base north of Copenhagen has problems with mold and a lack of maintenance. Heating in the offices doesn't work and sometimes there is no hot water for showers, or very low water pressure, broadcaster TV2 reported. Oliver Hansen, a spokesman for conscripted soldiers, told TV2 that soldiers must be able to withstand difficult conditions in the field but "not in the barracks."

ECB raises interest rates

BRUSSELS: The European Central Bank has slowed the pace of its interest rate increases, stepping back like the US Federal Reserve from a string of jumbo hikes aimed at snuffing out inflation. The ECB's quarter-point hike Thursday follows evidence that its efforts are working by making mortgages and business loans harder to get. The decision comes a day after the Fed approved a quarter-point increase and hinted that it may have reached the end of its hiking cycle. But the central bank for the 20 countries that use the euro currency started later and may still have further to go even as economic growth slows to a crawl and U.S. bank instability stirs new fears of financial turmoil. Market observers are waiting for ECB President Christine Lagarde's news conference for clues about the bank's future steps, especially with inflation still high at 7 per cent.—Agencies

Israel raids Nablus, kills three Palestinians over settler attack

The Israeli army said an assailant stabbed a soldier, who was "lightly injured" and taken to hospital for treatment. The attacker was "neutralised", it added. The Israeli army and settlers have killed at least 107 Palestinians, 20 of them children, so far in 2023, according to the Palestinian health ministry

FOREIGN DESK

OCCUPIED WEST BANK: The Israeli army has killed at least three Palestinian fighters and wounded four others while firing live ammunition during a raid in Nablus in the northern occupied West Bank, according to Palestinian officials. The Israeli army and intelligence service said in a statement that the men were behind an attack on April 7 north of Jericho that killed two British-Israeli sisters when gunmen opened fire on their vehicle. Their mother also later died of her wounds. Hamas, the Palestinian group governing the besieged Gaza Strip, said

the three men who were killed on Thursday – identified as Hassan Qatnani, Moaz al-Masri and Ibrahim Jabr – were members of its armed wing. Hamas, in its statement, claimed responsibility for the attack near Jericho that killed Rina and Maia Dee, and their mother Lucy, residents of the illegal settlement of Efrat, south of Jerusalem. More than half a million Israelis live in some 200 settlements built on Palestinian land considered illegal under international laws. Hamas described the killings of its three members as an "assassination" of the "heroes of resistance in the city of Nablus". Israel raids Nablus, kills 3 Palestinians it says killed

settlers As the funerals of the three men were held, political factions in Nablus announced a general strike on Thursday in response to the raid. The Palestinian Red Crescent said four people were transferred to hospital for treatment and at least 150 people suffered tear gas inhalation, including schoolchildren. The raid followed an exchange of cross-border strikes between Israel and Gaza earlier in the week and more than a year of intensifying violence that has seen repeated Israeli raids in the West Bank as well as a series of attacks by Palestinians on Israelis. Locals in Nablus told Mediathat large numbers of Israeli forces, including

undercover units, raided the Old City as residents were starting the day. The soldiers surrounded one house and exchanged fire with the Palestinian fighters inside, they said. "So many men from the city have been killed," a man who identified himself only as Kareem for fear of reprisals told The Associated Press news agency. "We are used to these raids. That's the story of life in Nablus." "We've heard chants of defiance at the funerals and vows to retaliate," she said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that those who harm Israelis are eventually reached. "It doesn't matter where

you try to hide – we will find you," he said. Palestinian hunger striker Khader Adnan dies in Israeli prison Separately on Thursday, Israeli soldiers shot dead a 26-year-old Palestinian woman in an alleged stabbing attack in nearby Huwara. Iman Odeh, 26, was "killed by a bullet to the chest fired by the occupation soldiers in Huwara, south of Nablus," a statement by the Palestinian health ministry said. The Israeli army said an assailant stabbed a soldier, who was "lightly injured" and taken to hospital for treatment. The attacker was "neutralised", it added. The Israeli army and settlers have killed at least 107 Palestinians, 20 of them

children, so far in 2023, according to the Palestinian health ministry. The figure also includes 44-year-old Palestinian prisoner Khader Adnan, who died on Tuesday on the 87th day of a hunger strike against his repeated arbitrary detention. The death of Adnan, who was arrested on March 5 and was awaiting military trial, caused widespread anger and protests in the West Bank and led to rocket attacks on Israel by armed resistance groups in the besieged Gaza Strip. On Tuesday night, a 58-year-old Palestinian man, Hashel Mubarak, was killed in Israeli air attacks on the Gaza Strip, and five others were injured.

