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Briefs

PM Shehbaz summons Cabinet meeting

NSC meeting cancelled

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, has summoned an emergency meeting of the federal cabinet to discuss the prevailing political situation in the country. Earlier the National Security Committee was also summoned but it was cancelled afterwards. The meeting was scheduled to take place today (Friday) at the prime minister house in Islamabad. The PM himself wanted to preside over the meeting and review the current security situation in the country. With tensions on the rise, the National Security Committee was to take action to ensure the safety and security of the country and its citizens.

Asif hints at declaring emergency

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of Defence Khawaja Asif said that an emergency is a constitutional option but there is no chance of imposing martial law, media reported on Thursday. Reacting to the Supreme Court's release order of Imran Khan, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that Imran Khan's personal and public medical reports have huge difference as he walked in the Supreme Court corridor without a wheelchair.

No talks with terrorist organizations: Foreign Office

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has again categorically stated that there will be no talks with the terrorist organizations, which do not respect country's laws and the constitution. This was stated by Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch at her weekly media briefing in Islamabad on Thursday.

Manner of arrest slammed SC declares Imran Khan's arrest illegal

Immediate release ordered, 3-judge bench advises PTI chief to approach IHC again; Imran dismisses claims of creating chaos

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday declared former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's arrest as illegal and ordered his immediate release in the Al-Qadir Trust case. The former premier was arrested on May 9 by the paramilitary Rangers force on orders from the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) from the Islamabad High Court (IHC), over allegations of having looted Rs50 billion along with a property tycoon from the national treasury and getting the Al-Qadir University Trust registered on 450-kanal of land.

The PTI chief had challenged his arrest in the apex court after the Islamabad High Court had earlier declared it legal. The apex court in order has advised the PTI chief to approach the Islamabad High Court again. The court has further directed that Imran be housed at the Police Lines guesthouse until today (Friday), and during this time he will be permitted to meet with up to 10 individuals. When Khan requested to be allowed to



PTI workers jubilant as SC orders Khan's release

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Supporters of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in Peshawar erupted in joy following the Supreme Court's order to immediately release former prime minister and party chief Imran Khan in the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case. Declaring his arrest illegal, the apex court directed that Imran be housed at the Police Lines guesthouse until Friday, and during this time he is permitted to meet with up to 10 individuals. When Khan requested to be allowed to return to Bani Gala, his residence in Islamabad, the top court responded by stating that his safety and security were of paramount concern and that he would remain in the custody of the court at the Police Lines guesthouse.

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Maryam suggests CJP he should 'join PTI' Accuses CJP of being responsible for attacks on crucial institutions

DNA

LAHORE: Senior vice president of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Maryam Nawaz has strongly criticized Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial over the release of Imran Khan, suggesting that the chief justice should resign from his position and join the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). In a scathing critique on Twitter, Maryam claimed that the chief justice seemed exceedingly pleased with meeting an individual accused of embezzling Rs 60 billion from the national treasury, and was even more delighted in releasing this alleged criminal. Maryam went on to accuse the chief justice of being responsible for the attacks on crucial and sensitive institutions in the country. Referring to the PTI chief,



Govt censures SC over 'relief' to Imran

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb censured the Supreme Court on Thursday for providing "relief" to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief and former premier Imran Khan. "The SC is giving relief to a criminal, a terrorist, a gangster who leads armed groups," said Marriyum Aurangzeb. The remarks came as the minister addressed a press conference in Islamabad minutes after the apex court ordered Imran to be

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IMF says will 'remain engaged' with Pakistan

Dar says Pakistan will not default in any case

CENTRELINE REPORT

NEW YORK: Amid speculations that Pakistan's chances of clinching a long-suspended International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout have been reduced due to the political situation, the lender clarified that it "remains engaged" with Islamabad, media reported Thursday. Declining to comment on the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan, the spokesperson of the global lender said: "IMF remains engaged with Pakistan on securing funding and policy assurances with the goal of reaching an agreement on the ninth review of the \$6.7 billion loan agreed in 2019." "The IMF sees no indication that Pakistan wants to pause negotiations on disbursement from the current programme," the spokesperson told the foreign publication. Following the arrest of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman, concerns sparked that Pakistan was edging closer to a default as political unrest will delay an IMF bailout. "It looks increasingly difficult for Pakistan to avoid a default in

Rupee plunges to new record low of 298.93

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The rupee slumped to a record low of 298.93 amid political tumult in the wake of clashes that broke out in the country following the arrests of senior leaders of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). The local unit fell Rs8.71, or 3%, against the dollar on Thursday closing at 298.93 in the interbank market, data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) showed. It should be noted that the dollar bonds due 2031 fell to the lowest since November on Thursday and were indicated at 33.10 cents on the dollar. The new rate is just Re1 away from the much-anticipated rate of Rs300 per dollar.

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ISLAMABAD: JUI Chief Maulana Fazal Ur Rehman calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Both leaders discussed prevailing political situation. - DNA

Bilawal urges PTI to forgo violence PPP against arrests of politicians

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Thursday said that he was not in favour of banning the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) despite the party attacking state facilities, adding that he would be the "last person" to endorse such a move. Speaking at a press conference, the foreign minister - flanked by Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah and provincial information minister Sharjeel Memon - said: "I am not in favour of banning anyone. We must adopt a completely constitutional and legal procedure to ban PTI." However, he added that declaring PTI a proscribed outfit was the last resort. While responding to a question on whether he considered banning PTI, the foreign minister responded: "A decision cannot be taken on television based on the video evidence that has come out so far." Moreover, Bilawal called for PTI workers to end their violent protests, adding that the party had done "what it had to do". "PTI should not cause more harm," he said. "They should declare an end to violent protests and face the cases against them." Bilawal also expressed a desire to have an outcome that would create political stability in the country. Earlier during the conference the PPP leader said that May 9 - the day when PTI Chairman Imran Khan was arrested from the Islamabad High Court (IHC) - was "another Black Day" in the history of the country. "The history of Pakistan several days are marked as the 'Black Days' and now May 9 has been added to the list."

Inciting violence More PTI leaders arrested as Govt intensify crackdown

Ali Muhammad Khan and Senator Ejaz Chaudhry arrested from Islamabad

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Amid the ongoing crackdown on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders in the wake of former prime minister Imran Khan's arrest, party leaders Ali Muhammad Khan and Senator Ejaz Chaudhry have been arrested from Islamabad. The Islamabad police said in a statement on Thursday that the party leaders were taken into custody under Section 3 Maintenance Public Ordinance (MPO). Ali Muhammad Khan was arrested as he was heading towards the Supreme Court, where the hearing against Imran Khan's arrest was underway. The latest arrests came a day after PTI leaders Asad Umar and Fawad Chaudhry were taken into custody while Shah Mahmood Qureshi was detained earlier today under the same act. PTI leaders are being detained by law enforcers in a bid to contain the countrywide violent protests sparked by the arrest of

PTI denies involvement in violence

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has denied involvement in the recent incidents of violence amid the protests against the arrest of its chairman, Imran Khan, saying that the statement by Inter-services Public Relations (ISPR) lacked the realisation of the situation on the ground. PTI's rebuttal comes a day after the hard-hitting statement by the military's media wing, where it termed May 9, the day clashes and protests ensued, a

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President writes letter to PM over Imran arrest

Appeals citizens to remain peaceful

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: In a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Arif Alvi Thursday deplored the manner in which Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan was arrested inside the Islamabad High Court (IHC) premises. "I would like to draw your attention to the way Imran Khan was arrested," the president wrote in the letter two days after the PTI chief was arrested in the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case, which led to widespread deadly protests. "The people of Pakistan and I were shocked to see the video of this incident. The video shows the abuse of a former



prime minister. Imran Khan is a popular leader and the head of a major political party." He further added that law enforcement personnel had forcibly entered the Islamabad High Court, while the biometric process of Khan was going on. Earlier, President Alvi on Twitter also condemned the "heart-wrenching and regrettable" situation the country has descended into.

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Constitution a cornerstone of individual & collective freedoms, says Ashraf

The Old Assembly Hall at the State Bank building was declared as a national heritage on April 10 this year. Exhibition of historic milestones, speeches and newspaper articles from Dawn and Jang newspapers from 1973 were also displayed at the Parliament

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf on Thursday said the Constitution is a cornerstone of collective and individual freedoms. "The Constitution is the best document which ensures the provision of all freedoms to each citizen irrespective of caste, creed and colour," he said while addressing the closing Plenary Session "Building Inclusive and Equal Societies: Challenges and Opportunities" of International Constitutional Convention to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Constitution of Pakistan here at the Parliament House.

Prevez Ashraf paid rich tribute to the struggle of generations of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leadership for the continuity of democracy and supremacy of the Constitution. He said following the principles and struggle of two charismatic leaders - Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtrama Benazir Bhutto, who had sacrificed their lives for furthering the cause of democracy in Pakistan, would bring the country out of socio-economic challenges. He expressed gratitude to the parliamentary delegations of 14 countries

for attending the convention. Convener of the International Constitutional Convention Committee Nafeesa Shah presented the outcome document of the convention and briefly outline its basics. The participating countries resolved to ensure the provision of constitutional rights to all with a collective and consensus-based approach. It was expressed to work together for enhancing and promoting democratic values. It was further reiterated to ensure the supremacy of the constitution, along with fundamental rights to all. Later, Speaker Prevez Ashraf and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari distributed prizes among the winners of declamation contests, which were organised across the country. It may be mentioned that the International Constitutional Convention culminated the month-long golden jubilee celebrations of the Constitution where a Constitution App was also launched, besides releasing of a commemorative coin by the State Bank of Pakistan and the issuance of a Rs 50 Commemorative Stamp. A collection of historic speeches

made by prominent parliamentarians on the floor of the house was also displayed. The Constitution was included in the educational curriculum to educate youth about the importance, role and rights guaranteed by it. A wall of unsung heroes of democracy was inaugurated by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to commemorate the role, and the fight of people to preserve, further and restore democracy in Pakistan. A monument was also inaugurated at the Constitution Avenue to commemorate the golden jubilee of the Constitution. The Old Assembly Hall at the State Bank building was declared as a national heritage on April 10 this year. Exhibition of historic milestones, speeches and newspaper articles from Dawn and Jang newspapers from 1973 were also displayed at the Parliament.



ISLAMABAD : Deputy Chairman of Majlis Oli of the Republic of Tajikistan calls on Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf at Parliament House. —APP

Delegations of merged areas contractors call on Governor

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali Thursday said that provincial and federal governments are striving to ensure clarity in the tender awarding process in merged districts aiming facilitation of contractors and transparency in the execution of uplift projects.

He was talking to a 24-member delegation of the All Tribal Contractors Association led by its President, Zahir Jan in Governor House Peshawar. The delegation comprised contractors of merged districts including Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram and Waziristan. The delegation informed governor about their concerns and urged him to contact concerned authorities to resolve them. Speaking on the occasion, KP Governor assured cooperation to delegation and also highlighted sacrifices of tribal people for establishment of peace. He said that appropriate allocation would be made for uplift of tribal areas in coming budget and added that it would change the destiny of tribal areas and help addressing long-standing sense of deprivation of tribal people. He also urged tribal contractors to ensure quality and transparency in completing uplift and development schemes in merged districts.

Later a delegation of tribal districts tehsil chairmen and elders called on KP Governor and inform him about their concerns relating to uplift work and pending payments to owners of houses and shops destroyed in operations. A delegation of Swabi farmers also called on governor and highlighted their issues regarding the acquisition of cultivable land in their respective areas.

UBG's leaders commend Karachi police working

DNA

KARACHI: Former President Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), President United Business Group (UBG) Zubair Tufail and Secretary General UBG (Sindh Zone) Hanif Gohar on behalf of Karachi Police arrested Chinese residents in Malir.

He has paid tribute to the police department for foiling the attack attempt. In this operation, a terrorist was killed who was allegedly wearing a suicide jacket. According to the statement issued by the Central spokesperson of United Business Group Gulzar Feroze, UBG Leaders Zubair Tufail and Hanif Gohar said that in the past also in

Karachi. Efforts were made to affect foreign investment, but due to the timely action of the police, the terrorists were not only brought under control, but also brought to hell, and the successful police action of the previous day further strengthened the friendship between Pakistan and China.

It will be strengthened and confidence will increase. It should be clear that according to the police officials, the terrorist wanted to target the foreigners living in the Pakistan China Shipyard, however, the police were stationed around the yard on secret information, the terrorists were killed in the exchange of fire. A police constable was killed while a police constable was also injured. The terrorist had reached here

via the canal and was trying to enter the ship repair facility. Firing was done, the terrorist was killed in retaliatory firing. He said that in the past several attempts were made to sabotage the joint Pak-China project "CPEC", but he paid tribute to the Chinese government for continuing the project. Zubair Tufail and Hanif Gohar said that due to the ongoing unstable political situation in the country, the enemies of Pakistan get opportunities to act, but since the police and rangers are active and the terrorists are failing, such actions may affect foreign investment in the future. Therefore, security should be tightened at the entrance and exit points throughout the city so that the terrorist elements cannot succeed in their nefarious intentions.

