



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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WHO says Covid global health emergency over

Detailed News On Page-08

Kazakh envoy urges youth to play fruitful role

Detailed News On Page-02



Babar Azam fastest batter to 5000 ODI runs

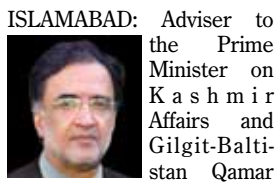
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Briefs

Bilawal in India to discuss Kashmir

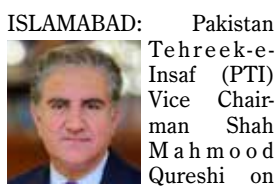
DNA



ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira has said that Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has gone to India to discuss the Kashmir issue. Addressing a press conference along with State Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday, he said that an uproar is raised over Bilawal's visit to India. "Those who bargained Kashmir with Indian PM Modi are criticizing the visit. We are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the Kashmiris," he added. Minister of State Faisal Karim Kundi said Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has forcefully presented the case of Kashmiris at the international level. He regretted that the PTI is pursuing a particular agenda against the national interests.

Govt-PTI talks go unfruitful

STAFF REPORT



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Friday stated that negotiations with the Pakistan Democratic Government (PDM) government have failed and the Supreme Court has been informed of the details. Speaking to the media in Islamabad, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi said that three meetings were held with the coalition government, and the PTI had tried to resolve the issues with honesty and good intentions. He said that progress was made in the negotiations with the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government, but no result was extracted from the dialogue, and the details have been informed to the Supreme Court.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday.

- Editor

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SCO CFMs Moot FM Bilawal says peace is our destiny

Says the onus is on India to create a conducive environment for talks

DNA

GOA: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Friday said that the people of Pakistan and India want peace, stressing that New Delhi has to create a "conducive environment" for talks between the neighbouring nations. His comments came while speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in the Indian state of Goa. The visit by Bilawal to India is the first by a Pakistani foreign minister to Delhi in over a decade and has garnered a lot of media attention in both countries. The two have fought three wars, share frosty relations, and have downgraded their diplomatic ties. The onus is on India to create a conducive environment for talks, said the foreign minister, adding that India's decision to end the special status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 undermined the environment for holding talks between the neighbours. Bilawal said, however, that despite his rare visit to India, there was no change in the status of diplomatic relations. "India took illegal steps in August 2019 and violated the UN resolutions by its actions," said the FM. The foreign minister retreated that Pakistan has a clear and solid stance on the Kashmir issue, highlighting that India's "one-sided actions" have affected the terms between both countries. "India will have to revoke its August 5 decision," he added.

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Toshakhana case Court to indict Imran Khan on May 10

Requests to dismiss the case rejected

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad court will indict Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case, in which the deposed prime minister is accused of taking gifts in an illegal manner. Islamabad District and Sessions Courts Additional Sessions Judge Humayun Dilawar said Friday he would charge the PTI chief and ordered him to ensure his presence in his courtroom - as he rejected his requests to dismiss the case. During the hearing, Khan's lawyer, Khwaja Haris, argued on two separate pleas requesting the court to dismiss the case, saying the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP)



Khan slams PM over UK visit

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has lambasted Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif for visiting United Kingdom (UK) amid 'increasing terrorism and worst inflation in the country', ARY News reported on Friday. Talking to Twitter, the former premier strongly condemned the 'heinous and brutal killing' of school teachers in Parachinar and martyrdom of six soldiers fighting terrorists in North Waziristan.

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ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi shaking hands with the State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, Mr Qin Gang, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad. - DNA

PM Shehbaz meets the British prime minister



DNA

LONDON: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif attended a meeting of Commonwealth leaders in London today. During his address to the meeting, the Prime Minister called upon the leaders of the Commonwealth countries to mark the accession of King Charles III as the dawn of a new era and the opening of new vistas and fresh avenues for the remarkable family of

Continued on Page 06

SC to take up Arshad Sharif case next week

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday fixed suo motu case of senior journalist Arshad Sharif's assassination for hearing on May 9. A five-member larger bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Umar Ata Bandial will conduct the hearing on the case next week. Other members of the bench are Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan, Justice Sayeed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar. The five-judge SC bench had initiated

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Pakistan-China reaffirm resolve to work together

State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China, Mr Qin Gang meets President Alvi

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China have reaffirmed the resolve to work together for promoting regional peace and prosperity as well as jointly cope with external challenges. Both sides emphasised the need to further advance and deepen bilateral cooperation in the areas of trade, economy, culture and defence for the mutual benefit of the two countries. The two sides also called for increasing bilateral exchanges, people-to-people contacts, and cooperation in the fields of culture and tourism to further cement bilateral ties. This was discussed at a meeting between President Dr Arif Alvi and the visiting State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China, Mr Qin Gang, who along with

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Afghan, Chinese FM's in Islamabad for talks

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi along with a high-level delegation reached Islamabad on a four-day official visit on Friday. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister of China Qin Gang has also arrived in Islamabad to participate in 5th China-Pakistan-Afghanistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue. Upon his arrival at Nur Khan Airbase, he was received by high

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'Constitution to be defended at any cost'

CJP says SC won't sit idle on polls verdict if talks fail

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial warned that if the talks between the government and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) failed then the Supreme Court would use the Constitution to implement its verdict of holding elections in Punjab on May 14. The warning was issued when CJP Bandial resumed the hearing of the petition seeking simultaneous elections across the country.

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Political parties must get to dialogue: Saad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique on Friday said that the political parties should resolve all the issues through dialogue which was the only solution. Talking to the media persons outside the Supreme Court, he said the government

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High-level Ethiopian delegation arrives next week

Ambassador Jemal says direct air links between Ethiopia and Pakistan to boost bilateral relations

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan Jemal Beker has said the Ethiopian Airline shall start its Pakistan operation from May 8 adding there shall be four flights per week from Addis Ababa to Karachi. The Ambassador made this announcement during a press conference here at the Embassy. Ambassador Jemal further said, a high level delegation shall also visit Pakistan on May 9. The delegation shall arrive in Pakistan on the maiden Ethiopian airline flight to Pakistan. He said the State Minister of Foreign Affairs shall lead the 60 member delegation comprising businessmen, high govt officials etc. He said the State Minister shall also formally inaugurate the Ethiopian embassy in Islamabad on May 11. The Ambassador, to a question, said that after Karachi the Ethiopian airline may start operations from Islamabad and Lahore. It all depends on the passengers' load, he added. The ambassador said all efforts shall be made to make this project a sustainable one. Towards this end he



had planned meetings with the tour operators, travel agents in order to inform them about the potential Ethiopia had in various fields. Likewise, he said, since the Ethiopian visa was available online therefore entry to his country was simply no problem. Jemal Beker Abdulla termed the visit of Pakistani business delegation to Ethiopia as Hijra Trade, which was very successful. He said that after the visit of the Pakistani delegation to Ethiopia, he received calls from many African countries including Somalia, Djibouti, and Kenya who showed interest in promoting trade ties



with Pakistan. He said that Africa is endowed with great natural resources and close cooperation of Pakistan with Ethiopia would help it get better penetration in the African region for trade and exports. He further said, Ethiopia has strong economic ties with Turkey & UAE and Ethiopia wants similar relations with Pakistan. China and India have good presence in Ethiopia and Pakistan should increase its presence in the Ethiopian market to explore the untapped land of Africa. Many Pakistani products including textiles, pharmaceuticals, cement



have great potential in Ethiopia and the business community of Pakistan capitalize on this potential for exports. Jemal Beker said two business forums were also being organized in Karachi and Islamabad to bolster the bilateral trade by strengthening trade and commerce ties between the two countries. He said Pakistani business community was keen to increase bilateral trade between the two countries since the ongoing development in Ethiopia's diverse economic sectors had really impressed them during their recent visit to the

capital city Addis Ababa. Likewise, business community of Ethiopia also wanted to develop business and trade ties with their counterparts in the country. On the occasion, the ambassador also congratulated the people of Ethiopia on Patriots' Victory Day which was being observed in his country today to honour the veterans of resistance movement against Italy. He said his side was ready to exchange knowledge, ideas and initiatives with the government of Pakistan by signing agreements on climate action. He said the initiative had brought a green revolution in the country through attitude, behaviour and cultural change. Under the Green Legacy Initiative, Ethiopia had planted some 25 billion seedlings in the last four years to address climate issues out of which 500 million are avocados, mangoes and papaya. Jemal Beker said the climate change was not a myth but a reality and Pakistan needed to build a resilient economy by addressing its climate related issues. "I have visited the flood affected areas in Sindh where I met with flood affected people and distributed relief items among them."

Youth play vital role in fostering Pak-Kazakh relations

The winner of the competition was Zulqarnain Khan from Bahira University Islamabad, who received the return air ticket. Umm e Salma from the University of Sargodha, who secured the second position, received a smartphone, while Taj Mir Khan from the University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar, who came in third place, received a tablet

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yezhan Kistafin on Friday said the youth played a significant role in building bridges and fostering relationships amongst countries.

The engagement of youth in meaningful conversations and inviting them to share the latest ideas might help Pakistan and Kazakhstan to reach phenomenal heights of cooperation, he said while speaking at the prize and certificate distribution ceremony of the essay competition "Knowing Ka-

zakhstan". The competition was recently organized by the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Pakistan and the Centre for Central Asia and Eurasian Studies, Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies, against the backdrop of the 30th-anniversary celebrations of relations between the two countries, Pakistan and Kazakhstan. It was aimed to promote a deeper understanding and stronger bilateral cooperation between their people, especially the young students, an embassy press release said. Ambassador Yezhan Kistafin shared his insights about Pakistan-Kazakhstan relations and the latest updates

and developments during the ceremony. He also spoke about the importance of engaging the youth in meaningful conversations and inviting them to share their latest ideas.

The winner of the competition was Zulqarnain Khan from Bahira University Islamabad, who received the return air ticket. Umm e Salma from the University of Sargodha, who secured the second position, received a smartphone, while Taj Mir Khan from the University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar, who came in third place, received a tablet. Certificates were also distributed among the participants of the essay competition.



ISLAMABAD: A group of the musicians are practicing their performance, on green belt along the road side in Sector E-11 to get notice by people for hiring them for events, in Federal Capital. — Online

APFMA demands lifting of ban on wheat transportation

PESHAWAR: All Pakistan Flour Mills Association (APFMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has urged the government to take notice of the ban imposed by Punjab on the transportation of wheat and announced a strike from May 8 if the ban was not lifted. Addressing a press conference here on Friday, Chairman APFMA KP, Haji Muhammad Iqbal said that government should take notice of the ban and save the KP flour industry from collapsing. He said the ban on wheat transportation should be lifted immediately while check posts established to check the wheat movement should be abolished. He also demanded permission to purchase wheat for open markets in Punjab and said that it would revive the flour mill industry of KP and also ensure the provision of quality and cheap flour to the people of the province.—APP

Task Force for prioritizing rights of transgender people

PESHAWAR: Participants of a meeting of Task Force on Trans-inclusive Humanitarian Response call for prioritizing the rights and needs of transgender people in the aftermath of any natural disaster including climate catastrophes like the disastrous floods of 2022 affecting around 33 million people in the country. The meeting was arranged by the National Commission of Human Rights (NCHR) and Blue Veins, a non-governmental organization working on gender equality. This was the first meeting of Task Force constituted with the objective of removing hindrances in the inclusion of the transgender community in disaster management plan both pre and post. People belonging to different walks of life including the transgender community, officials of PDMA, Social Welfare Department, UNDP and media

persons participated in the meeting. The participants laid stress on ensuring legal recognition and protection of transgender individuals during emergencies. They advocated for the recognition of transgender people's gender identity in relevant laws and for facilitation in the issuance of identity documents reflecting their self-identified gender. Equip humanitarian actors with the necessary knowledge and skills to address transgender individuals' unique needs, develop comprehensive training programs on transgender issues, rights, needs and raise awareness about the challenges faced by them during emergencies, they added. Earlier, Qamar Naseem, Programme Manager Blue Veins made a presentation on policy guidelines in humanitarian response. The guidelines were prepared by Provincial

Disaster Management Department (PMDA) KP. The overall objective of the policy guidelines is to enhance awareness and understanding among humanitarian actors, stakeholders, and communities about the rights, protection issues and other concerns of transgender individuals in all phases of the Disaster Management Spectrum, Qamar added. He also disclosed that NADRA (National Database Registration Authority) has issued notification declaring two transgenders in Peshawar as authorized in verification of documents of others for issuance of identity cards. Speaking on the occasion, Additional Secretary Social Welfare Department, Muhammad Farooq informed the participants that work is in progress over legal frame work for removal of hurdles in inclusion of transgenders in humanitarian response.—APP



