



Islamabad POST

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Australian PM calls for release of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange

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PTI to challenge defamation bill in court: Omer

Detailed News On Page-08

T20 WC: Babar provides update on Pak squad

Detailed News On Page-06



Calls for regional integration

PM reaffirms commitment to SAARC charter

SAARC Secretary General thanked the Prime Minister for receiving him and briefed him on his aspirations for making SAARC an effective platform for regional cooperation

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Mr. Muhammad Golam Sarwar, Secretary General, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), who is on his maiden visit to Pakistan, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, today, The Prime Minister congratulated Amb. Golam Sarwar on his appointment as the 15th Secretary General of SAARC. He hoped that the Secretary General would play his due role to revitalize the organization. Noting that the Secretary General belonged to Bangladesh, the Prime Minister conveyed his warm wishes for the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and said that Pakistan desired to strengthen its bilateral ties with Bangladesh. In the regional context, the Prime Minister underscored that the SAARC had immense potential for regional development, trade, cooperation and collaboration. He expressed his earnest desire to see SAARC act as a means of progress and prosperity in the region. He also reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering

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PM to attend funeral in Tehran Pak vows to carry forward Raisi's vision of stronger ties

After Supreme Court, govt also terms Faizabad inquiry report dissatisfactory

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Tuesday adopted a resolution to express condolence over the demise of Iranian President Dr Ebrahim Raisi, paying tributes to his services for promoting Pakistan-Iran relationship as well as for the region. The federal cabinet, which met under the chair of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also conveyed its sadness over the death of Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and others in the same tragic incident and said that the whole Pakistani nation sympathised with the bereaved families and the Iranian people in that difficult moment. The prime minister, who read out the resolution, recalled late Raisi as a great scholar and a visionary leader saying that with his death, Pakistan had lost a sincere and brotherly friend. He said that late Dr Raisi's services for his nation and promotion of Pakistan-Iran relations and regional cooperation would always be remembered. "Dr Raisi's visit to Pakistan last month

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ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation Muhammad Golam Sarwar calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

IHC trashes Tyrian case against Imran

New bench takes up plea against Khan for not disclosing his alleged daughter in nomination papers

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday rejected the petition seeking Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's disqualification in the Tyrian White case. A new IHC bench took up the plea today filed against Khan for not disclosing his alleged daughter in the nomination papers filed for contesting 2018 general elections. The bench comprising Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Justice Arbab Mohammad

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Vawda tables privilege motion against SC judge

If it is a crime to point out misconduct, then hang me because I will continue to do so, says former minister

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Senator Faisal Vawda has submitted a privilege motion in the Senate against a senior Supreme Court judge, Justice Athar Minallah, over his 'proxy' remarks, asserting his right to speak on judicial misconduct and standing by every word of his press conference. "If it is a crime to point out misconduct, then hang me because I will continue to do so," Vawda declared during a Senate session on Tuesday.

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Baloch missing persons Objection only on spy agencies' 'unlawful work', says IHC judge

"Intelligence agency will now be called to a police station," says IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court's (IHC) Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani has said that the court has only objection to spy agencies' "unlawful work" and not the operations they perform lawfully. "No one has any objection to the work of the [spy] agencies, the objection is [only limited] to the unlawful work," Justice Kayani said on Tuesday while hearing a case pertaining to the implementation of the recommendations of the commission on Baloch missing persons. Justice Kayani stressed that the court does not want to prevent judges, lawyers, journalists, parliamentarians and spy agencies from operating as per the law, but only objects to them working unlawfully. The judge's remarks come a day after he, while hearing a case relating to the recovery of missing Kashmiri poet and journalist Ahmed Farhad Shah, was irked by authorities' failure to recover

Continued on Page 06

IHC orders govt to recover missing poet by Friday

AGP Mansoor Usman Awan assures court about Farhad's rescue and recovery

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Tuesday ordered the government to recover missing Kashmiri poet Ahmed Farhad by Friday. The directive was passed by Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani during the hearing of the petition seeking the poet's recovery. Farhad, known for his defiant prose, was allegedly abducted from his house last week.

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Briefs

Kh. Asif: Tax evasion not considered as crime in Pak

Says over Rs36 trillion could be collected through taxes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Defence Minister Khawaja Asif says tax evasion is not considered as crime in Pakistan. Addressing a ceremony in Islamabad, the PML-N senior leader said over Rs36 trillion could be collected through taxes. "Tax evaders have managed to make their ways into the assemblies and the practice of evading tax is decades old. Honesty is needed to collect taxes," Asif said. Talking about 60,000 shops of government of Pakistan, he said the government's shops were rented out against Rs2,000 or Rs 4,000 per shop and in the same area the private shops were rented out for Rs50,000 to Rs100,000.

More students returns from Kyrgyzstan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistani students continue to return home in batches from Bishkek following mob attacks on foreign nationals, 347 more pupils reached Islamabad on Tuesday. A group of about 167 students on board the first flight of Pakistan International Airline (PIA) arrived in the federal cabinet from the Kyrgyz capital in the morning. While, flight of a private airline brought a batch of 180 other students at 5:26am. Over 800 students have been evacuated so far. More than 300 Pakistanis Monday returned from Bishkek, landing in Islamabad and Lahore on separate flights.

Muzzling the messenger

PTI leader injured in Islamabad attack

Imran Khan strongly condemns cowardly attack on PTI spokesperson Raouf Hassan



FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A group of around four people, apparently transgender persons, attacked and injured Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) spokesperson Raouf Hassan in Islamabad on Tuesday, drawing strong condemnation from his party. "Extremely shameful and deplorable," PTI said in a statement on X, formerly Twitter, adding: "Central Information Secretary Raouf Hassan attacked by unknown persons outside the office of a private channel."

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JUI-F seeks ban on appointment of 'dual-national' judges

MNA Noor Alam submits constitutional amendment bill to ban appointment of judges having foreign nationality

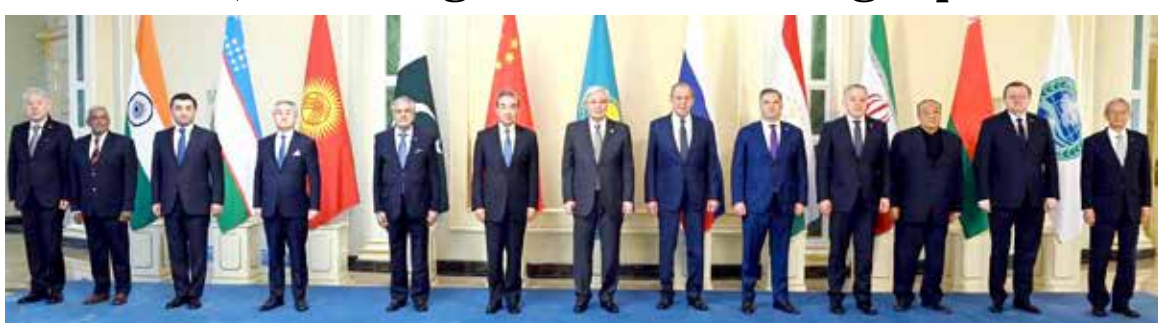
DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) has submitted a draft constitutional amendment to the National Assembly, seeking a complete ban on the appointment of judges in the higher judiciary who are dual-nationals. A Constitutional (Amendment) Bill, 2024, has been submitted to

Continued on Page 06

At SCO, Pakistan calls for unconditional Gaza ceasefire

Ishaq Dar reaffirms Pakistan's adherence to SCO charter, warns against bloc-based geopolitics



ASTANA: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar meets Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev along with other Foreign Ministers of SCO countries. - DNA

FOREIGN DESK

ASTANA: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday addressed the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) wherein he reiterated Pakistan's firm adherence to the SCO Charter and the "Shanghai Spirit" standing for mutual trust and respect for shared prosperity. In his statement, the dep-

uty prime minister warned against bloc-based or confrontational geopolitics and advocated for a multipolar world firmly grounded in multilateralism. He explained Pakistan's priorities as the current Chair of SCO Council of Heads of Government (CHG) which included promoting connectivity, transport links, youth empowerment, poverty alleviation, and enhanced practical cooperation among

Continued on Page 06

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Agriculture university students undertake study-tour

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Students of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Ravi Campus of Agriculture University on Tuesday undertook a one-day study field visit to various clinics and modern laboratories. According to the university's spokesman, the trip was part of a series of study-tours which had been arranged to provide an opportunity to students to learn through hands-on experience. During the trip, the students visited the Medicine Outdoor Clinic, Surgery Clinic, Food Testing Lab, Dairy Lab, and Biotechnology Lab where professors of the department provided insights about care of animals, preventive measures, expenses, and feeding for animals. Quoting the vice chancellor Dr. Professor Shakibullah the spokesman said that special attention should be given to equip students with quality education for facing challenges ahead, successfully.

The vice chancellor emphasized non-academic engagements besides academic activities for healthy personality and boosting students' confidence. He also urged students to focus on acquiring knowledge so that they could not only contribute to their families but also to national development. Assistant Professor Dr. Ajab Khan, Lecturer Dr. Ulfat Batool, Teaching Assistant Saadia Safi, and Teaching Assistant Fatah Ullah were also present on the occasion.—APP

KMU observes 'day of mourning'

PESHAWAR: In order to express grief over the sad demise of President of Iran, the national flag of Pakistan is being flown at half-mast at Khyber Medical University (KMU) in Peshawar and all its constituent campuses. This gesture reflects the deep sympathy and support of the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the people of Pakistan, for the people of Iran during this period of mourning for the late President Ebrahim Raisi, and other Iranian dignitaries, a message said issued here on Tuesday.

