



# Islamabad POST

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**New Zealand PM favors country becoming republic**

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**Turkiye kills suspected IS leader in Syria**

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**Klopp risks sanction for referee rant**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Holding of general elections

# PDM, PTI huddle today to hammer out a 'solution'

The government then would like to get the economic emergency imposed and thus extend its tenure for another year



ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The senior leadership of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and the PTI shall meet tonight for what is generally perceived as the decisive round of talks. Both the stakeholders would try to hammer out a deal as to when the elections should take place. According to sources both sides hitherto remain stuck to their traditional stands. The PTI believes the incumbent government should announce general elections date before May 14 while the government is of the view the elections date may be announced after the budget. The PTI in this case proposed the government to present its budget in May and then call it a day. But frankly speaking the PTI leader-

ship does not want this government to present the budget for a variety of reasons. The PTI is of the view that the government may announce certain incentives in complete disregard to the ground economic realities. As a result of these incentives it would be simply impossible for the next government to continue with the incentives. Hence, the new government had to face people's wrath when it would withdraw those incentives. The PDM government is trying its best to drag the election date beyond September. In September the President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Aliv shall complete his term. Since the Presidential electoral college i.e the provincial assemblies and the Parliament is incomplete therefore the Chairman Senate shall act as the Acting President. The government then would like to

get the economic emergency imposed and thus extend its tenure for another year. Things were going as per the government wishes but then suddenly PTI dissolved the Punjab and KP assemblies, which somehow dented government plans of extending its tenure. It is still an achievable target though. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry said on Monday PML-N bigwigs Khawaja Asif and Ahsan Iqbal were sabotaging negotiations between the PDM-led government and the PTI. He said we had been under immense pressure to call off negotiations after the law-enforcement agencies raided PTI president Chaudhry Parvez Elahi's house but PTI chief Imran Khan asked us to continue the process. "The government said it had no link to the raid," he added. "The issue of the date for holding elections is very important", he said. He went on to say that the constitution needed to be amended to push elections in provinces (Punjab and KP) forward. "We sat with them at the negotiations upon SC's order," he added. On the other hand Federal minister Javed Latif claimed facilitation is being done to bring Imran Khan back as the prime minister. "Revelations were made at the lawyer's convention by President Supreme Court Bar Amanullah," the minister said while addressing a press conference in Lahore.

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## 8 terrorists including TTP top commander killed

Jabar Shah was one of the main commanders of the banned outfit

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A total of eight terrorists have been killed by security forces in two separate operations. Security forces have successfully carried out an operation in the Daraban area of Dera Ismail Khan, resulting in the killing of a prominent commander of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Jabar Shah, while two of his associates were injured. According to the details, Jabar Shah was one of the main commanders of TTP and was involved in multiple attacks on law enforcement agencies and polio teams. He was also found to be active in extorting money on behalf of the terrorist group. This marks the second consecutive success for the security forces in the area, following a similar operation that resulted in the killing of two other terrorists just a day prior. Separately, Security Forces conducted an intelligence based operation on reported presence of terrorists in general area Miran Shah, North Waziristan District.

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## Khan sets terms for polls

# Dissolve all assemblies before May 14

The PTI chief says the govt is making "excuses" that it has to present budget



ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has said that he is ready for simultaneous elections if the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) dissolves all assemblies before May 14 - the date Supreme Court has set for Punjab's polls. Khan's comments came on Monday as the PTI and the ruling alliance are set to hold a "final round" of talks today (Tuesday) over the election date on the instructions of the apex court, but top leaders from both sides have cast aspersions over the fruitfulness of the negotiations. The apex court has asked both sides to sit down and evolve a consensus for holding elections across the country simultaneously after the government refused to follow the top court's orders on releasing funds for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). "They [government] want to hold elections when they believe I will be out of their way. Their only aim is to take me out of the way," Khan - who was ousted as

## 'Kh Asif, Ahsan sabotaging negotiations'

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry said on Monday PML-N bigwigs Khawaja Asif and Ahsan Iqbal were sabotaging negotiations between the PDM-led government and the PTI. Speaking to a media, he said we had been under immense pressure to call off negotiations after the law-enforcement agencies raided PTI president Chaudhry Parvez Elahi's house but PTI chief Imran Khan asked us to continue the process. "The government said it had no link to the raid," he added. One faction of the PDM did not want negotiations to be held adding that the anti-negotiations faction would be enjoying Maryam Nawaz's support, he said. Mr Chaudhry said if they (the government) announced the

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## Briefs

### PM pays tribute to labours

WEB DESK

ISLAMABAD: Paying tributes to the working class on the occasion of International Labour Day, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday stressed the need to fulfil workers' rights by making them shareholders in the system of the global economy. "While we pay rich tributes to the working classes & celebrate their contributions today, the fact is that the disruption in global markets has led to a severe cost of living crisis," he said in a tweet. The prime minister said, with an increase in commodity prices, the working people found themselves under tremendous stress.

### Elahi to seek bail in two cases

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President and former Punjab chief minister Pervaiz Elahi has met his legal team and decided to seek bail in two cases, citing sources. Sources said that the legal team of Pervaiz Elahi decided to seek interim bail in two new cases. The legal team will approach the high court against the case lodged with the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) Gujranwala.

# SC must accept NA's decisions

Maryam accuses ex-CJP of using influence to bring Imran back in power SC office returns plea on assemblies restoration



DNA

LAHORE: Amid an impasse between the judiciary and the executive over the matter of early polls in Punjab, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz asserted Monday that the Supreme Court will have to accept parliament's decision on the matter. Addressing a workers' convention in Lahore to mark

ISLAMABAD, May 01 (dna): Supreme Court of Pakistan registrar's office has returned a plea seeking the restoration of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) assemblies. As per details, the registrar's office has raised objections and returned the plea seeking restoration of Punjab and KP assemblies. The plea was filed by a citizen named Rai Ishtiaq Ahmed in Supreme Court. The objection raised on the plea

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# UN holds crucial Afghan talks without Taliban

Taliban rejects any meeting without Afghan govt representation

CENTRELINE REPORT

DOHA: The Taliban has not been invited to a United Nations-organised conference on Afghanistan in Doha, with the Afghan group governing the South Asian country saying that the two-day meeting would be "ineffective" without its participation. Envoys from the United States, China and Russia, as well as major European aid donors and key neighbours such as Pakistan, are among the representatives from about 25 countries and groups called to the two days of closed-door talks by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in the Qatari capital on Monday. "Any meeting about Afghanistan without the participation of the Afghan government is ineffective and counterproductive," Abdul Qahar Balkhi, the Taliban foreign ministry spokesperson, told media.

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# MoS to attend meeting on Afghanistan

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Hina Rabbani Khar would attend the meeting of Special Envoys on Afghanistan being held from May 01 to 02, 2023 in Doha Qatar. The meeting is being held under the auspices of the United Nations, said a press release issued by the ministry of foreign affairs on Monday. Besides attending the meeting, the Minister of State would also hold bilateral

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## IGP KP inspects Swat's CTD building

PESHAWAR: Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan on Monday offered condolences to the family of martyred Sub-Inspector Abdullah and inspected the damaged police station of Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in Kabal at district Swat, which had been destroyed in twin explosions on April 25. He inspected the dilapidated building of CTD Police Station and assessed the damages. He directed the authorities concerned to rebuild the police station as soon as possible. Later, the IGP visited the house of martyred CTD's Sub Inspector Abdullah in Manglor area, where he met with the heirs of Shaheed Sub-Inspector and offered his condolence. He prayed to Allah Almighty for the rest of the departed soul in life hereafter and to grant the bereaved family members the courage to bear this loss with patience and fortitude.

Earlier, Akhtar Hayat Khan also visited Swat Police Station and reviewed the records of Hawalat Barracks and spoke with on-duty police officers and jawans. He directed them to remain vigilant and maintain security with professional exuberance. On this occasion, the IG encouraged the police jawans and listened to their problems. IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also laid a wreath at the police memorial.

## Umar Sarfaraz Cheema booked in Gujranwala

DNA

GUJRANWALA: A case has been registered against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and former Punjab governor Umar Sarfaraz Cheema at the Ghakhar police station, Gujranwala. The complainant woman, Mehwish, claimed in the First Information Report (FIR) that the accused tried to abduct her at the 'behest' of PTI leader Umar Sarfaraz Cheema and Tanveer Safdar. The complainant also alleged that the accused individuals, including Farooq, Qudoos, Sadiq, Zeshan, and others, destroyed her crops by force of arms. On the complaint of Mehwish, a case has been lodged in the Ghakhar police station, Gujranwala, while a police investigation is underway. Last week, another case has been registered against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President and Punjab chief minister (CM) Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi. According to details, Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) Gujranwala filed a case against PTI president citing a source report, in which the former Punjab CM has been accused of taking a bribe worth Rs2 billion for the contract of a development scheme. Haji Tariq, the owner of the contracting company, SDO Highway Gujarat and previously arrested Sohail Asghar Chaudhry have also been nominated in the case. The FIR stated that Pervaiz Elahi awarded the contract of constructing.



ISLAMABAD: Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, ex-deputy mayor Islamabad Syed Zeeshan Ali Naqvi presenting shield and cash prize to the winning team in javelin competition. —DNA

## ICCI to organize marathon in Capital

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that the Chamber wants to organize a marathon race in the Capital in collaboration with ICT Administration, DHO Islamabad and other organizations to create better health awareness among the youth in order to promote a healthy society. He said that the diplomatic community, retired persons and high government officials will also be invited in the marathon race to better highlight the importance of healthy activities for the society. He said this while addressing the inauguration of the Run & Ride bicycle event at F-9 Park, which was organized by DHO Islamabad in cooperation with ICT Administration, ICCI, UNICEF, WHO and others to create better awareness among the citi-

zens about the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Pakistan Pediatric Association Islamabad Head Prof. Ijaz A. Khan, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan Abdullah A. Fazil, SSP Traffic Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer, Representative of WHO and others were also present on the occasion. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that today's youth have become almost addicted to mobile phones and social media, due to which they are moving away from healthy activities. Resultantly, diabetes, blood pressure, heart and other diseases are on the rise in the society. He said that in order to get rid of these diseases and to promote a healthy society, healthy activities including walking, bicycle culture, sports & running activities should be promoted in society to protect people from diseases and enable them to play an active role in the development of the economy. He said that nowadays the rush of patients in hospitals

is increasing and due to the increase in population, it is becoming difficult for the government to establish more hospitals in cities and villages. Therefore, the best solution to all these problems is to encourage people towards a healthy lifestyle, which will reduce the number of patients and also reduce the burden on the country's resources. He also appreciated the role of the health workers who rendered valuable services to the public during the coronavirus and hoped that they will continue to serve the public with the same spirit in the future. Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon in his address paid tribute to the efforts of DHO Islamabad Dr. Zaeem Zia for organizing the run & ride event in collaboration with ICCI and other institutions because such activities are necessary for a healthy society. He also appreciated the proposal of ICCI to

organize a marathon race in Islamabad and assured that the ICT administration would cooperate with the Chamber in this event. DHO Islamabad Dr. Zaeem Zia in his address informed the participants about the aims and objectives of organizing the run & ride event and thanked ICCI, UNICEF, WHO and other partners for making the event successful. He also thanked Islamabad Police, Traffic Police and other participants for joining the event. Abdullah A. Fazil, Representative UNICEF Pakistan said that Pakistan did a great job with the Covid vaccines and we should replicate that effort with routine immunization as well. ICCI Senior Vice President Faad Waheed, former President & Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari, Babar Chaudhry, Nisar Mirza, Mohsin Malik and others were also present on the occasion.

## Muqam thanks friendly countries for evacuation of Pakistanis from Sudan

PESHAWAR: Adviser to Prime Minister for Political, Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture, Engr Amir Muqam Monday expressed gratitude to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey for helping its stranded citizens evacuated from Sudan port safely. "Safe evacuation of every Pakistani and bringing them home safely remains our top priority," the Adviser to Prime Minister said while talking to media at Islamabad International Airport, says a press release here. He said a team of our mission is working day and night to facilitate the stay of Pakistanis who are still in Sudan until their evacuation to Pakistan, adding that another special PIA flight carrying 93 Pakistani nationals from Port Sudan reached in Islamabad today (Monday). Adviser to Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs, Mr. Amir Muqam, and Federal Minis-

ter for Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development, Sajid Hussain Turi were present at the airport to greet and welcome the passengers. The government has also made arrangements for their accommodation, and meal and paid them to travel from one city to another, Engr Amir Muqam mentioned. He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif himself had been supervising the safe process of Pakistanis, adding, overseas Pakistanis have always proved themselves as an asset to Pakistan and their welfare is the top priority of the incumbent government. Talking to the media on the occasion, Sajid Hussain Turi said that out of twelve hundred Pakistanis living in Sudan, about 700 hundred have returned to Pakistan. On the direction of Prime Minister of Pakistan and under supervision of Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

in coordination of relevant stakeholders including Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis & HRD/OPF has started evacuation of Pakistanis stranded in Sudan. Earlier today, a PIA flight transported 93 Pakistanis who had been stranded in Sudan from Riyadh to Islamabad. The officials of Overseas Pakistanis Foundation and Civil Aviation Authority were present to receive the passengers and provide hospitality. The emerging situation in Sudan necessitated repatriation of around 1500 Pakistanis who were stranded in Sudan for their safe evacuated amid growing security concerns. Pakistan Mission, Khartoum has started evacuation of stranded Pakistanis from Khartoum to Port Sudan through Saudi naval vessels and Pakistan Airforce C130s and Airbus for their onward evacuation to Saudi Arabia and subsequently to Pakistan.—DNA

## About 850,000 workers sent abroad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Sajid Hussain Turi has said that about eight hundred and fifty thousand workers have been sent abroad over the last one year for better employment opportunities. Addressing an event at National Press Club in Islamabad on Monday in connection with the World Labor Day, he said we are also finalizing agreements with sixteen to eighteen countries for export of our manpower. He said we are doing future planning to ensure legal export of manpower. Sajid Hussain Turi said the government has also taken various steps for the welfare of the workers. He said we are planning to establish a University in the federal capital where free of cost education will be provided to the children of workers. He said we have also enhanced the death compensation.

