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EU's Borrell warns Israel for 'threatening' ICC judges

Detailed News On Page-08

Successful foreign tours hard to 'swallow': Tarar

Detailed News On Page-08

Giroud to retire after Euro 2024

Detailed News On Page-06



PA, Hamas welcome order ICJ rules Israel must immediately halt Rafah offensive

Judges at the top United Nations court order Israel to immediately halt its military assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah

NEWS DESK

THE HAGUE: Judges at the top United Nations court ordered Israel to halt its offensive in the southern Gaza city of Rafah and withdraw from the enclave, in a case brought by South Africa accusing Israel of genocide, citing "immense risk" to the Palestinian population. Friday's decision marked the third time this year the 15-judge panel has issued preliminary orders seeking to rein in the death toll and alleviate humanitarian suffering in Gaza. While orders are legally binding, the court has no police to enforce them. Reading out a ruling by the International Court of Justice or World Court, the body's president Nawaf Salam said provisional measures ordered by the court in March did not fully address the situation in the besieged Palestinian enclave now, and conditions had been met for a new emergency order. Israel must "immediately halt its military offensive, and any other action in the Rafah Governorate, which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life that could bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part," Salam said, and called the humanitarian situation in Rafah "disastrous". South Africa's lawyers had asked the ICJ in the Hague last week to impose emergency measures, saying Israel's attacks on Rafah must be stopped to ensure the survival of the Palestinian people. Reporting from The Hague, in the Netherlands, a veteran journalist said that 13 of the 15 ICJ judges agreed that the situation in Rafah is a red line with words like 'exceptionally dire' being used by them to describe the situation. "The main judge said 800,000 are displaced, and that he doesn't believe Israel's word that they are provided safety and humanitarian access. He said there was no evidence of that," she noted. "That's why the court has now made a very strong order that Israel should immediately stop its offensive and military

900,000 have been forcibly displaced from Rafah

AGENCIES

RAFAH: The Israeli occupation forces continue their aggression on Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, and have penetrated deeper into the city, at a time when the number of internally displaced persons from it has risen to 900,000 displaced along with residents. Local sources said that the occupation forces continue, for the 18th day, to invade large parts of Rafah, noting that the southern areas of the city of Rafah, which are the Brazil neighborhood, the Qashta neighborhood, the Salah al-Din Gate, Block O, and the Yibna refugee camp, are subjected to intense gunfire, violent clashes, and continuous shelling. The occupation forces penetrated last night to the intersection of the Al-Amawi restaurant on the outskirts of the Yibna camp, where the area is witnessing violent clashes and intermittent artillery and air strikes. Israeli tanks also reached the center of the Al-Juneinah neighborhood, with the sound of heavy gunfire from helicopter gunships heard in the area, while a citizen was killed and others were injured in the

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INDEPENDENCE DAY OF AZERBAIJAN



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov and others cutting cake to celebrate the Independence Day of Azerbaijan. - DNA

No sign of attack on Raisi's helicopter
Iran releases 1st investigation report

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: The helicopter carrying Iran's late President Ebrahim Raisi caught fire soon after it crashed into a mountain and there was no sign it was attacked, state media reported, citing the military's crash investigators. The statement from the general staff of the armed forces in charge of investigating the crash was read on state television late Thursday. The first statement on the crash did not lay blame but said more details would come after further investigation.

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Not 'B-team' of any agency
No respect for anyone sans honour for courts: LHC

Justice Shahzad says judiciary does not want face-off with any bar, institution or government

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan has emphasised the need to avoid confrontation among institutions, saying: "Beware of those who want to sow discord". Justice Shahzad was addressing the conclusion ceremony organised for the participants of a pre-service training course at Punjab Judicial Academy on Friday. The chief justice expressed his views that confrontation would only weaken the institutions. He clarified that the "judiciary does not want face-off" with any bar, institution, or government, however, "this gesture should be seen by all parties". Justice Shahzad added that they will "respect everyone until the courts are given due honour,

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IHC, LHC issue notices to Pemra on court reporting ban

Petitioners argue that Pemra's ban violates Article 10-A, 19 and 19-A of the Constitution of Pakistan

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Lahore and Islamabad high courts on Friday issued notices to the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) after hearing petitions challenging its

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Nawaz to address rally on May 28

Workers and office-bearers have been directed to reach Lahore

DNA

LAHORE: The PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif has decided to address a huge public gathering on Youme-Takbeer - the day when he would assume the office of party president once again after almost seven years. According to sources, over 5,000 PML-N workers and office-bearers have been directed to reach Lahore for the power show. The former three-time prime minister will be elected as PML-N president once again on May 28 during the meeting of party's general council. It has been decided that the general council meeting would become a huge power show of PML-N.