The administration, faculty, and students of Khyber Medical University expressed their heartfelt condolences to the people of Iran.—APP

Health expert advises people to avoid exposure to sun

SUKKUR: Prominent health expert, Dr. Abid Ali Shah advised people, especially those who are unwell and sensitive to heat, to avoid exposure to sun. Talking to APP on Tuesday, he said heatstroke can cause death or permanent organ damage or disability if not properly treated in time. It is very important that a person's body temperature stays in the range of 36.1, 37.8°C. If one's body temperature rises above this, a person may develop a heat-related illness, he said and added that the best way to prevent heat-related illness is to drink plenty of water. Those suffering from lung infection, seizure, fever and asthma must take more care and limit their outdoor activities, he said. He suggested staying hydrated, organising outdoor activities during cooler hours of the day.—APP

Health delegation from Ethiopia visits HEC

Ambassador Jemal Beker said this is an ideal time for forging strong collaboration in the health and education sector of both the countries that have been enjoying cordial and brotherly relations for many decades

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from the health sector of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) on Tuesday visited the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and held a fruitful discussion with the management of the commission for potential collaboration between the two countries in healthcare sector. On arrival, the HEC management including its Chairman H.E. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed accorded a warm welcome to the delegation which was led by H.E. Jemal Beker, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the FDR Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The two sides had a detailed discussion on the matters of mutual interest including the modalities for initiating a collaboration for sharing knowledge, experiences and expertise in the health sector. They also discussed arrangements regarding mutual initiatives for capacity building of health experts from both the countries through short and long term training courses. Speaking on the occasion, H.E. Ambassador Jemal Beker said this is an ideal time for forging strong collaboration in the health and education sector of



both the countries that have been enjoying cordial and brotherly relations for many decades. He underlined the need for strengthening people-to-people contacts between the two countries through bilateral cooperation and collaboration in diverse areas of economy, culture, health and education. The Ambassador said the Government of the FDR Ethiopia was looking forward to establish

institutional linkages between the two countries in various sectors especially health and education. He said the people of Ethiopia and Pakistan had strong affinity, affection and love for each other and there is an immense potential for the collaboration to promote people-to-people contacts between the two countries. On the other side, HEC Chairman H.E. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed assured the

Ambassador of all-out support for strengthening cooperation and collaboration in education sector between Ethiopia and Pakistan. He briefed the delegation about the initiatives being taken by the HEC for the enrollment of foreign students in the public sector universities. The Chairman said the HEC had established a Global Engagement Department and Ethiopia had been made

its focal point to enhance educational collaboration in Africa which is strategically very important for Pakistan. He briefed the delegation on advancement and digitalization in education sector that included establishment of digital libraries and smart class rooms giving access to education to the millions of students in Pakistan and abroad.

USAID hands over eight satellite emergency stations to KP

PESHAWAR: Under a unique and innovative plan, the USAID on Tuesday handed over eight satellite emergency stations to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for installation on highways to provide immediate assistance in road accidents. In this regard, an official ceremony was held at Chief Minister House here. This project of satellite emergency stations was the first of its kind in Pakistan. These satellite stations would be installed in Shehzad Khel, district Lakki Marwat on Indus Highway, Spina Mor, Kark, Charsada and Kernal Sher Khan Shaheed Interchange on M1 Motorway, Haripur Interchange on Hazara Motorway, Katlang Interchange on Swat Motorway, Basham, Karakoram Highway and Dir Upper near Lowari top. The satellite stations would be equipped with the latest medical and technical facilities, including a small operation theatre and to be powered with solar systems and wireless machinery. The satellite station would provide emergency and operational services from the occurrence of the road accident to the transfer to the hospital. Under the project, as many as 14 ambulances have also been handed over to the provincial government under USAID's reconstruction program. Out of total, four ambulances would be provided to Saidu Group of Teaching Hospital, Swat, two each to Shangla, Malakand, Upper Dir and Lower Dir and one to Chitral district hospital. The facility of ventilators would also be provided to Saidu Hospital.—APP

Sharjeel condemns attacks on journalists

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister for Information Sharjeel Inam Memon has condemned attacks on journalists Iqbal Hasan and Nasrullah Gadani, here on Tuesday. He said that such attacks on journalists are an attack on freedom of press and democracy. Sharjeel said that the protection of journalists is important and any kind of violence against them is unacceptable. He further said that the Sindh Government is determined to ensuring the safety of journalists. He hoped that the culprits will be brought to justice as soon as possible.—APP

Chairman PRCS visits Pakistani Embassy in Doha

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, visited the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Doha, Qatar, on Monday. He was warmly welcomed by Pakistan's Minister/Deputy Head of Mission, Syed Mustafa Rabbani, along with Community Welfare Attache, Mr. Waheed at the Pakistani Embassy. Chairman PRCS, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, engaged in discussions with Syed Mustafa Rabbani, focusing on humanitarian collaboration and cooperation. The meeting, held at the embassy, addressed various topics including the services provided by the Pakistan Red Crescent, fostering relationships with the Qatar Red Crescent Society, and strategies to enhance

humanitarian efforts aimed at alleviating the suffering of vulnerable communities, particularly flood-affected people in Pakistan. During the meeting, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari provided an overview to Pakistan's Minister/Deputy Head of Mission in Qatar regarding Red Crescent's historic assistance to the 2022 monsoon flood affected and the Biparjor response through multifaceted interventions. He highlighted PRCS's efforts in augmenting the humanitarian activities by the government of Pakistan, NDMA, and Armed Forces, leveraging the strength and resources of its 1.8 million volunteers. Chairman Laghari emphasized the need to explore potential avenues of collaboration and strengthen ties with international humanitarian organizations in Qatar to ensure continued support for humanitarian development and

ongoing recovery programs benefiting families affected by floods in Pakistan. He elaborated that PRCS, with the support of Red Cross Red Crescent partners, is providing humanitarian assistance across the country through multifaceted interventions including disaster management, health and care, cash assistance, livelihood support, shelter, WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), and more, reaching areas where no other aid had arrived. Minister/Deputy Head of Mission, Syed Mustafa Rabbani, commended the exemplary services rendered by the Pakistan Red Crescent and expressed appreciation for Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari's leadership in advancing humanitarian initiatives. He assured his support for engaging PRCS with the Pakistani diaspora in Qatar for mobilization, sensitization,

Agreement between Aramco and GO Petroleum

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has granted a time-bound exemption on the relevant clauses of product supply agreement between Aramco Trading (ATC) Fujairah FZE Ltd and Gas & Oil Pakistan Ltd (GO Petroleum) for importing and selling Gasoline and diesel products to Pakistan. ATC Fujairah, registered in the United Arab Emirates, is one of the world's largest integrated energy and chemicals companies. Gas & Oil Pakistan Ltd, an Oil Marketing Company (OMC) registered in Pakistan that operates a network of retail outlets across the country that sell petrol, diesel, and lubricants. Under the referred agreement, ATC Fujairah intends to meet GO Petroleum's demand for essential petroleum products for its outlets.

Youth going abroad can approach FO, says Malik

BAHAWALPUR: Regional Head, Federal Ombudsman Office in Bahawalpur, Dr. Muhammad Zahid Malik on Tuesday said that the youth going abroad could lodge their complaints with the Federal Ombudsman Office against the federal departments. He expressed these views while addressing an awareness seminar at College of Tourism and Hotel Management (CO-THM) Bahawalpur, he said that around 187 federal departments, institutes and corporations came under jurisdiction of the Federal Ombudsman Office. "Federal Ombudsman Office as semi judiciary has powers to listen complaints against 187 departments of the federal government besides issuing directives to resolve them," he said. Zahid Malik said that youth and other people who wanted to go abroad to earn livelihood or for tourism visit could file their applications with the Federal Ombudsman

Office if they had legitimate complaints against the federal departments including FIA, Passport Office, NADRA, airports and others. He added that the Federal Ombudsman Office could also listen to complaints regarding bank transactions. "Overseas Pakistanis and youth going abroad used to approach the Federal Ombudsman Office if they have complaints against the banks regarding money transaction," he said. Addressing the seminar, Deputy Advisor at the Federal Ombudsman Office in Bahawalpur, Yasir Shabbir said that the Federal Ombudsman Offices across the country had been playing very important role in provision of swift justice to people. "People can file their application on a plain simple paper without paying any fee and can justice in their legitimate complaints against the federal departments including WAPDA, Sui Gas, NADRA, Passport Office and others.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari signing the condolence book at the Iranian embassy.—DNA

SCCI demands soft loans for entrepreneurs

PESHAWAR: President of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Fuad Ishaq on Tuesday urged the bank of Khyber and commercial banks to issue soft loans for promotion of new entrepreneurship and startup business, industry instead of provision of the running financing facility. Fuad said revival of Development Financing Institutions (DFIs) and Industry Development Bank of Pakistan (IDBP) in a true sense is vital for industrialization and promotion of small and medium scale industry and business. He called for proper training and awareness about various loans schemes to new entrepreneurs and startups. The SCCI chief asked the BoK and commercial banks to facilitate the business community under passion of service and friendly atmosphere. He furthermore emphasized KP constitutional rights on electricity

and gas should be ensured. In order to enhance export through railway, he suggested launching cargo trains from Peshawar to Karachi and fully functional dry-ports along with restoration of the railway system. For promotion of mutual Pak-Afghan trade, he stressed enforcement of sustainable and long-lasting policies and allowing trade in Pak rupee with Afghanistan and permission of re-export of the finishing goods/products. The chamber president stated that if tariff/duties of 224 items of Pakistani products should be equalized to Afghanistan and Iran, then smuggling will be eliminated. He added that the business community should be taken on board regarding closure of borders so that it will prevent huge financial losses and unhurt bilateral trade as well. Fuad Ishaq was speaking to members

during the visit of Mr Irfan Saleem Awan, Chief Financial Officer/Acting CEO/Managing Director of the Bank of Khyber (BoK) along with his team here at the chamber house on Tuesday. Besides, Senior vice president of the SCCI San-ullah Khan, vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, former senior vice president Imran Khan Mohmand, former vice president Junaid Altaf, member of the chamber executive committee Pervez Khan Khattak, Affaf Ali Khan, Monawar Khurshid, Qurtul Ain, senior management, high officials of the BoK, a large number of industrialists, traders and importers and exporters were present in the meeting. The SCCI chief lauded the resilience and bravery of the KP business community and people, who remained steadfast against terrorism and continued their businesses and played a role in country peace, solidarity

and economic development by giving matchless sacrifices and taking bodies and fought against conspiracies of anti-state forces. Fuad expressed grave concern over putting commercial banks KP into the red zone, stating that banks have surged up deposits but lending ratio is completely negligible in the province. He said Pakistan is situated at an important location so its position will be further improved in the region and rest of the world by taking full benefit from the locational advantage. Furthermore, he said there is the Silk route, or CPEC, KP will be made a hub of economic and trade activities through them. Half of the world population is in our reach, and our geo-political situation is very important, particularly KP is considered a gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asian states so we need to take full benefit from it, Fuad stressed.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

May

- May 03/Poland National Day
- May 06/Bulgaria Armed Forces Day
- May 06/UAE Armed Forces Day
- May 07/Kazakhstan Armed Forces Day
- May 08/Czech Republic National Day
- May 09/European Union National Day
- May 17/Norway Constitution Day
- May 21/Hungary Armed Forces Day
- May 22/Yemen Republic
- Re-unification Day(National Day)
- May 24/Eritrea National Day
- May 25/Lebanon Liberation and Resistance Day
- May 25/Argentina National Day
- May 25/Jordan Independence Day
- May 28 /Azerbaijan Republic Day
- May 28/Ethiopia National Day
- May 31/Brunei Armed Forces Day

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



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MH.....5611116
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RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Acting President/Chairman Senate Yousaf Raza Gillani signing the condolence book on the sad demise of the Iranian President and other high-ranking officials killed in helicopter crash. —DNA

Time to reinforce political commitment within SAARC

The SAARC Secretary General acknowledged the challenges faced by the organization but stressed its unwavering commitment to achieving core objectives such as enhancing intra-regional trade, promoting people-to-people interactions, combating poverty, addressing climate change, improving public health, and advancing women and youth development

DNA

ISLAMABAD: During an interactive session organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), SAARC Secretary General, Ambassador Md. Golam Sarwar called for a fresh and committed approach to address the challenges that have hindered SAARC's progress for decades. He also stressed that the organization's future success depends on member states setting aside political differences and prioritizing regional cooperation.