## Labour Day observed in KP amid walks, rallies

PESHAWAR: The International Labour Day was observed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday amid rallies, seminars and demonstrations by the labourers and workers. The Day dawned with special prayers in mosques for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan. The political, religious parties, NGOs, labour and trade unions besides the civil society organizations and humans rights activists took out rallies and walks in all districts to highlight the significance of the Day. Seminars, workshops and symposiums were also held in major cities of KP. The Labour Day was also celebrated in seven merged tribal districts. The TV channels, radio stations aired special programs and newspapers published special features, columns and articles on International Labour Day. The political leaders and the province leaderships of various political parties in their messages, reaffirmed their resolve to continue work for the rights of the workers. Various political parties, labour unions of federal and provincial departments besides private stakeholders here on Monday organized separate rallies to mark the International Labour Day and paid tribute to the martyred workers of Chicago in 1886. Qaumi Watan Party's Provincial Chairman Sikanar Khan Sherpao led a rally which started from Khyber Road and culminated at Peshawar Press Club. Other federal and provincial departments and labour unions such as PWD Labour Union, Tajir Ittihad KP, NADRA, Railway Workers Union, PESCO, TESCO, and Rent-a-Car Association also organized separate rallies to mark the Day.

## RCCI to organize BUILD 2023 Expo to promote cost effective and energy efficient Techniques

RAWALPINDI: There is currently a shortage of more than ten million houses in Pakistan. Rising inflation, expensive building materials and transportation costs have affected the construction sector. The president of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Saqib Rafiq in a statement has said that building a home or office by saving energy and construction costs, now has become inevitable. Keeping in view the challenges faced by the construction industry, the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) is going to organize the third BUILD 2023 Expo in the third week of May. The Build Expo 2023 will be held on May 19th-21st 2023 at Topi Rakh Complex, Rawalpindi. He further informed that the exhibition will have stalls based on various products including Property, Builders Developers, Construction and allied industry related materials, ceramics, tiles, electric cables, interior, paint and hardware. He said that more than 40 allied industries are associated with the construction sector. Increasing employment opportunities will reduce unemployment in the country, he further added. Preparations for the expo are going on and stalls are being booked, there will also be a musical evening and a food court on the occasion of the Build Expo 2023, he added. A conference with panel discussions will also be held on the sidelines of the Expo to highlight the barriers to innovation and development in the industry.—DNA

## Warns Sindh govt

## Will reject census results if reservations not addressed

KARACHI: The Sindh government on Monday expressed concerns over the exclusion of certain parts of the province from the census where population growth rate is higher than a certain benchmark. The provincial government has warned that it will reject the results if its reservations are not addressed. Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal had directed all provincial governments to complete the field verification of the population and housing census by May 15 in areas where population growth is not in line with normal demographic trends. However, the Sindh government has objected to this decision, calling it arbitrary. Both a federal government ally and opposition party PTI have expressed their reservations over the census results. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has written a strongly-worded letter to Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, stating that the government will reject the census result if its reservations are not addressed. The CM stated that, "It is wrong to judge the population growth of all the districts/talukas against a single universal benchmark. If such a benchmark was universally applicable, [then] there would have been no need to conduct the census at all, as the population growth could have easily been calculated based on that benchmark." Pointing to this, the chief minister "strongly urged" that the census activity continues in all the districts of Sindh till "each and every household and individual is accurately counted". He also urged that "a certificate to that effect [be] provided by the Census District Officer as per the requirement.—DNA

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ISLAMABAD: Motorist on the way at Zero Point during heavy rain, in Federal Capital. —ONLINE

## 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
May 31/Brunei	Armed Forces Day



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Monal.....0334-5421812



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Turkish Airlines.....8494949
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Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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



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CMH.....5611111
MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
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## IPS study lays out governance and policy reforms: Study

The research report on the constraints and shortcomings of the power sector is particularly focused on identifying the factors contributing to the exponential increase in circular debt, which has now reached Rs4 trillion, and providing doable solutions

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: The power sector of Pakistan is a mess and requires comprehensive and swift governance and policy reforms. Some of these include development of business models to boost renewable energy; liberalization of the energy market through deregulation and privatization, renegotiations of generation tariffs for independent power producers, segregation and deregulation of the administrative and operational activities of the distribution companies leading towards public-private partnership, and implementation of accelerated reforms for modernization. These and several other viable policy options and practical solutions for the sustainable development of the sector were put forward in a wide-ranging study, titled 'Pitfalls in Power Sector of Pakistan: Accumulation of Circu-

lar Debt - Causes, Consequences, and Way Forward', conducted by Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) recently published on its website: <https://www.ips.org.pk/pitfalls-in-power-sector-of-pakistan-accumulation-of-circular-debt-causes-consequences-and-way-forward/>.

The research report on the constraints and shortcomings of the power sector is particularly focused on identifying the factors contributing to the exponential increase in circular debt, which has now reached Rs4 trillion, and providing doable solutions. The power sector has long been stilted by numerous issues that hamper not only sustainable development but also the efficient progression and strategic growth of this vital sector. As a result, Pakistan has been severely affected by the energy crisis, resulting in a negative impact on the overall economy. Among the factors contributing to the rise in circular debt are

dependence on expensive imported fuels, high generation costs from thermal sources, unfavorable rupee-to-dollar parity, poor governance and policy lapses, regulatory issues, inadequate recovery of distribution companies' revenues, financial sustainability issues, capacity charges, aging infrastructure, and line losses. The rise in circular debt requires regular tariff hikes to maintain proper cash flow for public and private entities and this affects the energy affordability of the consumers. Additionally, the vertically integrated market of Pakistan's power sector is partially monopolized, where state institutions play a dominant role. This structure results in non-existent competition between the entities. Currently, 78 IPPs are operating in Pakistan and are majorly based on imported fuel. The country's total installed capacity is 40,813 MW, excluding K-Electric. The peak de-

mand witnessed in the system during FY2021-22 was 28,253 MW. However, the transmission capacity of the electricity infrastructure has remained stagnant at 23,000 MW. On the other hand, transmission and distribution losses of the state-owned distribution companies in FY2021-22 amounted to over 17 percent as against the 13 percent target determined by NEPRA. So even with surplus electricity, the consumers face load shedding despite paying higher electricity rates because of obsolete and deficient transmission and distribution system. In this scenario, public-private partnership is the way forward to extricate the power sector from this quagmire. This also requires new investments in the transmission and distribution system and shift to the latest technology to reduce line losses. A major reason for the burden on consumers is the

obsolete and less efficient power transmission system; therefore, power transmission must be made an investment priority area, along with energy transition and digitization.

Commenting on the report, Chairman IPS Khalid Rahman emphasized the urgency for formulating a financing plan and investment policy by the government. He pointed out that investments oriented towards the transmission and distribution system along with digitization can address the sector's inefficiencies and also help in rationalizing power tariff, one of the highest in the region. He also underlined the dire requirement of public-private partnership to boost the sector. Addressing the issues highlighted in the report will require significant reforms, investment, and policy changes, but ultimately it will make the power sector more sustainable, efficient, and accessible for the people.

## Report on the collapse of Pakistan in 2024 worrying

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Monday said the report of the reputed British publication The Economist that Pakistan will go bankrupt at the beginning of 2024 is very worrying.

This report sheds light on the state of affairs in Pakistan and the perception of Islamabad in the West, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the analysis of The Economist is considered very important globally. The organization has published a 43-page report on Pakistan which is enough to open the eyes of everyone including politicians, judiciary and elites.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the report states that protests over inflation and scarcity of basic necessities of life will continue while political instability will also last. The report also states that the intervention in the policy-making process will continue while the government will continue its efforts to obtain loans from various sources. The government will also increase the price of gas and electricity to increase its revenue. The income of the government will be low and the deficit will be high, while it will also have to spend heavily on the rehabilitation of the flood victims, he said.

According to The Economist, inflation will not go away, and the central bank will have to hike interest rates at least twice, which will break all previous records. The economic and strategic partnership between China and Pakistan will continue, but the loans from China will decrease. China will also ask Pakistan to start a new IMF program to avoid financial insolvency.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: First Lady Begum Samina Alvi, Mrs. Aziz Boolani and others witnessing Polo Cup final.—DNA

## Dastarkhwan on Labor Day

ISLAMABAD: A Social and Welfare Organization Acts of Kindness has arranged Dastarkhwan in Peshawar Mor near Chaman Metro Station here on Monday to serve the labourers with quality food on the occasion of International Labor Day being observed today (Monday). Hundreds of homeless daily wage labourers joined the Dastarkhwan by eating a lavish lunch, said a news release. The majority of students working voluntarily through the organization since 2016 to provide marvellous and delicious food to the daily wagers. Acts of Kindness organization also arranged a solidarity walk to highlight the struggle and problems confronted by the labourers in Pakistan.—APP

## Over 947,000 children to be inoculated against Polio from May 15

RAWALPINDI: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of District Health Authority Dr Saadat Ali Khan has said that a week-long Anti-Polio drive will commence in the entire district on May 15. The CEO told APP that 3,723 teams, including 3,272 mobile teams, 289 fixed points, 214 Union council medical officers and 765 area in charges, would vaccinate polio drops to over 947,000 children under five years of age during the campaign from May 15 to 21. He informed that drops would also be administered at 162 transit points while teams would be deputed at toll plazas

so that no child could miss immunization. Meanwhile, Commissioner Rawalpindi Laiqat Ali Chhatta directed the official concerned to improve the anti-Polio micro plan devised during the previous campaign. He said that the crippling disease was a national problem and that it was everyone's responsibility to play an influential role in the release of polio in the country.

The Commissioner warned the officials that strict action would be taken against those responsible for fake entries. Laiqat said hiding facts was not a solution to any problem, but it complicat-

ed the issue. He informed that no polio sample has tested positive this year; however, he urged more devotion during the campaign. The Commissioner directed the officials to remain present in the field and ensure no kids could miss immunization. Laiqat further directed to cover the missing and refusal cases by convincing the parents with the help of local community leaders and achieving the target set for the drive. He added that purpose of frequently launching campaigns was to protect children through protective drops and increase their immunity.

## IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD, May 01 (APP):Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Monday issued a power suspension programme for Tuesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Chahan, Chontra, Rajar, Chakri, SPD, SPF, Kahota City.II, Hanif Shaheed, Army Flats, RA Bazar, Islamabad Feed Mill, Jhata Hatial, Bisali, Pind Jatla, Lab.II, Lab.I, Reliance Weaving Mill, Industrial, Bhal, Jarrar Comp Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle Kayani Road, Westridge Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Basharat, CS Shah, Tharpal Feeders and surrounding areas.—APP

## No further monkeypox case reported in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD:The National Institute of Health (NIH) expert on Monday has confirmed that no further monkeypox case was detected in country as all the national and provincial health authorities had been advised to remain on high alert for any suspected case of this virus.Focal Person NIH Dr Muhammad Suleman talking to a Private news channel said that the Centre for Disease Control, NIH was strictly monitoring the situation and would keep the stakeholders updated. He said that screening of all incoming passengers are being ensured particularly passengers coming from African countries. As monkeypox cases were rising globally, Pakistani government has issued a standard operating procedure to conduct surveillance to local authorities at all entry points to the country that included all international airports, seaports, and land border crossings, he mentioned. He further said that the two patients who were admitted in PIMS hospital are now completely stable and recovered from the infection, adding, there is no need to panic. Replying to a question, he explained the virus is not much severe like chickenpox and coronavirus, adding, Monkeypox is a zoonotic disease that can spread from animals to humans and also between people coming from infected countries, he said. The symptoms of monkeypox include fever, intense headache, muscle aches, back pain, low energy, swollen lymph nodes and a skin rash or lesions, he added. The virus spreads when someone is in close contact with an infected person, he said, adding, the virus can enter the body through broken skin, the respiratory tract or through the eyes, nose or mouth. To another question, he said timely detection, awareness and notification were important for prompt implementation of preventive measures and all public and private hospitals had been directed to ensure readiness for isolation and treatment.

## Mortein Partners with Pandamart

ISLAMABAD: Last Year Pakistan was hit with devastating floods, economic uncertainties, and a severe dengue outbreak, with over 76,000 recorded cases affecting millions of people. Given the lack of a dengue

vaccine, protection and prevention measures are crucial to combating the disease. Mortein, a leading brand of Reckitt, has taken on the mission of making Pakistan dengue-free. To achieve this goal, Mortein partnered with Pandamart to create a plan

for protecting citizens from vector-borne diseases. Fumigation drives were conducted in areas of Karachi that were particularly vulnerable to dengue-carrying mosquitoes. Educational literature was distributed to over thousands of families to raise aware-

ness of the disease and its prevention measures. People living in slums and underprivileged areas are more vulnerable to these vector-borne diseases due to bad living conditions and not following preventative measures.

Thus, Mortein wishes to protect these areas from mosquitoes, allowing the residents to live a life without the fear of fatal diseases. Additionally, standees were also placed in hotspots to further educate the public on prevention.—DNA

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## Briefs

## Sanjrani calls for fair labour practices on Labour Day

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani in his Labour Day message called for a culture of mutual respect, equality, and fair labour practices that recognize the dignity of all workers.