ATC rejects interim bail of Parvez Elahi

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Thursday rejected the interim bail of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi in a case, registered under terrorism, attacking the police, rioting and other charges after he failed to appear before the court. ATC Judge Ijaz Ahmad Buttar conducted the proceedings, wherein Chaudhry Parvez Elahi did not appear despite expiry of his interim bail term. Mr. Elahi's counsel submitted an exemption application and pleaded with the court to exempt his client from personal appearance for one-day on medical grounds.

However, the court not only rejected the plea for exemption but also rejected the interim bail of Parvez Elahi due to his absence from the court. The Ghalib Market police had registered a case against the PTI president and others for allegedly attacking the police personnel during a raid at his house. On May 4, the court had granted interim bail to the PTI president till May 11, after the registration of the case.—APP

Govt takes action against PTI protesters

DNA

PESHAWAR: The government has taken rapid action against violent protesters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the institutions, and police were mobilized to identify the workers participating in such violent protests. According to a police spokesman, "Violation of vandalism, arson, road closures and looting of those delivering government and non-government property has started. The data of all miscreants are also being collected." "Actions will also be taken against those who call for protest." "Action will also be taken against those calling for protests and supporting the protests on social media as well," the spokesman added.

Internet suspension results in Rs1.6bn loss

DNA

KARACHI: The suspension of mobile broadband services in Pakistan due to political unrest has caused significant financial losses for digital service providers, the government and online services.

According to telecommunication sources, the suspension has resulted in an estimated revenue loss of Rs1.6 billion for telecom operators, while the government has lost around Rs570 million in tax revenue. Individuals who depend on digital apps and payments have also suffered a significant loss in earnings. Citizens and businesses have urged the government to restore mobile data ser-

VICES, insisting that its absence was leading to great economic costs. The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday issued notices to federal government and others over the suspension of internet services in the country as protests broke out following the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan. Hearing the petition, filed by Lawyer Abuzar Salman Khan Niazi, the court summoned a reply from authorities by May 22. In the petition, Lawyer Abuzar Salman pleaded the court to order restoration of internet services and social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. "This right has been conferred on the people of

Pakistan under Article 19-A of the Constitution. The same cannot be abridged, curtailed and eliminated through imposition of blanket ban, prohibition orders. Thus, the impugned blockage of the internet service is liable to be set aside," the petition stated. Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Wednesday said that internet services across the country will remain suspended for an indefinite period. The services were suspended as protests erupted after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's arrest in Al-Qadir Trust case. The decision to block mobile broadband services was taken on the directives of the Ministry of Interior, it added.

Angiography machine activated in KIHD

KARACHI: Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman Thursday said that after a gap of 16 years, angiography machine has been activated at the Karachi Institute of Heart Diseases (KIHD) and treatment of patients has started.

Department of Cardiology and Cardiac Medical and Surgical ICU have been added to KIHD after which the facility

of diagnosis and immediate medical assistance will be available to the patients of a large area of Central District. He said this while addressing the ceremony organized on the occasion of signing the MoU of Research General at KIHD. Earlier, Administrator Karachi inaugurated the Department of Cardiology and Medical and Surgical ICU Ward in KIHD. The KIHD

is the first hospital in Sindh which is going to publish a research journal on cardiology which will be a milestone in the field of heart diseases. KMC runs 13 major hospitals and Abbasi Shaheed Hospital is also being improved. Every possible effort is made to maintain the facilities that have been made functional in the medical institutions of KMC.—APP



KARACHI: Ambassador of the Republic of Korea Suh Sangpyo along with President Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry Mohammed Tariq Yousuf, Senior Vice President Touseef Ahmed, Vice President Haris Agar, KCCI Managing Committee Members and others group photo at the conclusion of "Korea Pakistan Business Forum 2023" organized here at local hotel on Wednesday. DN

Resolution passed to declare Sindh-Georgia as sister states

He also invited the member of House of representatives to visit the remains of ancient civilization of Moenjo Daro

KARACHI: Farooq Mughal member House of representatives of Georgia, USA presented the resolution passed by Assembly of Georgia regarding declaration of Sindh and Georgia as sister states to Acting Governor Sindh Agha Siraj Khan Durrani here Thursday at the Governor House. Farooq Mughal along with his delegation briefed Acting Governor about the purposes and benefits of declaring both Sindh and

Georgia as sister states. After approval from Sindh Cabinet, this resolution would be presented in provincial Assembly of Sindh for its consent, he added. Under the resolution, after declaration as sister states close cooperation in Health, Education, Business Development and Environment would be possible while it would also ensure mutual understanding between Universities of both Sindh and Georgia and students

scholarships would also be ensured, he further added. Acting Governor Sindh Agha Siraj Khan Durrani while speaking on the occasion said that Sindh was the first province to support creation of Pakistan and three members of Sindh Assembly resolution with their blood to convey to British rulers that Muslims of the sub-continent want a separate homeland for

themselves. He said that the passing of resolution from Georgia Assembly was a welcome step as it would ensure close relations between Sindh and Georgia. Both can get benefit from each other in various sectors, he observed. Acting Governor Sindh further said that Sindh was land of Sufis and Saints, who always preached love and peace. He also invited the member of House of repre-

sentatives to visit the remains of ancient civilization of Moenjo Daro. The delegation members included Zeeshan Altaf Chairman America Pakistan Business Development forum, Syed Naseer Wajahat Co-founder Global Section, Umer Farooq member America Pakistan Business Development Forum, Javed Mirza Director Public Affairs, Sumair Shamsi and Moiz Kashan.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MAY

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



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Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Airlines

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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Hospitals

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RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
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Shifa International 4603666



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CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
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Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Convention stresses promoting social justice

The speakers stressed the role of parliament as the people's representative and the need to prevent non-constitutional forces from interfering

ISLAMABAD: The political leaders, parliamentarians and experts on Thursday emphasized the importance of Pakistan's Constitution in establishing democracy, protecting minority rights and promoting social justice at the International Parliamentary Convention being organized by National Assembly Secretariat in connection with Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The speakers stressed the role of parliament as the people's representative and the need to prevent non-constitutional forces from interfering. The UN Charter and international laws were cited as means for resolving disputes. Discussions included the need to learn from past mistakes, and to promote teachings of Islam, which encourage tolerance and non-discrimination.

The session focused on threats to the constitution, including its suspension and abrogation, and the impact of emergency rules on democracy and the rule of law. It also discussed ways to

navigate and overcome crises that threaten democracy, such as national security threats, social unrest, and political and economic instability, and the role of constitutional principles and institutions in promoting resilience and stability during times of crisis. Senior leader of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Mohsin Shah Nawaz Ranjha stated that the Constitution of Pakistan guaranteed rights to people of all religions and had taken into account all future challenges. Chairing the first session titled Constitution in the age of Crises: Navigating Challenges," in the International Convention as part of Pakistan's Golden Jubilee of the Constitution, he also highlighted that parliamentary discussions assist in comprehending the Constitution. Moreover, he emphasized that it was imperative to practice tolerance, social justice, and protect the rights of minorities in accordance with Islamic teachings and the Constitution of Pakistan to ensure effective democratic governance. According to the Constitution of

Pakistan, there is a significant link between the fundamental rights of the people and the Holy Quran. The Constitution is designed to encompass and address all situations. The Kyrgyzstan representative expressed gratitude for the Speaker of the National Assembly, Raja Pervez Ashraf, for organizing the convention. Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan are both interested in boosting cooperation in tourism, healthcare, trade, and economy. They have recently signed the Charter of Operation to strengthen their collaboration. The representative also welcomed new investment prospects between the two nations. Speaking on the occasion, Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed emphasized the significance of the Constitution in establishing a functional democracy in Pakistan. He highlighted the parliament's role as a representative of its country and people and warned against constitutional violations and non-constitutional forces. He also mentioned the provisions for resolving dis-

putes between countries under the United Nations Charter and international laws. The senator also emphasized the importance of the Constitution in forming the basis for a functioning democracy in Pakistan. He emphasized that the parliament served as a representative of its country and people, and there was consensus among political parties based on the Constitution. This democratic process was the purpose of Pakistan's creation, and it relied on the foundation of democratic rule and the Constitution, he added. However, Pakistan has a history of constitutional violations, such as judicial activism, military coups, and amendments targeting specific individuals. Similarly, other countries, like the United States and India, have also violated their own Constitutions. For example, the US violated its Constitution by going to war in Iraq in 2003 without proper validation from Congress, and the Supreme Court's decision in the President George Bush vs. Al Gore presidential election was a violation of the Constitution as it declared Bush the winner by a

5-4 majority. India has also had various violations, including the promulgation of emergency by Indra Gandhi and blatant violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir. The Senator noted that under the United Nations Charter and international laws, there were provisions for determining relations and resolving disputes between countries. The International Convention discussed various challenges related to crises in different parts of the world. The interference of non-constitutional forces have significant effects. In his address to the plenary session, Khalid Mahmood, a member of the British Parliament, stated that democracy was not an easy thing to achieve, but rather a difficult task. Understanding democracy is fundamental. According to the constitution, representatives will remain in office for five years, and it is imperative that this be implemented. How can anyone talk about removing someone who has been elected for five years? We do not have a written constitution in Britain. —Agencies

Police net five drug peddlers, bootleggers

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers and bootleggers conducted raids in different areas and rounded up five accused on recovery of over two kg charras and 35 litres of liquor, said a police spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that Wah Cantt police held a Waqas on recovery of 1560 grams of charras. Race Course police rounded up Abdul Hadi for having 600 grams of charras. Naseerabad police in their operation managed to net an accused namely Waqas with 15 litres of liquor while Kahuta police nabbed two accused, Shakeel and Safer for possessing 20 litres of liquor. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added. —APP

FSC reserves verdict in transgenders case

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Shariat Court on Thursday reserved its decision on the petitions regarding the rights of transgenders. A two-member FSC bench comprised of Chief Justice Syed Muhammad Anwar and Justice Khadim Hussain M. Sheikh reserved the decision after the completion of arguments by all parties. The FSC reserved the decision after consecutive hearings. Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Mian Faisal Irfan presented the written position of the federal government while the Ministry of Religious Affairs submitted the Hajj policy for transgenders to the court. Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan, Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (F), journalist Oriya Maqbool Jan and others had filed petitions against the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018. —APP

Amin appreciates GSMA's role

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin- ul-Haque on Thursday appreciated the active role of global system for mobile communication (GSMA) to promote and facilitate the telecommunication industry in Pakistan. The Minister in a meeting with the head of public policy, GSMA Asia Pacific Jeanette Whyte discussed various issues including the initiatives and policies of the Ministry of IT regarding the telecommunication sector in Pakistan. —APP

Pakistan-Oman cordial ties deeply entrenched

ISLAMABAD :National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf on Thursday said that Pakistan and Oman enjoyed cordial ties deeply entrenched in shared values of brotherhood and socio-economic interests. Talking to Deputy Chairman State Council of Oman Sheikh Dr. Al-Khattab bin Ghalib bin Ali Al-Hinai, he said Pakistani diaspora in Oman was playing a key role for its socio-economic development. He appreciated the Oman people and government for hosting a large number of Pakistani workers gracefully. The speaker appreciated Oman's participation in golden jubilee celebrations of the Constitution.

The Oman Parliamentary delegation is in an official visit in Pakistan to attend International constitutional convention organized by National Assembly Secretariat in connection with Golden Jubilee celebration



of Constitution.

Discussing nature of friendly ties between the two sides, the speaker said, "Pakistan attaches high importance to its fraternal ties with Oman. The bilateral relations are historical, deep-rooted and based on

commonalities of faith, culture and traditions." He also appreciated Oman's role in strengthening peace and stability in the region. Dr. Al-Khattab appreciated the kind remarks of the speaker and said that Oman considered Pakistan as its

brother. He also stressed on the need to enhance parliamentary contacts via Parliamentary Friendship Group to explore avenues of cooperation in diverse sector particularly climate change. —APP

COMSTECH and Ibadat University enter into MoU

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH) Ibadat International University, Islamabad signed memorandum of understanding. The Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary and the Rector of the Ibadat International University, Prof. Dr. Syed Amir Gilani signed the MoU at COMSTECH Secretariat. Both institutions

have agreed to promote and strengthen cooperation by providing a platform for collaborative activities in the relevant fields of mutual interest. Under this MoU both institutions will develop and implement joint educational and scientific programs in the field



of science, technology and innovation. They will collaborate in organizing national and international events, such as workshops, conferences, symposia, seminars, exhibitions, training course. The Ibadat international university will join COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence (CCoE) as Associate Member and will register at OIC Technology and Innovation Portal. Ibadat International University will be able to get benefit from the COMSTECH Distinguished Scholars Programme. COMSTECH will arrange visits of distinguished scholars to Ibadat International University to deliver lectures, short courses, conducting workshops.