In response to a question regarding the scope of cooperation within SAARC, the Secretary General said that the organization

has broadened its cooperation spectrum in various development areas over time. He specifically noted that food security and sustainable agriculture are central to SAARC's collaborative framework, along with other significant areas of cooperation. The SAARC Secretary General acknowledged the challenges faced by the organization but stressed its unwavering commitment to achieving core objectives such as enhancing intra-regional trade, promoting people-to-people interactions, combating poverty, addressing climate change, improving public health, and advancing women and youth development. He also touched upon the progress achieved made in these key

areas thus far. Commenting on the Secretary General's remarks, President of the IRS, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, said that the Secretary General's remarks duly conveyed a sense of SAARC's renewed resolve to tackle the challenges and continue its efforts to promote regional cooperation and development across a wide range of sectors. He further stated that 'Pakistan is fully committed to the SAARC vision and has remained steadfast in promoting the SAARC objectives'. At the event, senior journalist Shaukat Paracha, emphasized the media's crucial role in advancing the SAARC agenda. He expressed concern over the lack of media

focus on SAARC developments in recent years. Paracha proposed reviving the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) to enhance media collaboration among member states, aiming to increase awareness and coverage of SAARC's initiatives and activities while fostering closer ties between the people of member nations. Ambassador Ghulam Dastagir, former Director at the SAARC Secretariat said that there was a need to move beyond formal proclamations, and sincerely work on promoting the people-centric agenda of the SAARC. He identified several areas within SAARC that require comparatively little investments and efforts such as agriculture, medical cooperation,

tourism, media cooperation, and women and youth development. He suggested that the SAARC member states should focus on these areas to make progress and benefit the people of the region. Dr Shabana Fayyaz, Associate Professor at QAU said that the visit of the SAARC Secretary General to Pakistan was a positive development for the region. It would help rebuild the confidence of SAARC member states in the organization, she added. She further stated that 'people-to-people contact is the core of regional integration in South Asia, therefore, SAARC member states should facilitate visiting people through a more relaxed visa regime, she emphasized.

Romina visits Iranian Embassy

DNA

ISLAMABAD :Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Romina Khurshid Alam visited the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran here on Tuesday to convey her profound condolences to the Government and people of Iran on the tragic demise of President Dr. Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Amir Hossein Abdollahian, and other senior Iranian officials, who died in a helicopter crash on Monday. While speaking to the Ambassador of Iran, Reza Amiri Moghaddam, Romina Khurshid Alam paid rich tribute to the late Iranian President and recalled his recent remarkable and memorable visit to Pakistan. During her meeting with the Iran's ambassador to Pakistan, she also remembered the late Iranian president's unparalleled and unprecedented



role for the betterment of global Muslim community at all levels and deepening of relations between the people of Pakistan and Iran. The PM's coordinator also fondly recalled her interactions with President Raisi during

his recent visit to Pakistan and lauded his pledges for Iran's unflinching support to Pakistan and people of the country at all levels for socio-economic development. "President Dr. Ebrahim Raisi was unquestionably a great leader, a visionary

person and a scholar of great credibility," said Romina Khurshid Alam. The PM's Coordinator also signed the condolence book at the Iranian Embassy on this solemn occasion during her visit to the Embassy of Iran in Islamabad.

Govt to bring reforms: Energy minister

He further made it clear that the IMF has yet not demanded anything related to this Policy

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Leghari Tuesday said that the government would bring reforms in key areas to address the issues concerning the masses. Talking to a private news channel, he said that we will take effective measures to eliminate power theft to reduce the financial burden on the national exchequer. Talking about Pakistan's solar net metering policy, he clarified that the government would take all stakeholders into confidence before taking any final decision, adding that the PML-N-led government in 2017 Solarization was encouraged, and there are currently 113,000 connections on the net. The government is willing to review the solar net metering policy if needed, it supports the continuation of the scheme, " he added. To a question, he said that Net metering is a billing tool that allows the consumers to send excess energy generated by solar panels to the local grid in exchange for credits to the monthly electric bills. He underscored the importance of E&P sector reforms, a supportive investor policy, and stakeholder inclusiveness to channel untapped natural resources. He further made it clear that the IMF has yet not demanded anything related to this Policy.

Interior Minister briefed about underpasses

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday chairing a high level meeting with Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Mohammad Ali Randhawa and NESPAK officials, directed to speed up the completion of two underpasses for a signal-free corridor. According to the plan, one underpass will be constructed at Serena Chowk and the other one will be built on Srinagar highway for the convenience of the citizens of Islamabad. Mohsin Naqvi directed to keep the height of the underpass up to full height and tasked Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad to personally look after the project for in-time completion. Nespak officials briefed the Minister about the initial design of the project.—APP

Mohsin Naqvi ordered to complete underpasses project in the minimum time

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Journalists with a proven track record of environmental investigations can apply for a remote fellowship. The Pulitzer Center is accepting applications for its Ocean Reporting Network (ORN) Fellowship. The network will establish a collaborative ecosystem of journalists around the world that will uncover the harmful and illegal practices of the fishing and extractive industries, systemic threats to marine biodiversity and coastal communities. At least eight full-time fellows will be selected for the program. The ORN fellows will work on individual and collaborative reporting projects to probe the drivers of the degradation of the marine environment, as well as the socioeconomic impacts.

IRSA releases 285,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 285,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 300,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1467.48 feet and was 69.48 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 97,300 cusecs and 100,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1177.30 feet, which was 127.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 63,000 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 177,400, 104,500, 75,500 and 26,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 96,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 29,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

CCP hearing on collusive practices of Poultry Companies

ISLAMABAD: Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) conducted a hearing in the poultry cartelization case, wherein the Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA) presented its defence against allegations of price fixing. This hearing was fixed after show cause notices were issued to PPA and eight other entities for cartelization, said a press release issued here on Tuesday. The CCP's investigation revealed facie collusion and price fixing of day-old broiler chicks by a suspected cartel of eight hatcheries from 2019 to June 2021. These entities include Hitech Group, Islamabad Group of Companies, Olympia Group, Jadeed Group, Supreme

Farms (Season's Foods), Big Bird Group, and Sabirs' Group. The enquiry was initiated following a surge in prices and complaints from broiler farmers through the Pakistan Citizens Portal, alleging cartelization in the sector. Subsequently, search and inspections were conducted at the premises of PPA and forensic analysis of the evidence uncovered that an official of one of the member firms played a central role in the cartel by coordinating mutually agreed prices of day-old broiler chicks. These rates were communicated daily to other hatcheries and PPA through SMS and WhatsApp, with pricing discussions also conducted through these mediums. The enquiry also found PPA

in prima facie violation of Section 4 of the Act, as its official was involved in the pricing discussions and announcements. The general principle is that if a price sensitive information is being discussed, an undertaking/trade association must be seen to distancing itself from the collusive practices. Most of the hatcheries involved in the suspected cartel are also vertically integrated and engaged in the entire poultry supply chain, from breeding to the production of broiler chicken including poultry feed and eggs production. The next hearing is scheduled for 21 May 2024, where the remaining eight undertakings implicated in the case will present their stances.

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Briefs

Minister meets delegation of Minorities

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law & Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar here on Tuesday met with a delegation of representatives of the minorities community which included representatives of the Christian, Hindu and Sikh communities and other notable personalities. The discussion focused on the formation of the National Commission for Minorities Rights. Addressing the delay in the formation of the commission, the law minister assured speedy efforts and emphasized that all minorities would be included to ensure a comprehensive approach. Highlighting the government's determination to protect the rights of minorities, he said that according to the previous census, the minority community is present in large numbers in Pakistan. The government is committed to taking steps to protect the rights of all minority communities. —APP

Awareness walk held to promote cleanliness

RAWALPINDI: On the directions of Secretary Local Government, Shakeel Ahmad, the Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi, on Tuesday organized an awareness walk to promote the 'Suthra Punjab' programme. The event aimed to engage the community in efforts to keep the city clean and was spearheaded by Chief Digital Monitoring Officer MC Rawalpindi, Dr. M. Abdullah Tabassum. The rally started at the Municipal Corporation office and concluded at Liaquat Bagh. The rally was attended by key figures including Chief Officer MC Rawalpindi, CO/RWMC Rana Sajid, CO/MCR Shahid Ghafoor Paracha, President Anjum Tajran Rawalpindi Tariq Jadoon, President Small Chambers and Traders Chaudhry Fakhar Warach, President Labour Wing MCR Amiruddin Mir, and Chairman UC 34 Rawalpindi and a significant number of citizens. During the event, Dr. Tabassum emphasized the crucial role of both the public and government departments in maintaining the city's cleanliness. He highlighted the importance of community involvement in making Rawalpindi a cleaner and more pleasant place to live. —APP

Ahsan Iqbal chaired review meeting on CPEC Phase-2

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday chaired a review meeting on China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Phase 2 and the 13th Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) on Tuesday at the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives. Attendees included the Additional Secretary of the Ministry, senior officials from various ministries, and representatives from federal and provincial ministries. The officials received a comprehensive briefing on the preparations for the upcoming online JCC meeting scheduled for this week. Discussions covered projects related to communications, infrastructure, energy, economic development, agriculture, and the security of Chinese officials working in Pakistan. Addressing the security concerns for Chinese personnel, Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal asserted that ensuring the protection and safety of Chinese personnel, projects, and programs is a top priority for the Government of Pakistan. He highlighted that a comprehensive security strategy has been formulated, and Pakistan will implement effective measures to safeguard Chinese citizens. Minister Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the priority of commencing the bidding process for the ML-1 project without delay and establishing a precise timeline for its timely initiation. Concerning the Mineral Corridor, he directed that efforts should be intensified to finalize the agreement during this JCC session. Additionally, he instructed the organization of sub-working group meetings with Chinese officials to expedite discussions on the Mineral Corridor projects.