Syria's return to Arab League possible

RIYADH: The secretary-general of the Arab League said Syria's return to the organization is possible before its upcoming summit in Riyadh on May 19. Speaking to Egypt's El-Sharq TV on Wednesday, Aboul Gheit said "there is a specific legal context in the Arab League Charter for Syria's reinstatement into the Arab League. "It is within the right of a state or a group of states to request a discussion about the issue of Syria's readmission to its position in the Arab League, particularly since Syria was not expelled from the League, but rather had its membership suspended," he said. Gheit added that only a "major event" could lead to the delay of Syria's return to the League, but did not elaborate any further. Syria was suspended from the 22-state League in 2011 over the regime's crackdown on protests, which led to a civil war. But several Arab capitals have mended ties with Damascus in recent years.—APP

Severe flooding in Italy kills 2

MILAN: A day and a half of nonstop rain has caused flooding in Italy's populous Emilia-Romagna region, leaving at least two people dead as riverbeds left dry by drought overflowed their banks. One person was swept away by floodwaters while riding a bicycle in the Ravenna province, and another died near Imola when a residence was hit by a flood-triggered landslide. Another person was missing. The intense rainfall comes as Italy faces a second year of drought, which has depleted its largest river, the Po. The river supports agriculture in the vast Po River Valley before emptying into the Adriatic Sea east of Bologna in Emilia-Romagna. The severe rainfall raised the level of the Po, by 1.5 meters (nearly 60 inches) in 24 hours and smaller rivers in Emilia-Romagna overflowed their banks, causing damage to property and agriculture. About 450 people were evacuated from their homes. The Coldiretti agricultural lobby said the violent storms, far from bringing relief from the drought, had worsened the situation, as floodwaters damaged vineyards and olive groves. Lake Garda, which straddles the neighboring Lombardy and Veneto regions and is used as a basin for agriculture, remains near historic lows at 43% capacity.—APP

Medvedev calls for 'physical elimination' of Zelenskyy

MOSCOW: Russia's former president on Wednesday called for the "physical elimination" of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his administration, after a drone attack on the Kremlin residence earlier in the day. "It is not even needed to sign the act of unconditional surrender. (Adolf) Hitler, as you know, did not sign it either," Dmitry Medvedev also said in a statement on Telegram. Medvedev's comments came as Russia claimed earlier that Ukraine attempted to strike the Kremlin residence with two drones, which, it said, were shot down. "We view these actions as a planned terrorist attack and an assassination attempt targeting the President, carried out ahead of Victory Day and the May 9 Parade, where foreign guests are expected to be present, among others," it said. It added that Putin was not injured by the alleged attack and that the Russian side reserves "the right to take retaliatory measures where and when it deems appropriate." Zelenskyy and other Ukrainian officials have since denied Kyiv's involvement in the drone attack.—Agencies

Hungary hosts event to rally global far-right

BUDAPEST: By hosting the European version of CPAC, the leading conservative conference in the US, Hungary's aims to cement its role as leader in global far-right. For the second year running, Hungary will host the European version of the most prominent right-wing political event in the US, known as the Conservative Political Action Conference, or CPAC. Viktor Orbán, Hungary's right-wing prime minister, will host the two-day event that begins on Thursday. Invitees include a who's who of European right-wing firebrands, including Herbert Kickl from the Austrian Freedom Party and Andrej Babiš from the Czech Republic. US right-wing celebrities, such as recently-ousted Fox News host Tucker Carlson, will appear via video messages. "The CPAC event highlights that Hungary has a significant soft power influence in ultra-conservative circles in the Western world and perhaps beyond it, too," explains Péter Krekó, the director of Political Capital institute