Naveed Qamar for barter trade system

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry organized a Pakistan-Ethiopia Business Forum in its auditorium during the visit of a high-level Ethiopian delegation to Islamabad. Syed Naveed Qamar, Federal Minister for Commerce and Misganu Arega Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia were the Chief Guests. Fauzia Amin, Minister of State for Innovation & Technology and other dignitaries were also present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, Syed Naveed Qamar, Federal Minister for Commerce emphasized the significance of the barter trade system for enhancing trade volume. He said that Pakistan is a potential market for foreign sectors and urged that the Ethiopian business delegation should explore Pakistan for


JVs and investment. He said that Pakistan's Look Africa policy would cover the whole of Africa to improve business relations with it. He said that Pakistan is going to launch a B2B Barter Trade Policy and Ethiopian entrepreneurs should take advantage of it to improve trade with Pakistan. He stressed that private sectors of both countries should finalize business contracts and sign business deals. He stressed that the embassies of both countries should focus on easy business visa policies to strengthen bilateral trade ties. Misganu Arega Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia said that Ethiopia attaches great importance to promoting business relations with Pakistan. He said that Ethiopia is the fastest growing economy in Africa and has

made a 10 years economic development plan. He emphasized that Pakistani investors should explore his country for investment. He said that the direct flights of Ethiopian airline with Pakistan would contribute to improve B2B and P2P relations between both countries. He said that the delegation has found Pakistan a heaven for commercial and manufacturing activities.




Educational activities in ICT schools and colleges disrupted

ISLAMABAD: The educational activities in schools and colleges working under the ambit of Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) across the city have been severely affected due to the recent law and order situation in the country, which stemmed from the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf Chief Imran Khan. The law and order situation in the country has resulted in a chain reaction of events that have left students, parents, and teachers in a state of confusion and frustration. The controlling office of the educational institutions of Islamabad, FDE, has come under fire for its lack of effective communication and inability to provide timely information to students and parents regarding suspension of academic activities. The educational institutions have suspended bus service without prior notification to the students. The sudden and unexplained halt in bus services has left students stranded and unaware of whether classes are continuing or not. The lack of decisive action and effective communication from the authorities has compounded the problem, exacerbated the suffering of students and parents. Nazia, a concerned mother whose son studies at Islamabad Model College for Boys in G-6/3, while talking to APP expressed her frustration over the situation. She told how both she and her son waited at the bus stop for an hour, only to realize that the bus service had been discontinued without any prior intimation from the college. This lack of communication caused unnecessary inconvenience and suffering for both the students and parents, she added. Meanwhile, a concerned teacher, speaking on the condition of anonymity, shared her own experience of the chaos. Living in Soan Garden, she encountered road closures near Faizabad due to ongoing protests. After waiting for a considerable time, she was compelled to return home, leaving her school unattended. The teacher expressed disappointment over the lack of leadership and prompt decision-making displayed by the education department in such critical situations. The educational institutions should be closed in such a situation, she added. Muhammad Imran, a resident of sector G-14 said, "There were no academic activities in the schools yesterday. The absence of clear directives and guidance from the schools has left me in a difficult position, uncertain about whether to send my children to schools or keep them at home. The plight of parents like me is exacerbated by the lack of formal communication regarding the continuation of classes. The schools should have effective communication with parents." —APP



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Briefs

PFC to take part in 6th China Intel Import Expo

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) will take part in 6th China International Import Expo to discover business opportunities and explore new markets access for Pakistani products.

In a statement Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of PFC Mian Kashif Ashfaq said, "PFC along with Chenone will be participating in this mega event," said a press release issued here on Thursday.

He said, "Chenone will also exhibit its high-quality international standards products to capture their share in the global market."

He said, "It's an excellent opportunity to showcase local products and develop business deals with international buyers."

He said, "Around over a hundred companies from the country will be exhibiting their products and this expo will also offer professional buyers a sourcing platform with a wide variety of products ranging from basics to the most creative and qualitative."

Mian Kashif Ashfaq said, "PFC and Chenone have already attended several other international fairs in the US, China, Italy, Sri Lanka, etc, and introduced its products which are in great demand."

He hoped for getting orders from the foreign market.

"The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) is facilitating the manufacturers of export products," he added.

He said, "I will also hold a series of marathon meetings with tycoons for investment to avail government unprecedented special package for foreign investors."—APP

Business community condemns politics of violence

ISLAMABAD: The business community Thursday condemning politics of violence warned such anti state activities of disgruntled unscrupulous elements would further inflict colossal loss to bleak economy and deepen economic crunch in the country.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists and traders led by Shahid Nazir, Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis said that politics of confrontation and violence was not solution to any issue except giving birth to chaos to serve the nefarious design of their foreign masters.

He said prevailing poor state of economy could not afford such political instability. He said it was established fact worldwide that political stability was pre-requisite for sustainable economic growth, prosperity and development in every sphere of life, said a press release.

He said business community was already suffering a lot due to imposition of ban on imports including imports of raw materials which he said slowed down economic growth.—APP

PTI leadership's conduct to fuel protests'

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday said the way Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s leadership fueled protests and agitations was a very irresponsible and dangerous reaction.

In a series of tweets, she lambasted the PTI leadership for triggering violence across the country after the arrest of its party chairman. Senator Rehman said the leadership of PTI could have controlled the violent protests in time, but it was a pity that the violence of the agitating workers was not even condemned. She added that the PTI leadership told the violent protesters to "set fire, burn, break up" but later showed indifference to the violent activists instead of stopping them. "Systematic attacks on sensitive institutions, public and private properties. This was not the reaction of a political party at all.—APP



ISLAMABAD: State Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia Ambassador Misganu Arega witnesses coverage of the Ethiopian embassy event in various newspapers, on the occasion of the formal inauguration of the Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad.—DNA

Chinese Company ensures safe drinking water for students

According to Runlan, under the framework of China's "Belt and Road" initiative and in line with the principles of green development, Chinese companies are actively contributing to global sustainable development

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese environmental technology company, Zhongke Runlan Environmental Technology (Beijing) Co., Ltd., in collaboration with international organizations, has donated reverse osmosis (RO) water treatment equipment to Islamabad Model College for Girls in Pakistan to address the school's water quality challenges.

Last month, a team of engineers from the company arrived in Pakistan to provide technical guidance and install the equipment at the school, according to China Economic Net (CEN). According to Runlan, under the framework of China's "Belt and Road" initiative and in line with the principles of green development, Chinese companies are actively contributing to global sustainable development by sharing China's clean energy equipment, technology, and services with the world. Upon their arrival in Pakistan, the team of technicians promptly ventured to the site to carry

out water sample testing. Startling results emerged from their assessments: "After our testing, we found that the electrical conductivity of the water sample reached 2330µs/cm, indicating a high concentration of harmful ion impurities far exceeding international standards," stated a representative from Runlan Environmental Technology. Pakistan is one of the countries facing severe water pollution issues, particularly when it comes to drinking water. In certain regions, due to ad-

verse natural conditions and improper utilization of water resources, the groundwater contains a high concentration of harmful substances, rendering it unsuitable for consumption. This directly poses a threat to the drinking water safety of local residents. Islamabad Model College for Girls, located in the rural area of Tarnol in Islamabad, is one such school grappling with this issue. The school lacks proper water filtration equipment, forcing some children to bring their

own drinking water from home every day. Unfortunately, not all children have access to clean water facilities at home. The team started their interaction with the school staff by explaining the basic theoretical knowledge about the RO reverse osmosis water treatment equipment. They then proceeded to demonstrate the specific wiring steps and testing procedures to the school. After undergoing treatment with the RO reverse osmosis water purification equipment, the electrical

conductivity of the water samples decreased to 42µs/cm, meeting international standards. "We are delighted to see children are now drinking safe and reliable water, this matters the most," representative form Zhongke Runlan expressed to the reporter. Information in this article comes from third party providers. This website does not provide explicit or implied warranty for such information and is not liable for any losses directly or indirectly caused by using such information.

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Police has arrested a total of 80 miscreants who were damaging government and public properties in reaction to the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chief Imran Khan. According to the Spokesman of Islamabad Police, the violent protesters were involved in setting fire to the Tarnol Railway Station, Aerial firing and pulling the track of Pakistan Railways from different points of the Federal Capital. He said earlier, Islamabad Police had arrested around 108 protesters involved in arson. Meanwhile, in a tweet, the Islamabad Police said all the roads were open for travellers and the flow of traffic was normal. The Islamabad Police has also urged all citizens to respect the law as Section 245 was in force in the federal capital for the safety of life and property of the masses as well as the security of the government institutions.

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He said Pakistan Army, Rangers, Frontier Constabulary and Islamabad Police were authorized to take action against the culprits involved in any kind of illegal activities. Prove to be a good citizen of the country and respect the law. The law is equal for all and it is the responsibility of everyone to obey it, Islamabad Police said.—APP

Mall Road Saddar closed for vehicular traffic

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Indian troops continue violent CASOs in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: Indian troops continued their violent cordon and search operations (CASOs) in different districts of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), subjecting the residents to severe harassment. According to Kashmir Media Service on Thursday, Indian troops and paramilitary personnel continued their so-called operation on the 7th consecutive day, today, in different areas including Kesari in Rajouri district. The operation was launched on Friday morning after the killing of five Indian forces personnel in a blast at Kesari. Later, the troops in a vindictive action martyred an innocent youth in a fake encounter in the same area. Indian army and paramilitary personnel continued their siege and search operations on the second consecutive day, today, in Khakha Nawar, Purani Poonch, Jernally Mohalla and Poonch town in the Poonch district. The search operation also continued on the 22nd consecutive day in several areas of the district. Meanwhile, Indian troops have been put on alert with the strengthening of checkpoints around the security installations in Akhnour, Samba, Kathua and other places in the Jammu region.

Officials said Indian paramilitary forces had been deployed in strength across the occupied territory to check vehicles at every checkpoint and all roads leading to Jammu city were being manned by a large number of forces personnel. They said the night patrolling had also been increased.—APP

China, Pak dialogue significant to the region

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a new push to achieve new heights in strategic partnership, the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and China co-chaired the fourth round of the Pakistan-China Foreign Minister's Strategic Dialogue in Islamabad on 6 May.

The dialogue marks a significant milestone in the history of the All-Weather Strategic Partnership between the two countries and holds significance for the region, according to an article carried by Gwadar Pro on Thursday.

Taking place during the first visit of Chinese FM Qin Gang to Pakistan since assuming office last year, this biennial dialogue serves as a platform for both countries to address regional and global challenges through a collaborative approach in a diverse range of areas of mutual interests.

The Strategic Dialogue underscores the mutual commitment of China and Pakistan to sustain their strategic partnership amidst the growing global

turbulence. The year 2023 has been a busy and proactive year for Pakistan and China as both countries continue to engage in multiple diplomatic and security-related consultations. This move speaks volumes about both countries' diplomatic prowess and commitment to regional stability. Earlier, both Foreign Ministers made a significant appearance in India for the SCO Foreign Minister's meeting. These engagements demonstrate the strategic depth of the bilateral relationship between the two countries. Last month, the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and China made a telephone conversation. These multifaceted connections are the ways for the senior leadership to discuss bilateral, regional, and global issues and to seek a consensus on responses to mutual threats and agendas. Strategic dialogue frameworks like these offer the foundation for deepening political, economic, security, and military cooperation, ultimately leading to enhanced understanding and harmonious responses to shared challenges. Pakistan is grappling with

diverse internal and external challenges that pose a significant threat to the stability and progress of the country. With a population of nearly 230 million people, the nation faces severe political and socio-economic crises, compounded by the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating floods triggered by global climate change in 2022. To overcome these challenges, Pakistan desperately needs international support and assistance.

One of Pakistan's most pressing issues is building its foreign exchange reserves and addressing debt servicing, which requires substantial liquidity. China's unwavering commitment to financing the CPEC projects enables Pakistan to achieve its development objectives. The economic dimension of the Pak-China strategic partnership continues to soar, despite the mounting challenges. Looking to the future, Pakistan and China are interested in extending CPEC into Afghanistan, connecting Central Asian Republics with Pakistan via roads and railways.

Govt committed to achieve polio-free Pakistan: PM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that the government was committed to purge the country of the deadly polio virus. The prime minister, in a meeting with a delegation of Rotary Foundation, headed by Chairman of International PolioPlus Committee Michael McGovern, said he would continue to personally monitor the efforts for the elimination of polio from the country. He said the services of the Rotary Foundation and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for the polio-free Pakistan were appreciable.

He told the delegation that the government was ensuring the security of polio workers. The prime minister appreciated Rotary International for the development of a housing project for the victims of the 2022 floods. He instructed the authorities concerned to devise a comprehensive strategy for the upcoming polio vaccination drive.