ISLAMABAD: Floral Art Society of Pakistan Magnolia Chapter held their monthly GBM at local Hotel. A very talented floral artist and an acknowledged judge, Aisha Zahid gave a demonstration on how to show the spirit of an art work through floral display. The topic was 'Like a Painting.' — ONLINE

Local manufacturing and export of cables to increase

This milestone signifies a transformative shift towards self-sufficiency and competitiveness in the renewable energy landscape. The domestic market will now benefit from access to quality-certified products while simultaneously fostering export readiness for global markets

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: In an important milestone for the local engineering industry, Pakistan Cables Ltd. has announced that it has achieved TUV certification for their local manufactured solar DC cables. Pakistan Cables is the premier cable manufacturer and market leader in Pakistan, which was founded in 1953, since then the company has continuously strived to attain excellence by maintaining quality standards par excellence. The efforts to get TUV certification was facilitated by the Engineering Development Board on the demand of REON Energy, a leading Solar Solution provider and EPC Contractor, and

an importer of DC cables. Reon is a next generation energy company leading the transition to clean energy in the region. It has deep expertise in solar power, energy storage across its various uses, electric vehicle charging and digitalization of energy assets leading to smart energy systems. The Engineering Development Board (EDB) has been striving since its establishment in 1995 towards framing appropriate policies and regulations for facilitating and encouraging development & growth of the engineering industry of the country. As a business support organization, EDB provides an effective bridge between the government and industry and renders professional/technical advice to the manufacturing industry to

adopt the best practices for becoming competitive to respond to the emerging needs and requirements of the fast changing world. In an effort to save foreign exchange and encourage the local industry, EDB advised Pakistan Cables Limited to attain TUV Rheinland Certification for Renewable Energy Cables aiming to discourage imports and promote local manufacturing of certified cables within the country. This major milestone was made possible through collaborative efforts of Pakistan Cables, Reon Energy and Engineering Development Board as all these entities shared a common vision of making TUV certified cables available locally, reducing dependence on imports and strengthening the economy of Pakistan. This milestone

signifies a transformative shift towards self-sufficiency and competitiveness in the renewable energy landscape. The domestic market will now benefit from access to quality-certified products while simultaneously fostering export readiness for global markets. Recognizing the increasing significance of international certification for stakeholders in the renewable energy sector, the Engineering Development Board has proactively facilitated the testing and certification process for locally manufactured products. The rigorous testing procedure, spanning over six months, exemplified the dedication and diligence of Pakistan Cables Limited in meeting and surpassing international standards. This achievement

holds profound significance for the local manufacturing industry, particularly the cable sector, as it reduces dependency on imports and unlocks new avenues of growth and innovation. With certified products readily available locally, Pakistan is poised to capitalize on the growing opportunities in the renewable energy market, fostering economic development and sustainability. The successful certification of Pakistan Cables Limited by TUV Rheinland exemplifies the fruitful collaboration between public and private organizations, showcasing how such partnerships can propel economic growth and enhance the competitiveness of local industries for the collective benefit.

IFA intensifies action against unsafe milk

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) on Tuesday took action against contaminated milk in the Federal Capital and destroyed 1500 liters of unsafe milk. Talking to APP, Deputy Director Operations of IFA, Dr Tahira Saddique said that numerous complaints about adulterated milk prompted the operation. The IFA, along with food safety teams, conducted inspections in the G-15 and G-8 areas of Islamabad. During these inspections, authorities found large quantities of unsafe milk, which they immediately destroyed. The IFA also imposed substantial fines on those violating food safety regulations and sealed one shop found selling contaminated milk. This operation was part of the IFA's ongoing efforts to ensure the safety and quality of food products in Islamabad, she said. The Deputy Director emphasized the importance of these measures to protect public health and prevent the sale of harmful products. The crackdown would continue as the IFA works to address food safety concerns and respond to public complaints. Dr Tahira urged citizens to report any instances of food adulteration to help maintain the quality of food in the city. —APP

Edu ministry to conduct interviews of EST

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) is pleased to announce commencement of interviews of the applicants who have qualified written tests for the recruitment of Elementary School Teachers (EST) (BS-14) in schools operating under the Federal Directorate of Education against 237 vacant positions. According to the Ministry details, the interviews are scheduled to start from Monday, 27th May 2024 and all candidates are being informed about their respective centres for interviews. —APP

Exports increase by 29% to Rs 7.1 trillion in 10 months

ISLAMABAD: The exports from the country in the rupee term witnessed an increase of 29.07 percent during the first ten months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. Exports during July-April (2023-2024) totaled Rs. 7,172,151 million as against Rs.5,556,750 million during the corresponding period of last year, according to PBS provisional figures. Exports from Pakistan during April, 2024 amounted to Rs.654,226 million (provisional) as against Rs. 715,458 million in March, 2024 and Rs. 608,239 million during April, 2023 showing a decrease of 8.56% over March, 2024 but increased by 7.56% over April, 2023. On a year-on-year basis, the exports during April 2024 increased by 7.56 percent and were recorded at Rs. Rs.654,226 million compared to the exports of Rs. Rs. 608,239 million in April 2023. On a month-on-month basis, the exports however decreased by 8.56 percent when compared to the exports of Rs. 715,458 million in March 2024. The main commodities of exports during April, 2024 were knitwear (Rs. 90,772 million), readymade garments

(Rs.81,020 million), rice others (Rs. 76,438 million), bed wear (Rs. 56,332 million), cotton cloth (Rs. 37,556 million), towels (Rs.22,459 million), rice basmati (Rs.21,378 million), cotton yarn (Rs.15,052 million), madeup articles (excl towels & bedwear) (Rs.14,843 million) and fish and fish preparations (Rs.12,123 million). On the other hand, imports during July-April (2023-24) totaled Rs. 12,737,458 million as against Rs. 11,043,857 million during the corresponding period of last year, showing an increase of 15.34%. Imports into Pakistan during April, 2024 amounted to Rs. 1,353,042 million as against Rs. 1,353,085 million in March, 2024 and Rs. 849,474 million during April, 2023 showing a decrease of 0.00% over March, 2024 but increased by 59.28% over April, 2023. The commodities of imports during April, 2024 were petroleum products (Rs. 187,277 million), petroleum crude (Rs.161,733 million), electric machinery & apparatus (Rs.135,222 million), natural gas, liquefied (Rs.95,650 million), palm oil (Rs. 60,107 million), iron & steel (Rs.53,175 million), plastic materials (Rs.47,458 million), mobile phone (Rs. 44,890 million), iron. —APP

Kashmiri diaspora delegation meets PM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Kashmiri Diaspora activists, led by Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Secretary General, World Kashmir Awareness Forum, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif today. The Prime Minister lauded the Kashmiri activists' efforts for increasing global awareness about the Jammu and Kashmir dispute and the plight of the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He recalled that he had never missed any opportunity to raise his voice in support of the Kashmiri brothers and sisters, as evident from his address at the 2022 UN General Assembly, as well as at other forums including SCO and with other world leaders. He reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering moral, diplomatic. —APP

PSA to launch Hall of Fame

ISLAMABAD: Professional Squash Association (PSA) announced to launch the PSA Hall of Fame on June 8 following the semi-finals of the British Open. It would be launched at PSA Awards dinner held at The Book Rotunda in Birmingham on Saturday. Throughout 2024, PSA was celebrating 50 years since the International Squash Players Association - the precursor to the PSA - was founded to govern the men's professional game, with a historic merger between the PSA and Women's Squash Association (WSA) then taking place in 2015. As part of the celebrations, two legends of the game would be inducted into the PSA Hall of Fame, with the inductees being announced at the PSA Awards dinner. "We are excited to mark the year of our 50th anniversary with the launch of the PSA Hall of Fame," said PSA Chief Executive Alex Gough. "So many amazing players have left their legacy on professional squash and we are pleased to have the opportunity to celebrate those who have had such an impact on the sport." The PSA Awards dinner would also recognize the achievements and performances of the world's top squash players over the 2023-24 campaign, with a host of awards up for grabs. —DNA

'Iranian people will never forget, concern and grief of Pakistan'

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran His Excellency Reza Amir Moghadam has extended his heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Pakistan and its people for expressing sympathies and solidarity over the martyrdom of President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hussain Amirabdollahian and other dignitaries in the consequence of a helicopter crash. The Ambassador was talking to Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry who paid a visit to the Embassy along with a delegation to condole the death of President Raisi and other high-ups in the tragic incident. The envoy while describing Pakistan a great friend of Iran said that President Raisi's vision of strengthening and promot-



ing Pakistan-Iran relations would continue and all the agreements inked on the occasion of his recent visit to Pakistan will be implemented letter and spirit and that there will be no change in the foreign policy of Iran. He especially expressed his thanks to President and Prime Minister of Pakistan for sharing their deep concern and grief over the tragedy. President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that late President Raisi was a bold,

sincere and dedicated leader of the Islamic world. His efforts for peace and services for the nation are unforgettable and restoration of diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia was one of his big achievements for unity of the Muslim Ummah which elevated his stature as a true leader of the Islamic world. He also recalled the crystal clear stance of the late President over the Palestine issue. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the late President was keen to boost Paki-

stan-Iran trade upto \$10 billion and we are determined to fulfil his this dream. He said that martyrdom of President Raisi is not the loss of Iranian nation only but the entire Muslim world and prayed to Allah Almighty for grant of the highest place in Jannah to the departed souls.

The President also registered his sentiments in the Condolence Book placed in the Embassy. Former President ICCI Zafar Bakhtawari said that the late President was a statesman whose contributions to his country and reinforcing Pakistan-Iran relations and regional co-operation will always be remembered. Executive member Maqsood Tabish mentioned his elevation from an orphan child to the President of the Islamic state of Iran. ICCI members Imran Cheenna, Khalid Chaudhry were also the part of the delegation.