Swati's interim bail extended

Former minister emphasises supremacy of constitution and law

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Central Court has extended former minister Azam Swati's interim bail until June 11 in the controversial tweets case. Lawyers Ali Sohail Khan and Murtaza Turi appeared on behalf of the PTI leader. However, Swati's bail plea could not be heard due to special judge Humayun Dil-awar being on leave.

Holiday Notice

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

Missing poet case

IHC summons ISI, MI, IB officials on May 29

The development came as Justice Kayani resumed hearing a petition seeking the recovery of the poet

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) senior puisne judge Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani on Friday summoned officials from the country's intelligence agencies and the defence and interior ministries in a case about the recovery of missing Kashmiri poet Ahmed Farhad Shah. The judge summoned the sector commanders of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and Military Intelligence (MI), the director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB), Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar and the defence and interior secretaries in the next hearing on May 29. The development came as Justice Kayani resumed hearing a petition seeking the recovery of the poet. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan had called for the immediate release of Shah, who had been allegedly abducted from his home on May 15. A petition had been filed by Shah's wife in the IHC the same day, requesting that he be found and produced before the court and to identify, investigate and

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PTI leaders sound alarm over 'threat' to Imran's life

"Future generation will not be proud of those who did this," Faraz says, stressing need to "restore" constitution

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Blasting the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)-led federal government, Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) senior leader Senator Shibli Faraz on Friday said that absolute victory is now only a "matter of moments". His remarks came a day after the Capital Development Authority (CDA) demolished a portion of the PTI Central Secretariat in the

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Pakistan rejects Indian SC orders failing to recognise J&K's status

Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said the Kashmiris had an inalienable right to self-determination as enshrined in the UN Security Council's resolutions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday rejected the fresh order of the Indian Supreme Court upholding its earlier ruling that had endorsed the Indian government's unilateral decision of revoking the special status of Jammu and Kashmir by abrogating Article 370 of the Constitution through legislation in 2019. "We reject the fresh order of the Indian Supreme Court just as we had rejected the earlier order of December 11, 2023. Two verdicts fail to recognize the internationally recognized disputed nature of Jammu and Kashmir... Indian Supreme Court judgments cannot distract the international community's attention from the gross and systemic human rights violation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said at her weekly press briefing. She said the Kashmiris had an inalienable right to self-determination as enshrined in the UN Security Council's resolutions. India has no right to make unilateral decisions on the status of disputed territory against the will of parties in the dispute - Kashmiris and Pakistan, she added.

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43 Pakistani prisoners in SL to return home

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's success on the diplomatic front will bring 43 Pakistani citizens back to their homes from Sri Lankan jails. In a high-level meeting on Friday with the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka, Admiral (Retd) Ravindra Chandra Srivijay Gunaratne, it was agreed to immediately repatriate 43 Pakistani citizens imprisoned in Sri Lanka. The Ministry of Home Affairs had been working with the Sri Lankan authorities for the past month to bring back these prisoners. The Sri Lankan High Commissioner assured all possible cooperation in this regard. Interior Minister Monsin Naqvi thanked the Sri Lankan High Commissioner for his support for the repatriation of the prisoners.