He expressed his heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the unsung heroes of the nation who substantially contributed to Pakistan's progress and development.

The Senate Chairman acknowledged the labour force's immense contributions and emphasized the need to ensure the protection of their rights and welfare.

## Union leader stresses for implementation of 'labour laws'

ISLAMABAD: Senior leader Capital Development Authority (CDA) Mazdoor Union, Chaudhry Muhammad Yaseen Monday has paid rich tributes to the labourers for their hard work and urged all government, non-government organizations (NGOs), trade unions and labour rights organizations to practically implement labour laws in the country. While talking to PTV news channel, on the occasion of World Labour Day Yaseen said that 1st May always reminds us of the sacrifices of the workers who laid down their lives while waging a relentless struggle for their rights. He regretted that despite labour' contribution towards economic prosperity, labourers were facing many issues like the unsafe working environment, unfair labour practices, poor wages, lack of job security, harassment of women at the workplace, long working hours and arbitrary dismissal. He said our labour force is the backbone of our economy and it is highly essential to take practical steps for the protection of their rights by strictly enforcing the labour laws to discourage unfair labour practices. He expressed hope that the federal and provincial governments would continue their endeavours to work for their welfare as well as to provide them with marketable skill sets. He also urged the workers of the country to be aware of their due rights, adding, for the first time in the country, the labour policy was issued and the rights of trade unions were introduced by Prime Minister Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto on February 10, 1972. Ch Yasin mentioned that Islamabad and Punjab governments had taken exemplary steps for the welfare and prosperity of the home-based women.—APP

## Punjab Council of Arts marks Intl Dance Day

A large number of people from showbiz, theater and television participated in the event, including Anjum Khabibi, Asma Butt, Afzal Latifi, Arshad Masood Minhas, Syed Salim Effendi, Sapna Shah, Suleiman Sunny, Saeed Anwar, Arshad Khan, Imran Rushdie, Liaquat Shah, Anjum Abbasi, Rahat Ahmed Khan and others

## DNA

RAWALPINDI: A colorful event was organized in Punjab Arts Council regarding the International Dance Day. Different types of traditional and modern dances were presented in the event. Naheed Manzoor and director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmed were the chief guests of the event regarding International Dance Day, while Saeed Anwar performed the duties of host. Chief guest Naheed Manzoor said that the purpose of celebrating the day is to promote different types of dances and to save the cultural capital of different nations.

Dance has been an important element of human cultures for centuries. Dance has its unique place in performing arts as well. In almost every culture of the world, dancing is done to express happiness. Dance is called the poetry of the



organs and it is said that the dancer tells the whole story with his movements and gestures during the dance.

Different types of dances are performed in Pakistan, among them classical and folk dances have a special place, while Balochi, Sin-

dhi and Punjabi Bhangra are also not second to none. Director Arts Council Waqar Ahmed said that folk dance has immense importance in Pakistan. All regions of the country have their own local dances that reflect the culture of those regions.

Dance is the tradition of Baba Bullay Shah, For five thousand years, we have witnessed dance with Moen Jo Daro's statue of the dancing girl. The Arts Council has always strived to promote the performing arts, and today's program is a link in that line,

he added. The audience enjoyed the performance of Dhol, classical, kathak, bhangra, simi, sufi dance and applauded the dance troupes heartily. A large number of people from showbiz, theater and television participated in the event, in-

cluding Anjum Khabibi, Asma Butt, Afzal Latifi, Arshad Masood Minhas, Syed Salim Effendi, Sapna Shah, Suleiman Sunny, Saeed Anwar, Arshad Khan, Imran Rushdie, Liaquat Shah, Anjum Abbasi, Rahat Ahmed Khan and others.

## PML-N to win elections 2023

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal Monday claimed that Pakistan Muslim League (N) will win the upcoming general elections 2023 with a thumping majority and Imran Khan's propaganda against party leadership would be failed from all fronts.

"People would never forgive those who had ruined the progressive country", he said while talking to a private news channel.

PTI chairman Imran Khan had committed political suicide and dissolved both the assemblies, he said, adding, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leadership was busy with politics of non-issues for which they will have to face embarrassment and insult. He maintained that incompetent PTI leadership will only cause harm to the country instead of resolving the public issues.

Imran Khan had built the PTI on lies, misrepresentations and false hopes, he further added.—APP

## Police arrest 6 for possessing illegal weapons

RAWALPINDI, May 01 (APP): Rawalpindi district police on the directives of Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi Capt Retd Muhammad Amir Khan conducted raids in different areas and netted six accused for possessing illegal weapons.

According to a police spokesman, Naseerabad, Airport, Rawat, and Kahuta police rounded up six accused namely Mubashir, Waleed, Shehryar, Amir Afzal, Irfan and Danish Khaliq and recovered four 30 bore pistols, a 12 bore rifle, and ammunition from their possession. The spokesman further informed that police in their ongoing operation against professional beggars rounded up 33 from different areas. The SSP said that strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against the lawbreakers and operations against aerial firing and illegal weapon holders would continue.—DNA

## 2nd Pak-Kazakhstan Alumni Forum Meeting Held

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: 1st May 2023 (COMSTECH): The 2nd meeting of Pak-Kazakhstan Alumni Forum held on Monday. The President of the Pak-Kazakhstan Alumni Forum Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH, warmly welcomed the participants of the 2nd Meeting of the Forum. The meeting was graced as guest of honor by the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Kazakhstan, H.E. Yerzhan Kistafin. Prof. Dr. Shahid Munir Chairman Punjab Higher Education Commission, Mr. Rao Khalid Honorary Consul General Kazakhstan, Prof. Dr. Robina Farooq Vice Chancellor Government College Women University Faisalabad, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Suleman Tahir Vice Chancellor of Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering & Information Technology Rahim Yar Khan, Mr. Faisal Manzoor Chairman Board

of Governors, University of Sialkot, Mr. Rehan Younis, President ISAT Gujranwala, Dr. Nadeem Bhatti, Vice Chancellor Leads University, Mr. Murtaza Noor, Advisor Linkages, COMSTECH and other senior academics participated in the meeting, along with over 70 Alumni from various universities of Kazakhstan. The President of the Forum, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, D. Sc. (Alfarabi Kazakh National University) stated that the Pak-Kazakhstan alumni forum is based on the shared mission to remain connected to the alma mater in Kazakhstan as well as to help furthering the cooperation between the two countries in the field of higher education and cultural exchanges and technological transfer. He praised the gift of excellent education that was given to the alumni by the Government and people of the Kazakhstan, which is at par to any European or North American education system. He said currently four universities of Kazakhstan are in top 500 of QS

university ranking. He mentioned that the alumni body of several hundred can serve as a bridge between the two countries and became a permanent ambassador of the beautiful country 'the Kazakhstan' in Pakistan. Prof. Choudhary proposed to the alumni forum to organize skill development events like workshops, conferences, and training courses both at technical and professional levels at Kazakhstan House. He also proposed that the Embassy of Kazakhstan with COMSTECH help in the mobility of the alumni to Kazakhstan for skill development courses, and organize joint education expo in Islamabad, Pakistan. The Ambassador of Kazakhstan, H.E. Yerzhan Kistafin welcomed the participants of the 2nd meeting of the Pak-Kazakhstan Alumni. He emphasized that the people of both countries, Pakistan and Kazakhstan, should be focused on special area, and of course education is an area that can help to develop and strengthen the ties between the two nations.

## MoIB issues notification for appointment of 8 NIRC members

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has issued a notification for the appointment of eight members of the National Industrial Relations Commission (NIRC), a gift from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to labourers on the occasion of International Labour Day being observed today (Monday). The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had issued an official notification in light of the approval of the Federal Cabinet, said a statement issued on Monday.

The eight persons appointed as members of NIRC included retired civil servant Syed Noorul Hasnain, retired district and session's judges Abdul Qayyum, Sohail Akram, Muhammad Zubair Khan and Shabbir Hussain Awan. Lawyers Mohammad Sirajul Islam Khan, Abdul Ghani and Manwar Hussain Turi are also among the appointed members of NIRC. The Cabinet had approved the appointments to these vacant posts on the summary of the Ministry of Information. These posts were vacant for past nine months and the commission has been established for the settlement of industrial disputes. The commission also registers workers' associations. In protecting the rights of workers and improving their conditions NIRC is an attached department of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. NIRC is established under Section 53 of the Industrial Relations Commission (IRA).

## PM directs admn to remain alert during rainy situation

He also asked National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and provincial management authorities to keep close monitoring of rains across the country

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed the federal and provincial departments to remain alert and use all resources to help the citizens during the current spell of rains across the country. He also asked National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and provincial management authorities to keep close monitoring of rains across the country. He said the federal departments should work in collaboration with the provincial governments and departments to cope with the situation. He said all the requirements should be fulfilled in the respective areas to ensure safety of the people. Wherever necessary, people should be shifted to safe areas immediately, PM Shehbaz said adding that the National Highway Authority (NHA) and

other relevant departments should monitor the inter-provincial national highways. The prime minister said effective arrangements should be made to ensure traffic flow and public convenience on Quetta-Karachi highway in Lasbela and Quetta-Sibi highway in Bolan. The people should be kept alert in affected areas and on various highways, Shehbaz Sharif added. He said safety of human lives and property was the top priority of the government, therefore all the civil service departments should remain vigilant and work with national vigor and responsibility. He also directed the people to follow precautionary measures in the situation of severe weather and cooperate with government institutions.—APP

## 2023 press freedom award conferred on Arshad Sharif

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF) has announced that the 2023 Press Freedom Award has been conferred on slain journalist Arshad Sharif. Arshad Sharif's experiences as a journalist in Pakistan were fraught with difficulties, including harassment and legal cases. His eventual decision to leave the country and subsequent murder in Kenya are a stark reminder of the dangers and challenges journalists face in Pakistan. Sharif's untimely death should serve as a wake-up call to both media professionals and institutions, as well as state authorities in Pakistan, of the grave risks

journalists face while performing their duties.

On World Press Freedom Day, PPF recognises and honours Sharif's contributions to freedom of expression." However, there remains little clarity on the circumstances of his departure from Pakistan, his eventual arrival in Kenya, and his murder on October 23, 2022. As we honour the life of the late journalist, we urge authorities to conduct credible investigations into his murder and ensure that justice is served on those who forced Sharif to flee from Pakistan. Initially, varying versions of his death came forward, with some reports claiming it was an accident and Kenyan media claiming it was a "mistaken




identity" case. However, in December, a fact-finding team (FFT) comprising officials of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the Intelligence Bureau determined that Sharif's death was a result of a "planned targeted assassination". The FFT report finds that the version of the Kenyan Police claiming the death to be a case of mistaken identity was "full of con-

traditions" and stated that the post-mortem indicates that the journalist had also been tortured. In April 2022, there were reports that Sharif was facing harassment by the FIA. While the FIA had denied responsibility for the arrest or harassment, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had ordered the agency to stop harassing Sharif and other journalists. Having fled the country, Sharif was still not safe. As Sharif's murder is investigated, we again call upon authorities to ascertain the factors that led to his departure from Pakistan and eventual arrival in Kenya. Sharif's ordeal is an alarming reminder of the lack of safety and the threats journalists face in Pakistan because of their work.

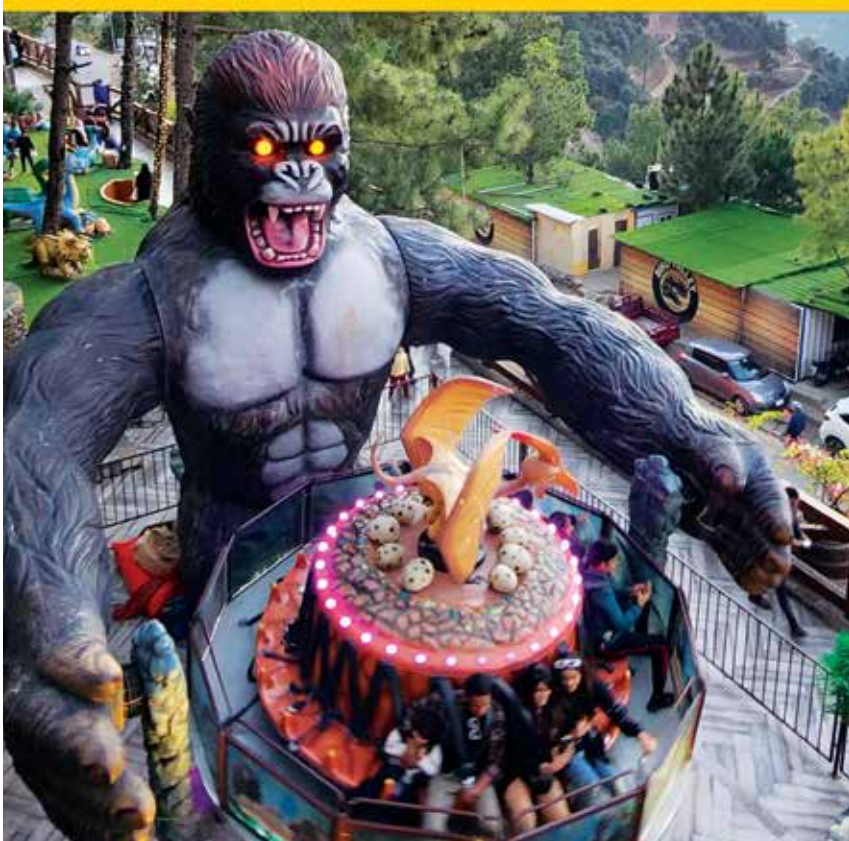
## NCHR demands India, Pakistan to free fishermen

ISLAMABAD: As part of its continuing effort for the return of foreign fishermen on the humanitarian ground, the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) has launched a campaign demanding the repatriation of such prisoners currently being held in prisons in India and Pakistan.