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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 05 Issue: 162

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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The 'canary in the mine'

PRIME Minister Robert Fico was hit by four bullet rounds from close quarters in an attempted assassination last week. After five hours of surgery, Fico is said no longer to be in life-threatening condition, but his condition is said to be serious. The police reportedly have charged a 71 year old poet and writer with attempted murder (an unusual profile for a 'lone wolf' attacker). "At the press conference after the attack" Politico reports, "SutajEštok, the interior minister, called for an end to the violent language and attacks on social media that have come to define Slovak politics in the Fico era. "I want to appeal to the public, to journalists, and to all politicians to stop spreading hatred", he said. One MP from Fico's Party shouted at the opposition in parliament that Fico "is fighting for his life today because of your hatred." Whilst Deputy Speaker Andrej Danko, head of the far-right Slovak National Party, demanded of the opposition: "Are you satisfied?" Slovakia is deeply polarised: There is, on one side, a strongly pro-EU faction, who have scorned particularly the long-serving PM's opposition to the West's Ukraine policy (Fico has been Premier for 11 out of the last 18 years). Should then the Presidential outburst be seen as just 'narrative' i.e. as nothing to be taken seriously? For there is no way that the EU can even contemplate war with Russia. The proposition is absurd. That is true – but nonetheless the language of Europe's Ruling Strata today is riddled with a fervour for militarism and war ('prepare for conscription'; move to 'a defence-security orientated geo-political EU', etc.). It is not rational, but rather resembles a mass psychosis affecting the elite class, who are becoming desperate that their 'Geo-political Europe' project is unravelling; and that their errors of political and economic judgement are becoming obvious as Europe slides towards an all-too-predictable social and economic crisis. It is not at all 'rational', but these élites understand that Putin and Russia can be used as cypher for the autocratic dark 'other' in the (Leo) Straussian conception – that 'the enemy' in a specially intense way is someone different and alien, so that conflicts with 'him' are possible, even mandatory (by the nature of who he is). More than that, the very dynamic first of recognition and then destruction of the adversary becomes a crucial component of national identity, or in this case, the EU transnational 'state' identity: 'Democracy fighting autocrats'. This formulation of an existential enemy so evil and alien implies that communication and relations should be regarded as unimaginable. Even to listen to the other side would be to cross the frontier of acceptable civic behaviour. The 'Putin/Xi are dictators' meme is crafted precisely to shut down free speech here in the West. It is intended to scare off critics of the élite and legitimises punishment for those 'consorting' with the enemy. In Europe, Russia is the principal hate-object; in the US anti-semitism stands in its stead, with Russian, China and Iran threaded on the same yarn as sharing a common malignity along an axis of evil. The bottom line to this approach is one that tends to massive over-investment in a single authorised narrative, and when it falls apart (as now), there is 'no exit'. Doubling down is the only option (even when that course of action is seen to be irrational). Unfortunately this can become the path to all-too-predictable disaster.



China's rush to fill power vacuum in Iraq

CHINESE firms recently won the lion's share of licences for oil and gas exploration that Iraq solicited to wean its power plants off natural gas from Iran. The news demonstrates China's drive to secure energy supplies as it struggles to reverse slowing growth at home. Beijing is seizing opportunities in the Middle East left by the West's conflicting ambitions to deter foes and reassure allies. Wang Yi, China's chief diplomat, has doubled down on the government's pro-Palestinian stance. Meanwhile, American and European companies are apprehensive about making long-term investments in war-ravaged countries with rampant corruption despite these nations' lucrative reserves of gas and oil. But China's strategy in Iraq could prove to be a negative-sum game on many fronts – political, trade, influence and more – given the power dynamics in the region. Many treacherous hazards confront statecraft, as the United States and Europe well know. China will face challenges in Iraq that are the result of antagonisms that have deepened over the past few centuries. The late US statesman Henry Kissinger wrote in 2014 that in the Middle East "political, sectarian, tribal, territorial, ideological, and traditional national interest disputes merge". Today, the war in Gaza promises an impossible outcome. Throughout the Middle East, there have been flare-ups of terrorist activity in societies roiled by deep-seated religious tensions that unstable governments cannot defuse. Gulf countries are rising in power and ambition as they assert their independence. China isn't absolved from these difficulties by stressing neutrality and dialogue facilitation while keeping its distance from local groups. As its involvement in Iraq deepens and the dilemmas multiply, President Xi Jinping's efforts will be compromised and possibly rebuffed. How can China succeed if it doesn't take sides with local actors? History shows repeatedly that geostrategic power vacuums are like black holes. Countries leverage various means – often economic incentives – to gain influence when rivals partially retrench or collapse, but not always. Sometimes remaining on the sidelines is a better strategy. US President Joe Biden made note of China's growing Middle East presence in 2022 while visiting Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. "We will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia or Iran," Biden said. "And we'll seek to build on this moment with active, principled American leadership." Estimates of US troops stationed in the Middle East go up to more than 50,000, with Qatar hosting the largest US base. There was unprecedented security cooperation between Washington, Tel Aviv, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi after Iran targeted Israel with missile and drone attacks last month. In comparison, China's foothold in the region is not as strong. China and Iraq last year marked 65 years of bilateral relations which began after Iraq's coup of 1958, when General Abdul Karim Qasim deposed the Hashemite monarchy and Beijing recognised his "revolutionary" government. Throughout Iraq's war with Iran in the 1980s, China sold weapons to both sides.

Hungary's anti-corruption protests

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Magyar publicly broke with Fidesz after a scandal involving a pardon led to the resignation of Hungarian President Katalin Novak and caused Magyar's estranged ex-wife, former Justice Minister Judit Varga, to withdraw from politics. Varga, who had planned to lead Fidesz in the upcoming European Parliamentary elections, claimed that Magyar's recording was forced and part of a long-standing scheme to blackmail her, and she accused him of abusing her during their marriage. Magyar has consistently denied these accusations. On March 26, Magyar spent several hours at the Prosecutor-General's...

A COUPLE of weeks ago, the mass demonstrations in Budapest where protesters expressed their resentment against alleged financial corruption that they believed was rampant in the country and possibly facilitated or ignored by the government. These protests were immense, peaking at a reported 100,000 participants. Since then, there have been four or five more demonstrations, including some in mid-sized towns where Prime Minister Viktor Orban's ruling party enjoys significant support. This reminded me of the large uprisings in other countries, such as the 1968 demonstrations in France that ultimately forced Charles de Gaulle from office when security forces could not suppress the movement. In Budapest, the protesters appeared to be predominantly anti-Orban, and the police seemed focused on maintaining peace rather than forcibly removing the demonstrators. Initially, I perceived this as a sign that Orban's grip on power was weakening, given the apparent lack of strong resistance from his side. However, I must admit that I was mistaken in my assessment. I failed to recognize the fundamental differences between the context of Budapest in 2024 and Paris in 1968. At a demonstration near Kossuth Lajos Square in downtown Budapest, Magyar told the crowd that he had shared a recording with investigators and urged them to demand justice and an investigation into the Schadl-Volner case, a major corruption scandal in Hungary. Thousands of people waved Hungarian flags and reacted loudly as Magyar read a statement accusing senior officials from the ruling Fidesz party of

corruption due to their long hold on power. The crowd chanted, "Jail them! Jail them!" in response. Since 2010, Prime Minister Viktor Orban and the Fidesz party have dominated Hungarian politics, using their supermajority to change election rules, control the judiciary, limit independent media, and weaken the role of political opponents. Magyar publicly broke with Fidesz after a scandal involving a pardon led to the resignation of Hungarian President Katalin Novak and caused Magyar's estranged ex-wife, former Justice Minister Judit Varga, to withdraw from politics. Varga, who had planned to lead Fidesz in the upcoming European Parliamentary elections, claimed that Magyar's recording was forced and part of a long-standing scheme to blackmail her, and she accused him of abusing her during their marriage. Magyar has consistently denied these accusations. On March 26, Magyar spent several hours at the Prosecutor-General's Office and stated that the recording implicates officials in several crimes. He also mentioned that he possesses many more recordings related to the Schadl-Volner case and intends to share them with investigators. The Schadl-Volner case involves possible illegal activities by Gyorgy Schadl, the head of the chamber of judicial officers, and a former state secretary at Justice Ministry, Pal Volner, and reportedly includes wiretaps and classified information. Magyar believes that prosecutors have no other choice but to summon several government members as witnesses and insists that they must summon the

prime minister as well. He argues that Prime Minister Orban is aware of much more wrongdoing than Magyar and his ex-wife knew. Magyar has accused Antal Rogan, a loyalist of Orban who manages the prime minister's cabinet office and government messaging, of having significant influence within a corrupt political group. Fidesz officials have dismissed Magyar's accusations as baseless and an attempt to harass his ex-wife. Magyar has called for a major rally in Budapest on April 6, hoping it will be the largest demonstration in the last 14 years to push for change. His previous call for an anti-government protest on March 15, a national holiday, drew an estimated 35,000 people, where he announced his intention to start a new political party. This rally followed significant anti-government protests in February, sparked by a controversial presidential pardon granted to a man convicted of helping cover up sexual abuse at a children's home. The Hungarian political landscape, shaped by Fidesz's decade-long supremacy and its strategic alterations to the political system, remains resistant to immediate upheaval. However, the sustained public demonstrations and the mounting pressure from figures like Magyar indicate a brewing discontent that could eventually lead to significant shifts in Hungary's political dynamics. While the immediate future may not mirror the swift changes seen in 1968 France, the persistent and organized efforts of the Hungarian opposition could pave the way for a gradual transformation in the country's governance.

Tragic helicopter crash: Impact on Iran and regional dynamics

Talha Bilal



The new president will inherit a complex set of challenges, including navigating regional tensions, advancing diplomatic initiatives, and addressing domestic priorities. The continuation of President Raisi's efforts to foster cooperation and friendship with neighboring countries, including Pakistan, will be essential for maintaining...