The prime minister was told that this year, Rotary International and other partner organisations had allocated \$15 million for anti-polio drives.—APP

Railways to complete Sibi-Harnai track by next month

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways was putting maximum effort to complete the reconstruction and renovation work on the strategic Sibi-Harnai railway track with the assistance of the National Logistics Cell (NLC) and hopefully, it would be operational by the end of next month. "The railway track was made dysfunctional after a series of bomb blasts which damaged as many as 22 steel bridges in the highly rugged and inaccessible area," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said the track was badly damaged in 2006 and so far about 99 per cent of the reconstruction work of the project was completed and the remaining work would be completed soon. The official said that Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique had also taken a keen interest in the projects and directed the concerned official to complete the project at the earliest. In March 2016, he said that a contract for rehabilitation and restoration of the Sibi-Harnai railway track along with the up-gradation of railway stations was awarded to the NLC as no other construction firm agreed to undertake the project due to the prevalent security situation and enormity of the task. During the initial survey of the track, the official said it was found that 22 steel bridges of different sizes were destroyed and required replacement. He said in addition, massive river protection work was to be undertaken to save the infrastructure. The quantum of work, non-availability of road access, and requisite resources made the project a formidable challenge, he added. The official said undertaking the project with the sincerity of purpose and utmost sense of duty, NLC officers, engineers, and construction workers braved harsh weather conditions and a hostile security environment and subsequently completed 99 per cent of the rehabilitation works in record time. The major task was the fabrication of steel bridges. The steel bridges were fabricated in Karachi and were transported to the project site after being painstakingly assembled by NLC engineers in a befitting manner, he added.—APP

AIOU commences exams of postgraduate programs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is conducting examinations of postgraduate programs (MA, M.Sc, M.Com, MBA/MPA, MLIS, M.Ed, and Postgraduate diplomas) offered in the autumn 2022 semester from May 22. The date sheet is available on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk), said a press release issued here on Thursday. Roll number slips have been uploaded to students' CMS portal and dispatched to the students at their addresses as well. Moreover, admissions for the second phase of the semester of spring 2023 are open. Fresh students can apply for admission till May 18 with late fee charges while continuing students can enroll themselves till May 25. The admission form and prospectus are available on the university website.



Police arrest eight for possessing illegal weapons

RAWALPINDI, May 11 (APP): Rawalpindi district police on the directives of Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi Amir Khan Niazi conducted raids in different areas and netted eight accused for possessing illegal weapons. According to a police spokesman, Gungmandi, Civil Lines and Saddar Wah police rounded up eight accused namely Munir, Mehwaj, Hamza, Khuram Shehzad, Bilal Azram, Faizan, Shehbaz and Muhammad Azram and recovered seven pistols 30 bore, a dagger and ammunition from their possession.—APP

UBG expresses unwavering solidarity with armed forces

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The United Business Group in the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry on Thursday expressed unwavering solidarity with the armed forces for frustrating the evil designs of anti-state elements. Chairing a meeting to take stock of the current state of affairs, Chairman United Business Group Shahzad Ali Malik said the government, the armed forces and the people were on one page with utmost discipline and unflinching faith to defend the geographical frontiers and stamp out the menace of all kinds of

violence from the country. He said that the Pakistan armed forces, one of the best in the world, should not be maligned into politics to achieve the nefarious designs and vested interests of their foreign masters, said a press release. The patriotic business community would thwart such targeted specific anti-state stances by a section of disgruntled and unscrupulous elements, he added. Malik further said, "Our armed forces are our greatest asset as they not only offer their precious lives on battlefields but also always remain in a state of high preparedness to undertake the re-

sponsibility of working as a cohesive force in very challenging situations, may it be horrifying earthquakes or the devastating floods." He said that Pakistan was faced with multiple challenges on the political, economic and security fronts and was passing through a critical phase of history. He stressed, "With the proverbial resilience of our people, we are destined to overcome this challenge and will soon emerge as a stronger country." Shahzad Malik said that a peaceful environment was a prerequisite for strengthening of the national economy and democratic system.

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Consequences for Trump

A 79-year-old advice columnist – along with a handful of other brave women who testified in her case – has done what legal and political institutions have not yet managed: held the former president Donald Trump accountable in law for his actions, and for his lies. In finding that he sexually abused E Jean Carroll in the 1990s, and subsequently defamed her, albeit not finding him liable for rape, the jury in her civil suit laid down an important marker. Though it awarded \$5m (£4m) to Ms Carroll, money cannot erase the initial attack, the intrusive memories she has endured or her continued avoidance of romantic or sexual relationships. Mr Trump compounding the damage when he attacked her as a “wack job” pursuing a “hoax” after she described what had happened. It required courage to take on a man who was one of the most powerful people in the world, who may be so again, and who attracts and encourages irrational and aggressive support. She has received death threats, and the judge advised jurors to remain anonymous “for a long time”. Asked if she regretted bringing the case, Ms Carroll replied: “About five times a day.” It is too easy to write off this hard-earned victory by focusing solely on the fact that its impact on voters is likely to be limited. No one imagines it will sink Mr Trump’s political fortunes. His ability to float past or even capitalise upon his worst acts, transmuting them into fundraising and campaigning capital, is both remarkable and depressing. It would be wrong to imagine that any case could fix a broken political system, or, indeed, root out entrenched misogyny. It is a sign of just how bad things are that it is entirely likely that the Republicans will go into the 2024 presidential election with a candidate found by a court to be a sexual abuser – and that, if they do, he may well win. This was a victory for Ms Carroll and, as she has said, for other women. It reflects the legacy of the #MeToo movement, sometimes written off as a blip due to the backlash against it. The journalist herself credited the flood of allegations about powerful, predatory men with persuading her to speak out. It also led to the New York law that temporarily lifted the statute of limitations on such allegations, making her case possible. Change does not always come in immediate, dramatic and decisive fashion. It may be slow, halting, partial and unsatisfactory, yet nonetheless real and significant. Mr Trump now faces mounting jeopardy on multiple legal fronts. Whatever the outcome of other cases, this one still counts.

Violence must stop

At least eight people had been killed, as many as 290 were injured, and over 1,900 enraged protesters were rounded up in running battles with law enforcers across the country till Thursday, as an accountability court in Islamabad handed over the custody of their leader Imran Khan to NAB for eight days in connection with the Al Qadir Trust case.

The violent protests provoked by the PTI chairman’s arrest entered the second day on Wednesday, as police and PTI supporters engaged in bloody clashes throughout the day that resulted in damage to several government installations, including police stations. Late Wednesday night, PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry and Shah Mahmood Qureshi were arrested hours after central Secretary General Asad Umar taken into custody. In a bid to control the worsening situation, the government called in the military in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad. The deployment came a day after protesters stormed the residence of the corps commander in Lahore and tore down a gate of GHQ in Rawalpindi. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto urged the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to end the “violent” protests that erupted following party chief Imran Khan’s arrest two days ago. Addressing a press conference in Karachi, the PPP chief advised the PTI “not to make matters worse” terming the protests “completely unjustified”. “It is violent and has created a scenario that has necessitated some serious conversations,” the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman said, adding that “those involved [in violence] will be held accountable”. Bilawal’s presser comes a day after the army warned that any further attack on it or state institutions or any law enforcement agency will be dealt with full force. “May 9 will be remembered as a dark chapter,” read the statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

It is unfortunate that the already hostile political environment in the country has come to this point. This unprecedented turn of events is not in favour of the any party or the state. For their part, the Army and the government has shown tolerance during the initial stage of violence, now its upto the PTI leadership to bring the momentum down and call for end to violent protests. Political leaders have been facing arrests and courts since decades. However, this show of defiance and anarchy is somewhat new, which must be condemned. At the same time, the government should address the concerns of PTI leaders and workers regarding the arrest and safety of Imran Khan. Enough damage has been done already, now efforts must be done to let the peace prevail.

Pakistan and global geopolitical changes

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Pakistan is a country located in South Asia, bordered by India to the east, Afghanistan to the west, Iran to the southwest, and China to the north. It is strategically located at the crossroads of the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia, making it a significant player in the changing geopolitics of the region and the world

Great powers seek to achieve their political goals by controlling the geography of the world. Today, the number of political actors seeking influence is increasing, and the domains of political competition and cooperation are expanding. Countries are seeking to gain strategic advantages by cooperating to address common technological, economic, and environmental challenges. The world is becoming more interconnected in terms of flows of information, capital, and people, and countries are becoming more dependent on their neighbors and the international community for greater leverage.

Pakistan is a country located in South Asia, bordered by India to the east, Afghanistan to the west, Iran to the southwest, and China to the north. It is strategically located at the crossroads of the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia, making it a significant player in the changing geopolitics of the region and the world. Therefore, Pakistan seeks to improve relations with China, Russia, America, and other Western countries in this changing world so that it can succeed in geopolitical rebalancing. However, Pakistan’s efforts to restore relations with the West will not succeed unless it accepts the imperatives of economic reform and political stability. In 2011, relations between Pakistan and America were weak due to the killing of two young Pakistanis by a contractor of the Central Intelligence Agency and the unilateral US action in North Pakistan, which embarrassed the government and army of Pakistan. At the same time, Pakistan’s traditionally national security elite moved to deepen its partnership with China, already a long-standing partner. The two countries stepped up their defense partnership and launched the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a bilateral part of the Belt and Road Initiative. However, poorly negotiated projects and increased imports led to uneven growth, balance of payments crisis, and an unbalanced economic partnership. Since 2011, Pakistan has also expanded its ties with other middle and major powers, including Turkey

and Russia, and its strategic partnership with China. However, Pakistan’s dependence on China in both the economic and military sectors began to burden the Pakistan Army, while efforts to reach the Biden administration accelerated after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. By the end of the 1960s, the US and Pakistan had begun trying to reset relations, but Pakistani officials appear unable to accept the new, limited terms of the relationship. Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari recently completed his fifth visit to the United States in the last year. During a visit in December, Zardari spent 10 days in the US and only managed to speak to Foreign Minister Antony Blinken on the phone, despite both men being in Washington. In contrast, India’s national security adviser Ajit Doval made a short scheduled visit to Washington earlier this year, meeting with at least three cabinet members as well as senior military officials, including agency heads. The chairman was also included. Pakistan’s military appears eager to get Washington’s attention, claiming that it could fall prey to a “Chinese debt trap” due to China’s request to build a port at Gwadar, which will serve as the operating station for the port operated by China. There has also been speculation that a Chinese naval base may be established in the future. However, this inconsistent and ambiguous policy could potentially damage Pakistan’s relationship with Beijing, as the military may be ignoring the advice of the country’s diplomats. Another difficulty in promoting US-Pakistan cooperation is that Pakistani-American advocacy groups and members of Congress have issued statements against human rights violations in Pakistan in response to the crackdown against the party of Pakistani expatriate Prime Minister Imran Khan, and they are mobilizing to take action. Pakistan’s rulers must address the imbalance in their relationship with Beijing while also understanding Washington’s indifference to their strategic situation. For example, a new report by the Center for a New American Security recommends that in the event of tensions on the India-China

border, the United States should “stand ready to provide full support to India” and Pakistan should be made aware of its “need”. However, after India’s unilateral annexation of Kashmir, how can Pakistan remain neutral?

Pakistan should focus on domestic economic reforms and human development while avoiding geopolitical and regional political divisions in pursuit of its geopolitical interests. Saudi Arabia is flush with cash, and while India is a lower-middle-income country, it is a huge market for American investors. Both are able to attract Fortune 500 CEOs and titans of finance to forums in their countries even as they side with the US on oil prices or human rights. In recent years, Pakistan has been facing a number of challenges, including a struggling economy, internal security threats, and tensions with neighboring countries such as India and Afghanistan. However, it has also been seeking to position itself as a key player in the region, particularly in light of the evolving power dynamics and changing geopolitical landscape. One of the key factors driving Pakistan’s efforts to increase its strategic importance is its partnership with China, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The CPEC is a massive infrastructure development project that aims to connect China’s western region to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan, and it has the potential to significantly boost Pakistan’s economy and regional influence. Furthermore, its partnership with China, Pakistan has also been seeking to strengthen its relationships with other regional and global powers, such as the United States, Russia, and Saudi Arabia. It has also been playing a key role in facilitating peace talks in neighboring Afghanistan, which is another important factor in its regional strategic calculus. Pakistan’s position in the changing geopolitics of the world is complex and multifaceted, with a range of domestic and international factors at play. While it faces significant challenges, it also has the potential to play a key role in shaping the future of the region and beyond. Once Pakistan puts itself on the path of sustainable development, the world will come to it.