Under this campaign, the Commission aims to highlight the ordeal of those held in prison for accidentally crossing the maritime borders and national and international agreements applied to such prisoners, besides urging the governments of Pakistan and India to schedule talks to ensure the return of the detained fishermen. According to data collected by the Commission, there are an estimated 1,155 foreign prisoners in Pakistan, with a significant proportion being foreign fishermen who are arrested after trespassing into Pakistan's territorial waters. The vast majority of fishermen are from India and from Gujrat.—DNA



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## US-China chip wars: no winners

Rishi Sunak is readying a billion pounds to subsidise the UK's fledgling microchip industry. It sounds big. But the British government is merely reacting to US economic warfare against China. Behind the talk of "friendshoring" and resurgent industrial policy is a struggle to avoid collateral damage in the battle between China and the US for tech supremacy. The EU plans almost to match the US promise of \$52bn (£42bn) in chip subsidies. India is spending \$30bn (£25bn) on its semiconductor mission. Mr Sunak looks to be bringing a peashooter to a gunfight. But Britain does not have a complete end-to-end chip supply chain nor does it aspire to have one. Instead, it is following the slipstream of US power. Washington's strength is that almost all chip factories contain critical tools from US suppliers. The US has isolated Beijing with export control powers that ban transactions between foreign countries and China. Washington's legislative arsenal was first deployed against China's Huawei, whose products Britain has also decided to ban. Microchips are the lifeblood of an advanced economy. Covid saw shortages when working from home meant demand for computers shot up just as chip supply dried up. This was exacerbated when skirmishes between Beijing and Washington turned into a "zero-sum" war on Chinese chipmakers. President Joe Biden sees China's rise as a threat to the US. The US says it does not want to block China's modernisation – except in every area the foreign policy establishment thinks it should. Jake Sullivan, the US national security adviser, said last year that the US would stymie China's attempts to attain "foundational technologies" such as artificial intelligence – by cutting off access to the high-speed processing power required. Some wryly note that this is "Trumpism with a human face". China isn't sitting still. Beijing is spending \$220bn to become self-sufficient in microchips, with some success. Trade is a two-way street: Berlin denied it would enforce a ban on key chemical exports after the news hit shares in its top companies. James Cleverly, the UK foreign secretary, last week suggested that China's pride in its economic success might be shortlived. The US treasury secretary, Janet Yellen, said last month that "China's economic growth need not be incompatible with US economic leadership". In short, Beijing ought to nurture strategic industries that don't challenge the US's dominant role. This is about tech prowess – not different models of government – in a competition for power. But innovative development is tricky to predict. The risks of geopoliticising technology are that international cooperation in critical areas like clean energy and drug discovery will suffer – and the whole world will lose out.



## Growing persecution of minorities in India

India has many things going for it these days but the growing authoritarianism of prime minister Narendra Modi's rightwing Hindu nationalist government is not one of them. The economy has rebounded faster than most after the Covid-19 slump, according to the IMF and the World Bank. Annual GDP is projected to overtake Germany and Japan by 2027, making India the world's third largest economy after the US and China. UN figures published last week indicate India will become the planet's most populous country by June, with a population of 1.4286 billion compared with China's 1.4257 billion. The significance of this shift is geopolitical as well as economic. In a world dominated by great power rivalries and blocs, India stands out as an independent force in global affairs, drawing on a proud post-1947 history of non-alignment. Contrasted with the creaking economies, fading influence and ageing populations of western countries such as Britain, the former colonial power's future looks bright indeed. Yet all this potential is set at risk by Modi's divisive and destructive actions. He and his ruling Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) pose a fundamental threat to that other crucial pillar of Indian progress: democratic governance based on the rule of law, civil rights and freedom of speech. Evidence to support this contention is plentiful. For example, the continuing defamation proceedings against Rahul Gandhi, one of India's most prominent opposition leaders and a scion of its best-known political dynasty. Gandhi faces jail and the loss of his parliamentary seat after a court in Gujarat, where Modi long presided as chief minister, ruled against him. It is difficult not to view this case as politically motivated. Since winning national power in 2014, Modi and the BJP have pursued an accelerating, repressive and intimidatory campaign against opponents, independent media organisations, individual journalists, civil society groups and free speech in general. A recent target is the BBC, accused of harbouring a "colonial mindset" after it investigated Modi's links to a notorious 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat in which at least 1,000 people died. Modi's abandonment of the secular legacy of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, and his redefinition of India as a Hindu nation has intensified discrimination against minorities, especially Muslims. Schoolbooks are doctored to remove references to Mahatma Gandhi's opposition to Hindu nationalism and to pre-Raj (Muslim) Mughal rulers. Gross human rights abuses in Kashmir, the only Muslim-majority state, corruption allegations swirling around the Gautam Adani business empire and "state capture" by industrial conglomerates are other aspects of a growing democratic deficit. Yet the all-controlling Modi machine appears unstoppable. India will vote next year. Modi, the BJP, and their ugly brand of intolerant Hindu hyper-nationalism look set to win again. India's friends have a duty to speak up. The US and Britain, like other western democracies, have been too ready to overlook Modi's authoritarian trajectory as they seek his backing in their battles with Russia and China. This is short-sighted. They should be braver. Democracy in India is a global asset. Its loss would be a global tragedy.

## Population anxiety in Pakistan

Dr Luay Shabaneh



In the past, families wanted to have more children because of child mortality and the need for a workforce, and to have more fighters in a world made of a tribal system that linked all good values, such as courage, strength, decisiveness, etc, to men and the risks of failing, such as keeping honour and avoiding stigma and shame, to women. Therefore, we inherited from them the preference for boys over

Years ago, I asked my mother why she had nine kids, and she responded that her mother and mother-in-law kept telling her that it is the only way to avoid polygamy; some children and all husbands are disobedient. Twenty years later, my Pakistani Canadian friend, Saima, when she consulted me on the idea of freezing her eggs, argued that she could not afford to have a baby and pursue her education and career. Her income is insufficient to cover the expenses of a baby in Montreal or New York, and support is not made available either by her husband or through affordable babysitting and kindergarten services. Both Saima and my mother, with a two-decade gap between them, were pushed to take their reproductive decision by economic and societal social norm factors far from national or global population growth trends. We live in an almost polarised demographic world; population anxiety is at both poles of increasing and decreasing population. The common feature is that both are focused on the outcome (population size and fertility levels) away from the root causes and the dynamics through which reproductive decisions are made. In the past, families wanted to have more children because of child mortality and the need for a workforce, and to have more fighters in a world made of a tribal system that linked all good values, such as courage, strength, decisiveness, etc, to men and the risks of failing, such as keeping honour and avoiding stigma and shame, to women. Therefore, we inherited from them the preference for boys over girls. Governments with high population growth rates, including Pakistan, got anxious because of their inability to create enough jobs and provide decent education and health services to all and the security threats they might face with increasingly growing unemployed youth. Therefore, they direct their thinking around reducing fertility. While governments with declining populations got anxious about the future of the nation. For example, during an informal chat, an ambassador from an Eastern European country hinted at a sort of blame on UNFPA for advocating an increased dose of women's rights to the extent that some women have lost direction and forgotten their reproductive duty to

produce more babies for the nation's existence. Historically, governments failed to understand or accept the fact that people's reproductive decisions do not factor in the opinion of politicians, academics and experts regarding population growth – they have their own reasons for having more or fewer children. UNFPA launched the annual report on the State of World Population last week, identifying rising population anxiety and urging a radical rethink of how countries address changing demographics. The report notices that increasing population anxieties are widespread, and governments are increasingly adopting policies aimed at raising, lowering or maintaining fertility rates. But efforts to influence fertility rates are very often ineffective and can erode women's rights. The landmark report called for a radical rethink of how population numbers are framed, urging politicians and media to abandon overblown narratives about population booms and busts. Instead of asking how fast people are reproducing, leaders should ask whether individuals, especially women, are able to freely make their own reproductive choices – a question whose answer, too often, is no. Women's bodies should not be held captive to population targets, says UNFPA Executive Director Dr Natalia Kanem, adding, "To build thriving and inclusive societies, regardless of population size, we must radically rethink how we talk about and plan for population change." Family planning must not be used as a tool for achieving fertility targets; it is a tool for empowering individuals. Women and couples should be able to choose if, when and how many children they would like to have, free from the coercion of pundits and officials. Governments must first realise that deciding to have children is an individual and couple's decision, not a community or a public affair. Governments must realise that any attempt to intervene in this matter will face push-back from society for religious, cultural, liberal, political and many other reasons, and the outcome will be a distortion of the demography of society that leaves negative socio-economic multiplier effects. The proper approach is the human rights that promote the fact that getting

babies is an individual decision. Branding such decisions as good or bad is a bad idea; people should freely decide if they want to get babies and choose how many. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the dynamics in which families take decisions, and governments should do their best to ensure the right people make their own reproductive choices; women should not be pushed to get pregnant and not be forced to become infertile; they should take their decisions in the context of an approach of bodily integrity and autonomy. Governments also need to ensure that whatever the decision is, families are provided with all proper services, information and understanding to implement their own reproductive decision. Women are not accountable for the nation's problems; they are victims of social norms. Nobody should hold women accountable for population decline or increase. This matter is an outcome of the societal values shaped over years by the men-led State's organs, including media, supporting programmes, and the enabling environment to decide. In countries facing population decline like Singapore, Japan, Poland, Germany, etc, we observe the difficulties that women face to have babies without compromising their human capital gains as professionals and human beings whose lives are in accumulated development and progress. In those societies, babies can come once women feel that they do not have to choose to get pregnant or continue their progress in life; when they realise that having another baby will not distort their future and spoil their economic aspirations due to costly childcare, babysitting, education, recreation and getting a healthy child whose mother can continue her own progress. Making the best services, advocacy and information in which women and couples can make informed decisions is the most appropriate approach to address population anxiety. All other alternative attempts proved not to work very well. In a nutshell, enjoying reproductive rights is the key.

—The writer is the representative of UNFPA.

## No security sans food security

Qamar Bashir

Pakistan spent \$29.4 billion from 2016-17 to 2020-21 to import wheat, sugar, edible oil, pulses, and tea while begging the IMF for a staff level agreement to release US\$1 billion. If we had focused solely on agriculture, we could have saved the country from bankruptcy and default and made sovereign decisions without making our dignity, honor, and respect hostage to the IMF, which is making the lives of common people miserable due to hyperinflation and unprecedented price hikes. If we had optimally used Pakistan's agriculture assets, which are among the world's best, we could have exported the food we now import to bring progress and prosperity to the people. Pakistan has immense agriculture potential, vast area of arable land, with over 22 million hectares of cultivated land and an additional 8 million hectares of cultivable waste and barren land that can be brought under cultivation with proper irrigation and land management techniques, the world's largest contiguous irrigation system, covering over 16 million hectares of land, significant groundwater reserves, which, if managed sustainably, could support increased agricultural production, a range of agro-climatic zones that are suitable for growing a variety of crops, including rice, wheat, sugarcane, cotton, fruits, and vegetables, human capital which with proper training and education can play a vital role in increasing agricultural productivity and promoting sustainable agriculture practices and advancements in agricultural technology, including precision farming, genetically modified crops, and smart irrigation systems. Pakistan is one of the world's most water-stressed nations. According to the World Bank, Pakistan's per capita water availability is approximately 1,017 cubic meters per year, which is significantly lower than the global average of 7,453 cubic meters per year and substantially lower than India's per capita water availability of approximately 1,544 cubic meters and Bangladesh's per capita water availability of 2,308 cubic meters. This low water availability per capita is causing water scarcity and reducing agricultural output. It is essential to address the water crisis in order to ensure food security and economic growth in the country. Inadequate infrastructure and poor or nonexistent roads, particularly in rural areas, limit access to markets, which, coupled with inadequate storage facilities, make it difficult for farmers to transport and store agricultural produce, resulting in higher transportation costs and decreased profitability. Pakistan, according to the World Bank, has a total road network length of approximately 263,775 kilometers, of which only 25% are paved, whereas India has a total road network length of 5.9 million kilometers, of which approximately 60% are paved. Similarly, China has an extensive road network with a total length of approximately 5.5 million kilometers, of which approximately 85 percent are

paved. Inadequate research and development facilities are also a significant obstacle in the agriculture industry. The development of new seed varieties and improved farming practices is essential for enhancing agricultural productivity, but there is insufficient funding and support for such initiatives. Research and development (R&D) expenditures in Pakistan are relatively low compared to other countries in the region. According to World Bank data, Pakistan spent approximately 0.3% of its GDP on research and development in 2019, which is lower than the global average of 1.7% and lower than India's 0.7%, China's 2.2%, and Iran's 0.9%. Low R&D spending hinders the nation's ability to develop new technologies, enhance existing ones, and address critical issues such as climate change. There is a need to increase investment in science, technology, and innovation and to foster collaboration between universities, research institutions, and the private sector. Access to capital is limited for farmers, making it difficult for them to invest in modern farming practices and technology, especially small-scale farmers, who have relatively limited access to financing compared to farmers in other countries. According to a report by the State Bank of Pakistan, just over 9% of farmers in the country have access to formal credit, despite the fact that agriculture accounts for approximately 19% of Pakistan's GDP and employs approximately 42% of the country's labor force. This is significantly lower than neighboring countries such as India, where 34% of farmers have access to formal credit as of 2019 and Bangladesh, where approximately 45% of farmers have access to formal credit. In Pakistan, the scarcity of formal financial institutions in rural areas is one of the most significant obstacles to farmers' access to financing. Numerous farmers rely on informal sources of credit, such as moneylenders, who charge high interest rates, resulting in a debt cycle. The security situation in certain regions of Pakistan, particularly the border regions, is a major impediment to the optimal utilization of agriculture and food assets. The threat of terrorism and law and order issues can discourage agricultural investment and impede the sector's growth. Pakistan ranks fifth on the list of countries most affected by terrorism, according to the Global Terrorism Index 2020, behind Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria and India, which ranks lower than Pakistan on the Global Terrorism Index, at eighth place. Pakistan's food security is also threatened by soil erosion, salinity, and waterlogging, which affect crop yields and soil fertility and are exacerbated by poor land management practices such as overgrazing, deforestation, and division and redivision of land by inheritance. Population growth is putting enormous pressure on the country's resources, including land and water, which makes it difficult to achieve food security. Furthermore, the lack of modernization and technology adoption is hindering the nation's ability to increase yields and enhance food security. To