THE recent helicopter crash that tragically claimed the lives of Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and other high-ranking officials has sent shockwaves across Iran and its neighboring countries. This unforeseen catastrophe has not only plunged Iran into mourning but has also reverberated throughout the region, prompting expressions of solidarity and condolences from nations far and wide. Pakistan, a close neighbor of Iran, has been quick to extend heartfelt condolences and support during this time of profound sorrow. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's visit to the Iranian embassy exemplifies the strong bonds of friendship between the two nations, as he conveyed the sympathies of the Pakistani government and people. President Asif Ali Zardari's tribute to President Raisi underscores the significant role the late leader played in fostering Pakistan-Iran relations and promoting regional stability. The untimely demise of President Raisi comes at a critical juncture for the Middle East, a region already fraught with conflicts and tensions. With ongoing strife between Israel and Palestine, as well as escalating confrontations between Iran and Israel, the loss of such a prominent figure further complicates an already volatile situation. Recent events,

including the Israeli attack on an Iranian consulate in Damascus and Iran's retaliatory missile strike on Israel, have heightened tensions and raised concerns about the potential for further escalation. In light of these developments, it is imperative to assess the implications of this tragedy on regional dynamics. The sudden vacuum in leadership left by President Raisi's passing will undoubtedly impact Iran's domestic and foreign policies, potentially influencing its interactions with neighboring countries and global powers. As Iran prepares for presidential elections in the coming months, the choice of its next leader will carry significant ramifications for regional stability and peace. The outpouring of solidarity from countries and international organizations, including Gulf Arab states, China, Russia, and several European nations, underscores the shared concern for stability in the Middle East. Despite differing geopolitical interests, there is a collective recognition of the need to prevent further escalation of tensions and promote dialogue and cooperation to address the underlying challenges facing the region. While initial reports suggest that the cause of the helicopter crash was a technical malfunction, thorough investigations are necessary to ascertain the exact circumstances surrounding the incident. The use of

US-made helicopters in multiple countries underscores the importance of comprehensive safety protocols and maintenance procedures to prevent such tragedies in the future. As Iran navigates this period of mourning and transition, the responsibilities of its incoming leadership cannot be overstated. The new president will inherit a complex set of challenges, including navigating regional tensions, advancing diplomatic initiatives, and addressing domestic priorities. The continuation of President Raisi's efforts to foster cooperation and friendship with neighboring countries, including Pakistan, will be essential for maintaining regional stability and promoting peace. In the midst of uncertainty and grief, the government and people of Pakistan stand in solidarity with the Iranian nation, offering prayers for strength and resilience in the face of adversity. It is our hope that Iran will emerge from this tragedy with renewed determination to pursue dialogue, cooperation, and peace, guided by the principles of mutual respect and understanding. Ultimately, the tragic helicopter crash serves as a stark reminder of the fragility of life and the unpredictability of geopolitical events. In honoring the memory of those lost, let us redouble our efforts to build a more peaceful and secure future for all nations in the Middle East and beyond.

Briefs

Chairman of PMYP addresses ministers' meeting

ISLAMABAD: In a momentous address at the D-8 Youth Ministers' meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan representing the Government of Pakistan, highlighted the importance of youth empowerment and collaboration among D-8 countries. With a focus on youth development, the Chairman underscored Pakistan's commitment to nurturing its vibrant and dynamic youth population. Recognizing the commendable efforts of the D-8 Secretariat and Secretary-General, the Chairman emphasized the significance of integrating youth empowerment into the D-8 agenda. Acknowledging the exceptional leadership of Mr. Nazmul Hassan MP, Minister of Youth and Sports of Bangladesh, the Chairman expressed gratitude for the successful hosting of the meeting, which showcased Bangladesh's dedication to youth development. The Chairman elaborated on Pakistan's comprehensive approach to youth empowerment through the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, highlighting initiatives such as skills development, education, entrepreneurship, and environmental sustainability. Pakistan demonstrated its commitment to providing opportunities for its youth. Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of networking and collaboration among youth leaders. Cultural exchanges and tourism initiatives were also highlighted as crucial avenues for fostering understanding and cooperation among D-8 nations while showcasing diverse cultural traditions and historical landmarks. Pakistan advocated for building bridges of friendship and cooperation. In conclusion, the Chairman PMYP reaffirmed Pakistan's dedication to youth empowerment and pledged to work collaboratively with D-8 countries to ensure a brighter future for the younger generation.—APP

Meat products valued at \$430.738 mln exported in 10 months

ISLAMABAD: Meat and meat preparations exports from the country during the first 10 months of the current financial year grew by 24.37 per cent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-April, 2023-24 over 104,513 metric tons of meat and meat products valued at \$430.738 million were exported as compared to the exports of 80,423 metric tons worth \$346.332 million in the same period of last year. However, exports of fish and fish preparation during the period under review decreased by 15.74 per cent as it was registered at 167,345 metric tons valued at 342.154 million, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Over 173,550 metric tons of fish and fish products worth \$406.090 million were exported in the first 10 months of the last financial year, it added. During the period from July-April, 2023-24 the food group exports witnessed about 45.61 per cent growth as food commodities valued at \$6.228 billion were exported as against the exports of \$4.277 billion in the same period of the last year, it added. On the other hand, the imports of food goods into the country during the period under review went down by 12.18 per cent as it was recorded at \$6.817 billion as compared to the imports of \$7.762 billion in the same period of last year. On month on month basis, the imports of food commodities grew by 22.82 per cent as food commodities costing 527.026 million were imported in April 2024 as compared to the imports of \$429.114 million of the same month of the previous year. Meanwhile, over 5,097 million metric tons of rice worth \$3.282 billion were exported as compared to the exports of 3.270 million metric tons valued at \$1.822 million of the same period of last year.—APP

Press Club of Pakistan in UK hosts interfaith event

Ch. Pervaiz Masih Mattoo, in his presidential welcome address, maintained that the prime objective of this event is to bring religious cohesion among the people and promote tolerance, brotherhood, and honour the faith of others and say a big "No" to hatred, racism and other social evils

ATTAULLAH CHEEMA

MANCHESTER: The Press Club of Pakistan, United Kingdom, hoisted a gorgeous interfaith festive here in Manchester, while Ch. Pervaiz Masih Mattoo, President of the organisation, Presided over the event. While Lord Mayor of Manchester councilor Mohtarma Yasmin Dar was the chief guest whereas member of British parliament Afzal Khan, and Pakistani community welfare Attache, here at Consulate General, Manchester, Ms Misbah Naureen were the guests of honour at the function. Ch. Pervaiz Masih Mattoo, in his presidential welcome address, maintained that the prime objective of this event is to bring religious cohesion among the people and promote tolerance, brotherhood, and honour the faith of others and say a big "No" to hatred, racism and other social evils. While recounting various achievements by the PCPUK, he also said, that we have carried out many projects, seminars, community welfare Attache of Pakistan at consulate-general of Manchester, while speaking at



the occasion, highly appreciated the constructive role of PCPUK, in community development, creating interfaith respect among all the segments of the British community. She suggested to the participants, mainly representing Pakistani Muslims, and Christians, here have substantial educational facilities and our Pakistani immigrants, should

focus their more and more attention towards the education of their children. She also lauded the role of organisation and termed its activities commendable, for the promotion of social, religious, and political norms. Lord mayor of Manchester Yasmin Dar, in her speech, thanked all the participants and appreciated, how the Local communities came

together, in a spirit of unity and brotherhood. MP Afzal Khan described organizing such events as an extremely important step on the part of PCPUK for social diversity. The city of Manchester has been unique and remarkable in the sense that it is home to people of all races and religions, who live here in harmony, as exemplified by today's event.

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World reactions to death of Iran's President Raisi

PARIS: Iran's powerful allies on Monday mourned the death of its president, Ebrahim Raisi, in a helicopter crash, while regional militants hailed him as a supporter of the Palestinian cause. The United States said the deceased ultraconservative leader "had blood on his hands", Russia and China called him a "friend", and Iran's arch-foe Israel has yet to react publicly. Here is a round-up of key reactions: Members of the UN Security Council observed a minute's silence in Raisi's memory at the request of the current council president, Mozambique Ambassador Pedro Comissario Afonso. NATO spokesperson Farah Daklallah on social media platform X sent the military alliance's "condolences to the people of Iran". State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said the United States "expresses its official condolences" and reaffirmed "our support for the Iranian people and their struggle for human rights and fundamental freedoms". Later, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters that Raisi was responsible for "atrocious" rights abuses and "had a lot of blood on his hands". China's President Xi Jinping said "the Chinese people have lost a good friend," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a press conference. The European Union expressed its "sincere condolences". EU Council President Charles Michel said in a statement: "Our thoughts go to the families." Iran's Gulf neighbours Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman sent their condolences. Jassem al-Budaiwi, secretary-general of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), called it a "tragic accident". Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed Raisi as an "outstanding politician" and "a true friend of Russia" in a letter to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. France sent condolences to Iran and "the families of the victims of this accident," in a foreign ministry statement. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "deeply saddened and shocked by the tragic demise" of Raisi, adding that "India stands with Iran in this time of sorrow." Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said in a statement he was "deeply saddened" by Raisi's passing, recalling his "candid discussions" with Raisi and the two countries' "friendly relations". Exiled opposition group the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) said Raisi's death was "a monumental and irreparable strategic blow to the mullahs' supreme leader Ali Khamenei and the entire regime, notorious for its executions and massacres", in a statement from the group's leader, Maryam Rajavi. —APP

Akram spotlights Gautam Buddha's peace legacy

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan on Monday highlighted profound legacy of Gautam Buddha, emphasizing his timeless message of peace, compassion, and non-violence during a commemoration marking his birth, enlightenment, and passing. Ambassador Munir Akram, addressing attendees of the event organized at the UN Headquarters on the 'Day of Vesak', underscored the enduring influence of Gautam Buddha's life and teachings, resonating across the globe. "Gautam Buddha's journey serves as a beacon for humanity, guiding successive generations towards the pursuit of harmony, empathy, and peaceful coexistence," remarked Ambassador Akram, highlighting the significance of embracing these principles in today's turbulent world. The event, which was held at UN headquarters in New York, was co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions to the United Nations of Thailand and Sri Lanka. "Our region carries a rich heritage of Buddhist civilization," the Pakistan envoy told delegates. The Indus Valley civilization in Pakistan saw the flourishing of Buddhism for over 2000 years - in Taxila, Swat and Takht-e-bai, where there were Buddhist universities. "Buddhism spread and flourished from there," Ambassador Akram added. Buddha, he said, taught immutable precepts for human co-existence - compassion, wisdom, peace and non-violence; to stand up for the world's weak, the marginalized and the oppressed against the powerful and oppressors; to show empathy and kindness to the vulnerable, and to defend the truth. "In our troubled times, the commemoration of Vesak Day is a good moment to renew our commitment to these values," Buddha's message is also reflected in the United Nations Charter, which makes it incumbent on member states to promote and ensure strict adherence to its principles.—APP