and a senior fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis. "Orbán has clearly become a symbol of the conservative Zeitgeist," he tells Euronews. The official agenda lists panels such as "No Woke Zone" and "Make Kids Not War", suggesting that anti-liberal and traditionalist talking points often parroted by right-wing and far-right groups will be discussed. Although Orbán has portrayed this event as a sign of Hungary's increasing influence on the global stage, most of the speakers at the conference have recently been voted out of power or, in the case of Carlson, had their platforms taken away. "If we look at the participant list of the conference, most of the people who happily refer to Hungarian policies as an example for their countries are being marched out of mainstream politics," said Krekó. "This is also true for Hungary itself, as it is facing increased marginalisation and isolation within the

alliance systems that it is a part of, such as the EU and NATO." Although Hungary is definitely inspiring conservatives around the world, Krekó says that "its real diplomatic influence lags behind". The hard stance Orbán has taken on immigration and LGBTQ issues, as well as his rejection of liberal pluralism, has garnered the admiration of some segments of the American right. Last year, Orbán called Hungary "the bastion of conservative Christian values in Europe," and urged US conservatives to defeat "the dominance of progressive liberals in public life" like he had done in Hungary. "It is clear that some of the invitees are big names on the American ultraconservative right, which at this point is basically the mainstream of the US Republican party," remarks Krekó. The event reflects an intensification of ties between the American right wing and Orbán's autocratic government. Some US commentators

have warned of antidemocratic tactics being adopted by American conservatives due to their burgeoning alliance with Orbán. With his fourth consecutive term in office, Orbán has prompted a backlash in the European Union for taking control of Hungary's media and democratic institutions. "The key takeaway is that Orbán is fostering and encouraging those, such as Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, who have recently turned away from supporting the current US government, as well as those who criticize the EU and are growing closer to Russia," Krekó continues. The EU has attempted to curtail Orbán's illiberal tendencies by withholding billions in funding from his government and conditioning its release on the implementation of anti-corruption and rule-of-law reforms. The bloc hopes this will bring Hungary back into the fold of more moderate European democracies.—DNA

F-16 shipment to Taiwan delayed

WASHINGTON: Delivery of 66 F-16V fighter jets from the US to Taiwan has been delayed due to pandemic-related production and supply-chain problems, the island's defense minister, Chiu Kuo-cheng, said on Thursday. The first batch of jets was supposed to be delivered in the fourth quarter of this year, but has been pushed to the third quarter of 2024. Chiu said authorities asked the US to "make up the deficiency," and were working with the de facto US embassy in Taipei and using other diplomatic channels. "We are minimizing the damage," the minister said, adding that the full order was still expected to be delivered before 2026. The Focus Taiwan news outlet quoted Chiu as saying that the \$8 billion contract signed in 2019 did not include financial penalties for late delivery and that the US promised to provide spare parts ahead of schedule. The new shipments would bring Taiwan's F-16 fleet to more than 200 aircraft, making it the largest in Asia, according to Reuters. Taipei is working to upgrade its aircraft in response to the heightened tensions with mainland China, with Beijing and Washington accusing each other of dangerous escalation in the Taiwan Strait and the larger Asia-Pacific. The Taiwanese Defense Ministry said on Thursday that 16 People's Liberation Army jets and nine warships were detected close to the island's coasts. Beijing held large-scale military drills around Taiwan last month following the visit of the island's president, Tsai Ing-wen, to the US. Beijing considers the island, which has been ruled by a separate government since the late 1940s, its territory and strongly opposes foreign contacts with the Taipei authorities. The US formally upholds the One-China policy by refraining from officially recognizing Taiwan as an independent state but has sold weapons to the island and promised to defend it from a potential attack from the mainland. Last year, Taiwan complained that deliveries of M109A6 Paladin self-propelled howitzers were delayed due to the pandemic. Taipei also raised concerns that shipments of Stinger air-defense missile systems could be held up because of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. In April, a group of US legislators that visited Taiwan urged the White House to speed up delivery of \$21 billion worth of backlogged weapon sales promised to Taipei.