realize Pakistan's agricultural potential and ensure food security for its citizens, it is essential to address these obstacles, but climate change is one of the most formidable obstacles. Even in May, Islamabad is experiencing pleasant weather due to frequent and unusual rains and cloud bursts caused by climate change-induced variations in the weather system. Since 2006, when it received 962 mm of precipitation, Islamabad has experienced an annual increase in precipitation, which peaked in 2013 at 1998 mm. Islamabad also received a record-breaking 620 millimeters (24 inches) of rainfall in just 10 hours in 2021, the heaviest rainfall in Pakistan over the past 100 years, while the country received a record 1,763.9 millimeters during floods last year, the heaviest rainfall ever recorded. These changing weather patterns, variations in precipitation and temperatures, increased frequency and severity of tropical storms and coastal rains, glacial melt, glacial lake outburst flooding, sea level rise are causing desertification, droughts and forest fires resulting in loss of biodiversity, crop losses and threatening the food security throughout the world, but particularly for Pakistan, which is ill-equipped and under-resourced. Climate change has provided Pakistan, like many other nations, with opportunities to develop new crops and farming methods, develop more sustainable water management practices and technologies, such as rainwater harvesting and water-efficient irrigation systems, and invest in research and development to develop drought and flood-resistant crops, vegetables, fruits, and livestock to ensure sustained food security, which is threatened by a number of factors. Top of the list are the impacts of climate change, including floods, droughts, and unpredictable weather patterns, which have a negative impact on agriculture, the backbone of the country's economy; water scarcity, which has made Pakistan one of the world's most water-stressed countries, primarily due to poor water management practices; and upstream diversions of precious water resources by India and Afghanistan. In contrast to Pakistan, other countries affected by climate change are rapidly adopting crops and agricultural practices that are better adapted to the changing climate. Ethiopia has implemented a number of adaptation strategies, including the promotion of drought-resistant crops like sorghum and millet, soil and water conservation techniques, and improved irrigation systems. India has developed drought-resistant crops, including maize and millet, and invested in climate-resilient agriculture, such as rainwater harvesting, soil conservation, and crop diversification. Australia, a major agricultural producer threatened by droughts, wildfires, and heatwaves, has developed drought-resistant crops like chickpeas and lentils and invested in sustainable agricultural practices like conservation farming, which involves minimal tillage and the use of cover crops to reduce soil erosion and water loss. The Netherlands has invested in precision agriculture, which utilizes sensors and data analysis to optimize crop yields and

reduce water and fertilizer consumption. To enhance food security, Malawi has introduced a new drought-resistant maize variety, and Uganda has developed a new banana variety. Senegal has developed a new groundnut (peanut) variety that is drought- and disease-resistant. Bangladesh has developed a new flood-tolerant rice variety called "Swarna-Sub1" to improve food security, increase climate change resilience, and lessen the impact of environmental degradation on agriculture. The government and international organizations must continue to invest in the research and development of new crop varieties, as well as extension services, in order to assist farmers in adopting these new crops and practices in order to increase the yield of existing varieties and introduce new varieties of agri products by reinventing and creating efficient agriculture ecosystems. Wheat yield per acre can be increased from the current 25-40 tons per acre to 30-35 tons per acre and 65-78 tons per acre, as in India and the United States. Rice yield can be increased from 2,250 to 3,750 kilograms per hectare to 5,000 to 7,000 kilograms per hectare as in India, 7,500 to 9,000 kilograms per hectare as in China, and 7,000 to 9,000 kilograms per hectare as in the United States. The yield of maize can be increased from 2,000 to 2,800 kg per acre to 7,500 to 10,000 kg per acre, as in China, and 8,000 to 10,000 kg per acre, as in the United States. Pakistan: Cotton yield per acre can be increased from 400-500 kg per acre to 500-600 kg per acre, as in India, 1200-1400 kg per acre, as in China, and 1100-1200 kg per acre, as in the United States. Pakistan: The per-acre yield of pulses in Pakistan can be increased from 200-250 kg per acre to 300-400 kg per acre in India and 400-500 kg per acre in the United States. Similar to Spain, the yield of fruits and vegetables can be increased from approximately 15 to 20 tons per acre to 32 to 40 tons per acre. Pakistan could introduce numerous crops, fruits, and vegetables to adapt to climate change, such as quinoa (edible starchy seeds), a crop that is drought-resistant, highly nutritious, and can be grown in hot and dry conditions. Sweet potatoes and pomegranates that thrive in hot and dry climates. Okra is a vegetable that thrives in hot and dry conditions, dates are a good source of carbohydrates and thrive in hot and dry conditions. Moringa is a tree that thrives in hot and dry conditions; its leaves and pods are highly nutritious and can be used in a variety of dishes. However, introduction of new crops should be done with care, taking into account soil conditions, water availability, and market demand, as well as conducting research and testing to ensure that these new crops will be viable and sustainable in the local context. Food security is one of the most important aspects of a country's overall security challenges, it is undoubtedly an essential area that requires attention and action to ensure the well-being of the population and the country's long-term stability and growth.

—The writer is the Former Press Secretary to the President, Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former MD, SRBC

## Briefs

PDM, PTI  
huddle  
today to...

FROM PAGE 01

Latif, who is from the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), questioned why former Inter-Services Intelligence chief Faiz Hamid and ex-Supreme Court chief justice Asif Saeed Khosa did not respond to the allegations being made against them. Sharing his views on the ongoing negotiations between the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the senior politician maintained that negotiations aren't conducted with terrorists' wings. Latif belongs to the very faction of the PML N that does not negotiate to meet with success. This faction believes PML N will lose in case it agrees to PTI demand of holding of elections before September. Since this group dominates within the party therefore it is expected that the talks may not yield any results. It appears as if the matter would once again go to the Supreme Court, which would finally decide the matter as per the constitutional provisions.

There is no second opinion that the elections should take place on the same day. For this to happen the ruling alliance has to show flexibility. The political parties' inability to arrive at a decision may put the democratic order in danger.

UN holds  
crucial...

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Last week, the UN chief said the de facto Afghan rulers would not be invited to the meeting to discuss the dire humanitarian situation in the country and its international isolation. A UN source told media on Monday that Taliban recognition was not on the agenda.

His statement came after members of the Afghan diaspora and some Western countries expressed concerns against the possible recognition of the government of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, as the Taliban refers to the country, in the wake of a statement by UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed.

In an open letter on Sunday, a coalition of Afghan women's groups said they were "outraged" that any country would consider formal ties because of the record of the government that says its handling of women's rights is "an internal social issue".

MoS to  
attend...

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meetings with leaders of other participating countries. Chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, the meeting brings together major international and regional countries to discuss the ongoing situation in Afghanistan with a view towards constructive engagement. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs would present Pakistan's perspective vis-à-vis Afghanistan and work on building a consensus regarding the way forward with international and regional partners. Pakistan would continue to support all efforts to advance the shared objectives of a peaceful, stable, sovereign, prosperous and connected Afghanistan.

8 terrorists  
including...

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Resultantly, 7 x terrorists, including Terrorist Commander Mehtab alias Lala belonging to Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group, were successfully apprehended by security forces. The apprehended terrorists have been involved in numerous terrorist activities, especially target killings against security forces as well as innocent citizens, and were highly wanted by the security agencies. Locals of the area appreciated Security Forces' operation and assured of their support in eliminating the menace of terrorism.

## Glimpses of Serena Hotels Polo Final



ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels organized Polo Cup 2023 final match. A large number of diplomats, members of the civil society and the Polo lovers attended the event.—DNA

Uzbekistan approves reforms  
to strengthen president

## NEWS DESK

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan overwhelmingly approved constitutional changes that will allow President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to remain in power until 2040 in a tightly-controlled referendum slammed by international observers as flawed. According to preliminary results released Monday, the changes were approved by 90.21 percent of votes with a 84.54 percent turnout on Sunday.

But election observers from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) said the

vote lacked the participation of meaningful opposition and was not truly representative. Mirziyoyev, 65, became president in 2016 after the death of dictator Islam Karimov. His proposed reforms, when confirmed, could extend presidential terms from five to seven years, allowing Mirziyoyev to serve two more terms. "Uzbekistan's constitutional referendum was technically well prepared and widely promoted as a move to enhance various rights and freedoms, but it took place in an environment that fell short of genuine political pluralism and competition," an OSCE statement said.

Despite undertaking recent reforms, government critics and rights groups say Uzbekistan remains authoritarian. Mirziyoyev has insisted that the overhaul will improve governance and the quality of life. But he is set to benefit from the changes in the most. Neighbouring Kazakhstan was the first to congratulate the Uzbek leader, with President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev saying the result showed "trust" and "firm support from the Uzbek nation." Mirziyoyev has presented himself as Karimov's modern successor. He had served 13 years as a loyal prime minister under Karimov's brutal rule. He then won two elections, in

which international observers say he did not face real competition. Following Karimov's death, Mirziyoyev spearheaded a series of reforms, including a clampdown on forced labour in the country's cotton fields. After years of being cut off from the world under Karimov, Uzbekistan now wants to join the World Trade Organization. The constitutional changes also include a ban on capital punishment and the protection of human rights for what Mirziyoyev has called a "New Uzbekistan." But despite some economic progress and social improvements — such as the criminalisation of domestic violence.—DNA

## Klopp risks sanction for referee rant

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp could face disciplinary action after accusing the referee in Sunday's dramatic 4-3 win over Tottenham of bearing a grudge against his team. Portugal international Diogo Jota's stoppage-time strike sealed victory at Anfield, just 99 seconds after Spurs thought Richarlison's first Premier League goal for the club had rescued a point after the visitors had been 3-0 behind. Klopp, however, was so incensed by the officiating throughout the match that he charged down the touchline to celebrate wildly in front of fourth official John Brooks — and injured himself in the process. Klopp then lambasted referee Paul Tierney. "We have our history with Tierney, I really don't know what he has against us, he has said there is no problem but that cannot be true," Klopp told Sky Sports. "How he looks at me, I don't understand it. My celebration was unnecessary, but what he said to me when he gave me the yellow card is not OK." The German boss, asked what Tierney had said, replied: "I will not say anything about it. The refs don't say what is said so I don't say what is said." That did not stop Klopp from going on to reference Tierney's performance during Liverpool's 2-2 draw away to Spurs last season.—DNA

Medvedev squeezes  
past Shevchenko  
in Madrid

MADRID: World number three Daniil Medvedev edged out his friend and Russian compatriot Alexander Shevchenko 4-6, 6-1, 7-5 on Monday to reach the Madrid Open fourth round. The Russian duo enjoyed six years of online gaming sessions together before they eventually met last year, facing off against each other in the Spanish capital for the first time in a thrilling two hour 42 minute clash. Medvedev, who readily admits he struggles on clay, started slowly but showed his quality to win back-to-back matches in Madrid for the first time. Shevchenko, arriving in fine form, converted his third break point in the first game and then broke again on the way to a 4-0 lead. However the 22-year-old showed too much impatience in trying to clinch the first set and allowed second seed Medvedev to fight his way back in. Shevchenko passed up two set points at 5-2 and Medvedev broke and consolidated to turn up the pressure on the world number 96.—APP

Atletico put five past Valladolid  
to close on Real Madrid

MADRID: Atletico Madrid moved back within two points of second-placed Real Madrid in La Liga after surviving a Real Valladolid comeback in a 5-2 victory on Sunday. Goals from Nahuel Molina, Jose Maria Gimenez and Alvaro Morata had visitors Atletico 3-0 ahead inside 38 minutes. Valladolid hit back through a Cyle Larin penalty and Sergio Escudero's goal, but Atletico sealed victory thanks to Joaquin Fernandez's late own goal and

an injury-time strike from Memphis Depay. Atletico have little to play for in La Liga, sitting 13 points behind leaders Barcelona and 13 clear of fifth-placed Villarreal. But Diego Simeone's men are finishing the season strongly and aiming to take second from Real. They have won eight of their last nine league games, with the only blip a 1-0 loss at Barca. Earlier on Sunday, Valencia's bid to avoid slipping out of La Liga for the first

time since 1987 suffered another blow with a 2-1 loss at fellow strugglers Cadiz. Valencia are now only two points and one place above the drop zone, although Espanyol's 1-0 win over Getafe prevented the six-time Spanish champions from falling into the bottom three. Ruben Baraja's side are two points clear of both 18th-placed Espanyol and second-bottom Getafe in the relegation dogfight. Cadiz moved above Valencia with their win and sit four

points clear of danger. The visitors were sunk by two goals either side of half-time from Gonzalo Escalante and Sergio Guardiola for Cadiz. Samuel Lino pulled one back but Valencia failed to mount a comeback and now need a response against Villarreal in midweek. Villarreal gave their slim hopes of qualifying for the Champions League a boost with a 3-1 victory over Celta Vigo to move within five points of fourth-placed Real Sociedad.—Agencies