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AI initiative to train 30,000 IT students in Pak

Database of trained IT individuals/experts in Pakistan was also being compiled

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "Certified Cloud Applied Generative AI" initiative has been launched to train 30,000 IT students, engineers and other professionals to impart practical training and upgrade their skills. Simultaneously, a database of trained IT individuals/experts in Pakistan was also being compiled to connect them with Pakistani-American tech entrepreneurs especially in the Silicon Valley. Moreover, a platform was also being created for Pakistani freelancers with an aim to provide them with better employment opportunities in Pakistan as well as across the globe. This was stated by a delegation of IT entrepreneurs who called on Ambassador Masood Khan at the Embassy of Pakistan. The delegation included Hira Khan, Adil Khan and Nadeem Sheikh. Briefing the Ambassador, the delegation said "Certified Cloud Applied Generative AI" has been launched under Sindh Governor's initiative. They informed that previously they had been contributing, on gratis basis, to promote education, research and business opportunities in Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Internet of Things, and

Cloud Native Computing under initiative for Artificial Intelligence and Computing. "We have trained over 1 million people of different ages and backgrounds in Pakistan under PIA-IC," Ms. Hira Khan told the Ambassador. The delegation showed their desire to establish a Tech National Incubation Centre in Karachi and other parts of Pakistan and highlighted that they intended to manufacture low cost software engineering products in Pakistan for export to the United States. Speaking on the occasion, Nadeem Sheikh, Supreme Court Lawyer, Head of Justice Helpline International and member Pakistan Council on Foreign Relations, briefed the Ambassador about the working of Justice Helpline International and Pakistan Council on Foreign Relations. He said that Justice Helpline International was providing pro-bono legal services as well as helping deserving Pakistanis domestically as well as internationally. Mr. Sheikh said that the organization has helped repatriation of several destitute Pakistanis who were languishing in foreign prisons. Justice Helpline International was helping Pakistani students in Kyrgyzstan also, he said. Mr. Sheikh said that Justice Helpline International was

planning to confer awards titled "Nishan-e-Justice" to top 10 eminent Pakistani-Americans across various walks of life in the US. Appreciating the initiatives being taken by IT entrepreneurs, Ambassador Masood Khan said Pakistan's tech sector had witnessed an impressive growth, especially in fintech, healthcare, and other tech associated areas including transportation and real estate. He highlighted the fact that Pakistan's IT exports have surged to \$4 billion. Discussing Pak-US collaboration especially in IT and Tech sector, Masood Khan said that the existing partnership had a great potential for growth. He said that U.S. stood as the preeminent import destination of Pakistani goods. In the fiscal year 2022-23, Pakistan IT and IT-related service exports to the U.S., amounted to \$1.4 billion, stated the Ambassador. Noting the presence of leading international IT corporations in Pakistan including HP, DELL, IBM, Intel, Microsoft, Oracle, NCR, Teradata, and Google, Masood Khan observed that digitization of economy, e-commerce and improved supply chains were driving this change. He said that tech startups have particularly been successful in fintech, retail, pharmacy, diagnostics, telemedicine, education, groceries and transportation.



ISLAMABAD: Artists presenting a cultural show on the occasion of the Africa Day celebrations in the Federal Capital.—DNA

Session on US scholarship opportunities

PESHAWAR: Women University Swabi held an insightful session on U.S. scholarship opportunities, organized by PAIMAN, a project supported by the U.S. Public Affairs Section. A large number of final semester students, particularly those in the 7th and 8th semesters, attended the event. The Director of the Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) Dr Ome Kalsoom expressed satisfaction with the turnout and the level of engagement from the students. "This session was crucial in equipping our students with the knowledge they need to explore educational opportunities abroad. The active participation we saw today is a testament to our students' eagerness to broaden their academic horizons," she remarked. Students who attended the session found it extremely beneficial. Many appreciated the detailed presentations and the opportunity to ask questions about the application processes and requirements for various U.S. scholarships. Ms. Aneela Shamshad, Senior Program Manager of PAIMAN provided valuable insights into the types of scholarships available, application timelines, and tips on preparing strong applications. The session concluded with a Q&A segment, where students' queries were addressed, helping to demystify the process of studying abroad. This session was part of the university's ongoing efforts to support and guide students in their pursuit of higher education.