Voting begins in local polls across England

LONDON: Seven out of 10 people in England are heading to polls to vote on Thursday in local elections for more than two-thirds of English councils. More than 8,000 seats are being contested at 230 councils across England, excluding London and some western regions, as they were held in 2022. All adults aged 18 and over, and who are British citizens, resident EU citizens, or "qualifying Commonwealth citizens," can vote in local elections. Under the Elections Act 2022 became effective, for the first time in England, people will have to show a photo ID to vote in person before they can cast their ballot. All seats will be contested in nine metropolitan boroughs, including the cities of Liverpool and Wolverhampton, 32 unitary authorities, with cities such as Nottingham, Derby, and York, as well as 105 district councils in much of the South East, East, and Midlands. Meanwhile, a third of seats will be contested in 14 unitary authorities, 23 metropolitan boroughs, and 47 district councils. After the May 2022 local elections, the Conservative Party held 37% of all council seats in England, down 2% from 2021, while the Labour Party won 31%, almost unchanged from the previous year.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Canadian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Leslie Scanlon along with Canadian delegation headed by Assistant Deputy Minister for Indo-Pacific posing for a photo.—DNA

Pak calls for implementation of UNSC's resolutions

NEW YORK: The pre-requisite for restoring trust in the international political and economic system is to secure compliance by the States which continue to violate the United Nations Charter's principles and the Security Council's resolutions, Pakistan's UN Ambassador Munir Akram said Wednesday. Speaking in the 15-member Council's debate on future-proofing trust to sustain peace, Ambassador Akram said that confidence among States has been eroded due to the violation of the Charter by powerful States and their allies and insufficient attention paid to implementing Council's resolutions. "Both the UN Charter and Security Council resolutions are cardinal pillars of international law and world order," the top Pakistani diplomat said, adding that compliance with them is binding and obligatory on member states. "This is the critical pre-requisite for restoring mutual trust among member states," <https://twitter.com/apccsocialmedia/status/1654005371768545281?s=20> During the high-level debate, more than 60 ministers, observ-

ers and representatives shared ideas on how the Council and wider United Nations system can strengthen their approaches to building trust for sustainable peace, particularly with respect to inclusion, normative frameworks, and use of data and technology. Delegates echoed calls for broader participation of civil society,

as well as strengthened collaboration with the Peace-building Commission and regional organizations, and highlighted the Secretary-General's forthcoming proposal for a New Agenda for Peace as guidance for effective action. In his remarks, Ambassador Akram attributed the erosion of trust in the international po-

litical and economic system to a toxic global security environment where States believe that equipping themselves for war is the best guarantee of preserving national security, sovereignty, and independence. "In Pakistan's view," he said, "trust among States has eroded primarily because the fundamental principles

of the Charter have been consistently violated by powerful States and their allies and because insufficient attention has been paid to securing the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council, as required under Article 25 of the UN Charter." The UN Secretary-General, the Pakistani envoy said, should prepare an annual review of situations on the Council's agenda where the Charter's principles are being violated and where the resolutions of the Council remain unimplemented. The Council can then utilize means available under the Charter to secure States' compliance. "This would be the best way to 'future-proof', and even to 'present-proof', international peace and security," he added. "Building international trust also entails addressing the root causes of conflict, including poverty, hunger, foreign occupation and oppression, denial of the right of the self-determination, injustice, human rights violations and climate impacts," Ambassador Akram said, adding that these are all conditions that should take center stage in the Secretary-General's agenda for peace.—DNA

Briefs

Posters appear in Srinagar praising COAS

DNA
ISLAMABAD: The posters appeared in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) praising Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir for reiterating Pakistan's firm stance in support of the Kashmiri people. The posters appeared days after the army chief, in a ceremony, reiterated a categorical stance on the issue of Kashmir and reaffirmed all-out support for Kashmiris' legitimate struggle. In the posters displayed at various locations in Srinagar, the people of Kashmir praised COAS for showing solidarity with the residents of IIOJK and to advance their cause of right to self-determination. "Thank you Pakistan Army Chief Syed Asim Munir. We are grateful to you for sticking to your national stand regarding the occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir and supporting Kashmiris," a poster said. "Thank you Pakistan Army Chief," said another poster.