Usman Buzdar's petition referred to larger bench

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday referred a petition, filed by former chief minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar against non-provision of details of cases, registered by the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) Punjab against him, to a larger bench for hearing. Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh heard the petition filed by the former chief minister Punjab. Usman Buzdar, along with his counsel, appeared before the court during the proceedings. The counsel advanced arguments on summoning of a person and the Anti-Corruption rules. However, a law officer requested the court to withdraw its stay over Usman Buzdar's arrest. But, the court did not agree to the request and extended the stay over Buzdar's arrest till May 8. The court further referred the petition to a larger bench. The court held that identical matters were being heard by the larger bench; therefore, it would be appropriate that the petition should also be fixed before that bench. Usman Buzdar had approached the court with a request to direct the ACE authorities to provide details of all cases, registered against him. He also expressed apprehension of his arrest in undisclosed cases.—APP

PDMA holds seminar to raise awareness about smog

LAHORE: Under the guidance of Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Director General (DG) Imran Qureshi, a seminar on "Smog damages, prevention and the use of Saans App" was organised at the Government College University, here on Friday. The PDMA representatives delivered informative lectures for the university students. The participants were educated about the harmful effects of smog, preventive measures and the use of 'Saans App', developed to enable students to re-

port smog-related issues to the authorities concerned. To further create awareness, the PDMA distributed pamphlets among students about smog prevention. In his speech, DG PDMA Imran Qureshi praised the volunteer services, being provided by the university students across Punjab to combat environmental pollution. He stated that the PDMA control room had established a centralised dashboard for monitoring the causes of smog, and the process of monitoring those who contribute to smog was ongoing at the

provincial level. The DG said that line departments' representatives were present at the PDMA control room to address smog-related complaints, and strict action was being taken against those who cause environmental pollution. He urged citizens to file complaints against environmental polluters to ensure a cleaner environment for the future generations. Additionally, citizens could report environmental pollution through the Saans App or by contacting PDMA's helpline number 1129, he added.—APP

Parachinar mourns killing of 8 people

PESHAWAR: The killing of eight people including five teachers in Parachinar, Upper Kurram is being mourned on Friday. On Thursday, a tragic incident occurred in Parachinar, Upper Kurram, where eight people including five teachers were killed by armed men at Government High School Tari Mangal.—APP

Attock police nabs eight outlaws

DNA

ATTOCK: On the orders of District Police Officer Attock, Dr. Sardar Ghiyas Gul Khan, the Attock Police conducted operations against criminals throughout the district on Friday. Sub-Inspector Muhammad Ismael of Fateh Jang Police Station, arrested the accused Ali Raza, a resident of Sultan Town, Sargodha and recovered a SMG rifle with ammunition from him. Similarly, the accused

Muhammad Kamran son of Abdul Rahman resident of Sargodha and Nauman Ejaz, resident of Mohalla Pind Sultani were arrested by recovering rifle 44 bore with ammunition and a 30 bore pistol with ammunition, respectively. In separate incidents, ASI Tariq Mehmood recovered 30 bore pistol with ammunition from Asif Mahmood, resident of Sahal, a Kalashnikov with ammunition from Sikandar Hayat resident of Sargodha. Sub-inspector of Bisal police station Abdul

Waiz during the investigation case number 97 dated 01.05.23, crime 452/506, arrested in Bisal police station, Javed Iqbal resident of Bisal and recovered a pistol of 30 bore ammunition used in the incident. Sub-Inspector Sajid Habib, in-charge of Police Chowki Nara, recovered an illegal pistol of 30 bore with ammunition from the accused Junaid Ahmed, a resident of Gharibabad Jahangira. All the accused were arrested and cases were registered against them.

Fire safety awareness campaign to be launched for SMEs

KARACH: Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman Friday said that a fire safety awareness campaign will be launched for small and medium industries to provide them with protection and safety from fire. He said this on the occasion of a visit to the head office of Landhi Association of Trade and Industries (LATI) located in Landhi Industrial Area. He said that the industries located in Karachi are our valuable assets, their safety and improvement of the environment were essential, LATI Fire Station has

been established for 200 industries located in Landhi Industrial Area where fire tenders, modern equipment and personnel are available. The construction and repair of the roads of Landhi Industrial Area will be done on a priority basis, he added. Chief Coordinator Landhi Association of Trade and Industries Zain Bashir, President Siraj Sadiq Monoo, Anees Majeed, Ajmal Afzal, Major Fahad, Major Fazal Ali and other members were also present while KMC was represented by Senior Director Municipal Ser-

vices Nauman Arshad, Chief Fire Officer Ishtiaq Ahmed and other officers. Administrator Karachi said that the future of millions of people is related to industrial enterprises, their development is a guarantee of economic prosperity, the owners of small and medium industries are requested to cooperate fully with KMC Fire Brigade because the fire safety awareness campaign will help them to avoid fire and it is aimed to provide protection and security measures to industries.—APP

One year project on increasing awareness of COVID implemented

PESHAWAR: In order to increase awareness and prioritization of COVID-19, Shifa Foundation implemented a one-year project on COVID-19 Test and Treat Advocacy in Pakistan. The project team has arranged a Quarterly review meeting attended by the Senior Management and Program Team of the Shifa Foundation. Program Manager Said Shah shared the overall background of the project and said that Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND) and Unit aid collaborated with Shifa Foundation to implement COVID-19 Test and Treat Advocacy Project in Pakistan. The aim of the project was to develop context-sensitive advocacy strategies supported by accessible advocacy and communication materials to increase awareness of COVID-19 Test & Treat programs. Project Manager Bawar Khan briefed the meeting about the achievements and targets of the Project. He said, "The project has directly accessed more than 10,629 people

including 6,612 women and young girls across Pakistan through 383 Community Awareness and Capacity Building Sessions on COVID-19 tests, treatment, SOPs, and vaccination." "In addition to in-person community sessions, Shifa Foundation has also launched a Digital Media campaign and shared authentic and updated advocacy and communication materials about COVID-19 Test and Treat Advocacy." Electronic data showed that more than 25 million people reached key messages about COVID-19, SOPs, Tests and Treatments through Shifa Foundation's digital media campaign. Speaking at the Quarterly Review Meeting, Bawar Khan shared that more than 11000 Information, Education and Communication materials/brochures were developed and distributed among the people. The brochures and flyers focused on COVID-19 services including but not limited to basic information about

service centres, preventive measures, basic vaccination/ booster shots, and testing. The meeting was briefed that the project ensured the involvement of more than 50 celebrities, health experts and volunteers for public awareness messages to urge communities to adhere to standard procedures to stop the spread of COVID-19 and get tested if they carry symptoms or have been in contact with infected people. To seek the consultation of key stakeholders, the project conducted three workshops with parliamentarians, representatives from the Ministry of Health, UN Agencies, Line Departments (Social welfare, Police, Education, Health etc), Civil Society Organizations, the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, Chamber of Commerce, Print and Electronic Media etc. The project team identified various challenges and barriers to scaling up COVID-19 services in Pakistan.—APP

GHC					
CENTRAL POWER GENERATION COMPANY LTD. GUDDU					
GENCO-II TENDER NOTICE FOR INVITATION TO BID					
Sr. No.	Tender No. & Sections	Description of material	Last Date of Issue of tender	Last Date & Time of Receiving bid	Date & Time of Opening of bid
01.	T-1359/CEO/CPGCL/MMM/PM-IV/ (Mechanical)	Supply of Consumable Items for Mechanical Section of 415MW CCP, Guddu.	26.05.2023	29.05.2023 14.00Hrs.	29.05.2023 14.30Hrs.
02.	T-1360/CEO/CPGCL/MMM/PM-IV/ (Mechanical)	Supply of Centrifugal Pumps for Chemical/Water Treatment Plant (Mechanical) Section of 415MW CCP, Guddu	29.05.2023	30.05.2023 14.00Hrs.	30.05.2023 14.30Hrs.
03.	T-1361/CEO/CPGCL/MMM/PM-III (Instrument)	Supply of Transmitters and Limit Switches for (Four Nos. Gas Turbines) of Instrument Section 600MW CCP, Guddu	30.05.2023	31.05.2023 14.00Hrs.	31.05.2023 14.30Hrs.
04.	T-1362/CEO/CPGCL/MMM/PM-III (Instrument)	Supply of Spares i.e. Flexible Ignition Lead (Spark Plug) Servo Valve & Flame Scanner for Gas Turbine Instrument Section 600MW CCP, Guddu	31.05.2023	01.06.2023 14.00Hrs.	01.06.2023 14.30Hrs.

Bidding documents containing detailed terms and conditions, method of procurement, procedure for submission of bids, bid security, bid validity, opening of bid, evaluation criteria, clarification / rejection of bids, performance guarantee etc. are available for the interested bidders can be requested from :

01	Eligibility of Contractors:	Original Manufacturers / authorized distributors / suppliers / Contractors etc. registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments may apply for issuance of tender documents. All tenderers are also required to attach an attested copy of registration certificate with the bid being their Manufacturers/ authorized distributors / suppliers / Contractors etc. registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments Government of Pakistan.
02	Tender Cost/Fee:	Rs.1500/- and by post Rs.1800/- for each tender (Non-refundable).
03	Earnest Money : (Each Tender)	@ 3% of the total value of the bid in the form of Call Deposit/Bank Draft/Bank Guarantee(refundable) drawn in favor of Central Power Generation Company Limited"
04	Tender documents can be purchased from:	1. O/O C.E.O. CPGCL, Genco-II, Guddu-Kashmore Pakistan Tel. (Direct) # 0722-691030, Fax No.0722-679085 2. O/O CEO, Genco Holding Company Limited, 1 st Floor, OPF Building, Sector G-5/2, Shahrah-e-Jamhuriat, Islamabad, Tele No.051-9217601, Fax No.051-9217602 3. O/O The Chief Resident Representative Wapda, C-26, Block-5, Sardar Ali Sabri Road, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi, Tele No.021-34823591-95

The bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the bidding documents, must reach at the office of Manager (Material Management, CPGCL, GENCO-II, Guddu on or before opening date as shown against each tender. Bid will be opened on the same day at 14.30hrs. The advertisement is also available on PPR website at www.ppra.org.pk.

Note: 1. In case Government announces any public holiday or due to unavoidable circumstances, the tender will be opened on next working day.
2. The C.E.O, CPGCL reserves all right to reject tender in the light of PPR Rules 33(1)

Chief Engineer/T.D
For Chief Executive Officer
CPGCL, Genco-II, Guddu

PID (I) No.6741/22

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



Hotels & Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Ladies taking interest in literary materials about Bangladesh on the occasion of the National Day of Bangladesh.—DNA

Media freedom index in improved: Info Minister

Efforts are being made to remove the stigma of 'media predator' on Pakistan's forehead", she said while referring to Imran's era

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Friday said that the improvement of Pakistan in global media freedom index was a manifestation of the fact that Pakistan's direction was correct and the government had intentions to improve it further. Expressing her gratitude over Pakistan's improvement of 7 ranks in the world ranking of press freedom, she said in a statement that the era of media-bashing, kidnapping, shooting, rib-breaking, accusing media persons of selling loyal-

ties and dirty character assassination campaigns was slowly ending, which was also being acknowledged globally.

"Efforts are being made to remove the stigma of 'media predator' on Pakistan's forehead", she said while referring to Imran's era.

The minister said that that four-year mess of 'Imran Media Predator' was gradually being cleared with the grace of Allah Almighty. She congratulated the Pakistani nation and the media that Pakistan was improving in the media index at global level. "It is gratifying to see progress in media in one year under the leadership of



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif", she maintained. She thanked to Allah for bringing positive improvement in media freedom index after getting out of FATF's gray list. Marriyum Aurangzeb

saluted the journalists and media organizations who struggled for the freedom of expression and journalism, faced hardships and oppression. She vowed that this journey of improvement would continue in their cooperation. The minister opined that a seven-point improvement in the Media Freedom Index was the manifestation of tolerance of dissent. The RSF report acknowledged that the current government was committed to a democratic attitude towards the media, she said and added, this report distinguishes between a democratic people's government and an undemocratic im-

posed regime. The minister said that the constitutional rights of media and expression of opinion would be further strengthened.

Referring to 2022 report in which Imran Khan was declared a media predator, she said in the past years of this dark regime, Pakistan went down 12 places in the media freedom index. She lamented that during the four-year tenure of 'Imran Predator', Pakistan went down 18 ranks in the Press Freedom Index. In just one year under the leadership of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, Pakistan's index improved its rank by 7.