PM calls for efforts to protect Markhor

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the significant increase in the Markhor population over the past decade was a testament to Pakistan's dedication to protecting its natural environment

ISLAMABAD: As the country observed the first International Day of the Markhor on Friday (May 24), Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called for the efforts to protect the national animal of Pakistan and other species which enrich the planet's biodiversity. The prime minister, in his message to the nation, said, "Let us work together to protect not only the Markhor but also all species that enrich our planet's biodiversity. By doing so, we

secure a sustainable future for generations to come." He called upon all Pakistanis and the international community to reaffirm their commitment to environmental conservation. "Today, as we celebrate the first International Day of the Markhor, the national animal of Pakistan, we take pride in the majestic creature that symbolizes our rich natural heritage," he remarked. The prime minister said that the Markhor, with its unique corkscrew-shaped

horns, represented Pakistan's commitment to preserving biodiversity and maintaining ecological balance. He said the day, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on May 2, 2024, acknowledged the nation's efforts and successes in wildlife conservation. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the significant increase in the Markhor population over the past decade was a testament to Pakistan's dedication to protecting its natural environment.—APP

Rescue 1122 conducts mock exercise

KHANEWAL: The Rescue 1122, in collaboration with the district administration, conducted a mock exercise at Lower Bari Doab canal here Friday. Deputy Commissioner Waseem Hamid Sindhu inspected the mock exercise. Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Azoba Azeem, DO Emergency Dr. Khalid and other departmental officers also participated. The DC made inspection of the rescue machinery and appreciated the professional capabilities. He also checked the medicines and other facilities at the camps of Health and Livestock departments. Speaking on this occasion, the DC said that the purpose of pre-flood arrangements was to assess the capabilities of departments to deal with emergency like situation. He directed the departments to ensure all arrangements on time to deal with flood during monsoon.—APP



ISLAMABAD: In a significant step towards enhancing economic relations, the Republic of Korea's Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Park Kijun, calls on the Pakistan's Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, to discuss and strategize on boosting bilateral trade and investment.—DNA

Two killed, one injured in Katlang firing

PESHAWAR: At least two people were killed when unknown assailants fired at them in Anwar Khan Killay of Katlang Tehsil in Mardan District on Friday. Police said the incident took place in the vicinity of Jabbar police station where two people identified as Sattar Khan and Afsar were killed by the firing of unknown assailants. Another unknown man also sustained bullet injuries in the firing. The officials of Rescue 1122 shifted the dead and injured to DHQ Hospital. Jabbar police have started an investigation into the incident after registering a case.—APP

DG NAB KP emphasises crucial role of academia

PESHAWAR: Director General, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ghazi Rehman here Friday said that quality research and the proactive role of academia in the creation of awareness against the menace of corruption was of paramount importance. Chairing a high-level meeting along with the Vice Chancellor, University of Peshawar, Professor Dr Muhammad Jehanzaib Khan, the DG NAB urged educationists to focus on character-building of students imperative to eradicate this social evil from our society. He said that corruption undermines progress, development and merit in society and a collective approach was required to win the fight against corrupt practices. The DG NAB further said that today's visit to UoP was in line with the vision of Chairman NAB to mobilize educationists at universities and colleges for the education of young minds against the menace of corruption. The NAB's motto is corruption-free Pakistan which is in line with its national anti-corruption strategy of awareness, prevention and enforcement, he said adding that NAB has chalked out a proactive and effective Anti-Corruption Strategy in order to make Pakistan corruption-free. He said that unfortunately, there was a misconception about plea bargains in some circles in our society, adding that such a procedure also existed in advanced countries aimed at quickly recovering the looted money from the accused. Under NAB laws, a plea bargain is an evidence-based procedure under which an accused is given a choice to return the looted money before going to jail or face trial which means that such corrupt elements are deemed to be convicted under the law. He said that countries like Malaysia had achieved rapid progress because of respect for the rule of law and its people's resolve against corruption. Emphasizing the need to take advantage of the massive mines, mineral and gemstone resources of KP, DG NAB said that higher educational institutions and universities should take a lead role by conducting quality research for the generation of employment opportunities for youth. From Mohmand to Bajaur and Buner to Shangla, he said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa northern-western belt was blessed with an abundance of mineral and mine reservoirs that, if fully tapped would help alleviate poverty and generate dignified employment opportunities for people. Earlier, Professor Dr Jehanzaib Khan, Vice Chancellor UoP assured full cooperation to NAB in its endeavours to create awareness against corruption. The meeting which was attended by directors, deans and senior officers of UoP underlined the need for strictly following the teaching of the holy Quran and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) to achieve success in this world and hereafter. The participants also emphasised the need for strengthening infrastructure in areas where marble and mine reservoirs existed besides promoting NAB's anti-corruption slogans through small videos on digital media.—DNA