'Ch Shujaat will remain PML-Q's president'

DNA
ISLAMABAD: While annulling the amendment to the constitution of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday declared that Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain will remain the president of the party. "The amendment to the party's constitution during the ECP's stay order is illegal," the ECP stated in its ruling and rejected Chaudhry Wajahat's plea to amend the party's charter. The election commission noted that the PML-Q's constitution allowed for the president to hold office for a term of three years and that Ch Shujaat had the right to amend the party's constitution. In reaction, PML-Q central information secretary Mustafa Malik said "Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain is the constitutional and legal president of the PML-Q."

Court grants interim bail to Elahi

DNA
LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore Thursday granted interim bail to former Punjab chief minister Pervaiz Elahi till May 11 next. The bail was granted to Pervaiz Elahi on the condition of submitting Rs50,000 worth of surety bonds in the case of resisting the police raid on his house and attacking policemen. ATC judge Ijaz Ahmed Butar conducted the hearing. Pervaiz Elahi appeared before the court in person. His lawyers filed a plea for granting interim bail to him.

China tourism rebounds above pre-pandemic

BEIJING: China's domestic tourism rebounded above pre-pandemic levels during the five-day May Day break. Tourists made 274m trips within the country during the holiday period, China's Ministry of Tourism says. That was almost 20% higher than in 2019, before the outbreak of Covid-19 triggered lockdowns across the country. Official figures also show that tourists spent \$21bn (£16.7bn) during the period, more than twice the amount seen the same time last year. "This can be seen as a turning point of China's tourism sector. The market performance has truly returned to its 2019 level," Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy told the official state news agency Xinhua. - Agencies

Moscow says US behind Kremlin drone attack

The US says Kremlin's spokesman is "lying" after he claimed the US guided Ukraine to carry out the alleged attack

KYIV: Russia said on Thursday that the United States was behind what it says was a drone attack on the Kremlin that aimed to kill President Vladimir Putin, while Moscow's forces fired more combat drones at Ukrainian cities including the capital Kyiv. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, speaking in The Hague after visiting the International Court of Justice (ICC), said that Putin must be brought to justice over the war and said Kyiv would work to create a new tribunal for this purpose. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov, without providing evidence, said Ukraine had acted on U.S. orders with the alleged drone attack on the Kremlin citadel in the early hours of Wednesday. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said Peskov was "just lying" and said the United States neither encouraged nor enabled Ukraine to strike outside its borders. He added it was still unclear what had

happened at the Kremlin. Kyiv has also denied involvement in incident, which followed a string of blasts over past week targeting freight trains and oil depots in western Russia and Russian-controlled Crimea. Moscow has blamed Ukraine for those attacks too. "Attempts to disown this (attack on the Kremlin), both in Kyiv and in Washington, are, of course, absolutely ridiculous. We know very well that decisions about such actions, about such terrorist attacks, are made not in Kyiv but in Washington," Peskov told reporters. Peskov said an urgent investigation was under way and that any response would be carefully considered and balanced. Separately, Russia's foreign ministry said the alleged drone attack "must not go unanswered" and that it showed Kyiv had no desire to end the 15-month old war at the negotiating table. Russia has increasingly accused the United States

of being a direct participant in the war, intent on inflicting a "strategic defeat" on Moscow. Washington denies this, saying it is arming Kyiv to defend itself and retake land illegally taken by Moscow. Earlier, Russia fired two dozen combat drones at Ukraine, hitting Kyiv for the third time in four days and also striking a university campus in the Black Sea city of Odesa, ahead of a major counteroffensive by Ukraine to recapture occupied land. There were no reports of any casualties. Kyiv's city administration said Russia had probably fired ballistic missiles as well as drones but that they had all been shot down. "The Russians attacked Kyiv using Shahed loitering munitions and missiles, likely the ballistic type," it said. Ballistic missiles are difficult to shoot down, and their downing could indicate Ukraine used sophisticated Western-sup-

plied air defence systems against them. In total, air defences shot down 18 of 24 "kamikaze" drones in the pre-dawn attack, officials said. Of 15 drones fired at Odesa, 12 were downed but three struck the university campus, the southern military command said. Shelling in the Donetsk region damaged a power station owned by electricity company DTEK Energo, but no casualties were reported, DTEK and the Energy Ministry said. The death toll from Russian shelling of Kherson and its environs in southern Ukraine on Wednesday rose to 23, regional governor Oleksandr Prokudin said. "The enemy's targets are the places where we live. Their targets are our lives, and the lives of our children," he said in an online video on Thursday, after a hypermarket, a railway station and residential buildings were hit. Russia denies targeting civilians in Ukraine. - Agencies