Lender is applying stricter conditions to Pakistan

Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Friday said Pakistan is between the devil and the deep blue sea over stringent IMF conditions. One reason for delay is release of loan tranche by IMF is lack of confidence, which will hit the budget making exercise. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the ninth review of the IMF and the staff level agreement should have been completed last year, but the previous regime violated the agreement with the international organization due to which the ninth review was stalled. Talking to the business community, the veteran

business leader said that people are constantly being told that all the new conditions of the IMF have been fulfilled, and that the agreement will be concluded in a few days, but the IMF is changing the goalposts very frequently. IMF is adding new demands to its list and asking Pakistan continuously to do more, he observed. Among the reasons for the unnecessary harshness on the part of the IMF is the fear of this institution that after receiving the loan, affairs in Pakistan will continue to be run irresponsibly and the expenditure will not be controlled, which will result in the country's bankruptcy. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that the IMF is also worried that billions of rupees will be wasted to

please the voters before the elections, which will further weaken the country's faltering economy and it will result in disrepute of the lender if Pakistan defaults. The business leader said that China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have assured loans to Pakistan. Moreover, the Government is discouraging imports, resulting in a fall of 68 percent in the current account deficit in the last eight months and is expected to further decline in the next four months. Import contraction is also reducing the revenue of FBR. Inflation has crossed 36 percent, the highest level in Asia, due to which the IMF is demanding a two percent increase in the interest rates. Mian Zahid Hussain said that economic instability is increasing

rapidly due to continuous delay in payment of loan instalments by the IMF. The current agreement with the IMF was signed in 2019 and expires next month. According to the agreement, Pakistan was supposed to get a loan of six and a half billion dollars, but so far only 3.9 billion dollars have been received. The government has already accepted all IMF conditions on exchange rate, tax rate, energy price, subsidy reduction and interest rate hike but could not convince IMF to release funds. In this most difficult economic situation, if the nation unites and implements the emergency program of import substitution and privatization of failed government institutions, then this vortex can be exited, he said.—DNA

PAF made a wish come true for an aspiring child

While showing extreme compassion for Master Abdullah Naveed, a bright child suffering from thalassaemia, Air Chief Marshal Zabeer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force made possible his life time dream come true by making him a PAF pilot for one day at an operational base of Pakistan Air Force. It was a dream of Abdullah Naveed to become a PAF fighter pilot which is indicative of the traditional affiliation of entire Pakistani young generation with PAF. This activity which was sponsored by Make a Wish Foundation, Pakistan, Master Abdullah visited an Operational Base of PAF, where he was given an honorary rank by Air Officer Commanding, Southern Air Command, Air Vice Marshal Khalid Mehmood and Base Commander Air Commodore Asim Rana in a customary way used in PAF. The child was also given a simulated experience of a fighter aircraft and visited various units / wings of the base. Parents of Abdullah and founding President of Make-A-Wish Foundation, Mr Ishtiaq Baig also accompanied him. Abdullah was elated and jubilant and showed extreme joy upon undergoing this unique and unprecedented experience. PAF has always held a special place in the hearts of the nation.—DNA



China, Pak step up exchanges in art and culture

ISLAMABAD: China, Pakistan have stepped up exchanges in the fields of art and culture, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Friday "We are discussing with Chinese guest professors about long-term research on various aspects of Chinese and Pakistani arts and crafts. The safeguarding of the rock carvings and ancient inscriptions in our northern areas is also possible under such collaboration", Prof. Dr. Zarwar Khan, Department of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Swat said while attending the China-Pakistan Contemporary Arts Exchange Exhibition. The exhibition is taking place at the University of Education, Lahore from May 3-5 and in tandem at the Lahore Museum from May 3-7. More than 100 pieces of works by Pakistani and Chinese artists, including Chinese painting, Chinese calligraphy, sculpture and other forms of art, are on display. "The art exhibition is one of its kind ever held at the University of Education in Lahore in collaboration with the Chinese art historians, students and delegates. The exhibition has added new dimensions to our knowledge about the ancient religious, cultural and commercial interaction between China and Pakistan", said Dr. Zarwar Khan. Post pandemic, Chinese students, art experts and historians are restoring contacts with Pakistan to conduct research on bilateral arts and crafts and enhance cultural interactions. The exhibition is also part of the ongoing efforts to mark the ten-year anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative. According to Mr. Hao, Director of the International Office, Hebei Academy of Fine Arts, after the conclusion of the two exhibition areas, the exhibits will continue to be on display at the local art center for more than a week.—DNA

FM visited India on SCO invitation to attend meeting

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister (PM) on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Qamar Zaman Kaira said that Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Foreign Minister (FM) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visited India on the invitation of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as representative of Pakistan to attend the meeting of the council of foreign ministers.

Addressing at a press conference here on Friday, he said, "Our friendly country China is leading the SCO and supporting Pakistan at all platforms of the world." Kaira said, "SCO is an active and effective forum of the region." He said some protests were reported against the partic-



ipation of the Pakistani foreign minister in the SCO conference. FM also met with his Russian counterpart at the sideline meeting of the SCO conference and discussed the matters of mutual interests of both states and reiterated to forge strong ties between the two nations.

Kaira said he had put the all criticism and propaganda of the opposition in the ashray about the visit of FM. "Bilawal is playing its vital role to restore the relationship and positive image of the country across the globe which is badly damaged in the previous regime of Pakistan

Threke-e-Insaf (PTI). Bilawal Bhutto had highlighted the Kashmir issue at all appropriate forums of the globe, he added. Kaira underlined that FM had visited India after raising the Kashmir issue across the world and declared Narendra Modi as the butcher of Gujrat.

Saudi press attaché shares heartwarming memories

ISLAMABAD: on Friday shared a heartwarming post on his Twitter handle, commemorating the historic visit of Saudi King Faisal bin Abdulaziz to Pakistan on May 5, 1955. The Press Attaché shared some memorable pictures and news clippings in the Arabic language of the Prince's visit to Pakistan. According to Dr Naif, King Faisal, who was a Prince at that time, arrived in Karachi on the mentioned date and went on to visit printing presses and ships of the Pakistan Navy. The King even had his breakfast on a battleship and witnessed a horse parade.—APP

Weekly inflation up by 1.05 percent

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 1.05 per cent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on May 04, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 254.84 points as compared to 252.20 points during the past week, according to the PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 48.35 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs17,732 witnessed a 0.94 percent increase and went up to 260.54 points from last week's 258.12 points. Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption group from Rs 17,732-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 1.03 per cent, 1.05 per cent, 1.09 per cent, and 1.02 per cent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 30 (58.82%) items increased, 09 (17.65%) items decreased and 12 (23.53%) items remained stable.

Furthermore, the Prince toured the radio studios and had the opportunity to meet a delegation of religious scholars during his visit to Pakistan.—APP

Govt's sincerity can avert uncertainty

ISLAMABAD: The members of the Senate Friday expressed their optimism that the coalition government's sincerity in dialogue with the opposition could help avert prevailing uncertainty due to political and constitutional crises alongside terrorism resurgence threatening peace and security of the country. Talking to APP outside the Parliament House, Senator Mousa Bux Chandio of Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarian (PPPP) said the prevailing crises were not insurmountable rather demanded a prudent approach of the government to tackle it with mutual consensus and cooperation. He added that the sincerity of the coalition government could help improve the situation. Senator Syed Ali Zafar of Pakistan Threke-e-Insaf (PTI) said there was uncertainty in the country due to no fresh polls alongside terrorism revival causing damage to the country. He opined that if the higher court made a decision and all stakeholders started to move in one direction then these issues could be resolved. Senator Zafar said all political parties and partners should sit together to resolve the issues and alleged that the economic crisis had worsened due to lack of planning and strategy of the coalition parties to manage the matters pertaining to economy. Senator Hidayatullah Khan of Awami National Party (ANP) said the issue of terrorism revived in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) due to its close proximity with Afghanistan but this would incur its repercussions to rest of the country.—APP

Briefs

'Elections should be held in Oct 2023'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Federal Minister for Power Khurram Dastagir Khan on Friday said the election should take place at its scheduled time in October 2023, neither earlier nor later. Talking to a private news channel, he said that Imran Khan's popularity was limited to social media. He also remarked that in terms of negotiations with PTI, he believed that it was pointless to negotiate with a person who lacked credibility, as Imran Khan was prone to making decisions but then reversing them due to his indecisive mindset. As for the demand for elections within 90 days, Khurram questioned why this requirement applied solely to the Punjab province.—APP

ANF recovers over two kg drugs in three operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in three operations managed to recover over two kg drugs and arrested two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He said in an operation at Lahore International Airport, 59 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a Riyadh-bound passenger resident of Haripur. In the second operation in Haripur Mansehra, one kg charras was recovered from the possession of an accused resident of Abbotabad. In the third operation conducted near Karachi Cantt Station, 1200 grams charras was recovered from the possession of a drug peddler resident of Karachi. He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.—APP

IRSA releases 138,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 138,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 141,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1439.65 feet and was 41.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 38,000 cusecs while outflow as 40,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1122.50 feet, which was 72.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 44,600 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 54,800, 52,800, 44,400 and 9,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 32,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera.—APP

Pakistani Students in Australia

TAYYIBA ZABIH

Australia is a well-liked study abroad option for Pakistani students due to the excellent quality of education provided by Australian universities and the friendly atmosphere in the nation. Many Pakistani students rely on various sources of support, including financial assistance from their families, scholarships, and part-time jobs. However, obtaining permanent residency and citizenship in Australia can be a challenging process for Pakistani students. The history of Pakistani students in Australia dates back to the 1960s, when a small number of Pakistani students began studying at Australian universities. The proportion of Pakistani students, however, did not start to significantly rise until the 1990s. This was due to several factors, including the growing demand for quality education, increased awareness about Australian universities among Pakistani students, and the availability of scholarships and other forms of financial assistance. One of the pri-

Govt brings education at the doorsteps of deprived communities

With the cost of education rising amid tough economic conditions, early this year Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif spearheaded two innovative projects "Schools on Wheels" and Pakistan Teleschool Application

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government in its first year took two significant initiatives to introduce technology and mobility in the education sector, with the aim to create learning opportunities for all sections of society particularly for children living in deprived communities. With the cost of education rising amid tough economic conditions, early this year Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif spearheaded two innovative projects "Schools on Wheels" and Pakistan Teleschool App. In February in the first phase, he launched the project of mobile schools consisting of eight buses that are providing primary-level education to children of Islamabad and adjoining areas. The buses which park at different spots in areas of the capital are equipped with computers, desks, whiteboards, and LCDs, giving

teachers and students an environment to engage and learn.

At the inauguration ceremony, while terming children 'future builders of the nation', the prime minister reiterated that the government would make sustained efforts to provide maximum educational facilities to the young generation. The project of mobile schools is part of the government's strenuous and persistent efforts to boost literacy rate, particularly in rural areas. In the next phase, the plan is to increase the number of buses and expand the project to other parts of the country including Azad Kashmir. The project will help children in neglected communities to become literate and capable of seeking further education and technical skills. According to UNICEF, an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 are not attending school in Pakistan, comprising 44% of the total pop-

'823 students enrolled in Pakistani School Tripoli'

ISLAMABAD, May 05 (DNA): Minister for State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan on Friday informed the Senate that there was a total of 823 students, including 227 from Pakistani community enrolled in the Pakistani School Tripoli (Libya) during 2022-23. Replying to various questions during Question Hour, the minister said that there were two Pakistani Schools in Libya including Pakistan Embassy International School & College, Tripoli and Pakistan Embassy International School & College, Benghazi. As many as 31 students appeared in Matric while 14 students in Higher Secondary School Certificate (F.Sc) during 2022-23, he added. He said the schools and colleges were not only for Pakistani students but also for students from other communities. The schools bore expenditure from their own resources and no funding was made from the government budget, he said. The minister said the syllabus of the Federal Board of Education at SSC and HSC levels was being taught in the schools and students regularly appear in Federal Board Exams every year. Additionally, IGCSE, Edexcel and AS Level Syllabi were also taught, he said. To another question, the minister said there were 45 regular Lecturers (BS-17) and 18 daily wages staff working in evening shifts in Islamabad Model Colleges. It was a fact that lecturers teaching in the evening shift in Islamabad Model Colleges as Visiting Faculty Members were being paid remuneration @Rs. 180/- per period and @240 per period for degree level with the approval of the Finance Division while lecturers working in evening shift in one ex-FG-College i.e. Islamabad Model Postgraduate College of Commerce, H-8/4, Islamabad were being paid remuneration @ Rs. 350/- Per Period, he said. He said the case regarding enhancement in remuneration of Visiting Faculty Member (VFM) for teaching Secondary/ Intermediate or equivalent classes from Rs.180/-per period to Rs. 400/-per period and; visiting faculty member for teaching to BS/Associate Degree Programme or classes to Rs. 750/-per period was being examined in consultation with Federal Directorate of Education.—DNA

ulation in this age group and there is a dire need to make education accessible to them through new tools of information technology. In a bid to bring education to the homes of children, PM Shehbaz Sharif in March launched a Pakistan Teleschool App developed by Ministry of Federal Education and the results were encouraging.