Istanbul's century-old streetcar gets a makeover

ISTANBUL: Istanbul's emblematic red and white trams, built over 100 years ago and loved by both locals and tourists, are about to give way to a more modern streetcar. The tramway has become a symbol of Istanbul's most popular shopping street, Istiklal Avenue, which runs for 1.4 kilometres (0.9 miles) on the European side of the city. Put into service in 1914, the original streetcars have undergone regular touch-ups, without ever betraying their historical look. The new battery-powered trams, from their wooden floor to their reversible seats, stay faithful to the look of their predecessors. Two cameras on either side of the vehicles replace the old rear-view mirrors, giving drivers better visibility and enabling them to drive seated. "It's a very good thing that they are modernising the tram. The new one hasn't changed the nostalgic aspect of the old one," said local Gonul Murtekin, who travels with her grandson. Istanbul's mayoral office says it plans to retire all the old trams and put them in a transport museum which is still in the planning stage. In the meantime, the newest streetcar will be co-habiting with its century-old ancestors while it undergoes testing. city authorities hope to dismantle the overhead power lines on Istiklal Avenue within a year. Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu has committed to reduce energy consumption. "With the battery system, we save a lot of energy," said Ali Tugrul Kucukalioglu, Istanbul's director of electric transport. He pointed out that a tram can "run for two days on a single battery". The batteries will enable the city to get rid of the trams' overhead power lines. "During national holidays, the tram had difficulty running because of the flags hanging from the lines," said Kucukalioglu. More importantly, the streetcar has been stripped of its external sidebars, which passengers would cling on as it travelled up and down Istiklal Avenue. It was a risk for them and for our drivers," Kucukalioglu said. Greek trial of one of Med's worst migrant tragedies opens Kalamata, Greece, May 21 (AFP/APP):The trial of nine accused smugglers opened in Greece on Tuesday, nearly a year after a migrant trawler with hundreds on board sank off the country's coast in one of Europe's deadliest shipwrecks. The rusty and overloaded trawler Adriana sank on the night of June 13 to 14, 2023, carrying more than 750 people, according to the UN. Only 82 bodies were found. Nine Egyptian men - who were among the 104 survivors - are in court in Kalamata, southwestern Greece, to answer charges including negligent homicide, participation in a criminal organisation and facilitating illegal entry into the country. The men, aged 21 to 37 years old, have denied responsibility. Their lawyers say they are being scapegoated to obscure the responsibilities of the Greek coastguard, which failed to mount an effective rescue. The suspects, who have spent the past 11 months in pre-trial detention, face life imprisonment if convicted. Dalia Abdel Megui, the aunt of one of the accused, said she had travelled from Italy to attend the trial. "Our nephew is innocent," she said. "He only came to Europe to seek a better future, he is not a criminal," she told AFP. As the sinking occurred in international waters, 47 nautical miles (87 kilometres) off the coast of Pylos, lawyers for the defendants will argue a Greek court is not competent to hear the case. Anti-fascist and leftist groups are staging a protest outside the courthouse to denounce Europe's migration policies. Before the start of the trial, there was a skirmish between riot police and the protesters, with one person taken to hospital. Protester Panagiotis Merdikas told AFP that the police had attacked the crowd after it refused to disperse, and detained two people. The defence team will argue that major procedural violations were committed in the investigation that led to the trial.

Pakistan improves on WEF's development tourism Index

ISLAMABAD: The WEF report ranks Pakistan 101st globally, showing an improvement of 20 ranks as compared to 2019, with a score of 3.41, reflecting a 3.6 percent improvement since 2019 and, a 14% improvement on its 2019 rankings. Pakistan has significantly improved its global rankings of the Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI). Keeping the base year 2019, Pakistan has improved 20 ranks and scored at 101 on the TTDI in 2024, said a press release issued here on Tuesday. Pakistan is classified as a lower-middle-income economy and part of the Asia-Pacific regional group in the Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) 2024. The top countries on the Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) in 2024 are the United States, Spain, Japan, France, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, China, Italy, and Switzerland. These countries have been recognized for their favorable business environments, open travel policies, well-developed transport, tourism, and ICT

infrastructure, as well as rich natural, cultural, and non-leisure attractions. They collectively accounted for over 75% of the Travel & Tourism industry GDP in 2022 and 70% of GDP growth and between 2020 and 2022. Within the Asia-Pacific region, Pakistan shows potential, especially in natural resources and cultural assets. However, challenges remain, particularly in air transport infrastructure and tourist services. Pakistan's efforts to enhance its tourism sector are evident, with various initiatives to improve ICT readiness and cultural resources. Speaking on the occasion, Amir Jahangir, Chief Executive Officer of Mishaal Pakistan and the Country Partner Institute of the World Economic Forum said, "Pakistan's scores identify the struggling efforts done by the institutional efforts in the country. Institutions like the Pakistan Tourism Development Authority and its team have made significant efforts in making Pakistan a more at-

tractive and affordable tourism destination". He further said, "The efforts of the World Bank have been pivotal in supporting integrated tourism in the country". Jahangir said that the collective efforts put in by PTDC and other institutions along with the World Bank have brought the stakeholders on a single platform and successfully created public policy dialogues. This is enabling the provinces to learn best practices from each other". The initiatives under PTDC on the National Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (NTTCI) have enabled a structure of institutional learning. This is impacting the improvement of Pakistan's rankings manifold. The data from the National Index can further improve rankings if the international travel and tourism data are reflected in the national and provincial strategies. A more competitive environment between the provinces can also improve the competitiveness proposi-

tions offered by the tourism industry across the nation, ultimately expanding choices for the citizens and attracting international tourists for unique tourism experiences. Pakistan's positive performance on the Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) between 2019 and 2024 is part of a broader trend where low to middle-income economies have shown significant enhancement in performance on the TTDI, with these economies accounting for much of the above-average improvements in scores in various regions. Pakistan's advancement on the index signifies a positive trajectory in its tourism sector, indicating potential growth and readiness for future opportunities in the travel and tourism market. Comparatively, Pakistan's TTDI score places it above countries like Nepal, and Bangladesh in South Asia. However, it trails behind higher-ranked countries

in the region such as India, and Sri Lanka, which have higher scores across most TTDI pillars. Pakistan's high seasonality of international tourist arrivals reflects the country's appeal as a travel destination, but infrastructure and enabling conditions for tourism development remain areas needing improvement. The government's prioritization of tourism and ongoing efforts to enhance safety, security, and health and hygiene standards are crucial for advancing Pakistan's tourism industry. Mishaal Pakistan is Pakistan's leading strategic communication and design company. It is a multi-year award winning strategic planning company and the Country Partner Institute of the World Economic Forum. Mishaal generates primary data on more than 200 indicators measuring Pakistan's growth and competitiveness and the foremost domain of activity is behavior change communication, strategic communication with a spotlight on media and perception management.—Agencies

CDA chief for early completion Park Road project

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa Tuesday directed to complete the development work of the Park Road project till June 15 at any cost. During a visit to the Park Road project, the Chairman said that the safety measures should be ensured during the construction work on the project. Muhammad Ali said that the clear signboards and lights should also be installed soon on the project. While expressing dismay over the pace of ongoing development work on the project, he that the construction work on the project should be carried out by 24/7. The Chairman urged the National Logistics Corporation (NLC) to ensure the presence of labor and machinery by 24/7 on the project site. Muhammad Ali also directed that the machinery and workforce working on the project should be increased.—APP

Homage paid to Hurriyat leaders

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Tuesday paid rich tribute to prominent martyred Hurriyat leaders Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq, Khawaja Abdul Ghani Lone and the Hawal martyrs on their martyrdom anniversaries in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. According to Kashmir Media Service, Mirwaiz Molvi Farooq was assassinated by unidentified gunmen at his residence in Srinagar on May 21, 1990. On the same day, over 70 mourners were killed when Indian troops opened indiscriminate fire on his funeral procession in the Hawal area of Srinagar. Twelve years later, on May 21, 2002, unknown attackers shot dead Khawaja Abdul Ghani Lone as he was returning from addressing a gathering at the Martyrs' Graveyard in Srinagar. APHC leaders, including illegally detained Shabbir Ahmed Shah, Bilal Siddiqi, Fayaz Hussain Jafri, Zamrooda Habib, Abdul Samad Inqilabi, Syed Sibti Shabbir Qummi and Maulana Musaib Nadi, in their statements, stated that the martyrs of the freedom movement are the heroes of the Kashmiri people. They reiterated the Kashmiris' resolve to accomplish the mission of their martyrs at all costs. The leaders emphasized that these noble souls sacrificed their lives for the great and sacred cause of freedom. They highlighted that the martyrs were torchbearers of the freedom movement, and their struggle, teachings, and sacrifices serve as role models for future generations of Kashmir.—APP

MC organizes awareness walk

RAWALPINDI: Municipal Corporation (MC) Rawalpindi on the directives of Secretary Local Government Punjab, Sha-keel Ahmed Mian here on Tuesday organized an awareness walk regarding 'Saaf Suthra' Punjab cleanliness campaign. A rally was taken out from MC office to Liaquat Bagh under the leadership of Chief Digital Monitoring Officer Punjab, Dr. M. Abdullah Tabassum. A large number of officers from various departments, business community, journalists and citizens participated in the awareness walk. Dr. M. Abdullah Tabassum said that as per the vision of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz, an awareness walk was organized to further strengthen the 'Saaf Suthra' Punjab Cleanliness Campaign, adding, to make the Rawalpindi city clean and beautiful, along with the government institutions, the public will also have to play their full role. The aim of the awareness walk is to promote environmental friendliness, Dr. M. Abdullah Tabassum added. A clean environment is essential to prevent many diseases including dengue, Chief Officer MC, Imran Ali said adding, a clean environment could protect the citizens from various diseases. All possible steps are being taken to make the city zero waste, Imran Ali added.—APP

Briefs

PTI's Elahi released from prison

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi released from Kot Lakhpat Jail. According to the jail authorities, Chaudhry Parvez Elahi has left the jail with his lawyer. It should be noted that the Lahore High Court granted bail to Chaudhry Parvez Elahi in the case of recruitment against merit in the Punjab Assembly. Justice Sultan Tanveer Ahmed pronounced the reserved judgment on the request of Chaudhry Parvez Elahi. Meanwhile, former Punjab chief minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi has been nominated in 20 new cases related to the May 9 violent riots, it is learned. A report was submitted to the Lahore High Court by the inspector general of Punjab Police in this respect on Tuesday. According to the report, a copy of which is available with Dunya News, Parvez Elahi has been named in three cases registered in Lahore, four cases registered in Faisalabad, 11 in Rawalpindi and one each in Attock and Gujranwala districts.