Pakistan’s energy security: Challenges and opportunities

Amina A Ghafoor



We will start with a brief review over Pakistan’s Indicative Generation Capacity Expansion Plan IGCEP 2022-31. Current Installed Energy is 43,775 MW as on 30 June 2022 and targeted energy generation is 69,372 MW, respectively by the year 2031. Here is the summary of plan; we must appreciate that government is focused and planning to overcome energy crisis. Few main Strength of Indicative Generation Capacity Expansion plan (IGCEP) 2021 ~ 2030

Pakistan has many reasons to worry about its energy security: lack of a sufficient Strategic Petroleum Reserve, severe pollution conditions and environmental problems, skyrocketing inflation, political instability, dramatic fluctuation of global energy prices and rising domestic energy prices, and severe shortages of electricity and water. Facing these immense pressures and challenges. The challenges facing the Pakistani government are to better manage its dependence on oil and to define a sustainable energy security path, rather than to simply pursue “oil independence.” With a lack of continuous attention and clear strategy to energy policy undercutting Pakistan’s foreign policy and economic security, integrating energy security issues with other aspects of Pakistan’s foreign policy remains a challenge for Islamabad. R. B Fuller said; There are no energy crises, only the crisis of ignorance.

We will start with a brief review over Pakistan’s Indicative Generation Capacity Expansion Plan IGCEP 2022-31. Current Installed Energy is 43,775 MW as on 30 June 2022 and targeted energy generation is 69,372 MW, respectively by the year 2031. Here is the summary of plan; we must appreciate that government is focused and planning to overcome energy crisis. Few main Strength of Indicative Generation Capacity Expansion plan (IGCEP) 2021 ~ 2030 are that government is willing to use the power of water in form of hydro energy. However, below are few technical aspects which may require more effort by the relevant officials and if missed these can cause serious financial and manpower damage. Here is the snag list of Indicative Generation Capacity Expansion plan (IGCEP) 2021 ~ 2030, it is based on 1. Outdated Generation, Transmission and distribution systems, 2. Zero focus on improvement of existing system, Line losses, maintenances of machinery, 3. Obsession for Dams; dams may sound a perfect solution for energy generation but they carry a bucket of jumbles like we have internal conflicts of provinces, it requires high budget, it takes long term tenures for construction, usual lack of research on water reserve and climate changes, 4. Neglected Renewables; Solar Energy (the targeted solar

energy is only 4%, despite the fact that Pakistan is blessed with great irradiance graph), mistreated costal line of our land which is approximately 990 km, 5. Coal Reserves ; total reserve of Coal is approximate 3,377 million tons (Enough for energy generation for more than a century), but why our coal is untreated and totally untouched? While the rest of the world is using coal, why no body thought to change the data written in our books which says our coal will take seventy years to be matured so that we can use it and we are reading it since seventy plus years, 5. Taking Maximum benefit of Professional Engineers and think tanks; energy generation is a complete technical matter which requires critical analysis on planning, execution and implementation. 6. The “Industrial Zones” which were being ignored in the plan; industries are strongly linked with our economy-but government however forgot to take them onboard, un-defined industrial zones, there have been no discussion on the need of industries, businessmen and industrial think tanks should also be taken on board to cater their energy need as well, 7. No emphasis advance technology, 8. Public awareness on electricity theft, 8. Public Awareness for domestic solar plants, 9. For developing countries like us, government should give awareness through campaigns on benefits of solar panels for our domestic needs. This will help to put our government at some ease. 10. Poor planning may lead towards loss of finances & skill power as there is no technical data provided, zero emphasis on advanced technology, 11. Government poor management of circular debt, and 12. In IGCEP planning is not made for centuries but only for years.

In the current stage of industrialization especially in Pakistan energy security is essential for economic security. Economic security, in turn, is a critical element of national security and an objective of foreign policy. Pakistan has various and plentiful natural endowments, such as minerals, metals, and coal among other natural resources; it is not a resource-poor country. Fully use of these resources will definitely lead to Self-reliance and self-sufficiency. We can take help from our friend-China by using their energy security model for promoting energy conservation through three corresponding objec-

tives: economic efficiency, the reduction of poverty, and environmental preservation. To obtain economic efficiency, the energy sector is expected to transform from the planned economy to the market-oriented economy.

The industrialization economic model of west that relies heavily on high carbon output may not be a good example to follow. Pakistan needs to design its own energy security given its natural resource endowments, technological level, and potential growth. Though Pakistan has strong potential for growth in the hydro-power, nuclear, wind, and natural gas sectors, in the short run it may consider making full use of its coal resources in order to alleviate oil dependence or dams conflicts. In the medium run or long run, Pakistan should build a low-carbon economy by conducting R&D in clean coal technology and developing renewable energy. Policies based on a single-minded pursuit of resources or a unilateral approach to energy security will lead to national energy insecurity and damage the credibility of Pakistan’s diplomacy. Like many countries, Pakistan realizes that foreign policy should not be completely subordinated to resource diplomacy. Given the multi-faceted nature of energy security, multilateral agreements between nations and regions will become more and more important in ensuring the availability of energy resources and possibly to regulating their exploitation and consumption. Pakistan and other regional states may need to be established ties to coordinate in times of energy price and supply shocks so that member countries can better prepare for a sudden energy crisis and improve cooperation.

Energy crisis will continue to pose challenges to Islamabad in both the short run and the long run. Foreign policy and domestic economic policy are inseparably entangled with each other. Energy policy should be an important part of foreign policy as long as Pakistan’s economy continues to grow and sustain well. Nevertheless, Pakistan may need to continue to define and search for an energy security path in order to balance energy security with Pakistan’s accountability and responsibility to its nation, environment, and international society for a better, brighter, breathable future for next generations.

Briefs

SC declares
Imran Khan's
arrest illegal

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return to Bani Gala, his residence in Islamabad, the top court responded by stating that his safety and security were of paramount concern and that he would remain in the custody of the court at the Police Lines guesthouse. While the hearing was underway, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial reportedly commented that the Islamabad High Court (IHC) would resume hearing of the case the following day. "You must abide by the decision of the IHC," the CJP was quoted as telling Khan during the proceedings. The CJP said that regardless of the legality of the warrants, the arrest itself was not carried out lawfully. In court, Imran Khan claimed that he had been "abducted" from the IHC and subjected to physical assault, saying that he had been beaten with clubs and that such brutality was not even inflicted on criminals. Additionally, he expressed that he had no knowledge of what had occurred after he was tortured. The CJP requested that Imran should condemn the violent protests that erupted after his arrest on Tuesday.

President
writes letter
to PM over..

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The president said: "The way some miscreants have damaged public property, particularly government and military buildings, is condemnable." President Alvi tweeted: "I am alarmed, shocked & deeply disturbed over the current situation in the country arising out of the arrest & manhandling of the former PM Imran Khan. The loss of human lives as an aftermath is heart-wrenching, regrettable, unfortunate & highly condemnable." He further added that while the right to protest is a constitutional right of any person, it should remain "within the bounds of the law". "Protest is a constitutional right of every citizen of Pakistan but should always remain within the bounds of the law. The way some miscreants have damaged public property, particularly government and military buildings, is condemnable."

Maryam
suggests
CJP he...

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she argued that the top judge had become a shield for this miscreant and was adding further fuel to the fire in the country. She suggested that the chief Justice Bandial should step down from his position and, like his mother-in-law, join the PTI. Maryam's comments come hours after the Supreme Court of Pakistan declared former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's arrest as illegal, and ordered his immediate release in the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case. The PTI chief had challenged her arrest in the apex court after the Islamabad High Court had earlier declared it legal.

Government
censures SC
over 'relief'..

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produced in court within an hour on Thursday, as it heard the PTI's plea challenging Imran's arrest in the Al-Qadir Trust case. At the presser, Marrayum told reporters that, "Imran Khan arrested by NAB for investigation in Al-Qadir Trust case." She lamented that "after the arrest, terrorists and armed groups attacked state and public property in the country". She maintained that the PTI leadership has "incited armed groups to violence", and at another point stressed that "the leader of these armed groups is the terrorist". "Corps commander's house was burnt, patients were taken out of ambulances and ambulances were set ablaze, mosques were targeted by arsonists, metro stations were burnt," she lamented, "policemen were attacked, their vehicles set on fire."

34th National Games Torch
Relay held in Islamabad

National Games would be staged in Balochistan after 19 years. More than 6,000 athletes would feature in 32 categories in National Games. National Games torch relay ceremony held

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: The 34th National Games torch relay ceremony was held at Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad in a colourful manner. Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ehsanur Rehman Mazari was the chief guest at the ceremony

while Director General of Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Shoab Khoso, Chairman of Interim Committee of Islamabad Olympic Association Rana Muhammad Sarwar, Secretary Rizwan ul Haq, Olympian Sadaf Siddiqui, Pakistan Sports Board Deputy Director General Muhammad Abrar, Saeed Akhtar, officials of Pakistan Olympic Association and Pakistan Sports Board were

also present on the occasion. The minister handed over the torch relay to Olympian Sadaf Siddiqui, after which the torch relay was handed over to Islamabad Olympic Association Interim Committee Chairman Rana Muhammad Sarwar. Addressing the ceremony, the IPC minister Ehsanur Rehman Mazari hoped for the successful holding of the National Games

and had high expectations of the national athletes participating in the extravaganza. He said the federal government was making all-out efforts to promote sports in the country. The Pakistan Sports Board would also set up training camps for the preparation of the Asian Games. The torch relay would move to Azad Kashmir after Islamabad. After traveling to different cities,

the torch would move to the host city Quetta. The National Games would be staged in Balochistan after 19 years. More than 6,000 athletes would feature in 32 categories in the National Games. National Games torch relay ceremony held. The torch relay for the National Games scheduled to start in Quetta on May 22 is currently on a trip to all four provinces including Islamabad.

Muharrem Ince withdraws
from Turkey
presidential race

ISTANBUL: In a dramatic development, one of the presidential candidates in Turkey's knife-edge elections has withdrawn from the race in a move expected to bolster the chances of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's main challenger. Muharrem Ince of the Homeland Party announced on Thursday that he was standing down from the presidential election, just three days before polls that have been billed as the most important in recent Turkish history. "I'm withdrawing my candidacy," Ince told reporters. "I am doing this for my country." In a statement, Ince blamed an apparent smear campaign against him as the reason behind his decision to pull out from the race. "Turkey could not protect my reputation. A presidential candidate's reputation is important," said Ince. The 59-year-old, who branded the Homeland Party and his movement as the "third way", was the only con-



tender without an alliance backing him. "The Homeland Party is important for Turkey's future. It must be in the parliament. I want votes for the Homeland Party from every household," he said. Ince also hit out at the opposition, saying: "When they [the opposition] lose the election they will put the blame on us. They shouldn't have any excuses left." His withdrawal is likely to boost votes for Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the leader of the People's Republican

Party (CHP). Kilicdaroglu is the candidate for an alliance of six opposition parties and has also received endorsement from other parties outside the coalition. In his first public comment on Ince's withdrawal, Kilicdaroglu tweeted an apparent invite for Ince to join his campaign: "My call still stands," he said. "Let's put aside old resentments and bad blood. We welcome MrInce to Turkey's table. Please come." According to polling data released by KONDA, Ince's

share of the vote stood at 2.2 percent in its most recent survey, the last before Sunday's presidential and parliamentary elections. Kilicdaroglu led the poll with 49.3 percent, followed by Erdogan on 43.7 percent. A fourth challenger, Sinan Ogan, stood at 4.8 percent in research conducted on May 6 and 7. KONDA, one of Turkey's more respected polling firms, questioned 3,480 people in 35 of Turkey's 81 provinces. A successful candidate must achieve over 50 percent of the vote to win in the first round and avoid a run-off between the two leading candidates two weeks later. Most of Ince and Ogan's voters preferred Kilicdaroglu in a potential second round, KONDA reported. Addressing a rally in Ankara, Erdogan also remarked on Ince's withdrawal. "One of the candidates withdrew," he said. "Actually, I was sad. I wonder what happened, I don't know." - Agencies

Edwards weighs
in for world-title
eliminator

PARIS: Fabian Edwards and Gegard Mousasi weighed in as anticipation grows before their middleweight title eliminator at Bellator 296 in Paris on Friday. The pair stared at each other intently, before exchanging friendly words and shaking hands during their face-off. A win for either fighter will earn them a title shot against champion Johnny Eblen. Britain's Edwards, 30, is aiming to join his brother - UFC welterweight title holder Leon - as champion. Siblings such as Anthony and Sergio Pettis, and Patricio and Patricky Freire, have all held world titles, but never at the same time across multiple major MMA promotions. Edwards comes into the bout following two wins over veterans Lyoto Machida and Charlie Ward last year, while the Netherlands' Mousasi, 37, last fought in June, losing the title to Eblen. Fabian Edwards reflects on his best KO and pride of his brother Leon Mousasi, sporting a casual look while wearing jeans, appeared the more relaxed of the two fighters. He is a veteran of 59 fights, with 49 wins across 20 years, and could mark the toughest test of Edwards' six-year career, which has yielded 11 victories from 13 bouts. Elsewhere, Mansour Barnaoui and Brent Primus both made the weight before their Lightweight Grand Prix quarter-final bout. A semi-final against current champion Usman Nurmagomedov is at stake after he beat Benson Henderson at Bellator 292 in March. The eventual winner of the tournament, which also features AJ McKee, Patricky 'Pitbull' Freire and AlexandrShabliy, will win \$1m (£794,000). - Agencies

Pak jump above India
in ICC ODI Rankings

LAHORE: Pakistan jumped above India in the ODI rankings after the annual update by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Thursday. Pakistan have moved up one place to second, meanwhile Australia are in first place. India are now in the third position on the table. "Australia have retained their position at the top of the ICC Men's ODI Team Rankings following the annual update that drops results from the 2019-20 season and reflects all matches completed since May 2020," the ICC said in a press release. "Australia are two rating points clear of Pakistan at 118 points after the update, which weights matches completed prior to May 2022 at 50 per cent and subsequent matches at 100 per cent. "Pakistan, who had grabbed the number one position briefly on 5 May before losing the final ODI of their five-match home series to New Zealand and slipping back behind Australia, are on 116 points, one more than India. Pakistan would have remained at the top of the ODI rankings even after the annual update had they completed a 5-0 sweep in the series against New Zealand."