In just a week, the application was downloaded 10,000 times, 5500 enrollments were made and 17000 videos were viewed in 310 cities. The project is aimed at providing online education to students from grades 1 to 12.

While in another step to educate children, the government is working to bring the remaining 70,000 out-of-school children in the Islamabad Capital Territory to schools by June 30. Shehbaz Sharif during his tenure as chief minister Punjab successfully brought to fruition a scheme to distrib-

ute laptops among students pursuing higher education. Once again, the PM has plans to distribute 100,000 laptops among higher achievers in educational institutions as he passionately believes that equipping youth with the latest tools of information technology is the path to future learning and innovation. In the summer of last year, Pakistan was devastated by floods of epic proportions induced by climate change and 33 million people were affected in the flood-hit areas. The floods destroyed critical infrastructure including schools in Balochistan and keeping in view the urgent need to re-open schools, the prime minister led the way and inaugurated a smart school in Sohatpur, Balochistan in January. Built in a record period of two months, the school is equipped with the latest IT facilities. He also reopened a new building of flood-affected Government Boys Secondary school Killi Jaya Khan in the same area.

Niaz Celebrates 6 Months of Impactful Work for Personswith Disabilities in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Niaz Support, a social enterprise dedicated to improving the lives of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Pakistan, is celebrating its 6-month anniversary since its inception. Over the past few months, Niaz has made a significant impact on the lives of PWDs, especially in providing customised wheelchairs to deserving beneficiaries. Niaz has been a pioneer in providing customised wheelchairs to deserving PWDs in Pakistan. The initiative has been able to provide mobility and independence, allowing PWDs to participate in daily activities and take control of



their own lives.

Niaz would like to extend its gratitude to all the gifters who have generously contributed to support the cause, their ambassadors who have worked hard to reach out to and connect with the gifters

globally and the media partners for raising awareness on the disability needs in Pakistan.

Niaz would also like to extend a special thank you to Mr. Agha Hussain Raza of PSCOPWD and all the DPOs

across Pakistan for their dedicated efforts in identifying the list of most deserving beneficiaries from across Pakistan. Their expertise and commitment have been invaluable in ensuring that the customised wheelchairs provided by Niaz

reach those who need them the most. We are grateful for their partnership and look forward to continuing to work together to improve the lives of persons with disabilities in Pakistan. Hussain Odhwani - Founder Niaz, shared his thoughts on the progress of the initiative, "It has been a challenging but rewarding journey so far. We have been able to make a significant impact. We are grateful for the support we have received from all our partners, and we look forward to continuing our work to improve the lives of persons with disabilities in Pakistan." Niaz is committed to creating a world where persons with disabilities are empowered to lead fulfilling and independent lives.

Police net nine drug peddlers, bootleggers


RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers and bootleggers conducted raids in different areas and rounded up nine accused on recovery of over 8820 grams charras and 50 bottles of liquor, said a police spokesman here on Friday. He informed that Waris Khan police held a female drug smuggler namely Shamim Akhtar and recovered 1370 grams charras while Sadiqabad police rounded up Nawaz for having 1100 grams charras. Pirwadhai police netted Umar with 1680 grams charras and Gungmandi police arrested Haris for possessing 1350 grams charras. New Town police in their operation managed to arrest Malik Shahid with 1420 grams charras while Westridge police held Muhammad Ali for possessing 1100 grams charras. Cantt police apprehended a bootlegger namely Ishaq and recovered 50 bottles of liquor from his possession. Other accused were sent behind the bars on recovery of drugs. 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

COMSATS, Syndesis Health Inc. (USA) join hands


ISLAMABAD: The Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Syndesis Health Inc., USA, for "Genomic Sequencing Programs". The MoU will provide a broad framework for collaborative activities aimed at providing better healthcare to the citizens, supporting curative drugs development, and devising guidelines to help in managing pharmaceutical products. Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, Executive Director COMSATS, and Mr. Kamil Mehmood, Co-Founder & Director Syndesis Health Inc., signed the MoU on behalf of their respective

organizations. The signing ceremony held at COMSATS Secretariat in Islamabad on Friday was participated by Heads / Representatives of diplomatic missions of COMSATS' Member States in Islamabad, Secretary Incharge Ministry of Science & Technology - focal ministry of the host country for COMSATS, Usman Akhtar Bajwa, senior officials of relevant ministries, as well as representatives from print and electronic media. Addressing the participants, the Executive Director COMSATS threw light on the agreement and its prospects for research, impact on the industrial sector, and economy. The MOU was a manifestation of a mutual desire on both sides

to support each other in the endeavours towards keeping pace with the rapid development in the field of S&T, particularly ensuring better healthcare for all through the effective utilization of modern-day technologies. The Director of Syndesis Health Inc., Kamil, while highlighting the activities and achievements of his organization, assured full support to COMSATS in implementing the related programs. Ambassador Zakaria and Mehmood briefed the media and the distinguished participants on how the collaboration would utilize the latest technological know-how for strengthening the healthcare sector, reducing healthcare costs, and contributing to the national economy.—APP



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Coronation of Charles III

As the day nears, ask yourself a question. What is this weekend's coronation for? It will not make Charles III the king. He is that already. He became king when his mother died last year, and after a smoothly performed and sensibly low-key accession process. The line of succession is also firmly set. Nor will the coronation make any difference to the king's ability to carry out his constitutional role as Britain's head of state. It will confer no new power on him. He already gives his assent to laws. The coronation no longer provides a platform to parade an imperial reach, as that of Elizabeth II, attended by more than 50 senior representatives of Britain's possessions and Commonwealth nations, emphatically still sought to. It will not be a celebration of Britain's global military and naval clout, which earlier coronations also were. Those days have gone, and good riddance.

The coronation is certainly not taking place because of public demand or enthusiasm for the monarchy or the new king. A mere 9% of British adults say that they care "a great deal" about this weekend's events. Only 7% describe themselves as committed royalists, willing to give uncritical support to the monarchy. It seems gratuitous to be paying £250m for a coronation during a cost of living crisis. Nor can it be seen as a symbolic new chapter for the nation. The 1953 coronation of the then 27-year-old Elizabeth was widely depicted as an event designed to bring colour and hope to postwar Britain – perhaps even as the start of a new age. Charles, by contrast, is the oldest monarch to take the British throne. His life story, his family problems and his ways are familiar. Britain will not change this weekend. The overwhelming truth is that the coronation is taking place for anachronistic religious and constitutional reasons. This weekend's events are centred on a religious service in which Charles vows to uphold the Protestant religion, is anointed with holy oil and swears an oath which, in words that the archbishop of Canterbury will intone in Westminster Abbey on Saturday, commits to making Britain "a holy nation" under "a royal priesthood".



Rate hike addiction

A drug is "a substance intended for use in the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of disease". But if taken to cure all ills, a drug can lead to addiction, which can have "harmful physical, psychological or social effects". We can add "economic and political effects", which the Federal Reserve's addiction with interest rate hikes will have not only on the United States but the rest of the world as well.

The Fed raised the interest rate by 25 basis points on Thursday (Beijing time), the 10th time it has done so since March 2022, justifying its move as being "strongly committed to returning inflation to its 2 percent objective". True, the 10 rounds of rate hikes have reduced inflation from a peak of 9.1 percent in June 2022 to 5 percent in March this year. But in the US, the rates of credit cards, mortgages and auto loans – already surging since last year – all stand to rise even more, increasing the burden of loan costs for both consumers and businesses. And since banks are offering higher interest rates on savings, people will save more and spend less to earn more interest, which could cause the economy to slow down further, leading to a recession. Worse, the Fed's rate hikes will cause capital to flow from other countries into the US, dealing another blow to their economies at a time when they are yet to emerge from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis. The Fed surely knows the interest rate hikes alone cannot bring down inflation or boost the US economy, because there are many reasons behind the high inflation – massive quantitative easing, for one, the Fed pumping in huge amounts of money into the market, for another. During the three years of the pandemic alone, the US' money supply increased by more than 40 percent to peak at \$21.7 trillion in April 2022. The US is trying to restore order to its economy, which fell into disarray due to an overdose of money, by harming other economies. Sticking to its addiction of interest rate hikes to check inflation and boost US growth, the Fed is creating problems for both developed and developing economies. But why should the US worry about other economies now when it has never done so before? Maybe the other economies can take solace from the Fed Open Market Committee's statement about taking "into account the cumulative tightening of monetary policy", which has been widely interpreted as implying an end to this round of interest rate hikes. But given its addiction, the Fed cannot be relied upon.

Why Moscow depends more on Tehran than Beijing?

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



However, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has recently shown support for a "Look East" policy, particularly after the United States withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in May of 2018. Khamenei realized that Europe's preference

The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic has, for some time, been guided by the principle of neither aligning with the East nor the West. However, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has recently shown support for a "Look East" policy, particularly after the United States withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in May of 2018. Khamenei realized that Europe's preference for the JCPOA would not prevail, and many European companies abandoned their dealings with Iran due to secondary US sanctions. This led to an increased interest in closer trade relations with China, with whom Iran signed a long-term agreement in March 2021. Under this agreement, China has access to subsidized oil purchases for the next 25 years in exchange for hundreds of billions of dollars in Chinese investment in Iran. Iran's relationship with China is important, as China is one of the few countries willing to defy Western sanctions on Iran's energy

sector. Iran's relationship with Russia came under scrutiny when Russia invaded Ukraine in February of 2022. Iran offered Russia diplomatic, economic, and military support, including supplying attack drones for use on the battlefield in Ukraine. US officials have also suggested that Iran may send surface-to-surface missiles to Russia. Iran's experience in sanctions evasion and indigenous weapons production makes it an attractive partner for Russia. The Iranian government has doubled down on its "Look East" policy over the past year, hoping to secure China and Russia as its main backers against the West. While this policy may be a gamble, Iran seems optimistic about its prospects. However, both China and Russia's economic cooperation has been a source of frustration for Iran. All three countries are cash poor and dependent on selling oil to markets like China and India. This leaves military relations as the most natural ap-

proach. Iran has already sent drones to Russia for its war against Ukraine, and there are confirmed reports that Moscow will soon hand over its advanced Su-35 fighter jets to Iran. While these military transactions are important, closer geopolitical alignment between Tehran and Moscow would represent an even bigger leap. When Raisi met President Vladimir Putin in July 2022, Tehran officials described the summit as the birth of a new regional understanding between Tehran and Moscow. Iran's prospects as a regional hard power player in places like Syria, the South Caucasus, or Central Asia would be greatly reduced by a Russian military defeat in Ukraine. However, the "Look East" policy is unlikely to be abandoned, as Russia has long been seen as a counterweight to the West by Khamenei and senior IRGC officers. For Iran, Russia is the only large and relatively resource-rich state in the region that is almost unconditionally ready to side with Moscow against the West.

How to ignore Israel's apartheid: Learn from Ursula von der Leyen

Andrew Mitrovica

On Tuesday, Palestinian prisoner Khader Adnan was found dead in an Israeli prison after a nearly three-month hunger strike against his incarceration without charge or trial. Don't expect von der Leyen to utter a word about it. The birthday bash mustn't be ruined. While her contentious comments triggered a broad backlash, I remembered that von der Leyen had spouted this historically illiterate, revisionist tripe just months before when she was given a lofty prize at an event imbued with ego-soothing pageantry. On June 14, a beaming von der Leyen was feted with an honorary doctorate from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

Diplomatic tip: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will forgive and forget your country's outrages and crimes and wish you a happy birthday in return, apparently, for an honorary degree. That quid pro quo was on blatant and telling display last week when von der Leyen took to social media to congratulate Israel on its 75th birthday. In lieu of a blue and white cake topped with 75 candles, von der Leyen posted a nearly 90-second video airbrushing Israel's long, cruel history of theft and violence visited on generations of imprisoned Palestinians. She also praised the apartheid state for its "dynamism" and "ingenuity". "Seventy-five years ago, a dream was realized," she said. "You [Israel] have literally made a desert bloom." Her crude revisionism and recycling of a familiar, bigoted trope was condemned instantly and loudly by Palestinians who have not only endured the endless nightmare of Israel's ruthless occupation, but who have also been invaded, jailed, tortured, killed and had their homes and lands stolen by the dynamic and ingenious birthday boy celebrating Independence Day along with President von der Leyen.