## PSG lead in Ligue 1 cut after defeat

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's lead at the top of Ligue 1 was cut to five points on Sunday after Achraf Hakimi was sent off in their 3-1 home defeat by Lorient and nearest rivals Marseille beat Auxerre 2-1. Mid-table Lorient were already ahead through Enzo Le Fee's early goal at the Parc des Princes before Hakimi was dismissed for a second yellow card inside the opening 20 minutes. Kylian Mbappe equalised for the home side in opportunistic fashion, pouncing to score after Lorient goalkeeper Yvon Mvogo had thrown the ball to the ground wrongly thinking the referee had blown for a free-kick. Yet Lorient deservedly

retook the lead before half-time when Darlin Yongwa converted from close range, and they made sure of the win late on when Bamba Dieng ran through unchallenged to score at the second attempt after Gianluigi Donnarumma had stopped his shot. The final whistle was met with loud cheers from the home support in a stadium where one end was closed as a punishment after fans let off flares during a recent defeat by Lyon. It was PSG's sixth Ligue 1 loss of 2023 and it allowed Marseille to close in, casting new doubt on the capital club's quest to win a French record 11th league title. Marseille came from behind to win at home to

Auxerre, with Cengiz Under's 75th-minute strike cancelling out Birama Toure's opener for their relegation-threatened opponents. Alexis Sanchez then clinched all three points for Marseille on 77 minutes with his 13th league goal this season. Third-placed Lens will move to within six points of PSG if they beat Toulouse away in midweek. "Our second half of the season has been very, very average. Too many players seem distracted," said PSG coach Christophe Galtier, who called Hakimi's second yellow card "really stupid". "Everyone in the dressing room is disappointed, and what I expect now is a reaction from everyone, from

the players, the staff and everyone who works for the club," Luis Campos, who is effectively PSG's sporting director in his role of football advisor, told broadcaster Canal Plus. "There must be a reaction and we have to win the title. I am sure we will do it but we need to make sure we don't lose our heads. We need to be conscious of the fact we can do better and must do better." PSG, who had Neymar watching in the stands as he continues his recovery from an ankle injury, had not lost a home league game while conceding three goals since October 2010. That was the final season before the Qatari takeover that transformed

the club. PSG's next four games are against Troyes, Ajaccio, Auxerre and Strasbourg, four clubs who are either in the relegation zone or fighting to avoid the drop. Marseille and Lens also play each other next weekend, and it remains highly unlikely that the Parisians might fail to retain their league crown. Monaco's hopes of qualifying for next season's Champions League were dealt a new blow in a comprehensive 4-0 home defeat against Montpellier. Arnaud Nordin scored twice for Montpellier, with Foutou Maouassa and English former Arsenal winger Steph Mavididi also on target. It was a second succes-

sive heavy defeat for Monaco, after they went down 3-0 at Lens last weekend. They remain fourth in the table, five points behind third-placed Lens. Only the top three in Ligue 1 qualify for the Champions League with the team in fourth going into the Europa League alongside the winners of the French Cup. Toulouse won the French Cup on Saturday with a crushing 5-1 win over holders Nantes in the final watched by over 78,000 at the Stade de France. Rennes, who are sixth, boosted their hopes of qualifying for Europe by beating bottom side Angers 4-2 on Sunday with Belgium's Jeremy Doku scoring twice.—APP

Dissolve all  
assemblies  
before...

FROM PAGE 01

the prime minister in April last year — said during an address to a rally in Lahore today. The PTI chief said the government is making "excuses" that it has to present the budget and that "they think that they can trap us in their ill-intentioned-plan". Khan added that if the government thinks that it can stall and the PTI will wait, then they are wrong. "We will move the court and demand elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)." The PTI chief said his party would put forth only one proposal in the meeting tomorrow: dissolve all assemblies — Sindh, Balochistan, and national — and head for polls before May 14. Since Khan's ouster, he has been on the streets protesting against the government for what he calls "injustice" as he blames the PDM for hatching a "conspiracy" to remove him from office. In an unusual move, Khan had Punjab and KP assemblies dissolved in January this year to force the government into holding elections across the country, but the PDM did not cave in, which led to further political turmoil, resulting in damage to the already fragile economy.

'Kh Asif,  
Ahsan...

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budget, it would add to the troubles of people. "70pc of negotiations stood successful as we want elections before the budget and they want it after the budget," he added. "The issue of date for holding elections is very important", he said.

He went on to say that constitution needed to be amended to push elections in provinces (Punjab and KP) forward. "We sat with them at the negotiations upon SC's order," he added. He said they (the PDM) used to say that the PTI did not want to sit with them at the negotiating table adding that they (the PTI) proved them wrong. "We want matters to settle but if they don't, it will be because of mischievous [members of the PDM]," he added.

SC must  
accept...

FROM PAGE 01

International Labour Day, Maryam, while referring to the Supreme Court's three-member bench hearing the Punjab polls delay case, said the nation is eagerly awaiting the top court's verdict. "You will have to accept the decision of the Parliament. If the Constitution of the country is supreme then parliament is also supreme," she remarked. Maryam was referring to the parliament's move to reject a money bill seeking funds for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to hold elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, despite the top court's order. Commenting on the case proceedings, Maryam said an honourable judge of the apex court raised questions over the PTI's move to dissolve the assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. She quoted the judge as saying that the reason for dissolving assemblies needed to be sorted out before deciding the case. "The senior judges of the Supreme Court raised their voice against the conspiracy," Maryam added. The ruling party leader said PTI wanted the elections in the country soon "otherwise, there will be no one to help them win the elections". Maryam said the PTI chief himself admitted that he dissolved the provincial legislatures on the advice of former army chief General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa.

SC office  
returns...

FROM PAGE 01

stated that the petitioner did not file the plea to the concerned forum despite their availability. The top court's registrar's office objected that the petitioner is not an aggrieved party in this petition. Furthermore, the use of Article 184(3) powers in this petition are not justified. Earlier, the Election Commission of Pakistan submitted a report to the Supreme Court regarding progress on the delivery of funds from the State Bank of Pakistan for the Punjab elections.

## Briefs

## APHC lauds morale-boosting statement of COAS

DNA

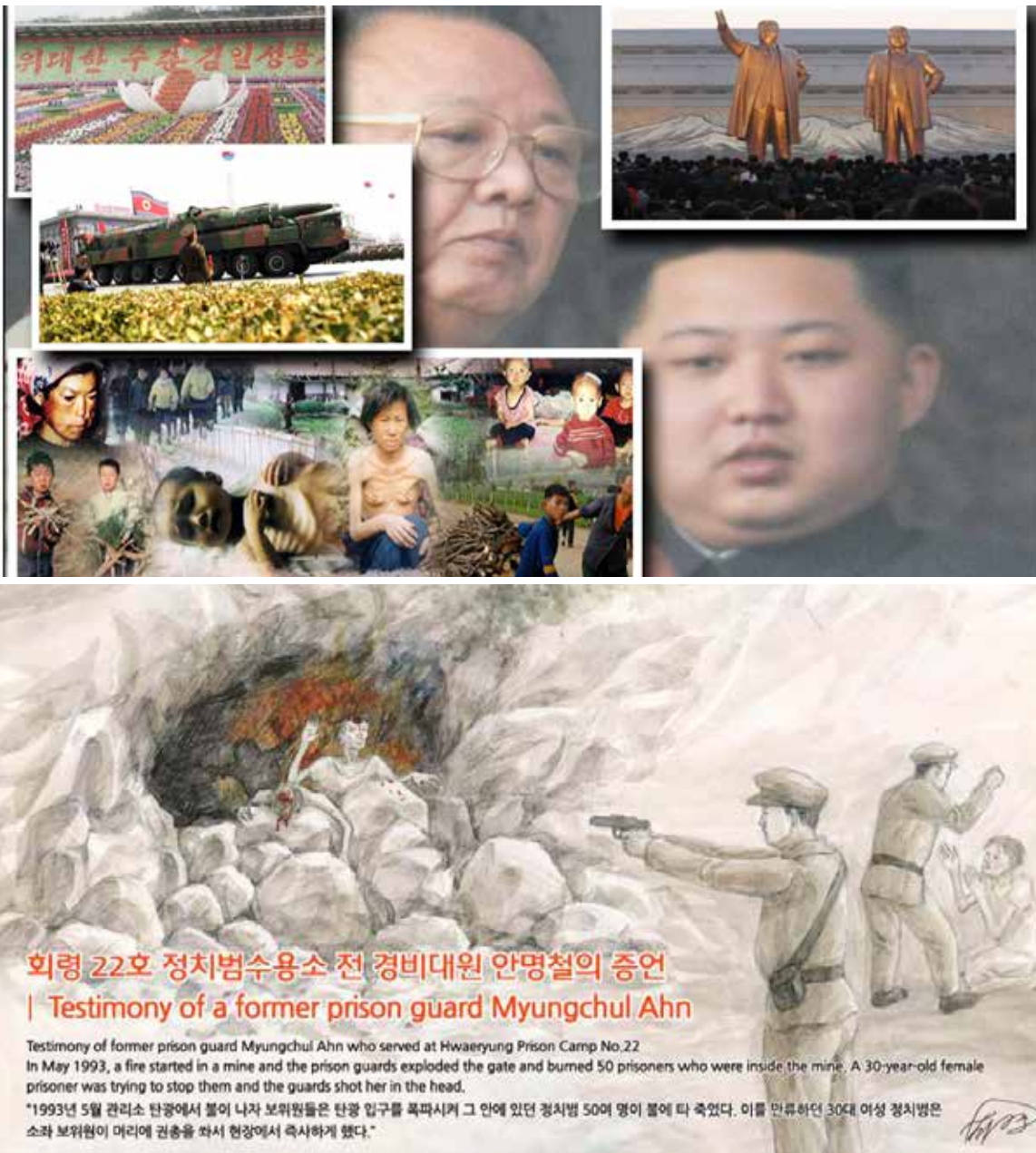
ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference AJK chapter leadership while welcoming the recent statement of Pakistan Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir on Kashmir has said it has boosted the morale of the Kashmiris who are struggling for their right to self-determination. APHC-AJK Convener Mehmood Ahmed Saghar in a statement issued in Islamabad said General Munir's speech at the passing out parade at PMA was a clear-cut message to India to stop peddling lies on Kashmir, as Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally recognized dispute whose final status is yet to be ascertained. Stressing the need for an early and amicable settlement of the Kashmir dispute, Saghar said that peace in the south Asian region was inescapably linked to a just and equitable settlement of the Kashmir issue. APHC-AJK leader Muhammad Farooq Rehmani also praised the Army Chief's statement, which, he said, reiterates Pakistan's strong support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Rehmani expressed the hope that the Pakistani government will take all necessary international measures to thwart Indian attempts to alter the Muslim majority character of Jammu and Kashmir and seek practical assistance for implementing the UN resolutions on Kashmir. Others leaders including Sheikh Abdul Mateen, Imtiaz Wani, Ijaz Rahmani, Shamim Shawl, Sheikh Muhammad Yaqoob, Manzoor Ahmed Shah, Zahid Ashraf and Mushtaq Ahmed Butt said that the morale of the Kashmiri people has been raised by the statements of the political and military leadership of Pakistan. They appealed to the international community to play its role in resolving the Kashmir issue to ensure lasting peace in South Asia.

## 'Pak among 10 most climate change vulnerable countries'

ISLAMABAD: The Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis Monday said Pakistan is amongst the 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change, "braving disastrous floods, unlivable heatwaves and fast-melting glaciers". Pakistan will have to face numerous climate-induced extreme changing weather conditions in the future and the government must in advance chalk out viable plan to mitigate the impact of natural disasters. Speaking to a delegation of industrialists and traders led by Mian Zeeshan Elahi CEO Marvel Cables he said just two weeks ago there were at least two stark reminders of the hazards natural disasters pose to people's safety. He said a number of people were killed in a landslide at the Torkham border with Afghanistan when tons of rocks and mud came crashing down upon truck drivers. He said local speculated that the recent controlled blasting in the area could have contributed to the landslide. Elsewhere, thousands of people travelling to GB for Eid were trapped on the high-altitude Karakoram Highway due to heavy rainfall and landslides. Exacerbating the situation was the fact that a bridge in KP's Uchar Nallah area that was swept away during last year's summer floods had yet to be rebuilt. Meher Kashif Younis said the biggest extreme weather event in recent history was last year's super monsoon flood and millions of people have yet to fully recover from the impacts of that disaster. He said it's high time for government two workout master plan to address the anthropogenic factors that aggravate the impact of natural disasters, and secondly, efforts must also be made to build climate-resilient infrastructure that can resist the worst effects of disasters.—DNA

## Glory for Kim Jong Un, agony for his people

Recently, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has upgraded its WMD capabilities through provocations, such as ballistic missile launches and nuclear test preparations, undermining global peace and stability. According to the annual report of the UN Sanctions Committee for DPRK released this April, last year alone, the DPRK launched various ballistic missiles, including ICBMs, on 73 occasions. The launches would have costed the DPRK about \$200 million, which is equivalent to the cost of 500,000 tons of rice. This is enough food supply to feed the entire population of North Korea for 46 days. These rogue activities not only exacerbate its already devastating food shortage issue, but also evidently reveal that the DPRK is diverting its resources for food supply to weapons development. Poor humanitarian conditions also continue in the DPRK, with no sign of improvements. According to the report on human rights in the DPRK released this March 30 by the Republic of Korea, the DPRK publicly executed its people who distributed videos or traded cosmetics made in the ROK. The human rights abuses against vulnerable groups

회령 22호 정치범수용소 전 경비대원 안명철의 증언  
| Testimony of a former prison guard Myungchul Ahn

Testimony of former prison guard Myungchul Ahn who served at Hwaeryung Prison Camp No.22  
In May 1993, a fire started in a mine and the prison guards exploded the gate and burned 50 prisoners who were inside the mine. A 30-year-old female prisoner was trying to stop them and the guards shot her in the head.  
"1993년 5월 관리소 탄광에서 불이 나자 보위관들은 탄광 입구를 폭파시켜 그 안에 있던 정치범 50여 명이 불에 타 죽었다. 이를 만류하던 30대 여성 정치범은 소파 보위팀이 머리에 권총을 쏘자 한창에서 죽어 버렸다."

such as women and people with disabilities are also serious. Outrageous human rights violations, such as executing a pregnant woman for pointing her finger at the portrait of Kim Il-Sung, and performing unethical human experiments on people with disabilities, are prevalent in the DPRK. As the Kim Jong-Un regime is behind the human rights atrocities, the DPRK leadership and those involved in political prison camps must be held accountable for their actions. These crimes against humanity may be brought to the ICC in accordance with Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, or tried in a special tribunal established by a resolution of the UN General Assembly. Taking judicial measures against Kim Jong-Un such as making his arrest or imprisoning him may be proved to be difficult for now, but the attempt itself will result in significant political ripple effect and have profound impact on the perpetrators. In a situation where it is impossible to directly intervene with DPRK's human rights abuses, I hope that such engagement exerted by the international community will lead to positive changes in the state's human rights landscape.