Call to make SAARC functional and relevant body

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "I urge the business community of SAARC member states to support and cooperate in advancing the mandate of SAARC and its initiatives," said Md. Golam Sarwar, Secretary General, SAARC. This was stated by Hon'ble Ambassador Golam Sarwar, Secretary General SAARC during his maiden visit to Pakistan after assuming the Chair of SG, SAARC in SAARC Secretariat Kathmandu Nepal. Excellency, lauded the commendable efforts of the SAARC Apex and recognized bodies in taking regional agenda forward. He pledged relentless efforts to fortify cooperation among Member States, striving to unlock the full potential of SAARC. Expressing concern, Mr. Sarwar stated that since the last SAARC summit held in 2014, no major events at the government level have

taken place to overcome the procedural issues of SAARC Apex bodies. This lack of activity has impacted all the Apex and recognized bodies of SAARC. Excellency, called for a renewed and dedicated effort to overcome the longstanding challenges that have impeded SAARC's progress. He emphasized that the organization's future success hinges on member states putting aside political differences and focusing on regional cooperation. The Secretary General noted the recent positive signals from both India and Pakistan regarding SAARC, expressing hope that these gestures could serve as a potential 'icebreaker' for future collaboration. The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) hosted a networking reception in honor of His Excellency Mr. Md. Golam Sarwar, Secretary General of SAARC, which was attend-

ed by the business elites of Pakistan. Hon'ble Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for Industries and Production, grace the occasion as Chief Guest. In his address, he said that SAARC's primary objective is to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia, improve their quality of life, and accelerate economic growth, social progress, and cultural development. By fostering mutual understanding and trust, SAARC aims to create an environment of peace and stability in the region. Unfortunately, SAARC faces significant challenges. Political tensions, economic disparities, and logistical hurdles often impede its progress. To truly harness the potential of SAARC, member states must prioritize dialogue, diplomacy, and a genuine commitment to regional cooperation. He expressed his desire for prosperous South Asia wherein collaboration prevails over conflict, and the

collective dreams of our people become a vibrant reality. Earlier, Mr. Atif Ikram, President, FPCCI highlighted the critical role of regional cooperation in achieving prosperity across South Asia. "The prosperity of the region is highly dependent on regional cooperation, especially regional economic and commercial cooperation," stated Mr. Ikram. "We, the business community of South Asia, believe that business remains the most important partner in this path towards meaningful cooperation. We are not only an association that is open for business, but today we are also committed to being open to business across the region without any biases." Mr. Ikram's comments underscored the FPCCI's dedication to fostering economic growth and collaboration among SAARC member states, emphasizing the crucial role of the business community in driving these efforts. "Until then, I urge the busi-

ness community of SAARC member states to wholeheartedly support and cooperate in advancing the mandate of SAARC and its initiatives," emphasized Mr. Sarwar. Mian Anjum Nisar, Vice President, SAARC CCI, emphasized that nature has endowed South Asia with every opportunity and resource necessary for development. However, to fully harness these opportunities, the political will for deeper integration is pre-requisite. He quoted the example of India and China relation who are the best trading partner despite political differences. Mr. Nisar also shed light on the pressing issues confronting regional chamber since the last SAARC Standing Committee meeting, urging His Excellency to address these concerns of private sector of South Asia, pertaining to recognized bodies, to pave the way for dialogue, cooperation, and regional integration.