Yemen shoot down US MQ-9 drone

SANAA: The spokesperson for the Yemeni Armed Forces (YAF) says the country's air defense units have successfully shot down an American MQ-9 Reaper drone while it was conducting hostile activities in the airspace over the central province of Bayda. Yahya Saree said in a televised statement on Tuesday that the unmanned aerial vehicle was targeted with a locally made surface-to-air missile, and that footage of shootdown will be released later. According to Saree, this is the fifth aircraft that the Yemeni air defenses have shot down since the start of the operations in support of Palestinians in Gaza amid the Israeli regime's genocidal war. The spokesperson affirmed that Yemeni Armed Forces will continue to enhance their defense capabilities in order to confront the joint US-British aggression against their homeland, and will carry on conducting pro-Palestine operations until the Israeli aggression against Gaza ceases and the all-out siege on the coastal sliver is fully lifted. The US military did not immediately acknowledge the shooting down. - Agencies

PML-N to amend party constitution

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has decided to amend its party constitution. A five-member committee has been formed to amend the constitution. Rana Sanaullah will be the convener of the committee while Khawaja Saad Rafiq, Azam Nazir Tarar, Khuram Dastgir, Mohsin Shah Nawaz Ranjha and Barrister Zafarullah Khan will also be a party of the committee. Anusha Rehman is appointed secretary of the committee.



ISLAMABAD: Editor Daily Islamabad POST Ansar Mahmood Bhatti in a group photo with players of Pakistani National Hockey team, on the occasion of a dinner hosted by the Chairman Monal Group, at the Monal Tree House. - DNA

Food distribution in Rafah suspended due to insecurity

The Israeli army also targeted a group of citizens near the Awadallah junction in Yabna refugee camp in central Rafah, killing three of them and injuring others

NEWS DESK

JENIN: Seven Palestinian citizens were killed and 13 others were injured on Tuesday morning after the Israeli occupation forces (IOF) stormed Jenin refugee camp and randomly opened fire at local residents. Four of the martyrs were identified as Mahmoud Hamadiya, a 14-year-old student, teacher AllamJaradat, Muammar Abu Amira, 48, and Amir Abu Amira, 20. Doctor Wissam Bakr, head of the Jenin Hospital's surgery department, was also shot dead during his presence near the hospital. According to the Palestinian health ministry, three of the wounded citizens suffer from serious bullet injuries. Local sources said that Israeli forces stormed the camp and embarked on opening fire at school students and other citizens, which provoked clashes with local youths and resistance fighters in some areas. They added that resistance fighters clashed with the Israeli forces on the outskirts of WadiBurqin area near the camp. As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 228 on Tuesday, aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and target different areas and massacre more civilians, especially in northern Gaza. Reporters for the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to bomb homes in different areas of Gaza during the past 24 hours, amid ongoing attacks in Rafah and Jabalia. According to media sources, four civilians, including two women and one child, were massacred when the Israeli army bombed a house in al-Tuffah neighborhood in Gaza City. Meanwhile, an Israeli tank bombed the gate of the Kamal Adwan Hospital's emergency department, amid Palestinian efforts to evacuate the patients and medical crews from the hospital. The Israeli army recently ordered all the people inside the

France, Belgium announce support for ICC measure

PARIS: France and Belgium announced on Tuesday their support for the International Criminal Court's (ICC) application for the issuance of arrest warrants against top Israeli officials and Resistance leaders. The Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, Karim Khan, stated on Monday that his office is filing applications for arrest warrants before Pre-Trial Chamber I of the ICC against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Security Minister Yoav Gallant, making it the first action of its kind taken against any major US partner. Khan said that Netanyahu and Gallant bear criminal responsibility for a list of "war crimes and crimes against humanity" in Gaza, including "extermination and/or murder, starving civilians, willful killing, willfully causing great suffering, or serious injury," and deliberate direct attacks against civilian populations in the Strip. His decision sparked outrage in the occupation entity and the United States, both threatening to take retaliatory measures against the court, including imposing sanctions. "France supports the International Criminal Court, its independence, and the fight against impunity in all situations," the country's Foreign Ministry said in a statement late Monday. Belgium's Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib posted on X, "Crimes committed in Gaza must be prosecuted at the highest level, regardless of the perpetrators," with a statement attached. - Agencies

hospital to leave it. A baby girl reportedly died for lack of oxygen at the Kamal Adwan Hospital's nursery, which has been under Israeli military siege for several days. The Israeli army also targeted a group of citizens near the Awadallah junction in Yabna refugee camp in central Rafah, killing three of them and injuring others. In Beit Lahia, an Israeli attack on an apartment claimed the lives of a citizen, his wife and kids, while at least three children were killed and many others were injured or went missing following an attack on a house in the east of Abasan in Khan Yunis. Other casualties were reported in other areas of Gaza following Israeli aerial, artillery and shooting attacks last night and today. After the latest aggression in the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, which has continued for the eighth day, the Israeli occupation forces (IOF) left a widespread destruction, specifically targeting shelter centers and schools, the Government Media Office (GMO) disclosed on Monday. "With intense airstrikes and shelling, the brutal Israeli aggression on the Jabalia camp continues for the eighth day in a row," the GMO continued in a statement. It said, "Whole residential blocks were destroyed, some of them over the heads of their occupants." The statement pointed out that at the Jabalia camp, the occupation army specifically targeted schools, public gathering places, and shelter centers; as a result, hundreds more people were injured in addition to dozens of martyrs, many of whom have not yet been removed from the under the debris. "In a new crime committed by the occupation against defenseless civilians, and regrettably once again in front of the eyes of the international community, the occupation army is besieging families in several areas (in the Jabalia camp), especially schools, without being able to evacuate the fate of the besieged people or provide relief to them," the GMO underlined.

Joint action committee rejects Punjab defamation bill

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: More than 80 civil society organisations registered their protest on Tuesday against the Punjab Defamation Bill (2024) passed by the provincial assembly a day earlier. The provincial assembly yesterday passed the Defamation Bill, 2024, rejecting all amendments proposed by the opposition amid protests by the PTI-backed Sunni Ittehad Council and journalists covering parliamentary proceedings. The SIC members tore apart copies of the bill after the House passed it through a voice vote. Vetted by the Special Committee-1 in the absence of standing committees, the bill was tabled by Punjab Finance Minister Mujtaba Shujaur Rehman after the PML-N govern-

ment refused to delay voting on the bill, even for a week, at the request of journalists. On the occasion, the press gallery members walked out of the assembly to boycott the proceedings. They rejected the bill as a "curb on free media". A press release issued by civil society and journalists Joint action committee said they outrightly reject the Punjab Defamation Bill, given that it was a gross infringement on the fundamental rights of freedom of expression and press freedom. It said that the bill served as a "draconian and regressive" tool to suppress dissent and criticism and particularly targeted journalists and the wider public. "Its explicit mandate of safeguarding 'public officials' against defamation is nothing short of an authoritarian manoeuvre, designed to shield those in power from accountability and scrutiny," it said. It said that the bill's provisions, which allow defamation actions to be initiated without proof of actual damage and imposing extortionate fines, amounted to nothing less than legal intimidation tactics. Furthermore, the bill's broad definition of "journalists" and "newspapers" to include social media users set a dangerous precedent for stifling freedom of expression online, the statement said. "The proposed punishments, including the possibility of blocking social media accounts, are disproportionate and antithetical to democratic principles," it said. The alliance urged the Punjab government to heed civil society and stakeholders' voices and reverse the effort to pass another regressive legislation akin to Peca (Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act).

Iranians mourn President Raeisi martyrdom as funeral ceremonies begin

FOREIGN DESK

TABRIZ: Millions of people have taken part in a massive funeral procession for Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi and his companions who were martyred in a helicopter crash in a remote, mountainous area of Iran's northwestern province of East Azarbaijan. The funeral ceremony started on Tuesday morning and drew a massive crowd. The mourners marched alongside the coffins, draped with the national Iranian flag, in the northwestern Iranian city of Tabriz. The participants



shouted slogans to pledge allegiance with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei as well as the principles of the Islamic Revolution, and vowed to stand firm against enemies. The mourners in the ceremony are converging on Tabriz's Imam Khomeini Mosalla (prayer grounds). Speaking at the ceremony in Tabriz, Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahdidi said that Iran is mourning the loss of a beloved, popular, and humble president. The Iranian nation is also saddened by the death of a foreign minister who left active diplomacy in the critical moments of the resistance as his legacy, Vahidi added. He also praised the constructive efforts of the late governor of East Azarbaijan province and the province's Friday prayers leader. "We had a bad landing in this matter, but we will have a brilliant rise," Vahidi stressed. Another funeral procession for President Raeisi and his companions is scheduled to be held in Iran's north-central city of Qom, which hosts the holy shrine of Hazrat Masoumeh (AS), on Tuesday evening. The bodies will then be transferred to the capital Tehran for a funeral on Wednesday. According to reports, the body of Friday prayers leader of Tabriz Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Ale-Hashem will be laid to rest in Tabriz on Thursday, while that of Governor of East Azarbaijan Malek Rahmati will be buried in Maragheh city on the same day. The helicopter carrying Raisi and his entourage crashed around afternoon on Sunday as it was on its way to Tabriz, the capital of Iran's East Azerbaijan province, from a location on the border with the Republic of Azerbaijan where the Iranian president had opened a major dam project. Rescuers found the wreckage of the helicopter early on Monday after hours of extensive search which involved more than 70 teams. Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and two senior provincial officials along with crew members and bodyguards also died as a result of the crash.

Australian PM calls for release of Assange

CANBERRA: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has demanded an end to Julian Assange's imprisonment, as his extradition from a London prison to the United States was temporarily put on hold. Albanese reiterated his appeal for an end to the pursuit of Assange, an Australian citizen, highlighting that his ongoing detention would yield no benefits. "We continue to work very closely to achieve that outcome," the sexagenarian prime minister told reporters on Tuesday, adding that "enough is enough." Albanese had earlier voiced his concern, saying that the ongoing prosecution of Assange "cannot just go on and on and on indefinitely." His latest plea came in the light of Monday's decision by the UK High Court allowing Assange's appeal against extradition, which hinders Washington's attempts to prosecute him for disclosing US military information. His extradition was approved by the UK in June 2022.

The 52-year-old Australian hacker and the founder of WikiLeaks has been granted permission to initiate a limited appeal, which will examine whether he will be granted freedom of speech rights as a non-citizen within the US legal framework. - Agencies

Pakistan to launch a new satellite on May 30

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is all set to launch a new satellite dubbed MM1 on May 30, according to the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco). The national space agency, Suparco, said that the launch is set to take place from Islamabad. The primary objective behind the MM1 satellite is to strengthen Pakistan's communication infrastructure. This satellite is actually a communication satellite which will be sent in Geostationary Orbit. The GEO orbit is at an altitude of about 36000 km from the Earth. The satellite is expected to contribute to the establishment of a sophisticated communication network and help meet the growing demands of the telecom sector.

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