On Tuesday, Palestinian prisoner Khader Adnan was found dead in an Israeli prison after a nearly three-month hunger strike against his incarceration without charge or trial. Don't expect von der Leyen to utter a word about it. The birthday bash mustn't be ruined. While her contentious comments triggered a broad backlash, I remembered that von der Leyen had spouted this historically illiterate, revisionist tripe just months before when she was given a lofty prize at an event imbued with ego-soothing pageantry. On June 14, a beaming von der Leyen was feted with an honorary doctorate from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. "Well, how exciting," the university's giddy president said before bestowing von der Leyen with the symbolic honour, which was a reflection in part, he added, of their "exceptional" guest's "long-term commitment to women's rights". Von der Leyen sat in the centre of a raised dais, smiling as a short film tracing her accomplishments and applauding her commitment to promoting women's interests and equality was shown to the students, faculty and diplomats gathered in a round hall. Only weeks earlier, veteran reporter Shireen Abu Akleh was fatally shot in the head by an Israeli sniper while covering yet another

early morning raid in the Jenin refugee camp by eager-to-harm soldiers. Still, von der Leyen couldn't resist travelling to Israel to get her sash and scroll. In her effusive 22-minute speech in June, von der Leyen gave more fulsome expression to her blind, unqualified support and affection for Israel. "I feel honoured and humbled to receive this recognition," she said. "It seems like a miracle that a German like me is welcomed and honoured here in the state of Israel as a friend among friends." Needless to say, von der Leyen did not mention Abu Akleh's name – if she remembered it at all. Nor did she address, let alone condemn, the murder of a courageous female journalist who had dedicated her life and work to defending the rights and dignity of her sisters – Palestinian girls and women among so many others. Instead, von der Leyen lauded a rogue nation that was not only responsible for Abu Akleh's assassination but also the state-sanctioned brutality that Palestinian girls and women in blockaded Gaza, the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem have suffered year after grinding year. It was a sorry performance by a preening politician more interested in having her vanity stroked and absolving her hosts' complicity and guilt than confronting Israel's systemic violation of women and girls whose cause she claims to champion. Von der Leyen's at times hyperbolic acceptance speech veered into what can only be described as the surreal. "Europe is the values of the Talmud: the Jewish sense of personal responsibility, of justice and of solidarity," she said. This will come as a surprise, I suspect, to enlightened Europeans who continue to oppose and denounce the failure of iron-fisted Israeli governments and too many obstinate Israelis to accept any measure of responsibility for the litany of injustices the occupiers have forced upon besieged Palestinians. This will come as a surprise, as well, to the string of human rights groups inside and outside Israel who have concluded – as a matter of international law – that the nation von der Leyen calls a "friend" has, since its inception, pursued a pitiless policy of apartheid towards Palestinians. All with the sinister intent to impose its ethnic supremacy and to crush Palestinians into ghettos with deliberate, inhuman efficiency. Von der Leyen didn't devote so much as a syllable to that egregious and exhaustively documented record. She preferred to traffic in

stubborn, facts-on-the-ground-allergic rhetoric like this: "Israel is a vibrant democracy. Its resilience is admired worldwide ... Israel is a small slice of land where people of all faiths and born on all continents live together."

Of course, von der Leyen singled out Russia for "its aggression" against Ukraine's territorial integrity without bothering to note that Israel has launched calamitous ground invasions of Gaza in late 2008 to early 2009 and in 2014 that obliterated homes, schools, hospitals and livelihoods while killing, maiming and traumatizing thousands of children, women and men who had no place to hide. The casualties included Palestinian Nobel Peace Prize nominee Izzeldin Abueilah's three daughters and their cousin who were dismembered when two Israeli tank shells were fired into their home as they huddled together on January 16, 2009.

It appears that von der Leyen has forgotten about those girls and women, too. What she didn't forget to do was to trot out the odious chestnut that, lately, has caused such an uproar. "I marvel at how ... you have, quite literally, made the desert bloom," von der Leyen told her appreciative audience. Beyond erasing the history and presence of Palestinians in that "desert" for centuries, the clear and indeed, racist, implication is that the land was empty or neglected prior to the arrival of Jewish settlers. Again, I'm convinced that enlightened European parliamentarians and millions of Europeans who side with the Palestinians' just fight will reject outright the president's outrageous language and demand she retract her retrograde remarks. Listening to both speeches, I was taken aback not only by some of what von der Leyen said but how she said it. The talks oozed with a grating, self-gratulatory quality: the by-product of her evident and overreaching aim to please rather than to challenge.

Then there was the smug certainty of von der Leyen's gooey sentimentalism that betrays a profound misunderstanding of the combustible region and an obliviousness to the hurt that her halting comments were bound to cause to appalled Palestinians and their equally offended allies. The European Commission's president should, at the least, apologise. You and I know she won't. A gift-wrapped bauble, it seems, is more important than the constant struggles, capricious fates and endangered lives of Palestinians. Shame on her.

Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

FM Bilawal
says peace is
our destiny

FROM PAGE 01

Bilawal further talked about the tensions between both countries surrounding sports and said that it should be separated from politics and foreign policy. The foreign minister, who is also the chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), said that he tried to send Pakistan's cricket blind to India but they were not issued their visas. "Why is India afraid of Pakistan's blind cricket team?" he questioned. "I have tried to Pakistan's internal politics confined to its borders." Bilawal also said that when Pakistan gets the chairmanship of SCO, it will also be able to organise a successful meeting.

'Don't
weaponise
terrorism...

FROM PAGE 01

the SCO a key regional platform comprising countries, which are bound together by longstanding historical, cultural, civilizational and geographical ties. "Our excuse cannot be we were too divided to put up a fight," he said. He highlighted Pakistan's vision of enhanced regional economic connectivity and win-win cooperation. The foreign minister said the climate crisis posed an existential threat to humanity and proposed the establishment of a Joint Working Group in SCO on Climate Change. He mentioned that Pakistan recently faced the greatest climate catastrophe and stressed that the planet could only be saved from the ravages of climate change if the international community worked in unison.

Afghan,
Chinese
FMs in...

FROM PAGE 01

officials of Pakistan's Foreign Office. The Afghan Foreign Minister will participate in the 5th Pak-China-Afghanistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue at the Foreign Office tomorrow (Saturday, May 6, 2023). State Council and Foreign Minister of China Qin Gang will also participate in the Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue. The visit of the Acting Afghan Foreign Minister is a continuation of Pakistan's political engagement process with Afghanistan, which, inter alia, included a visit of Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to Kabul on November 29, 2022, and visit of a high-level delegation led by the Defence Minister of Pakistan to Kabul on February 22, 2023.

Political
parties
must get...

FROM PAGE 01

and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had agreed on one thing that elections should be held across the country on same day. "We showed flexibility and are ready for negotiations even today," the minister said adding that our lawyer Farooq H. Naik had appeared in the court and he was here to represent Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). The minister said "Institutions are standing in front of each other due to continuous injustices in the country." He said Punjab should not be accused of monopoly. "Our dialogue with PTI has come a long way," he added.

PM Shehbaz
meets the
British PM

FROM PAGE 01

nations known as the Commonwealth. The Prime Minister urged the leaders to re-imagine and reinvigorate the Commonwealth and infuse it with ever greater synergy and even stronger sense of purpose. The Prime Minister also spoke of his Government's commitment to equipping the Pakistani youth with the right kind of skill sets and opportunities. He added that his Government was empowering the women and mainstreaming the marginalized youth, religious and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and transgender community.

Babar becomes fastest batter
to score 5,000 ODI runs

The star batter, who is the top ODI batter in the world, has become the first batter to achieve this feat in less than 100 innings

The star batter, who is the top ODI batter in the world, has become the first batter to achieve this feat in less than 100 innings

DNA

KARACHI: Babar Azam, the captain of the Pakistan cricket team, has once again created history by breaking a world record in One Day International (ODI) cricket. Pakistan skipper Babar Azam added another feather to his cap by becoming the fastest batsman to score 5,000 runs in one-day internationals (ODI). The star batter, who is the top ODI batter in the world, has become the first batter to achieve this feat in less than 100 innings. Babar crossed this milestone in just 97 innings, becoming the 14th to score 5,000 runs. He broke the record during the fourth match of the series against New Zealand in Karachi on Friday (today). South Africa's Hashim Amla scored 5,000 runs in 101 innings, while West Indian legend Vivian Richards and India's Virat



Kohli scored these runs in 114 innings. Previously, the batter achieved the international feat during the first fixture against the Black Caps by completing 12,000 runs in international cricket. He took 277 innings to achieve this feat as the fastest Pakistani and second-fastest Asian batter. In the world, he is the sixth-fastest to get to this achievement. Pakistan, who have already clinched an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series, were forced to leave out Mohammad Nawaz after he injured a finger in the third match on Wednesday. Also out are Imam-ul-Haq, Shadab Khan, Abdullah Shafique and Naseem Shah. They are replaced by Shan Masood, Iftikhar Ahmed, Mohammad Haris, Haris Rauf and Usama Mir. New Zealand made three changes with James Neesham, Ben Lister and Blair Tinkler coming in for Adam Milne, Henry Shipley and Henry Nicholls. Last week, Babar also became the second-fastest Asian batter to score 12,000 international runs, just falling short of the record held by Kohli. Babar achieved this remarkable feat during his 49-run knock in the first ODI against New Zealand at Pindi Cricket Stadium. The 28-year-old reached the milestone in his 277th international inning, whereas India's superstar batter took only 276 innings.

Napoli ends 33-year
wait for Serie A title

The late Argentine legend Maradona had inspired the Blues for their maiden championship in the 1986-87 season and their second title win in the 1989-90 season



ROME: Napoli has ended their 33-year wait for the Serie A title after a 1-1 draw with Udinese, joining the club's late icon, Diego Maradona, in the history books. Victor Osimhen's second-half goal sealed the deal for Napoli and marked his 22nd goal in 28 league appearances this season.

The team's lead over second-placed Lazio stands at 16 points with five matches still to play. Napoli supporters celebrated in Udine, at the Stadio Maradona in Naples, and all around the city. However, some moments of tension occurred when supporters streamed onto the pitch to celebrate, creating

tension with the home fans. Napoli's skipper, Giovanni Di Lorenzo, claimed that the title belonged to every player and the people who worked to make their dream come true. Coach Luciano Spalletti became emotional when speaking to DAZN, saying, "Seeing Neapolitans happy is enough to give you

a sense of that joy they are feeling." The Napoli squad will receive an emotional welcome when they return to Naples. Osimhen's performance this season has been a crucial part of Napoli's historic charge to glory. The Nigeria striker has had the best season of his career, and his title-deciding strike rightly caused bedlam among the away fans. Napoli struggled to create scoring opportunities in the first half and were stunned in the 13th minute when Sandi Lovric opened the scoring for Udinese. However, Osimhen's 52nd-minute strike brought relief to the Napoli supporters, who were confident that Thursday night would be the night. While fans had to be cleared from the pitch in Udine to avoid clashes with home supporters, the Stadio Maradona was lit up by phones held by teary-eyed Neapolitans singing along to songs by late local singer-songwriter Pino Daniele. - Agencies

Cristiano Ronaldo,
Neymar beyond
Newcastle's reach

NEWCASTLE: Eddie Howe says Newcastle are not able to launch blockbuster moves for superstars like Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar despite the financial muscle of their Saudi owners. Newcastle, 80 percent owned by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, have spent over £250 million (\$315 million) on new players in the last three transfer windows. With Howe's side sitting third in the Premier League ahead of this weekend's visit from Arsenal, the Magpies look odds on to secure a lucrative berth in next season's Champions League. Newcastle's impressive transformation since Howe took charge has made them a desirable destination for top players, with Paris Saint Germain forward Neymar and Al Nasser striker Ronaldo both linked with moves to St James' Park recently. But, asked on Friday about the prospect of some of the best players in the world coming to Newcastle, Howe told reporters: "It is best to discover them before they explode onto the world scene. We could not be able to come close to affording those players as they are the best players in the world. We are never going to be in a position currently to afford those transfer fees and wages, so we need to go underneath and find them young and develop them into the players they can be." Howe has made shrewd signings like Nick Pope and Kieran Trippier for relatively low fees, while spending larger sums to land Bruno Guimaraes, Sven Botman, Alexander Isak and Anthony Gordon. Mega-money swoops for players of Neymar's calibre remain out of Newcastle's reach at present, but Howe knows that won't stop the speculation. "That kind of speculation has been there from day one since the takeover, really. Naturally everyone has then assumed the biggest names in world football will be going to Newcastle," he said. "Now we've not recruited that way. Financially, we can't recruit that way at the moment, but also we have to bring the right people and the right players into the group. I will say the transfer market is such a complex decision, you can't just pick a name and bring them in. There's got to be a lot of thought going into what we're doing both financially and looking at the players." - APP