Top 10 ODI Rankings

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1- Australia | 6- South Africa |
| 2- Pakistan | 7- Bangladesh |
| 3- India | 8- Afghanistan |
| 4- New Zealand | 9- Sri Lanka |
| 5- England | 10- West Indies |

PCB floats new proposal
regarding Asia Cup

The Pakistan board said it has not received any official communication from ACC, and noted that hosting rights for 2023 Asia Cup had been given to Pak under Shah's leadership

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has floated a new proposal to organise the Asia Cup in two phases, according to sources. In the first phase, all the teams, except for India, will play one match in Pakistan. Meanwhile, in the second phase, all the teams, including India, will complete their remaining matches in the UAE. The final will also take place in the UAE, according to the new model. The members of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) will present the new plan to President Jay Shah before making the final decision. Meanwhile, PCB Management Committee Chairman Najam Sethi has left for England after discussing

the new proposal with ACC members in Dubai. It must be noted that in October last year Pakistani cricket authorities hinted they may pull out of next year's World Cup in India, a day after officials there said they would not send a team to the 2023 Asia Cup in Pakistan. Indian cricket board secretary Jay Shah had said that India "can't" send a team to Pakistan, adding the tournament would be moved to a neutral venue. His announcement caught Pakistan by surprise, with officials warning it could "split" the international cricket community. The PCB said Shah's comments "can impact Pakistan's visit to India for the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 and future ICC Events in India in the 2024-2031 cycle". The Pakistan board said it has not received any official communication from the ACC, and noted that hosting rights for the 2023 Asia Cup had been given to Pakistan under Shah's leadership. Despite being considered one of sport's greatest rivalries, India and Pakistan have not met on home soil in any version of the game since 2012, and only play each other in multinational tournaments on neutral grounds. - DNA

Fabio Fognini defeats Andy Murray in Rome battle

ROME: Fabio Fognini edged out Andy Murray in a battle of veteran tennis dads to reach the Italian Open second round on Wednesday. Fognini, ranked outside of the top 100 for the first time in 14 years, came through 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 against his fellow 35-year-old. Former number seven Fognini delighted his home crowd with a controlled final set serving display in which he conceded just three points. It was his fifth win in nine career meetings with Murray but just his third on the tour in 2023. The Italian maverick, like Murray a father of three, fired 46 winners past the former world number one and three-time major winner in a first round tie which stretched to almost three hours. "For sure I'm happy because coming back from injury is never easy, especially at our age. But winning here in Rome against a really big player like Andy," said Fognini, who has been troubled by a foot injury. "Now it's important to recover. It's going to be tricky and a nice question to my mind if I will recover well. But I just want to enjoy this night and going home with this victory." Next up for Fognini is a clash with Miomir Kecmanovic while 42nd-ranked Murray, the 2016 champion in Rome, licks his wounds after celebrating his

first title since 2019 at the Aix-en-Provence Challenger on Sunday. Novak Djokovic will begin his bid to retain the Italian Open title against Tomas Etcheverry after the 61st-ranked Argentine beat Luca Van Assche of France in the first round 7-6 (9/7), 6-3. Djokovic comes into the tournament he has won six times recovering from an elbow injury and set to lose top spot in the world rankings to Carlos Alcaraz. Alcaraz just needs to play a match in the Italian capital to return to the world number one ranking ahead of the French Open which starts later this month. Djokovic won his record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam at the Australian Open in January. However, he missed the American hard-court swing in March due to his refusal to be vaccinated. The 35-year-old has endured a tough start to the European clay-court season, being eliminated in the last 16 at the Monte Carlo Masters, in the quarter-finals at Banja Luka and then pulling out of Madrid. Veteran Stan Wawrinka is facing 26th seed Grigor Dimitrov in the last 64, the three-time Grand Slam winner easing past Ilya Ivashka 6-4, 6-2.

Wawrinka, 38, and playing in the Italian capital for the 18th time, hit 26 winners and saved the one break point he faced. "I was ready for it. I am playing well. It was a good first match and I am really happy to get through again," said Wawrinka, who was runner-up to Djokovic in Rome in 2008. The former world number three now down at 84 in the rankings added: "I have been working hard to get to this level. This year I am playing much better, but I need to win more matches." In the women's event, Lesia Tsurenko won an all-Ukrainian clash, beating Elina Svitolina 6-4, 6-3. The 28-year-old Svitolina, returning to the tour from maternity leave, says the Russian invasion of her country means her career now has greater significance than in her pre-motherhood days when she was number three in the world and swept up 16 titles. "I want to make sure Ukraine is still in the news," said 540th-ranked Svitolina who is married to French tennis star Gael Monfils. "Playing tournaments, trying to organise events on the side, connecting with people around the events - that's really important. The war continues, so we need to continue helping peop. - APP

PTI workers
jubilant as
SC orders...

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After the media reported the court's orders in the high-profile case, many PTI supporters fell to their knees, prostrating (offering sajda) to express gratitude to the Almighty. In Peshawar, many were seen dancing to the beat of drums and firing guns into the air to celebrate. The workers were seen distributing sweets among themselves and other supporters in various parts of the city. Meanwhile, in an official press release, the PTI welcomed the decision, emphasising that it believes in peaceful political struggle and hopes that all institutions will strictly follow the orders of the Supreme Court and take care of the security of its chairman. The PTI leadership will decide on the next political course of action after consultations, according to the statement. The party expressed its gratitude to the judiciary for upholding the rule of law and protecting the rights of citizens.

IMF says
will 'remain
engaged'...

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the absence of fresh funding support coming in," said Eng Tat Low, an emerging-market sovereign analyst at Columbia Threadneedle Investments in Singapore. "I am also growing more skeptical whether an IMF deal is going to come through. Their heavy debt amortisation against precarious reserves would suggest default is imminent," he added. Violent protests erupted in Pakistan on Tuesday with dozens injured across several cities and demonstrators attacking military buildings after Khan was arrested. Moreover, the police initiated a crackdown and arrested the top leadership of the party along with thousands of workers. The rupee slumped to a record low and slid over 3% a dollar on Thursday. Dollar bonds due 2031 fell to the lowest since November and were indicated at 33.10 cents on the dollar.

Rupee
plunges to
new record..

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The rupee depreciation has piled up foreign debt without taking new external loans, making imports further expensive for Pakistan, which faced a six-decade high inflation reading at 36.4% in April 2023. Financial pundits believe that the rupee has been depreciating due to political and social unrest caused after the arrest of PTI Chairman Imran Khan. Moreover, the dollar demand supply gap has also widened as the exporters have stopped selling US currency on speculations that rupee would depreciate further versus the greenback. On the other hand, importers are seen rushing to buy dollars.

More PTI
leaders
arrested...

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PTI chief Imran Khan. Earlier today, an Islamabad Police spokesperson confirmed that scores of PTI leaders, including Qureshi, Umar, Fawad, Jamshed Iqbal Cheema, Falak Naz Chitrali, Mussarat Jamshed Cheema, and Maleeka Bukhari were arrested. "All arrests were carried out after completing the legal requirements," the spokesperson said, warning that more arrests are expected. Qureshi, who is second-in-line to Khan, was arrested by the police in cases of riots and arsons in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, police sources said.

PTI denies
involvement
in violence

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"black chapter in history". "We believe in achieving our goals by remaining peaceful, non-violent, and adhering to the Constitution and law. PTI has always discouraged deviance from the Constitution and law," a statement released by the party read.

Briefs

S. Korea moves to end all COVID restrictions

South Korea on Thursday announced an end to almost all restrictions imposed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. "I am pleased that our people will reclaim their everyday lives after three years and four months," President Yoon Suk Yeol said, declaring an end to the pandemic restrictions. He was addressing a meeting of the Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasures Headquarters at the presidential office, Seoul-based Yonhap News reported. According to the World-meters website, South Korea has reported 31.4 million coronavirus cases including 34,583 deaths since COVID-19 was first reported in December 2019 in the Chinese city of Wuhan. According to new measures which will take effect from June 1, the seven-day mandatory isolation period for COVID-19 patients will be reduced to five days, Yoon said. "The indoor mask mandate will be lifted everywhere except for hospitals with rooms for hospitalization, and the PCR test-upon-arrival recommendation will be removed," the report said.—APP

German railway workers announce strike

BERLIN: German railway workers will stage a nationwide warning strike starting Sunday, transport union EVG announced on Thursday. The strike will start at 10 p.m. local time (2000GMT) on Sunday and continue until midnight (2200GMT) on Tuesday, EVG board member Cosima Ingenschatz told a news conference in Cologne. The warning strike, the third in the space of a few months, is expected to cause delays and cancellations in regional and long-distance passenger trains across the country. The EVG, which has around 230,000 members, is currently in wage negotiations with national rail operator Deutsche Bahn and some 50 other railway companies. Amid high inflation and a cost of living crisis, the union is demanding a 12%, and no less than 650 (\$712), monthly wage hike.—APP

Asia region's synergy stressed

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at the 3rd Islamabad Security Dialogue (ISD) 2023 - an initiative of the National Security Division - on Thursday underlined the need that synergy among the countries of Asia to achieve sustainable development and enduring peace in the region abstaining from great power contestation was imperative in the prevailing testing times. It was the key highlight of the opening session of the "National Security Advisers Forum Reimagining Security Cooperation in Asia" on the concluding day of the two-day Islamabad Security Dialogue 2023.

Former National Security Advisor (NSA) Lieutenant General (R) Nasser Khan Janjua delivered the keynote address in the session followed by the recorded statements of the NSAs of the Asian countries, including China, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

General (R) Janjua said the 21st century belonged to the Asia region that was home to 59.36 percent of the global population, with consumer markets, human resource, natural resources, development scope and connectivity potential. He mentioned that as per global reports, by 2030 the United States' economy would lag behind China which would be leading the world. "China is the second largest economy of the world and possesses maximum foreign currency reserves with the largest trade volume in the world." The US, he said, in that situation had to meet a triple crisis comprising its economy buildup and maintenance against China, mitigating all its challenges and retaining a reliable superpower status. He proposed that Asian countries, particularly Pakistan, should reimagine their security cooperation in the prevailing scenario.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: A two-day Training workshop on Business and Economics Reporting under the aegis of Pakistan Information Center (PIC) a project of Press Information Department (PID) Islamabad. — DNA