OIC condemns Israeli crimes in Nablus

DNA
JEDDAH: The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) condemned the horrific crime committed by the Israeli occupation forces in the city of Nablus, which resulted in the death of three martyrs and wounding of dozens of Palestinian citizens, and the recent Israeli military aggression on the Gaza Strip. The OIC considers these attacks an extension of the open Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. The OIC held Israel, the occupying power, fully responsible for the consequences of the continuation of its crimes that would increase tension and instability in the region.



ISLAMABAD: Mitsuhiro Wada, Ambassador of Japan called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at the Finance Division. - DNA

NIH confirms first mpox case in Karachi

The NIH added that the patient has been isolated, while contact tracing was underway. Meanwhile, Sindh Health Department Spokesperson Mehar Khursheed told media that the patient worked as a driver in Jeddah and flew back to Pakistan via Oman

ISLAMABAD: A few days after the federal health minister declared Pakistan "free of monkeypox", the National Institute of Health (NIH) said on Thursday that the third case of mpox in the country has been detected in Karachi. In a tweet today, the institute said that the case was reported from Karachi - the first in the city and Sindh - and had been confirmed by the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC). The patient is a young male who recently travelled abroad and was isolated after he showed symptoms of the virus at the Jinnah International Airport, it stated. The NIH added that the patient has been isolated, while contact tracing was underway. Meanwhile, Sindh Health Department Spokesperson Mehar Khursheed told media that the patient worked as a driver in Jeddah and flew back to Pakistan via Oman. A rare disease caused by the monkeypox virus, mpox symptoms are similar to but milder than smallpox symptoms. The disease spreads when someone is in close contact with an infected animal or person. It is a droplet infection and enters the body through broken skin, the respiratory tract or through the eyes, nose or mouth, as well as through shared items such as bedding or towels. Early signs of monkeypox include flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, trunk, lymphadenopathy and chickenpox-like rashes on the hands and face. According to the NIH, the first two cases of mpox in Pakistan were reported in Islamabad and the patients have now completely recovered. - DNA

Gold breaches Rs 225,000-mark for first time

DNA
KARACHI: The increase in international gold rates, coupled with Pakistan's ongoing economic turmoil, led to the precious metal's value reaching a fresh high in the country Thursday. According to data provided by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association (APSGJA), the rate of gold (24 carats) surged by Rs2,600 per tola and Rs2,229 per 10 grams to reach Rs225,300 and Rs193,158, respectively. The price of gold in the international market rose by \$29 to settle at \$2,044 per ounce. The gold rate has been on a steady uptrend in Pakistan, as economic fundamentals weakened, the rupee depreciated and inflation soared to record highs. During such times, people prefer to buy the yellow metal to protect themselves against inflation and currency depreciation. The rupee had fallen to an all-time low of Rs288.43 against the US dollar in the interbank market on April 11. While it has recovered since then, the US dollar continues to trade above Rs280. On Thursday, the rupee gained Re0.06 to close at Rs283.82 per dollar in the interbank market.