Tories suffer 'terrible'
defeat in local polls

LONDON: UK Conservatives, who have been in power for over a decade, have suffered what has been described as a "terrible" defeat in local elections which is Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's first major electoral test since he took office last year. Early results on Friday showed that Sunak's Conservatives lost nine councils adding to a possible one thousand of the 8,000 council seats in local government authorities, which have responsibility for the day-to-day provision of public services such as bin collections and schools, while the main opposition Labour Party led by Sir Keir Starmer was on course to win the elections. The Conservative Party is in "considerable electoral trouble," John Currice, Britain's best-known pollster said. Johnny Mercer, a member of parliament for Plymouth, said it had been a "terrible" night for the Conservatives. However, a full picture of the Conservatives' dire situation will not be clear until later on Friday when most of the councils will announce their results. A former Conservative minister and a member of the upper House of Lords, said the poor results in the latest elections reflect the political and economic chaos of the last year. In the past year, the Conservatives changed prime ministers three times as the nation reeled from a high cost-of-living crisis and soaring inflation leading to a multitude of strikes and protests across the country. - Agencies

Sabalenka plots Swiatek
revenge in Madrid final

MADRID: Aryna Sabalenka gave herself an early birthday gift by easing into the Madrid Open final for the second time in three years on Thursday and then plotted revenge on world number one Iga Swiatek. The world number two turns 25 on Friday and the Belarusian celebrated in style by breezing past Greek world number nine Maria Sakkari, 6-4, 6-1. Sabalenka, the 2021 champion in Madrid, will face Swiatek in Saturday's championship match after the French and US Open

ball to finish the point." Top seed Swiatek enjoys a 5-2 win-loss record against Sabalenka, having also won the pair's three previous clay-court meetings. In the men's quarter-finals, Jan-Lennard Struff stunned world number five Stefanos Tsitsipas to become the lucky loser to reach the semi-finals of an ATP Masters event. The 33-year-old German, who had lost in the qualifying round before being allotted a place in the main draw, triumphed 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 6-3. He will now face Russian qualifier Aslan Karatsev in Friday's semi-finals. "It feels amazing." - DNA

Syria visit a 'turning point' in bilateral ties

Iran and Syria enjoy ample potentials and grounds for cooperation to improve economic ties, President Raeisi said, adding he mainly discussed financial and trade issues during meetings with his Syrian counterpart Bashar al-Assad

DNA

TEHRAN: President Raeisi has described his two-day visit to Syria as a turning point in promoting economic, political and security relations, saying the aim of the trip was to honor the spirit of resistance of the Syrian government and nation. "Given the Islamic Republic of Iran's 12-year-long support for Syria-based resistance groups as well as the steadfastness of the Syrian nation and government against conspiracies and seditious plots of the enemies, the two-day trip to the Arab country is of paramount importance to both countries and the region," Raeisi said at Meh-

abad airport in Tehran early on Friday upon return from Damascus. Iran and Syria enjoy ample potentials and grounds for cooperation to improve economic ties, President Raeisi said, adding he mainly discussed financial and trade issues during meetings with his Syrian counterpart Bashar al-Assad. Cooperating in the field of power generation and transmission, setting up a joint bank and an insurance company, reducing trade tariffs between the two countries, expanding transit facilities between Iran, Iraq, and Syria as well as reviving Syria's agricultural, industrial and energy sectors were among the primary issues included in the 14 cooperation docu-



ments signed between the two sides, he added. A final communiqué issued at the end of Raeisi's two-day official visit to Syria, which started on Wednesday and was the first by an Iranian president to the Arab nation

in over 13 years, stated that the two sides expressed satisfaction over joint cooperation in the fight against terrorism and extremism, and emphasized that they will continue working together until the total annihilation of

all terrorist groups in Syria. Raeisi and Assad also held in-depth talks on ways to further develop and strengthen cordial and strategic relations between Tehran and Damascus, and exchanged viewpoints on the latest regional and international developments. The two presidents underlined the need to respect each other's national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity in accordance with the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter. They went on to emphasize the importance of cementing mutual ties through continuation of political, economic and consular interactions, as well as exchange of high-ranking delegations be-

tween the two countries. The two sides also expressed readiness and willingness to take appropriate measures aimed at further promotion of bilateral commercial and economic relations through existing mechanisms such as the Joint High Commission for Economic Cooperation. They stressed the potential areas of cooperation in Syria's post-war era of reconstruction and development. Raeisi and Assad condemned in the strongest terms the recurrent Israeli air raids on various areas across Syria and described them as a destabilizing factor in the Middle East region, and pointed to Syria's legitimate right to respond to such acts of aggression in a proper manner.

Court to
indict
Imran
Khan on...

FROM PAGE 01
petition was "non-maintainable" and the sessions court did not have the jurisdiction to hear the matter. However, the judge dismissed both requests and summoned Khan in person on May 10 for the indictment. Khan has not appeared before the court to date. He came to the capital judicial complex once to appear before the court, but due to PTI workers' presence, chaos ensued and Khan was allowed to mark his attendance in his car. The former prime minister was disqualified on his then-elected seat in October last year after the ECP found him guilty of unlawfully selling gifts from foreign dignitaries and heads of state.

Khan slams
PM over
UK visit

FROM PAGE 01
"At this time of increasing terrorism and dire [economic] situation, with worst inflation in our history, what is PM [Shehbaz Sharif] doing going off for a Coronation trip to UK?" Imran Khan wrote. It is pertinent to mention here that at least seven teachers were gunned down after unknown assailants targeted a school in Parachinar town of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Upper Kurram Tehsil. The incident occurred in the staff room of the school in Upper Kurram. All the educators were performing their exam duties at the time of the attack.

Pakistan-
China
reaffirm...

FROM PAGE 01
the members of his delegation, called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The meeting was also attended by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ms Hina Rabbani Khar, Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Sun Weidong, and senior government officials of Pakistan and China. Welcoming the Foreign Minister of China, the President said that Pakistan-China relations were rooted in mutual trust, understanding, goodwill and both sides firmly supported each other on core issues. He highlighted that Pakistan-China mutual cooperation was assuming an even greater significance in the light of new developments taking place in the regional and international arenas.

'Constitution
to be
defended...

FROM PAGE 01
Apart from the CJP, the three-member bench included Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar. The apex court bench heard the PTI petition that challenged the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) order to hold Punjab elections in October. Later, another petition was filed by a citizen, Sardar Kashif Khan, nominating the federal government, the ECP, and major political parties as respondents seeking the holding of polls on the same date across the country. In the last hearing on April 27, the three-member Supreme Court bench directed the government and PTI to hold talks while making it clear that its April 4 order on Punjab Assembly elections had remained unchanged.

SC to take
up Arshad
Sharif case..

FROM PAGE 01
suo motu proceedings to ensure transparent and independent investigation into the journalist's murder. In previous hearing, the apex court hinted at forming a judicial commission in the murder of senior journalist Arshad Sharif. The counsel of Arshad Sharif's family Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui had raised objections to the court proceedings, saying that the Supreme Court can monitor and investigate matter cases related to basic rights but cannot monitor the investigation of JIT. The court said that Attorney General informed the court about the bilateral cooperation from the Kenyan side.

Briefs

Britain to start free trade with NZ, Australia

WELLINGTON : New Zealand (AP) – Britain's free trade agreements with New Zealand and Australia will come into force by the end of this month, the leaders from the three nations said Friday. The announcement came while the prime ministers from the two Southern Hemisphere nations are in London for the coronation of King Charles III. The deals are part of Britain's efforts to expand its economic ties after it left the European Union. Both deals were first agreed to in 2021. New Zealand officials say its deal will help boost sales of products like wine, butter, beef and honey, and will increase the size of its economy by up to 1 billion New Zealand dollars (\$629 million). New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said it was a gold-standard agreement. "The market access outcomes are among the very best New Zealand has secured in any trade deal," Hipkins said in a statement.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the deal with New Zealand reflected the close relationship between the nations.

"This deal will unlock new opportunities for businesses and investors across New Zealand and the United Kingdom, drive growth, boost jobs, and, most importantly, build a more prosperous future for the next generation," Sunak said in a statement.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said it would mean more market access for its exporters. "So far beef, for our sheep products, for our seafood, for our other products it will mean much greater access to the British market," Albanese told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. in an interview.—DNA

15 killed in Congo flooding

KINSHASA: Rescue efforts were underway after flooding and landslides brought on by torrential overnight rains in eastern Congo's South Kivu province killed more than a dozen people, a local official said Friday. Delphin Birimbi, a community leader in Kalehe in South Kivu, said that there were 15 dead in his village and that more than 30 people are missing in the nearby localities of Bushushu and Nyamukubi. He fears that the death toll will rise significantly as more bodies are recovered.

Two rivers broke their banks after the heavy rains which began on Thursday evening and there have been multiple landslides with scores of homes destroyed, Birimbi said. Rescuers are working to find and save anyone who may be trapped under the rubble of their homes.

In a statement published Friday, the provincial government of South Kivu offered its sympathies to the families affected and said it was sending a delegation to the scene. Heavy rains have brought misery to thousands in East Africa, with parts of Uganda and Kenya also seeing heavy rainfall.—Agencies

Maduro accuses US of 'looting' Venezuelan oil firm

CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Thursday accused US President Joe Biden's government of "looting" over the proposed sale of Caracas' most valuable overseas asset, oil refiner Citgo. A court in the US state of Delaware ruled that shares of Citgo, a subsidiary of Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA, can be sold to pay off its creditors, with the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control endorsing the move on Monday. "What Joe Biden's government is doing is one of the thefts, one of the biggest looting that has ever taken place against any nation in the world and we reject it," Maduro said during an event in Caracas. Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez indicated Wednesday that the acts "are absolutely null and void," while accusing Washington of green-lighting.—APP

Canada mulls expelling China diplomat for targeting lawmaker

The Globe and Mail, citing unidentified intelligence sources, has reported that China preferred to see Trudeau's Liberals re-elected in the 2021 election and worked to defeat Conservative politicians considered unfriendly to Beijing.

NEWS DESK

TORONTO: Canada's foreign minister said Thursday the country is considering the expulsion of Chinese diplomats over an intelligence agency report saying one of them plotted to intimidate the Hong Kong relatives of a Canadian lawmaker. Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said her department was summoning China's ambassador to a meeting to underline that Canada won't tolerate such interference. She said the intelligence agency report indicated that opposition Conservative lawmaker Michael Chong and his Hong Kong relatives were targeted after Chong criticized Beijing's human rights record. "We're assessing different options including the expulsion of diplomats," Joly said before a Parliament committee. Canada's spy

agency has not released details publicly. Chong has said the report identifies a Toronto-based diplomat as being part of the plot. Chong has been critical of Beijing's treatment of Uyghur Muslims in China's Xinjiang province. "I cannot imagine the shock and concern of learning that your loved ones have been targeted in this way," Joly said to Chong at the committee hearing. "There will be consequences." Chong said the diplomat should be on the first plane out of Canada. "It is inexplicable that this diplomat hasn't been told to leave the country already," he said. "If we do not take this course of action we are basically putting up a giant billboard for all authoritarian states around world that says we are open to foreign interference targeting Canadian citizens. That's why this individual needs to be sent packing." Chinese Ambassador Cong Peiwu de-



nied interference in a statement and warned against expelling its diplomats. "Once again, China strongly urges the Canadian side to immediately stop this self-directed political force, and not go further down the wrong and dangerous path.

Should the Canadian side continue to make provocations, China will play along every step of the way until the very end," Cong said. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Wednesday that he did not learn of the spy agency report until a

Globe and Mail article Monday, citing top-secret documents, said the spy agency had the intelligence. But Chong told Parliament that Canada's national security adviser informed him the 2021 report went to various points in government, including to the national-security adviser at the time. Trudeau has ordered Canada's intelligence agencies to immediately inform lawmakers of any threats against them, regardless of whether those threats are considered credible.

Canada's spy agency didn't tell Chong about the targeting of his family until this week. Many governments, the United Nations, and human rights groups accuse China of sweeping a million or more people from its Uyghur community and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minority groups into detention camps, where many have said they were tortured, sexually assaulted,

and forced to abandon their language and religion. China denies the accusations, which are based on evidence including interviews with survivors and photos and satellite images from Uyghur's home province of Xinjiang, a major hub for factories and farms in far western China.