No real progress on Myanmar peace plan: Indonesia's Widodo

LABUAN BAJO :Southeast Asian nations have made "no significant progress" on implementing a peace plan aimed at ending bloodshed in Myanmar, Indonesian President Joko Widodo said Thursday, as a summit ended. Escalating violence in junta-ruled Myanmar dominated the three-day meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on the Indonesian island of Flores. The regional bloc has spearheaded diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis, though its mostly fruitless attempts to enact a five-point plan agreed upon with Myanmar two years ago have fuelled warnings the group risked irrelevance. Since the Myanmar military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's government it has overseen a bloody crackdown on dissent, killing thousands of people. "I have to be honest that (on) the implementation of the five-point consensus,

there's been no significant progress," Widodo said on the final day of talks in the fishing town of Labuan Bajo. Widodo insisted ASEAN members must remain united in resolving the crisis or risk the "break up" of the bloc. "I am convinced that not one country in ASEAN would like to see that," he told reporters through a translator. "There cannot be a party within or outside ASEAN that can gain benefits from internal strife in Myanmar. The violence must end." But members were divided over how to handle the issue. An internal report on the foreign ministers' discussions said some countries wanted to invite the junta back to ASEAN meetings because "the time for isolation has served its purpose." "There was also an observation that ASEAN might be experiencing a 'Myanmar fatigue', which might distract ASEAN from

larger goals of ASEAN Community-building," said the document seen by AFP. "Patience, flexibility and creativity are therefore required since there will be no quick fix to the crisis." Myanmar still belongs to the 10-member ASEAN bloc but has been barred



from its summits due to the junta's failure to implement the peace plan. The junta has spurned international criticism and

refused to engage with its opponents, which include ousted lawmakers, anti-coup "People's Defence Forces" and armed ethnic minority groups. An air strike on a village in a rebel stronghold last month that reportedly killed about 170 people sparked global

condemnation. Jakarta's chairing of the bloc this year had raised hopes ASEAN could push for a peaceful solution, using its economic weight as well as its diplomatic experience. Pressure on the bloc increased Sunday after a convoy of vehicles carrying diplomats and officials coordinating ASEAN humanitarian relief in Myanmar came under fire. Beyond condemning the attack and expressing concern over the continued bloodshed, the ASEAN leaders did not come up with anything concrete to move the peace process forward. The end-of-summit statement did not provide a timetable or plan for implementation. Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said the bloc should not "give up". "We have to give attention to the well-being of the people and that is what ASEAN would like to do," Marsudi told reporters. There are fears that peace efforts could stall next year when communist-ruled Laos becomes chair. ASEAN lead-

ers also discussed "serious incidents" in the South China Sea and ongoing negotiations for a code of conduct aimed at reducing the risk of conflict. Beijing claims almost the entire sea while four ASEAN countries - the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam and Brunei - have overlapping claims to part of it. "We must ensure that the South China Sea does not become a nexus for armed conflict," Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos told the gathering. ASEAN has long been decried by critics as a toothless talking shop, but its charter principles of consensus and non-interference have hamstrung its ability to take action. A review of the charter was "long overdue", said Lina Alexandra of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta. "When you see your next-door neighbour's house is burning, what will you do? Can you just stay silent?" she said.—Agencies

BoE hikes rates to 15-year peak

LONDON: The Bank of England hiked interest rates by 0.25 percentage points to 4.5% on Thursday, raising borrowing costs to peak levels since 2008. The UK's yearly inflation rate reached 10.1% in March, five times the central bank's 2% target. The bank said the economy has been subject to "a sequence of very large and overlapping shocks." The UK's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to remain stagnant during the first half of the year. However, moderate growth is forecast in underlying output, which excludes the estimated effects of strikes and an additional bank holiday. Despite a weaker February, economic activity has been less feeble than originally anticipated, said the bank. It now predicts that the demand trajectory will likely be substantially more robust than previously predicted in the February Report, though still subdued when compared to historical norms. Inflation is projected to fall sharply starting from April, in part as large rises in the price level one year ago drop out of the annual comparison. "However, food price inflation is likely to fall back more slowly than previously expected," it said. Food inflation in the UK hit a 45-year high of 19.1% in March.—DNA

G7 finance ministers to vow support for Ukraine

NIIGATA: Financial leaders of the Group of Seven advanced economies are discussing ways to support Ukraine and pressure Russia to end the war as they meet in Japan starting Thursday. Ukraine's finance minister, Serhiy Marchenko, was participating online in the first session of the G-7 talks in Niigata, a port city on the Japan Sea coast. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the G-7 nations "will stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes" to end the conflict. The leaders will be mulling ways to prevent Russia and other countries from circumventing sanctions against Moscow for its invasion, Japanese Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki told reporters. "We have taken a wave of actions in the past few months to crack down on evasion. And my team has traveled around the world to intensify this work," Yellen said. The war and its toll on the global economy, debt crises in developing countries and a stalemate in Washing-

ton over the national debt are topping the agenda of the three days of talks by finance ministers and central bank governors of G-7 countries and others invited to attend. Despite the wide range of topics due for consideration, from climate change to debt relief to digital currencies, the standoff over the U.S. debt ceiling and a potential default loomed as a major potential threat to the global economy. Speaking before the closed-door meetings began, Yellen said one of her priorities was to emphasize the importance of resolving the crisis. "A default is frankly unthinkable," she told reporters. "America should never default. It would rank as a catastrophe." Japan's central bank governor, Kazuo Ueda, echoed that sentiment. If the United States defaults on its debt, "it will become a big move and a big problem, and I think that the Fed alone, for example, may not be able to counteract it," said Ueda, who took the helm of the Bank of Japan last month. He said

he trusted the U.S. government would do its best to avoid such a situation. U.S. President Joe Biden said Wednesday that he and congressional leaders had a "productive" meeting Tuesday on trying to raise the nation's debt limit. They will meet again Friday to try to avert the risk as soon as June 1 of an unprecedented government default if lawmakers in the divided Congress don't agree to raise the debt ceiling. Biden said he was "absolutely certain" that the country could avert a default. Yellen also said she was "very hopeful" the problem can be resolved in time. Yellen also will be seeking to reassure her counterparts that have raised worries over risks for the global financial system. She said Biden's "historic" investments in modernizing U.S. infrastructure were a step toward improving the resilience of an economy whose reliance on global supply chains was sorely tested during the COVID-19 pandemic.—APP

Azerbaijani soldier killed by Armenian forces

BAKU: One Azerbaijani military personnel was killed and another was injured in two separate incidents of "provocative fire" by Armenian forces in the Basarkechar region, according to official statements released on Monday. "As a result of deliberate provocation committed by Armenian armed forces units, Azerbaijan Army's long-term active military serviceman Novruzalizade Orkhan Elkhan became Shohid (martyr)," said a statement issued by the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry on Thursday. Divisions of Azerbaijan's Armed Forces are taking "decisive retaliatory measures," the statement said, adding that the operational situation in the region is under its control. Earlier, the ministry said an Azerbaijani serviceman was injured late Wednesday as a result of intense fire from Armenian positions in the area of Zod in the Basarkechar region. "The wounded serviceman was immediately taken to a military medical facility. —APP

Malaysia's unemployment rate stands at 3.5 pct in March

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has recorded a lower number of unemployed in March at 588,700 persons, registering an unemployment rate of 3.5 percent, official data showed Thursday. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) said in a statement that an optimistic economic position in March has allowed the country's labor market to continue to develop steadily. "An improving labor force situation during the month was mirrored by the rising number of employed persons, while the number of unemployed further decreased," it said. According to DOSM, the number of the labor force in March strengthened further by 0.2 percent to record 16.81 million persons, as compared to 16.78 million persons in February. March's labor force participation rate (LFPR) stood at 69.9 percent. The number of employed persons in March was also on an upward trend, with a month-on-month rise of 0.2 percent to 16.22 million persons. Meanwhile, the number of unemployed persons in March continued to decrease month on month, falling by 0.5 percent to register 588,700 persons. As for the first quarter, DOSM said the encouraging economic and social activity contributed to a stable labor supply situation. According to DOSM, the number of the labor force for the period rose by 0.6 percent to 16.65 million persons as compared to 16.54 million in the fourth quarter of 2022. Consequently, the LFPR went up by 0.3 percentage points quarter on quarter to 69.8 percent. In the meantime, the total number of employed persons edged up by 0.8 percent quarter on quarter to 16.06 million persons during the quarter. On the contrary, the number of unemployed persons reduced further by 2.3 percent quarter on quarter to 586,900 persons. Accordingly, the unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2023 fell by 0.1 percentage points to 3.5 percent from 3.6 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022. DOSM said the growing domestic economy led to more labor demand to support the continued stabilization of the economy as well as an increase in the creation of job opportunities to sustain the business market in the transition phase to endemic.—Agencies

Syria's re-entry into Arab League indicates shifting sands in ME

ISLAMABAD: Syria's re-entry into the Arab League indicates shifting sands in the Middle East, says an article carried by Gwadar Pro on Thursday. "We will not walk away to leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia or Iran. ... The United States is not going anywhere," bragged US President Joe Biden during his visit to the Middle East last July while trying to muffle the apprehensions about his apparently "disengagement" policy towards this region. But the shifting sands of the Middle East tell a different story now. Despite Washington's intense pressure, the majority of the Arab League members have endorsed Syria's return to the group after 12 years. This is the second major setback for American diplomacy in the last two months; the China-medi-

ated Iran-Saudi détente in March was the first lethal blow to the already waning influence of the US in the region. Both events have corroborated the emerging realities in the Middle East where the US is finding itself increasingly isolated. It is time for the United States to wake up and smell the coffee. It is no longer tenable for the United States to cling to outdated notions of hegemony and ignore the shifting drifts in global power fabric. The Biden administration needs to face the new reality and shake off the delusions of the past. It is no longer a question of if, but how, the United States will compete for influence in the Middle East. For the first time in decades, Washington appears so weak that it is struggling to earn its place in the Mid-

dle East theater rather than simply taking it for granted. In a bold and unprecedented move, Arab foreign ministers congregated in an extraordinary meeting of the Arab League in Cairo on Sunday to announce the restoration of Syria's membership in the league after more than a decade of suspension. This momentous decision, despite some reservations from a few members, was approved, and the Arab League's council has facilitated the resumption of Syria's participation in all meetings of the council and its various organizations and bodies. This marks a significant shift in the region's geopolitical landscape. Three key factors have played the instrumental role in the expedition of such a decision, which was deemed inconceivable even at the start of this year:

the Biden administration's policy of gradual extrication and disengagement, the devastating earthquake in Syria and Türkiye, and China's successful mediation in the Iran-Saudi reconciliation in the month of March. The synergistic effect of these factors created a natural momentum which eventually culminated in the return of Syria into the Arab League. The reinstatement of Syria into the Arab League is a pivotal development in a wider regional geopolitical transformation that has witnessed a series of novel diplomatic alliances that have disrupted the prevailing regional order. In the past few months, states have displayed an escalating level of autonomy, while a new player, China, has made its mark, contesting the United States' role as the region's dominant

powerbroker and propelling the Iran-Saudi Arabia deal forward. The catastrophic earthquakes on February 6, which struck parts of Syria still grappling with the ravages of war, have also intensified the calls for a reevaluation of existing sanctions, as the country struggled to secure the much-needed aid. Together, these factors have set the stage for an unprecedented regional reconfiguration that could yield dramatic consequences for all involved. Undoubtedly, the reinstatement of Syria into the Arab League does not provide an acute remedy for the country's two fundamental challenges: the ongoing conflict and the financial strain it faces. Two immediate inferences can be drawn from the Arab League's decision, in spite of Washington's serious opposition, to readmit Syria after a prolonged

period of isolation. One, it is certainly a symbolic triumph for Damascus. Two, a wider regional realignment is taking shape where America's influence is diminishing, while China is being accepted as a sincere, reliable and peace-loving mediator. The Arab League's decision to disregard US reservations signifies America's declining leverage and a growing inclination among allies to pursue their own political course. Arab nations have become increasingly cognizant of the US' strategic motivations, including the instigation of conflict and turmoil in the Middle East, and have come to recognize that American interests are not aligned with a unified Arab world but rather with a fragmented one that can be more easily manipulated to serve its own interests.—APP

5 arrested after blast near Golden Temple

AMRITSAR: Five people were arrested on Thursday after a third blast in less than a week shook the area around the Sikh holy site of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Indian police said. Two of the suspects had prepared the improvised explosive devices at a guest house in the city, state police director general Gaurav Yadav told reporters, while the other three provided the materials. He gave no information about their suspected motives and said investigations were continuing. Pressure for a separate Sikh homeland known as Khalistan sparked deadly violence in India in the 1980s and 1990s. In March, a manhunt was launched in Punjab state to arrest a firebrand Sikh separatist that sparked protests and vandalism among the diaspora. It was unclear whether that was connected to the three explosions. No injuries were reported in the third blast, which happened around midnight, with police describing it as low-intensity. "The area is totally sealed and a forensic team is working on it," police official Naunihal Singh said.—APP

BoE hikes rates to 15-year peak

LONDON: The Bank of England hiked interest rates by 0.25 percentage points to 4.5% on Thursday, raising borrowing costs to peak levels since 2008. The UK's yearly inflation rate reached 10.1% in March, five times the central bank's 2% target. The bank said the economy has been subject to "a sequence of very large and overlapping shocks." The UK's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to remain stagnant during the first half of the year. However, moderate growth is forecast in underlying output, which excludes the estimated effects of strikes and an additional bank holiday. Despite a weaker February, economic activity has been less feeble than originally anticipated, said the bank. It now predicts that the demand trajectory will likely be substantially more robust than previously predicted in the February Report, though still subdued when compared to historical norms. Inflation is projected to fall sharply starting from April, in part as large rises in the price level one year ago drop out of the annual comparison. "However, food price inflation is likely to fall back more slowly than previously expected," it said. Food inflation in the UK hit a 45-year high of 19.1% in March.—DNA

EU should influence China, says Borrell

BRUSSELS: The EU should influence China to use its global power in a "responsible" way, the bloc's foreign policy chief said on Thursday. Speaking at the European Defense and Security Summit, Josep Borrell stressed that the EU is a "partner" and a "competitor" to China. Their "systems are rivals," but they also exchange \$2.7 billion every day by trading services and goods, he said. Borrell just presented a report for EU foreign ministers on "reshaping" the bloc's ties with China ahead of their informal meeting in Stockholm on Friday. The core element of the EU's strategy is to "ask China to act responsibly as a permanent member of the UN Security Council," he asserted. The important thing is "how China uses its world power," Borrell said. He argued that the "unlimited friendship between China and Russia" indeed has limits since the Russian economy represents 1% of the global economic output while China gives 20%. Borrell said "China is supporting Russia but at the moment not providing arms" for its war in Ukraine. The EU keeps "asking China to use its influence on Russia to stop war," he further said. Borrell reiterated the bloc's backing for Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression. He asserted that the war could end quickly if the free world stopped supporting Ukraine.—Agencies

Briefs

Finland
footbridge
collapses
injuring 27

DNA

ESPOO: Officials from the Espoo rescue service on Thursday said about 27 people, mostly minors, had been hurt when a makeshift pedestrian bridge collapsed in the Finnish city. The daily Helsingin Sanomat newspaper reported that the group was part of an eighth-grade class returning from a field trip. The accident, at about 9:20 a.m. (0620 GMT/UTC) is believed to have happened when wooden planks beneath the structure gave way. Police in Espoo, the city immediately to the west of the Finnish capital, Helsinki, said the bridge was made from plywood and was in place because of construction work in the area. "Several people fell a few meters when the bridge collapsed. The situation is being investigated," police said in a statement. Officials said a technical investigation would examine the possible causes of the accident in Espoo's Tapiola district. "Shocking news about an accident in Tapiola," Finnish President Sauli Niinisto tweeted. "Providing support and help now important." Helsinki hospital service HUS said most of the injuries were limb fractures.