## China's example of dispute resolution thru online mechanism

The report says, in the new age, the need for confidential and quick resolution of disputes based on justice and equality between commercial entities through cost-effective measures is a major challenge

DNA

BEIJING: China's internet courts revolutionizing online dispute resolution mechanism, setting a good example to follow by others of the World community. Dispute resolution through arbitration, mediation and cost-effective and timely measures has been a cherished dream for the communities globally, says a report published by Gwadar Pro on Monday. The report says, in the new age, the need for confidential and quick resolution of disputes based on justice and equality between commercial entities through cost-effective measures is a major challenge. According to the Confucius, justice is the "real essence" of a progressive society and sus-

tainable social development. Whereas, the real philosophy of socialism also speaks highly about justice and the Chinese model of Internet Court is the replica of it. In this backdrop, China's online internet courts are doing wonders and thousands of litigants are being provided immediate, transparent and cost-effective justice without spending money. In the age of Covid-19 pandemic, Chinese authorities focused on online dispute resolution through internet courts. Initially, these courts were established in Beijing, Guangzhou and Hangzhou. The internet courts do not require citizens to appear in court as the 'smart court' allows participants to register their cases online and resolve their matters via a

digital court hearing. The Chinese internet courts handle a variety of disputes, which include intellectual property, e-commerce, financial disputes related to online conduct, loans acquired or performed online, patent registration, domain name issues, intellectual property and civil rights cases involving the Internet, product liability arising from online purchases and certain administrative disputes. Internet Courts of China has legal and administrative protection in term of carrying the cases, giving verdicts and enforcement of decisions and laws of the land empower these courts to take all possible appropriate measures to protect the sanctity of the law which clearly upholds that Chinese are law-loving people and

always respect other different views. The Beijing Internet Court deals in 11 different types of cases. It was established during September 2018. Till now more than 400,000 cases have been received and more than 85 percent have now been resolved which has the highest percentage of judicial efficiency in the world. There are specialized judges working 24/7 to resolve the disputes between two parties. On average every judge has 1000 cases which are indeed commendable. It usually takes 86 days to reach its conclusion. With special reference to maintain complete elements of impartiality and accuracy, all the decisions are being judged through different innovative means, making the Internet Court an apex status in the judicial system of China.

## France's Macron faces Labour Day protests

PARIS: France's President Emmanuel Macron faces more nationwide protests on Monday as he seeks to steer the country on from a divisive pension law that has sparked anger, pan-bashing and social unrest. Last month he signed a law to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64, despite months of strikes against the bill. He and his government have since tried to turn the page on the episode of popular discontent, one of the biggest challenges to his second mandate. But protesters have booed and banged pots and pans at him on his forays into provincial France to meet members of the public. When Macron attended a football match on Saturday, he was met with activists waving red cards. Unions and the opposition are hoping for a mass turnout at the May Day rallies to let Macron know they continue to oppose the pension overhaul. "I invite all French men and women... to go out and catch the sun, to tan while pushing their baby strollers in the streets of Paris and the rest of the country," Francois Ruffin, a member of parliament for the hard-left France Unbowed party, said on Sunday. "We are making sure 2023 goes down in the country's social history," he told broadcaster BFMTV ahead of the public holiday. Monday will mark the first time since 2009 that all eight of France's main unions have joined in calling for protests. "This worker's holiday will take place amid union unity and that alone is historic," said Frederic Souillot, the secretary general of the Force Ouvriere (Worker's Force) union.—APP

## Armed attackers kill 10 in Ecuador

GUAYAQUIL: At least 10 people were killed overnight when heavily armed assailants opened fire outside a shop in Guayaquil, Ecuador's main port city and economic hub that is under a state of emergency due to rising drug violence, police said Sunday. The gruesome attack occurred at a mechanic shop in the city's southwest as people were inside drinking and watching a soccer match on TV, witnesses said. Several people drove up in a black truck, stepped out without saying a word, and opened fire using "long weapons," said General William Villarroel, the police commander for Guayaquil and neighboring Duran and Samborondon. Hours later, bodies could be seen lying on the sidewalk in pools of blood, as people cried and hugged one another while police cordoned off the area, AFP saw. "I don't feel comfortable living like this," one neighbor told AFP, asking not to be named. "We can't go out with our families, with our children." In addition to those killed, three people were wounded, "unfortunately including a five-year-old girl who is stable and is going to be operated for shrapnel," Villarroel said. He said police believed the massacre was the result of "a fight between organized criminal groups - a fight for power and territory."—Agencies

## Suspected IS leader killed in Syria

ISTANBUL: The suspected leader of the Islamic State group has been killed in Syria in an operation carried out by Turkey's MIT intelligence agency, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Sunday. "The suspected leader of Daesh, codename Abu Hussein al-Qurashi, has been neutralised in an operation carried out yesterday (Saturday) by the MIT in Syria," he announced on television. The Islamic State group announced the death of its previous leader, Abu Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, on November 30, replacing him with Abu Hussein al-Qurashi.—APP

## 6 months after Tigray peace deal

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia's government and Tigrayan authorities signed a surprise "Cessation of Hostilities Agreement" on November 2 to end a two-year war that has inflicted a devastating human toll. Six months on and against all expectations, there has been progress implementing a deal that according to one diplomat, no-one believed would work. The guns have fallen silent and humanitarian aid is being restored to the stricken region of Tigray, but numerous challenges remain to

cement the peace. Despite the brutality of the fighting between pro-government forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), observers note goodwill on both sides to execute the accord, although there are delays. "The two sides acknowledge that the deadlines were untenable and agree they should not be a reason to block (implementation)," a second diplomat said. "The dynamic is positive," added geopolitical researcher Patrick Ferras. "The two parties are quite honest and

the implementation is fairly rapid," he said, conceding that "such issues cannot be resolved in five months". Benjamin Petrin, research fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Washington, voiced caution about the "opacity" of the process. But he highlighted several positive developments since the deal was signed in Pretoria. "The halt in violence has been nearly complete. Restoration of services to Tigray and the delivery of external aid are also key accomplishments," he said.—Agencies

## Pope urges Hungarians to 'open doors' to migrants

ABOARD: Pope Francis on Sunday called on Hungarians to "open doors" to migrants, as he wrapped up a three-day visit to the central European country led by a prime minister who is staunchly anti-immigration. Throughout his visit to Budapest - dominated by the war in neighbouring Ukraine - Francis has emphasised a welcoming stance towards those fleeing conflict or poverty. His comments have stood in stark contrast to the stance of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who, while welcoming Ukrainian refugees, has otherwise espoused anti-migration rhetoric to defend a "Christian Europe" since coming to power in 2010. Some 50,000 people, including Orban, listened to the pope lead an open-air mass at a central Budapest square under tight security, during which the Argentine pontiff urged all, including "those with political and social responsibilities", to be more open.

## Santiago Pena wins Paraguay vote

Asuncion, May 1 (AFP/APP): Paraguayans on Sunday elected a president from the rightwing party in power for nearly eight decades, rejecting a center-left challenger who had railed against endemic institutional corruption. Economist and former finance minister Santiago Pena, 44, took the election with more than 42 percent of the vote to continue the hegemony of the conservative Colorado Party, results showed. Sixty-year-old challenger Efraim Alegre of the Concertacion center-left coalition garnered nearly 27.5 percent despite having gone into the vote with a narrow lead in opinion polls. The outcome bucked a recent anti-incumbency trend in Latin American elections with voters reportedly punishing establishment parties, often in favor of leftist rivals. The Colorado Party has governed almost continually since 1947 - through a long and brutal dictatorship and since the return of democracy in 1989, but has been tainted by corruption claims. Pena's political mentor, ex-president and Colorado Party leader Horacio Cartes, was recently sanctioned by the United States over graft. Pena thanked Cartes in his first public address as president-elect for his "stubborn dedication to the party," to loud cheers from supporters at party headquarters. Conceding defeat, Alegre stated: "The effort was not enough."—Agencies

## Italy cuts anti-poverty subsidies

ROME: Italy's right-wing government on Monday rolled back anti-poverty subsidies introduced four years ago that helped some four million people last year, as critics denounced a "provocation" on the international May Day labour holiday. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who leads the country's most far-right coalition since World War II, said the "citizens' income" benefits would be replaced by a more limited "inclusion cheque" for qualifying households. The government says it costs too much, at around eight billion euros (\$8.8 billion) last year, and discourages able-bodied people, especially youths, from looking for jobs. The new inclusion cheques, set to begin in January 2024, will cost around 5.4 billion euros annually, and be available only to households with minors, seniors 60 or older, or handicapped people. Since taking office last September, Meloni has pushed corporate tax cuts while also promising to restore Italy's economic credibility by cutting debt incurred most recently during the Covid-19 pandemic. "We are reforming the citizens' income to make a distinction between those who are able to work and those who aren't," Meloni said in a statement. Her government also made it easier for companies to hire on short-term contracts - which unions blast as keeping employees in precarious economic situations - while promising tax breaks to firms hiring.—APP

## UN sending envoy over Sudan war fallout

KHARTOUM: The top United Nations humanitarian official is heading to the Sudan region due to the "rapidly deteriorating humanitarian crisis" in the conflict-racked country, the UN chief said. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' announcement Sunday came shortly after rival Sudanese forces announced the extension of a truce they have largely violated, as warplanes roared overhead and fighting continued in the capital Khartoum. The fighting pits the forces of army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan against his ex-deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a heavily armed paramilitary group. More than 500 people have been killed and tens of thousands of people have fled since battles erupted on April 15. "The scale and speed of what is unfolding is unprecedented in Sudan. We are extremely concerned by the immediate as well as long-term

impact on all people in Sudan, and the broader region," Stephane Dujarric, the spokesperson for Guterres, said in a statement. He said the UN chief was "immediately" sending Martin Griffiths, his emergency relief coordinator, to the area "in light of the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Sudan." The latest widely breached ceasefire was scheduled to formally expire at midnight (2200 GMT), before the rival forces announced an extension of 72 hours, which the Sudanese army said came due to "US and Saudi mediation". Witnesses on Sunday evening reported continued clashes as well as fighter jets soaring above various parts of the capital and its twin city Omdurman, across the Nile River. The civil aviation authority announced Sudan's airspace would remain closed until May 13, with the exception of aid and evacuation flights. "There has been very heavy fight-

ing and loud gunfire," a southern Khartoum resident told AFP earlier in the day. Further complicating the battlefield, Central Reserve Police, a paramilitary unit, were being deployed across Khartoum to "protect citizens' properties" from looting, the Sudanese police said, confirming an army statement. Police said Central Reserve had arrested 316 "rebels", a reference to the RSF, which did not confirm the information and had previously warned police against joining the fight. Washington last year sanctioned the Central Reserve for "serious human rights abuses" related to its use of "excessive force" against pro-democracy protesters after the October 2021 coup that brought Burhan and Daglo to power. Daglo's RSF is descended from the Janjaweed unleashed by former dictator Omar al-Bashir in Sudan's western Darfur region, leading to war-crimes charges against Bashir and others.

With projectiles crashing into residential buildings, supplies running short and daily life increasingly untenable for civilians, foreign nations have scrambled to evacuate their nationals by air, road and sea. But millions of Sudanese are still trapped in the country, where aid workers are among the dead and the UN said humanitarian facilities have been looted, forcing a halt to all of its aid operations. "We once again urge all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, allow safe passage for civilians fleeing areas of hostilities, respect humanitarian workers and assets, facilitate relief operations, and respect medical personnel, transport and facilities," Dujarric said. A first Red Cross plane brought eight tonnes of humanitarian aid from Jordan to Port Sudan, which is so far untouched by the fighting. The aid included surgical material and medical kits to stabilise 1,500 patients.