Last month, Trudeau named a former governor general as a special investigator to look into allegations of Chinese interference in Canada's last two elections. David Johnston will decide if a public inquiry is needed and Trudeau has said he will abide by recommendations. The Globe and Mail, citing unidentified intelligence sources, has reported that China preferred to see Trudeau's Liberals re-elected in the 2021 election and worked to defeat Conservative politicians considered unfriendly to Beijing.

Pakistani entrepreneurs bridging trade ties with World

DNA

BEIJING: Canton Fair paves the way bridging trade relations of Pakistani entrepreneurs with China and the rest world, according to a report published by China Economic Net (CEN) on Friday. "When I heard that there will be an international booth here and a lot of international visitors will be participating, I feel like it's a must to come here to find out the possibility of doing business with China as well as the whole world," Rana Javed Akhtar, Chief Executive, M.K. Sons (Pvt.) Ltd., told CEN while attending the 133rd China Import and Export Fair held in Guangzhou, China.

The 133rd China Import and Export Fair - known as Canton Fair - kicked off on the morning of April 15, and entered its third and final phase in Guangzhou, China on May 1. Held in three phases through May 5, it is also the largest in history, with a record



number of exhibition areas and exhibitors. Its offline exhibitors rose to more than 34,000 this year, with more than 9,000 new exhibitors, and online exhibition enterprises reached 39,281. "It's our first time to be here," Akhtar said, adding that he was hoping for the best. "I was really impressed - the fair is well organized; we got good services from the constructor and from the Cantonese people. I bring the best textile products here. I would like to see how I can explore the market and how to start business with the Chinese buyers." Safdar Fayyaz, Chief Manag-

er Exports, Piano Exports FZCO, who also attended the fair as an exhibitor for the first time, expressed his excitement over the event. "China is our big partner. We heard that it is one of the largest fairs in China, so we are eager to come here, and hopefully more coordination will be seen in the future," he pinpointed. As one of the largest manufacturers of writing instruments and stationery items and one of the leading exporters to the globe, Piano Exports FZCO showcased its dazzling products with price & quality combination to international visitors.

Though it is the very first time being here, Fayyaz was quite confident about the future performance of products coming from an old brand established in 1965. As Pakistani entrepreneurs see it, their Make-in-Pakistan products can make its way in the Chinese market, and even beyond it.

"Pakistani textile products have their own edges here," Akhtar told China Economic Net. As China is a fast developing country, Pakistan with its specialization in making certain textile goods will be able to break into this market with retailers. "There should be more visits and exchanges between both countries," he suggested.

"One of the best things we are doing right away is coloring pencils. We have some unique colored pencils that might interest Chinese buyers," Fayyaz noted. He observed that e-commerce is very important when exploring the Chinese market, "so we will definitely develop it very soon."

Italian FM cancels trip to France

ROME: Italy's foreign minister on Thursday canceled a trip to Paris after a member of the French government criticized Rome's management of the ongoing migration crisis. French Interior Minister Gerard Darmanin's "offenses to the (Italian) government and to Italy are unacceptable," Antonio Tajani said on Twitter, announcing that he would not be meeting with his counterpart Catherine Colonna on Wednesday. "This isn't the spirit with which we should face common European challenges," Tajani said. The move follows comments by Darmanin in an interview with French broadcaster TV RMC that Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and her government were "incapable of solving the migration problem for which they have been elected." Italy has faced increasing seaborne arrivals of migrants making their way across the Mediterranean Sea on boats from Tunisia and Libya. Many of those migrants, after being rescued and brought to Italian soil either by authorities or boats run by charities, then try to move towards northern Europe, including France. Darmanin said there was a flow of migrants towards southern France, in particular of unaccompanied minors, accusing Italy of being unable to manage the migration pressure. The two countries have been at odds several times in the last months over the management of the migration crisis with reciprocal complaints of not managing properly the issue or not cooperating enough for its solution. After the Italian foreign minister's announcement, Colonna said she spoke on the phone with her colleague. "I told him that the relationship between France and Italy is based on mutual respect, both between the two countries and between their officials. I hope to be able to welcome him in Paris soon," she wrote on Twitter. Her tweet echoed a statement published on the website of the French Foreign Ministry. "It is also in a spirit of solidarity that the French government would like to work with Italy to tackle the common challenge posed by the spike in migration flows, from the Central Mediterranean in particular," the statement read.—DNA

Spain, Colombia eye strengthened ties

OVIEDO: Spain's prime minister and Colombia's president met on Thursday, with both expressing shared hopes for a "turning point" in ties between Latin America and the EU.

The two regions are set for a "shift in the political and economic relationship," Colombia's Gustavo Petro said, referring to an upcoming July summit in Brussels between heads of state in the EU and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) – the first since 2015.

"The context today is very different. This implies that this won't just be another meeting, but instead a shift in the political and economic relationship between the two regions," Petro said during a joint press conference with Premier Pedro Sanchez.

The leaders discussed Latin America's "huge potential" for green energy and the need to move beyond raw material production. Instead, Colombia wants to form a "partnership to create a more productive and prosperous world."

Last week, Sanchez met with Brazil's president, and both expressed optimism about reaching a free trade agreement between Europe and Latin America in the coming months.

In July, Spain will assume the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU. One of its main goals is deepening ties between Latin America and Europe.

"We need to build a launchpad to change the politics of the EU and Latin America, and Spain has an enormous advantage in terms of language. We'll see how it works," Petro said.

The two left-wing leaders also signed several bilateral agreements on education, crime, business financing, and the environment.

"Colombia is a global role model in terms of biodiversity; we should join forces with them. We share the need to drive forward the green transition," Sanchez said, mentioning Spain's "devastating" drought.—APP

Japan vows to help Mozambique fight terrorism

MAPUTO: Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Thursday that Tokyo would help Mozambique counter Islamist insurgents in the restive north. Mozambique's gas-rich northernmost province, Cabo Delgado, is struggling with an insurgency waged by militants linked to the Islamic State group. "Japan will financially support the fight against terrorism," Kishida told a news conference in the capital, Maputo, on the final leg of an African tour. "Security is crucial for the operation of Japanese companies in northern Mozambique." Mozambique has set high hopes on vast natural gas deposits – the largest found south of the Sahara – that were discovered in the Muslim-majority northern province in 2010.—Agencies

Wagner boss threatens Bakhmut troop pullout

MOSCOW: Yevgeny Prigozhin said his forces haven't received enough artillery ammunition supplies from the Russian military since Monday. The owner of the Wagner Group mercenary group has threatened to pull his troops out of the protracted battle for Bakhmut next week, accusing Russia's military command of starving his forces of ammunition and causing them heavy losses. Yevgeny Prigozhin, a notorious millionaire with longtime links to Russian President Vladimir Putin, claimed that Wagner had planned to capture the eastern Ukrainian city by 9 May. That day is a major Russian holiday marking the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II. But, Prigozhin said, his force hasn't received enough artillery ammunition supplies from the Russian military since Monday. Known for his bluster, Prigozhin has previously made unverifiable claims and made threats he hasn't carried out. Hours before releasing the statement, Prigozhin's spokesperson published a video of him angrily demanding ammunition from Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and General Staff Chief Valery Gerasimov.—APP

Australian PM urges US to drop Assange pursuit

CANBERRA: The Australian Prime Minister has criticised US efforts to extradite WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, while in the UK for King Charles III's coronation.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has expressed frustration at the United States's sustained pursuit of Julian Assange and the lack of diplomatic resolution to the issue. Albanese said he is concerned about Assange's mental health, as the Australian national has been held in a high-security prison in the UK for four years. "I just say that enough is enough," Albanese told Australian public broadcaster ABC on Friday. "There is nothing to be served by his ongoing incarceration." Assange, now 51, is fighting against the UK's approval of his extradition to the US after being forcibly removed from the Ecuadorian embassy in London in 2019. The UK approved his extradition last June, saying courts had found nothing that "would be oppressive, unjust or an abuse of process". Assange was initially arrested in London following accusations of sexual assault in Sweden – a charge that was eventually dropped. However, the US's pursuit of the Australian continues for 18 espionage and computer hacking charges concerning the release of confidential US military records and diplomatic cable. Albanese on Friday condemned the long effort, saying he has advocated for Assange's release in meetings with US President Joe Biden's officials.—APP



GOA: Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari meets his Indian counterpart, Subrahmanya Jaishankar at the sidelines of SCO CFM meeting. – DNA

China registers record surge in holiday spending

DNA

BEIJING: China has registered record surge in holiday spending which is being considered as positive omen for the Chinese economy, says a report published by China Economic Net (CEN) on Friday. The recent surge in domestic travel by Chinese tourists during the May Day holiday period is definitely a promising sign for the country's economy. According to the report, China's services sector has demonstrated a much-awaited resurgence in consumer spending during the celebrated "golden week" holiday, where domestic tourism revenue has exceeded pre-pandemic levels for the first time since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. The recent uptick in demand has further reinforced the roaring recovery of the Chinese economy in the first quarter that also surpassed the most optimistic calculations. Marking the first time

in three years that the country's travelers have emerged from the Covid-related restrictions and are eager to indulge in post-pandemic extravagance, the skyrocketed surge in China's Golden Week holiday has also bettered all projections, for many, the five-day May Day period from April 29 to May 3 was the first opportunity to go on vacation in over three years, without having to worry about contracting Covid infection. This fervor for travel and holidaying is a sign that pent-up demand has finally been unleashed, and people are eager to make up for lost time. This time the consumer behavior was quite different from the Chinese New Year holiday in January when a significant number of individuals chose to stay at home due to the fear of getting infected amid China's "exit wave". As China continues to recover from the pandemic, this trend signals a sustained economic revival. The consumer spending data during the 5 days long holiday

has bamboozled all the previous records. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has reported that during the five-day break that began on Saturday, Chinese travelers made a staggering 274 million domestic trips, representing a 70.8% rise from the previous year and a 19% increase from 2019. These travelers spent 148 billion yuan (\$21 billion), a remarkable 128.9% jump from the previous year and comparable to 2019 levels.

As this is the first travel season since the pandemic without restrictions, the figures from this year's May Day holiday are being acutely monitored as a barometer of China's economic health. There was a significant resurgence in services-related consumption, as dining and retail companies reported an almost 20% surge in revenues during this week. According to data from the Ministry of Commerce, this growth is particularly significant consider-

ing retail sales only saw a 10.6% increase in March. Alipay, the country's largest digital payment app, also noted a 200% surge in online holiday spending compared to the previous year, and a 70% increase compared to the 2019 level. According to a statement by Alipay, a leading digital payments app in China, travel-related purchases made by Chinese consumers surged by 70% in the first three days of the country's five-day national holiday, when compared to the same period in 2019. Meanwhile, average daily transactions for transportation-related spending nearly tripled at WeChat Pay during the first four days of this year's holiday compared to 2019, while hotel and tourist attraction spending jumped by 93%. At the same time, in a stunning demonstration of China's post-pandemic economic resilience, the country's railway system has also recorded a new milestone by reporting a remarkable 120 million trips between April 27

and May 4, marking a 20% surge from the same period in 2019. However, despite such astounding performance of China's domestic tourism industry, some economists are cautioning against the sustainability of this demand boom, suggesting that the road ahead for the economic recovery could be more challenging. According to Goldman Sachs, the sustainability of the consumption recovery will depend on higher income growth and improved consumer confidence in the coming days. Despite a slight decline from 58.2 in March to 56.4 in April, the official non-manufacturing purchasing managers' index remained at its second-highest reading this year, indicating a positive trend. "The strong holiday tourism data, together with the still-solid April services PMI, bode well for consumption and services recovery in coming months, despite the softening in manufacturing growth momentum.—Agencies

Briefs

Canada reduces visa processing time for Pakistani nationals

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government of Canada has decided to considerably reduce the duration of processing time for visas of Pakistani nationals. Canada's Minister for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Sean Fraser has announced that the visa processing time for Pakistani nationals has now been reduced from 802 days to just 60 days. The Canadian minister promised that visa processing time would be further reduced to one month. He said that now Pakistani citizens will be able to get a visa to Canada in 60 days instead of 802 days. "Currently, a complete TRV [Temporary Resident Visa] application from Pakistan will be processed in 60 days, and we expect to hit 30 days in the near future," Sean Fraser tweeted. Last year, Canada announced that it will boost its immigration targets, hoping to welcome a record number of newcomers in order to address a worker shortage in the country. A large chunk of the population is heading into retirement, according to recently released census data, with one in seven people in Canada between the ages of 55 and 64 years old.