Top court to hear plea for simultaneous polls

ISLAMABAD: A three-member Supreme Court bench will hear a petition on Friday (today), requesting the top court to order that elections be held on the same day across the country. The bench will be headed by CJP Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar. The petition filed by a citizen, Sardar Kashif Khan, nominated the federal government, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), and major political parties as respondents. The petition states it would be "in the interests of justice and equity as well as fulfilment of the constitutional imperatives (and balancing of competing constitutional requirements) if the general elections of National Assembly and all four provincial assemblies were held together rather than in piecemeal". If elections across the country were held on the same day, they would be done under caretaker setups which would "ensure

that the general elections are carried out honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with law". "Having political governments in power in the provinces when general elections are being held for the National Assembly has the potential to adversely affect the National Assembly election more than in the inverse situation since provincial governments have operational control of all day-to-day affairs in the respective NA constituencies (other than those in ICT)," the petition added. Moreover, holding elections simultaneously would save billions of rupees and the expenses could be included in the budget for the upcoming year. The armed forces and police would also only be required once instead of multiple times, allowing them to devote more time to their principal duties, it stated. The move would free up law enforcement agencies to focus on improving the country's law and order situation instead. - DNA

Bushra Bibi sends notice to Maryam Nawaz

Bushra Bibi demanded a public apology from Maryam Nawaz within the next seven days to avoid any legal actions against her

DNA
LAHORE: Bushra Bibi, the wife of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, on Thursday sends legal notice to PML-N Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz for false and slanderous accusations of receiving 3 karats ring for signing a file; Gives seven days deadline for an apology

to avoid legal action Bushra Bibi demanded a public apology from Maryam Nawaz Sharif within the next seven days to avoid any legal actions against her. PTI Chairman Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi gave a reference to a speech made by Maryam Nawaz on May 01, 2023, in the legal notice. She also mentioned the transcript of the video clip of the PML-N Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz's address to the Labour Day convention in Lahore. A relevant video clip of Maryam Nawaz has also been attached. Bushra Bibi declared Maryam Nawaz Sharif's statement as a part of the vilification propaganda campaign aimed to harm, defame and denigrate her and her family with criminal objects to benefit the political opponents of her husband (Imran Khan).

IMF to discuss Pakistan's 2023 budget plans

"In all IMF programmes, authorities issue a letter of intent associated with last review outlining their policy intentions for the period after programme," said Nathan Porter, mission chief to Pakistan

MONITORING DESK
NEW YORK: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is preparing to discuss Pakistan's budget plans for the coming financial year, as part of a long-awaited bailout tranche from the lender for the cash-strapped nation, the IMF's Pakistan mission chief told media on Thursday. Negotiations over key budget targets such as the fiscal deficit are one of the last hurdles before the IMF approves a staff-level agreement to release \$1.1 billion in funding, which has been delayed for months, that is crucial for Pakistan to resolve an acute balance of payments crisis. A successful staff level agreement (SLA) for the 9th review, which has been pending since November, will unlock the \$1.1 billion tranche. The funding is a part of a \$6.5bn bailout package the IMF approved in 2019, which is due to end in June, prior to the budget. "In all IMF programmes, the authorities issue a letter of intent associated with the last review outlining their policy intentions for the period after the programme," said Nathan Porter, mission chief to Pakistan. Pakistan has been in economic turmoil for months with an acute balance of payments crisis while talks with the IMF to secure \$1.1bn tranche have not been successful. Inflation surged to a record 36.4 per cent in April from a

year earlier, driven mainly by skyrocketing food prices and rising energy costs. The finance ministry projected that inflation would remain in the range of 36-38pc mainly due to the rupee's depreciation and rising administered prices, which contributed to the increase in overall prices. Last month, IMF chief Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said the Fund hoped to complete its current programme with Pakistan successfully. "My hope is that with the goodwill of everyone, with the implementation of what has been already agreed by the Pakistani authorities, we can complete our current programme successfully," IMF Georgieva said at a news briefing in Washington. Responding to a question about IMF-Pakistan talks for the revival of the 2019 loan package, Georgieva said: "We have been working very hard with the authorities in Pakistan within the context of our current programme to make sure that Pakistan has the policy framework that makes it possible to avoid what you are talking about." The reporter who asked the question had hinted at the possibility of Pakistan's burgeoning debt becoming unsustainable. But Georgieva said the purpose of the IMF-Pakistan talks was to avoid getting to a point where the country's debt may become unsustainable. "We are not there yet and it's better not to get there," she said. The IMF and Pakistani officials, she said, were also discussing how to support Pakistan "in terms of providing financial assurances so we can complete the programme".

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