On Saturday the health ministry said the violence has wounded around 4,600 people and killed at least 528. Those figures are likely to be incomplete. The UN World Food Programme has warned the unrest could plunge millions more into hunger in a country where 15 million people already needed aid to stave off famine. Only 16 percent of health facilities are functioning in Khartoum, according to the World Health Organization, with many shelled. "The situation cannot be sustained" as medical supplies run short, warned Majzoub Saad Ibrahim, a doctor in Ad Damar, north of Khartoum. An envoy of Burhan's met on Sunday in Riyadh with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, who urged the restoration of calm in Sudan, his ministry said. Egypt has called an Arab League meeting of its permanent delegates Monday to discuss the situation.—Agencies

## Briefs

### NZ leader favors nation becoming a republic

WELLINGTON: New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said Monday he personally favors his country becoming a republic, but it's not a change he intends to push for as leader. Hipkins made the comments to reporters hours before he was due to depart for this week's coronation of King Charles III in London. New Zealand, a former British colony, is self-governing but Charles retains a largely ceremonial role as head of state and king. Charles is represented in New Zealand by a governor-general. Like many former British colonies, New Zealand continues to wrestle with what — if any — constitutional role the British monarchy should play in modern times. Barbados chose to become a republic in 2021. Jamaica last year said it plans to pursue independence, and Australia in February decided to remove the British monarch from the last of its banknotes, although an image of Charles is expected to feature on coins. "Ideally, in time, New Zealand will become a fully independent country, will stand on our own two feet in the world, as we by and large do now," Hipkins said. — Agencies

### Trump lawyer's mistrial request rejected

DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States judge overseeing the rape case against Donald Trump has denied a request for a mistrial, after a lawyer for the former president accused Judge Lewis Kaplan of ruling in a biased manner against Trump. In an 18-page letter filed early on Monday in Manhattan federal court, lawyer Joe Tacopina accused Kaplan of being biased against Trump, including in the jury's presence, during the civil proceedings that began last week. Tacopina said the effect of Kaplan's rulings "manifests a deeper leaning towards one party over another", including in comments where the judge "openly expresses favoritism". The judge denied the motion for a mistrial before testimony resumed on Monday. Mistrial requests are rarely granted, but they can serve as the basis for eventual appeals. Tacopina was also more likely hoping the judge would grant a version of his alternative requests, The Associated Press news agency reported.

### Talks on Syria's fate kick off in Jordan

WEB DESK

AMMAN: Regional leaders met in Jordan Monday to discuss Syria's return to the Arab fold and a Jordanian proposal to reach a "political solution" to the Syrian conflict. The talks, attended by the top diplomats of Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Egypt, kicked off with a meeting between Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi and Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad, followed by a meeting of all the ministers. A Jordanian foreign ministry spokesman said the meeting came as a follow-up to talks with the Arab Gulf countries, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt that were held in Saudi Arabia last month. The spokesman added that those countries aimed to build on their contacts with the Syrian government and discuss a "Jordanian initiative to reach a political solution to the Syrian crisis." Syria was ostracized by Arab governments over President Bashar Assad's brutal crackdown on protesters in a 2011 uprising that descended into civil war. However, in recent years, as Assad consolidated control over most of the country, Syria's neighbors have begun to take steps toward rapprochement.

# Sudan crisis: Air strikes hit Khartoum despite truce

The country is now in a civil war, says Sudanese businessman and philanthropist Mo Ibrahim, and its conflict must not be allowed to spill over its borders and become regional

NEWS DESK

KHARTOUM: Air strikes have pounded Sudan's capital, Khartoum, despite a truce aimed at allowing civilians to flee. The army said it was attacking the city to flush out its paramilitary rivals, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The fighting intensified even as the warring sides said they would extend the truce by another three days. More than 500 deaths have been reported with the true number of casualties believed to be much higher. Millions remain trapped in Khartoum. Army commander Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF chief Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as Hemedti, are vying for power - and disagree in particular about plans to include the RSF into the army. The generals agreed a humanitarian truce after intensive diplomatic efforts by neighbouring countries, the US, UK and UN. It was extended, but did not hold. However, it remains unclear on what

they will do in the next stage of the deal arrived at with US and Saudi mediation, according to the army. The country is now in a civil war, says Sudanese businessman and philanthropist Mo Ibrahim, and its conflict must not be allowed to spill over its borders and become regional. "We don't want another Syria," he told media, adding that it was difficult for either side to win outright. BBC diplomatic correspondent Paul Adams, who is monitoring events from the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, says the fighting is concentrated mainly in the north of Khartoum, close to the confluence of the Blue and White Niles, but right across the city, people are huddled in their homes, wondering whether it is more dangerous to stay or leave. The army will find it difficult to expel the RSF from Khartoum - for all the army's superior firepower, the paramilitaries are highly mobile and more suited to urban warfare, our correspondent adds. Before the announcement of the extension

on Sunday, the army said it had conducted operations against RSF troops north of the city centre. On Monday, the World Food Programme announced that it was resuming its operations in Sudan, reversing its decision to pull out two weeks ago, after three of its staff were killed when fighting erupted in Khartoum. Hamid Khalafallah, from the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, is one of those unable to flee. "When there is very loud bombing and it gets closer, we take shelter in the house, try to all come to a central room, far from windows, far from walls, and so on, and just lie on the floor until it passes. "When it's a bit further, we try to use the quiet hours that we get - a couple of hours a day - to just quickly go out and get what we need which is also very risky but we have to do it," he told media. MrKhalafallah said his neighbourhood was dotted with RSF checkpoints, with people risking their lives every time they had to negotiate their way past. "It's basically a

gamble. Sometimes they let you through, sometimes they don't. Sometimes they shoot at you, sometimes they steal your things and it's very random," he added. MrKhalafallah said he has not had a "single drop of water" at his home since fighting started on 15 April, and he was getting it from neighbours who had wells at their homes. The first major aid flight, laden with medical supplies, has arrived in the country. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) says a plane landed at Port Sudan with eight tonnes of relief supplies, including health kits for hospitals. "With hostilities still ongoing, ICRC teams will need guarantees of safe passage from the parties to the conflict to deliver this material to medical facilities in locations with active fighting, such as Khartoum," a statement said. More than 70% of health facilities in the capital have been forced to close as a result of the fighting that erupted on 15 April. Foreign countries have been evacuating their nationals amid the chaos.

### Shujaat slams police action at his residence

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain lashed out at the Punjab police on Monday for attempting to enter his Lahore residence during a raid to arrest PTI President Parvez Elahi and termed the action "unacceptable". A police and ACE raiding team had conducted a raid at Elahi's Gulberg residence, late on Friday night and arrested 12 people. The raiding party used an armoured vehicle to break open the main gate of the residence after facing resistance. However, the ACE team could not find Elahi, even after thoroughly searching the house. The police officials had also tried to force their entry into the adjoining residence of Shujaat, but they were resisted by the PML-Q leader's sons. Talking to journalists today, Shujaat addressed the matter and recounted the night's events, a PML-Q press release said. "Before making statements on this entire matter, I would like to say that the procedure followed in this entire affair is unacceptable," he said. The PML-Q president strongly condemned how an armoured vehicle was used to break down the main gate of his residence and called on the authorities to bring to light and justice whoever was responsible for the matter.

9 tourists killed in Neelum Valley accident

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: At least nine people were killed in a tourist vehicle accident in Azad Kashmir's Neelum Valley area. According to details, on the way back from Tao Butt last night at Grace Valley in the upper area of the Neelum district, a jeep went out of control and fell into the Neelum River. As soon as the accident was reported, police, locals and army reached the spot. The rescue teams recovered the dead body of a tourist while five injured including the driver were shifted to the hospital. According to Police, the jeep went out of control and fell into the middle of the Neelum River, due to which nine tourists died. Rescue activities are underway to search for the tourists. However, the administration said that now there was no chance of their survival. According to the police, the injured included two local people and three tourists, while the body of one tourist was shifted to the Muzaffarabad military hospital.



LAHORE: PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi leads a rally. — DNA

### Pakistan, Russia celebrate 75th Anniversary of ties

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the Russian Federation are commemorating the 75th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations, today. To mark this milestone occasion, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov exchanged letters of felicitations. Pakistan and Russia enjoy close, multidimensional relations based on mutual goodwill and trust. Bilateral ties are marked by cooperation in diverse areas, including economic, energy and security. The two countries also consult at various multilateral fora on regional and global issues of mutual interest. Diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Russia were established on 1st May 1948. — DNA

### Justice Isa for elevation of SHC, PHC CJs to SC

ISLAMABAD: Justice Qazi Faez Isa has recommended the names of Sindh High Court (SHC) Chief Justice Ahmed Ali M Shaikh and Peshawar High Court (PHC) Acting Chief Justice Musarrat Hilal for elevation to the Supreme Court, sources told media Monday. He made the recommendations in a letter sent to all members of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) — a constitutional body that decides appointments to the SC, high courts, and the Federal Shariat Court. The JCP is headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, the next senior-most four judges, a former chief justice or SC judge, the law minister, the attorney general, and a senior SC advocate nominated by the Pakistan Bar Council. In his letter, Justice Isa urged that a meeting of the JCP be called soon to decide the appointments. The Supreme Court comprises 17 judges, of which two positions are currently empty. The JCP meeting should consider the names of the two judges on the seniority principle, he urged. The JCP had recommended Justice Shaikh's appointment as an ad hoc judge of the Supreme Court in 2021. However, Sheikh had declined the appointment, and in a letter written to the then-chief justice Gulzar Ahmed and President Dr ArifAlvi, had said he did not accord his consent to the appointment. Sheikh had taken oath as the SHC chief justice on March 15, 2017. Meanwhile, Justice Hilal took oath as the PHC acting chief justice on April 1, 2023 — becoming only the second woman to be appointed as a high court chief justice and the PHC's first. The JCP has already recommended her name for regular appointment as the PHC chief justice and a meeting of a parliamentary committee in this regard is scheduled to be held on May 4. — APP

## US panel again takes aim at India on religious freedom

"The continued enforcement of discriminatory laws facilitated a culture of impunity for widespread campaigns of threats and violence by mobs and vigilante groups," it said. It was the fourth straight year that the panel has made the recommendation on India, angering New Delhi which has called the commission biased

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: A US government panel renewed calls on Monday to blacklist India over religious freedom, saying that the treatment of minorities has continued to worsen under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom offers recommendations but does not set policy and there is little expectation that the State Department will accept its stance on India, a growing US partner. The State Department each year lists countries where it sees particular concern on religious freedom, with the prospect of sanctions without improvement. The independent commission, whose members are appointed by the president and congressional party leaders, supported all of the State Department's latest designations which included China, Iran, Myanmar, Pakistan, Russia and Saudi Arabia. It however recommended that the State Department add several countries, including India, Nigeria and Vietnam.

The annual report pointed in India to violence and destruction of property targeting Muslims and Christians and drew links to comments and social media posts by members of Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. "The continued enforcement of discriminatory laws facilitated a culture of impunity for widespread campaigns of threats and violence by mobs and vigilante groups," it said. It was the fourth straight year that the panel has made the recommendation on India, angering New Delhi which has called the commission biased. The State Department briefly blacklisted Nigeria at the end of Donald Trump's presidency following calls from evangelical Christians, but President Joe Biden's administration removed it, rejecting suggestions of violence in Africa's most populous country being religious-based or abetted by the government. The commission also recommended that the State Department add a number of US partners to a watch list of countries that risked being blacklisted without improvements, including Egypt, Indonesia and Turkey.

## Ukraine: Russia launches massive missile attack

DNA

KYIV: Russia has launched a series of missiles at Ukrainian cities in the second pre-dawn attack in three days. Pavlohrad, a logistics hub near the central city of Dnipro, was hit ahead of a much-anticipated counter-offensive by Ukraine. The strike sparked a major fire, destroyed dozens of houses, and wounded 34 people. Hours later, the air raid alert sounded across the country, with the capital Kyiv among the targets. Across the country, the Ukrainian army said it shot down 15 of the 18 cruise missiles that had been fired. The most significant damage was in Pavlohrad, a city in Ukrainian-held territory around 70 miles (110km) from the frontline. Pictures posted on social media showed a massive blaze. One resident, OlhaLytyvnenko, said she was getting dressed to leave their house when "both doors were smashed out by the explosion wave". "I ran outside and saw that the garage was destroyed. Everything was on fire, glass shards everywhere. Had we been

outside, we would have been killed," she said. Explosion derails train in Russian border region Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk military administration described it as a "tragic night and morning", saying an industrial site had been hit. Nineteen high-rise apartment blocks, 25 private houses, six schools and kindergartens and five shops were also damaged, it added. Vladimir Rogov, a Russian-installed official, said the strike targeted railway infrastructure and fuel depots, in a message on Telegram with a thumbs-up gesture. At around 04:00 local time (02:00 GMT) the air raid alert sounded in Kyiv and lasted for about three hours. The military administration said all missiles and drones directed at the capital were destroyed. In the Kherson region - which is still partly controlled by Russia - Ukrainian regional authorities said Russia had carried out 39 shellings. They came from ground-based weapons, as well as drones and planes, the authorities said, adding that one person was killed. Recent days have seen an increase in attacks in Ukraine, with places away from the front lines being

targeted. On Friday, 23 people were killed in the central city of Uman. Ukraine says it is finishing plans for a long-awaited offensive against Russian forces, supported by Western-supplied weapons and military equipment. Russia, meanwhile, is also preparing for a Ukrainian push, and has fortified its positions in occupied territory. In the latest change at the country's military leadership, C1 Gen Mikhail Mizintsev - the Russian deputy defence minister who oversaw armed forces logistics - has been sacked, after being appointed to the role only last September. There have been longstanding complaints that front line troops are not getting sufficient military equipment, and suffer shortages of food and uniforms. Meanwhile, a Ukrainian official on Monday said the army had ousted Russian forces from some positions in Bakhmut, an eastern city that has been under siege for months. General Oleksandr Syrskyi, the commander of ground forces, said on Telegram the situation remained "quite difficult" - but "the enemy is unable to take control of the city".

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