Protests as Parachinar reels from killings of 8 people

DNA

KURRAM: Protests took place in the Parachinar area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kurram district on Friday, as the town mourned the deaths of eight people, including five teachers, who were killed in separate attacks yesterday. On Thursday, unidentified gunmen killed one person in the town's Shalozan area, after which seven people were gunned down at a school in the Teri Mangal area. Authorities have characterised the violence as the result of a "land dispute". Soon after the killings, Kurram Teachers Association representative Zahid Turi announced that all private and public schools would remain closed and the board exams for ninth and tenth grades had been postponed. On Friday, Parachinar painted a desolate picture, as roads remained barren and markets remained shut. There were sporadic protests, which were carried out by mourners.

Funeral of martyred jawans held

RAWALPINDI: Funeral prayers of Havaldar Saleem Khan (age 36 years, resident of District Tank), Naik Javed Iqbal (age 37 years, resident of District Kohat), Sepoy Nazir Khan (age 26 years, resident of District Bannu), Sepoy Hazrat Bilal (age 25 years, resident of District Mardan), Sepoy Syed Rajab Hussain (age 22 years, resident of District Orakzai) and Sepoy Bismillah Jan (age 22 years, resident of District Khyber) who embraced martyrdom on 4 May 2023 during an intense exchange of fire between Security Forces and terrorists in general area Dirduni, District North Waziristan, were initially offered at Bannu and later at their respective native towns. The Shaheeds were laid to rest with full military honours. A large number of senior military officers, soldiers including civil officers, public & relatives of Shaheeds attended the funeral prayers. Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve. At least six army soldiers embraced martyrdom during an exchange of fire with terrorists in Dirduni area of North Waziristan district in KP, the army's media affairs wing said on Thursday. - APP



GOA: A group photo of participating diplomats at SCO Foreign Ministers' moot. - DNA

WHO says Covid global health emergency over

Vaccines were one of major turning points in the pandemic - allowing millions of people to be protected from serious illness and death. US and UK, like many other countries, have already talked about "living with the virus" and wound down many of tests and social mixing rules

DNA

GENEVA: The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared that Covid-19 no longer represents a "global health emergency". The statement represents a major step towards ending the pandemic and comes three years after it first declared its highest level of alert over the virus. Officials said the virus' death rate had dropped from a peak of more than 100,000 people per week in January 2021 to just over 3,500 on 24 April. The head of the WHO said at least seven million

people died in the pandemic. But Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that the true figure was "likely" closer to 20 million deaths - nearly three times the official estimate - and he warned that the virus remained a significant threat. "Yesterday, the Emergency Committee met for the 15th time and recommended to me that I declare an end to the public health emergency of international concern. I've accepted that advice. It is therefore with great hope that I declare COVID-19 over as a global health emergency," Dr Tedros said. But he warned the decision to remove the highest level of alert did not mean

the danger was over and said the emergency status could be reinstated if the situation changed. "The worst thing any country can do now is to use this news as a reason to let down its guard, to dismantle the systems it has built, or to send the message to its people that Covid-19 is nothing to worry about," he said. The World Health Organisation first declared the so-called public health emergency of international concern in January 2020. Vaccines were one of the major turning points in the pandemic - allowing millions of people to be protected from serious illness and death. The US and

UK, like many other countries, have already talked about "living with the virus" and wound down many of the tests and social mixing rules. But in many countries vaccines have not reached most of those in need. Dr Mike Ryan, from the WHO's health emergencies programme, said the emergency may have ended, but the threat is still there. "We fully expect that this virus will continue to transmit and this is the history of pandemics. It took decades for the final throws of the pandemic virus of 1918 to disappear. In most cases pandemics truly end when the next pandemic begins."

Envoy assures efforts for release of Pak prisoners

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki here on Friday assured Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah of all-possible efforts for the release of Pakistanis languishing in Saudi jails. During the meeting with the minister, the envoy also discussed matters of mutual interests including bilateral relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, said a news release. The meeting also reviewed progress on an agreement between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia for "Road to Makkah project". Both the dignitaries agreed to finalize the agreement at the earliest possible time for facilitating Pakistanis in Hajj pilgrim. According to the press release, the Pakistani pilgrims will be provided easy and hassle-free immigration facility under the project which is being launched from Islamabad Airport. Forty thousand pilgrims will be benefited from the project this year. The interior minister said that the project would be extended to other major cities soon to benefit more pilgrims. He said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had historical, longstanding and brotherly relations. The people of Pakistan have special devotion and love for Khadim Al-Haramain Al-Sharifain (custodian of the two holy mosques), he said. The interior minister lauded the efforts of the Saudi Ambassador for further strengthening bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries.

Senate passes SC Review of Judgments, Orders Bill 2023

ISLAMABAD: The Senate passed the Supreme Court Review of Judgments and Orders Bill 2023 with a majority vote which aims to provide support and reinforce the powers of the Supreme Court in reviewing its judgments and orders, enabling the Supreme Court to exercise its powers more effectively and efficiently. Senator Irfan-ul-Haque Siddiqui presented the bill to the Senate while the opposition demanded a vote count on the bill, which was ordered by the Senate chairman. During the vote, 32 members of the Senate supported the bill, while 21 opposed it. As a result, the Supreme Court Review of Judgments and Orders Bill 2023 was passed

by the Senate with a majority vote. Article 188 of the Constitution empowers the Supreme Court, subject to the provision of any Act of Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) and any rules made by the Supreme Court, to review any judgment pronounced or any order made by it. According to the statement of the objects and reasons of the bill, it is necessary to ensure that fundamental rights to justice by providing for meaningful review of judgments and orders passed by the Supreme Court in exercise of its original jurisdiction under Article 184. The bill states that in case of judgment and orders of the supreme court in exercise of its original jurisdiction under Article

184 of the Constitution, the scope of review on both facts and law, shall be the same as an appeal under Article 185 of the Constitution. It proposes that a review petition shall be heard by a bench larger than the bench which passed the original judgment in order. It suggests that the review petitioner shall have the right to appoint any advocate of the supreme court of his choice for the review petition. The bill states that the right to file a review petition shall also be available to an aggrieved person against whom an order has been made under clause (3) of the Article 184 of the Constitution, prior to the recommendation of this legislation. - DNA

President Ilham says relations with Pakistan excellent



SHUSHA: President Ilham Aliyev praised ties with Pakistan in his speech at the int'l conference on "Shaping the Geopolitics of the Greater Eurasia: from Past to Present to Future" in Shusha. The President said, "First of all, I'd like to say that Pakistan and Azerbaijan are true friends and brotherly countries. We are very grateful to the people, government, and previous governments of Pakistan for their continuous support of Azerbaijan". With respect to our territorial integrity

and sovereignty - during the times of occupation, during the war - there were very clear statements from high-ranking Pakistani leaders - President and Prime Minister - supporting Azerbaijan and after the war. So, once again, I would like to ask you to convey our gratitude to all our brothers. Pakistan is one of the three countries, along with Türkiye and Saudi Arabia, which did not have any diplomatic relations with Armenia because of occupation, and we highly value that. - DNA

Pak, Uzbek agree to enhance bilateral ties

GOA: Pakistan and Uzbekistan on Friday agreed to enhance bilateral economic cooperation besides completing connectivity projects, particularly CASA-1000. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari held a meeting with his Uzbek counterpart Bakhtiyor Saidov on the sidelines of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Goa, India. They discussed a broad spectrum of bilateral relations and agreed to further strengthen economic ties, and early completion of connectivity projects in particular CASA-1000. - Agencies

Will pull fighters out of Bakhmut: Wagner boss

Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov have often been the focus for Prigozhin's anger, amid reports of fierce infighting among different power groups in Russian President Vladimir Putin's entourage

NEWS DESK

BAKHMUT: The leader of Russia's Wagner mercenary group says he will withdraw his troops from the Ukrainian city of Bakhmut on 10 May because of ammunition shortages. Yevgeny Prigozhin's statement came after he posted a video of him walking among his dead fighters' bodies, blaming top Russian defence officials. "Tens of thousands" had been killed and injured there, Prigozhin said. Russia has been trying to capture the eastern city for months, despite its questionable strategic value. Wagner troops have been heavily involved. Earlier this week, US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby - citing newly declassified intelligence - said that more than 20,000 Russian soldiers have been killed and another 80,000 wounded in fighting in Ukraine since December. Half of the dead were from the Wagner group. In his statement on Friday, Prigozhin, 61, pinned his decision to withdraw from Bakhmut squarely on the defence ministry, using expletives. "Shoigu! Gerasimov! Where is the... ammunition?... They came here as volunteers and die for you to fatten yourselves in your mahogany offices." Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov have often been the focus for Prigozhin's anger, amid reports of fierce infighting among different power groups in Russian President Vladimir Putin's entourage. In the statement, Prigozhin said his Wagner's casualties were "growing in geometrical progression every day" because of the lack of ammunition. But he stressed that his fighters would stay on their positions until 9 May, when Russia marks Victory

Day in World War Two, and would only withdraw from Bakhmut the following day. In the video released earlier, Prigozhin - seen standing in front of his men - said he would "transfer positions in the settlement of Bakhmut to units of the defence ministry and withdraw the remains of Wagner to logistics camps to lick our wounds". "My lads will not suffer useless and unjustified losses in Bakhmut without ammunition," he added. Prigozhin is a publicity seeker, and his influence has seemingly waned in recent months. He has previously made threats he has not followed through with - subsequently dismissing them as jokes and military humour. Only last week he told a Russian pro-war blogger that Wagner fighters in Bakhmut were down to their last days of supplies of bullets, and needed thousands of rounds of ammunition. The Kremlin has not com-

mented on Prigozhin's latest statements, saying they related to what Moscow calls the "special military operation" in Ukraine. Meanwhile, Ukraine's military said it was not seeing any less intensity of fighting near Bakhmut. "For months, Prigozhin has been trying to make outrageous statements in order to draw attention to himself," Serhiy Cherevatyi, a spokesman for Ukraine's Eastern Command, has told BBC Ukrainian. And Ukraine's deputy Defence Minister Hanna Malyar said Russia was desperately trying to seize Bakhmut by 9 May. Prigozhin has emerged as a key player in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine launched in February 2022, in charge of a private army of mercenaries leading the Russian onslaught. He recruited thousands of convicted criminals from jail for his group - no matter how grave their crimes - as long as they agreed to fight for Wagner in Ukraine.

EU shows interest in investment in Kaghan Valley

KAGHAN: A delegation of investors from the European Union led by European Union (EU) Trade Commissioner Jan Bronner here on Friday called on Chairman Kaghan Development Authority (KDA) Dr. Amjad Zaman Khan and discussed with him the investment opportunities in Pakistan. The delegation expressed keen interest in investing in the Kaghan Valley and carrying out various projects to improve the standard of living for the people, in addition to promoting tourism in the area. They also expressed their interest in providing grants and investing in several sectors with focus on hydropower projects, the Naran chairlift, technical education, the hospitality industry and the skiing resort. Keeping in mind the shortage of electricity and power in the Kaghan and Naran valley which also affects the tourism industry, the hydropower project in the Balakot Valley also came under discussion. For the construction of the hydel power project in Balakot KDA, Austria and PEDO also showed interest and discussed the provision of the underground electricity transmission line to promote winter and summer tourism in the valley. - APP

Short-term inflation hits record high of 48.35pc

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Index (SPI) rose to an unprecedented 48.35 per cent year-on-year (YoY) for the combined income group for the week ending on May 4, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on Friday. Prior to this, the highest-ever percentage of short-term inflation year-on-year was recorded for the week ending on April 19 at 47.23pc. As for the week ending on May 4, PBS data showed that short-term inflation increased by 1.05pc week-on-week (WoW) as a "major increase" was seen in the prices of chicken, potatoes, powdered milk, pulses, eggs, mutton and bread. Meanwhile, non-food items, including footwear and soaps, also became costlier. The SPI monitors the prices of 51 essential items based on a survey of 50 markets in 17 cities across the country. During the week under review, the prices of 30 items increased, nine decreased and 12 remained unchanged.

Pak review to conclude once financing in place: IMF

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is working with Pakistani authorities to conclude a ninth review of a bailout programme, its mission chief said on Friday of the funding critical for the cash-strapped country to avert an economic collapse. Pakistan and the IMF have been discussing fiscal policy measures under review since February to resume the stalled funding that was due in November from a \$6.5 billion bailout agreed upon in 2019. The money is crucial for Pakistan, which is facing a balance of payment crisis, to avert defaulting on its external payment obligations. Foreign exchange reserves held by Pakistan's central bank have shrunk to pay just four weeks of controlled imports. "The IMF continues to work with the Pakistani authorities to bring the ninth review to a conclusion once the necessary financing is in place and the agreement is finalised," mission chief Nathan Porter said in a statement to media. "IMF supports the authorities in the implementation of policies in the period ahead, including in the technical work to prepare the FY24 budget, which is to be passed by the National Assembly before end-June."