Explosion,
injuries, arrest
at German
high-rise
building

WEB DESK

BERLIN: German police said on Thursday that an explosion in a high-rise apartment block had injured both firefighters and police officers who had been carrying out an operation in the building. "Currently there is a large operation in Ratingen-West," police wrote on Twitter. "There an explosion took place for still unclear reasons. Several people are injured, among them also police officers. More information will follow as soon as we have confirmed details." Police followed up by saying the explosion had come from one of the apartments in the building. A police spokeswoman told the dpa news agency that officers were injured because they were already in the building for an operation. She said that police had been called to the building originally to assist a person supposedly in distress. A police spokeswoman at the scene said later on Thursday that a 60-year-old man, the occupant of the flat from which the explosion came, had been arrested. Police had stormed the apartment and arrested him, she said.

G-B CM
reportedly
under house
arrest



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid was reportedly placed under house arrest on Thursday for "sheltering PTI leaders". According to media, the chief minister had provided shelter to the PTI leaders in G-B House, after which he was placed under house arrest. The house has been declared a sub-jail and a contingent of police and rangers was also deployed outside it. As per sources, PTI leaders Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Malika Bukhari, Musrat Cheema and others were taken into custody from G-B House Islamabad earlier. Sources also reported that role of Khurshid is being evaluated for sheltering the leaders, who were wanted by the police, in the G-B house.

Direct air links to further solidify ties: Amb. Arega
Pakistan greatly values its
relations with Ethiopia: Hina
Ethiopian embassy in Islamabad formally inaugurated;
committed to take relations to new heights: Amb. Jemal

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar has said Pakistan greatly values its relations with Ethiopia adding opening of the embassy in Islamabad would certainly further strengthen these relations. She expressed these views on the occasion of the formal opening of the Ethiopian embassy in Pakistan. Ethiopian State Minister Ambassador Misganu Arega along with Hina Rabbani Khar inaugurated the embassy. The Ethiopian State Minister had led a high level business delegation to Pakistan. The delegation arrived in Pakistan by the Ethiopian Airlines maiden flight that landed in Karachi from Addis Ababa on the night of May 8. Minister Hina Rabbani Khar further said former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had inaugurated the Pakistan embassy in Ethiopia back in 1973. Since then both countries maintain excellent relations. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs said that the new Ethiopian Embassy and the airlink would provide limitless opportunities to boost bilateral ties through enhanced trade and investment as well as people-to-people connections. She said a country's diplomacy must be geared towards opening doors and opportunities for its people, trade, and investment. Hina Rabbani Khar said the economic and developmental challenges of the two countries were similar but also, there was commonality in the resilience of the two people to achieve these goals. She said Pakistan has always supported Africa throughout history. Hina Rabbani Khar said Pakistan wished to engage with Africa meaningfully and partner in its growth and prosperity journey. Highlighting the significance of direct flight operations by Ethiopian Airlines to Karachi, she said opening direct flights between the two countries would boost trade and people-to-people contacts. She expressed the hope that the new Embassy would be instrumental in materializing that potential for the mutual benefit of our countries.



ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia Ambassador Misganu Arega, Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan Jemal Beker and others inaugurating the Ethiopian embassy in Islamabad. – DNA

She lauded the services of a new Ethiopian ambassador in Islamabad Jemal Beker Abdula, who made a mark in his short eight months. In his remarks, Ethiopian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mesganu Arega said that the opening of the Ethiopian Embassy marked a new history in the diplomatic, political, economic, and social cooperation between the two countries. He said the commencement of Ethiopian Airlines flight to Karachi would connect Pakistan with the "Land of Or-

igins-Ethiopia" and more than 60 destinations in the continent of Africa and 130 more globally. The state minister said the opening of the Embassy was a concrete example of the importance the Ethiopian government attached to its bilateral relations with Pakistan. He said Ethiopia considered Pakistan as a strategically important and strong partner in Asia, and the signing of the Political Consultation guided the aspiration of the two governments and peoples to play their appropriate role in international

issues like climate change, terrorism, migration, and peace and security. Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan Jemal Beker Abdula thanked to the government of Pakistan for extraordinary support to launch the airline and for providing a friendly environment for business. He further said that ever since his arrival in Pakistan he had tried his best to take bilateral relations to new horizons. He said, Ethiopia and Pakistan established their bilateral diplomatic relation in 1950s, he said, adding the major initiatives includ-

ing inauguration of Ethiopian Airlines and the Embassy in Pakistan and visit of over 70 Pakistani businessmen to Ethiopia had changed landscape of bilateral relations altogether. Ambassador Beker said Pakistan was a great country blessed with all sorts of resources adding he had received very warm welcome from the government of Pakistan and people of Pakistan. He said highest diplomatic skills were used to build relations between Ethiopia and Pakistan on solid footings.

Israeli-Palestinian fighting intensifies

GAZA CITY: Palestinian resistance fired hundreds of rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israel on Wednesday, while Israel pressed ahead with a series of airstrikes that have killed 23 Palestinians, including at least 10 civilians. A state-run Egyptian TV station announced that Egypt, a frequent mediator between the sides, had brokered a cease-fire. But the truce efforts appeared to falter as fighting intensified late Wednesday, with neither side showing any sign of backing down. Early Thursday, the Israeli military said it

targeted the commander of Islamic Jihad's rocket squad in an airstrike on a building in the southern Gaza Strip. The military said Ali Ghali was hiding in an apartment and that two additional militants from the group were killed alongside him in the airstrike at a Qatari-built residential complex in Khan Younis. Ghali instructed and took part in rocket attacks against Israel in recent months. There was no comment from the militant group. In a prime-time TV address, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that

Israel had dealt a harsh blow to the militants. But he cautioned: "This round is not over." "We say to the terrorists and those who send them. We see you everywhere. You can't hide, and we choose the place and time to strike you," he said, adding that Israel would also decide when calm is restored. Throughout the day, rocket fire set off air-raid sirens throughout southern and central Israel, some 80 kilometers (50 miles) away. Residents had been bracing for an attack since Israel launched its first airstrikes early Tuesday. – Agencies

UK to supply long-range
missiles to Ukraine

WEB DESK

LONDON: The UK has confirmed it is supplying Ukraine with long-range missiles it requested for its fight against invading Russian forces. The Storm Shadow cruise missile has a range of over 250km (155 miles), according to the manufacturer. By contrast, the US-supplied Himsars missiles used by Ukraine only have a range of around 80 km (50 miles). The weapons will give Ukraine the "best chance" of defending itself, UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said. They are fired from aircraft, so the longer range means Ukrainian pilots will be able to stay further from the frontlines. Once launched, the Storm Shadow drops to low altitude to avoid detection by enemy radar, before latching onto its target with an infra-red seeker. The announcement was made in the House of Commons by Mr Wallace. The decision follows repeated pleas from Ukraine for more weapons from the West.

Mr Wallace said the missiles would "allow Ukraine to push back Russian forces based on Ukrainian sovereign territory". He said the UK took the decision after Russia "continued down a dark path" of targeting civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. Mr Wallace wrote to his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu in December, he said, to warn that further attacks could result in the UK donating more capable weapons. He said the missiles were "going into" or already in Ukrainian hands, and described the move as "calibrated and proportionate to Russia's escalations".

Saudi King invites Assad to
attend Arab League summit

RIYADH: King Salman has invited Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad to attend an upcoming Arab League meeting that will take place on May 19 in the Kingdom, Saudi Press Agency reported on Wednesday. The invitation to the meeting was handed over by the Kingdom's ambassador to Jordan, Naif bin Bandar Al-Sudairi, during a meeting with the president in Damascus. Al-Sudairi conveyed the greetings of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Al-Assad and their wishes for security and stability for the Syrian government and people. In return, Al-Assad conveyed his greetings and appreciation to the king and crown prince. The Arab League restored Syria's membership into the organization during a meeting in Cairo on Sunday. Syria's membership was suspended for brutally cracking down on mass protests against Assad in 2011. Since then, the uprising turned into a civil war that killed nearly a half million people and displaced half of the country's pre-war population of 23 million. – Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf presenting Commemorative Stamp and Coin to Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at Parliament House. – DNA

Indian ethnic clashes shatter harmony, houses
Most victims are reported to be from the mainly Christian Kuki

MONITORING DESK

MANIPUR: Houses in a remote village in the restive northeastern Indian state of Manipur daubed with "Don't Burn" notices stand untouched while many unmarked buildings are in ruins, their Meitei owners having fled. "It all started with an attack on two houses... But there was so much anger at what had happened in the afternoon that the people kept coming back to attack the entire neighbourhood," said Khumujamba village resident Muan Pau, 25. The predominantly Hindu Meitei, Manipur's main ethnic group, live mostly in the capital Imphal and the surrounding plains. The Kukis and other smaller tribal groups live in the hills. But several hill pockets, like Khumujamba in Churachandpur dis-

trict, were also home to some Meitei, living side-by-side in uneasy harmony with the Kuki and other tribal peoples. That was until last week, when an explosion of ethnic violence killed around 60 people and left 30,000 displaced and almost 2,000 houses burnt down across the state. Most victims are reported to be from the mainly Christian Kuki, some of their villages destroyed by Meitei mobs and their residents killed or fled to the safety of army camps. But the Meitei were also targeted by the Kukis, as a visit by AFP journalists to debris-strewn Khumujamba showed. "I am not sure what I will do in the future," traumatised Meitei carpenter Oinam Parshuram, 48, told AFP as he sat waiting to be evacuated in an army truck with his wife and daughter. Looting: The violence was sparked by Kuki anger at the prospect of the Meitei being

given guaranteed quotas of government jobs and other perks in a form of affirmative action. This also stoked long-held fears among the Kuki that the Meitei might also be allowed to acquire land in areas currently reserved for them and other tribal groups. On Tuesday, days after most Meitei fled Khumujamba, village men were still scavenging loot including taps, iron grills and firewood from different buildings. The few structures left standing had "Eimi In" and "Haal Louh Ding" written on their external walls, messages in the local language exhorting rioters and looters not to touch them. Even the main commercial road, now under curfew, had two types of shops: those spray-painted with the word "Tribal" and the ones that were ransacked by mobs. One of the latter group belonged to Oinam Ravi, 28, who also had a home in the same district.

"Both of them are gone now," he told AFP, one of a group of about 3,000 Meiteis being moved by the army, which has deployed thousands of troops and imposed curfews. Tongbram Rajesh Meitei, 36, said he and other Meitei men spent a sleepless night guarding women and children in a building when tensions peaked on May 3. The teacher, who said his grandfather settled in the region more than a century ago under British colonial rule, was abandoning the area with his seven family members. "We will stay in a camp initially and see what the government does for us," he said. Rajesh fears his house has been ransacked but said he doesn't have the courage to risk going back to his old neighbourhood to look. "No one wants to come back. We want to leave and settle somewhere among our Meitei brothers," he said.

Japan: Public
reluctant
to defend
Taiwan

MONITORING DESK

TOKYO: A new opinion poll has found that over half of the Japanese population is of the opinion that the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) should not become involved in fighting if China invades Taiwan. A full 80% of the 3,000 adults interviewed by the Asahi Shimbun daily newspaper recently expressed concern that Japan would become caught up in the conflict if Beijing were to attack Taiwan in an effort to unify it with the Chinese mainland.