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Head Office
3rd Floor, Yasin Plaza, 74-West, Blue Area, Islamabad.
Tel: (+92 51) 2822471, 2274221, 2878029, 2272273, 2822211, 2874289 - Fax: (+92 51) 2825132, 2274227.
E-mail: moving@freelinemovers.com - Website: www.freelinemovers.com

Karachi
Plot No. 14 & 15, 3rd Floor, Kalkandah Road, Main Sang Road, 17D Block 2, P.E.C.H.S. Karachi. Tel: (+92 21) 3403008, 34119478. Fax: (+92 21) 34031747. E-mail: kara@freelinemovers.com

Lahore
P.O. Gulberg Centre, Main Boulevard, Lahore. Tel: (+92 42) 3579981, 35791085. Fax: (+92 42) 35791620. E-mail: laha@freelinemovers.com

Peshawar
Office No. C-8, 3rd Floor, Zillier Plaza, Left Road, Ring Road, Peshawar. Tel: (+92 91) 2822778. Fax: (+92 91) 2822599. E-mail: pesh@freelinemovers.com

Kabul
House #4, Street #4, Chah-Angel Road, Doha-e-Nova, Kabul - Afghanistan. Tel: (+92 91) 177, 93 793958 898, 93 793949 288. E-mail: kabul@freelinemovers.com

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

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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

Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Baktawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry presenting Chamber's shield to Pir Syed Sarwar Chishti, custodian of shrine of Khawaja Gareeb Nawaz, Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti (R.A) Ajmair Sharif, India.—DNA

Ahsan terms CPEC a transformative force

The minister and Vice Chairman National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Li Chunlin jointly chaired the 13th Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, Li Chunlin praised the Pakistani minister of planning for his deep commitment to CPEC and his active role in promoting it

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD, Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal on Friday said that the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has become a transformative force in the region as the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), especially for Pakistan. The minister said that CPEC will enhance cooperation and development for both countries in the fields of agriculture, industry, information technology and science. The minister and Vice Chairman National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Li Chunlin jointly chaired the 13th Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, Li Chunlin praised the Pakistani minister of planning for his deep commitment to CPEC and his active role in promoting it. Ahsan Iqbal chaired 10 of the 13th JCC meetings held so far, which is quite an honour in itself, said Li Chenlin. Federal Minister for Privatization, Minister of Communications,

Federal Minister of Information Technology, Secretary Planning, Secretary Energy, Secretary Communications, Secretary Board of Investment, and senior officials of federal and provincial ministries participated in the meeting. In the JCC meeting, the Pakistan side appreciated the vision of Chinese leadership to upgrade the second phase of CPEC with the inclusion of these new corridors which are in harmony with Pakistan's 5E framework. Meanwhile speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Iqbal said, "We are ready to work with NDRC to finalise the scope and implementation plan on these corridors. Both sides are highly committed to this shared vision, and together, both countries have embarked on a journey of shared dreams, working hand in hand to build high-quality development projects." Last year, Pakistan and China celebrated a decade of successful high-quality development and ever closer collaboration under CPEC, he said. The minister stated that during the celebrations, Vice Premier He Lifeng unveiled five new corridors proposed by President Xi Jinping,

including the Growth Corridor, Livelihood Enhancing Corridor, Innovation Corridor, Green Corridor, and Opening Up/Regional Connectivity Corridor. Ahsan Iqbal said that Gwadar Port has been made operational and several infrastructure and social sector projects have been completed. He said that these developments are pivotal in the transformation of Gwadar into a smart port city, promising to significantly improve the lives and livelihoods of the people of Gwadar and its adjoining coastal areas. As we shift our focus from government-to-government (G2G) to business-to-business (B2B) cooperation in the next phase of CPEC, we emphasize high-quality development in industrialization, agriculture, and science and information technologies, he said. Ahsan said that now is the time to attract investors and manufacturers to populate the Special Economic Zones, develop the Gwadar as a business district, and create high-quality tourist resorts in Gwadar." To this end, we propose signing of an MoU to promote cooperation in these areas", he said. He said the second phase of CPEC has begun,

but much work remains to ensure its success. "We are progressing on developing four priority SEZs, including Rashakai SEZ, Allama Iqbal Industrial City, Dhabaji SEZ, and Bostan SEZ. However, we need to replicate the Chinese experience in this area", he maintained. He said, "to set up our SEZs similarly to Chinese SEZs, we require support from your technical experts to advise our SEZ authorities regularly and this can be facilitated under the Industrial Cooperation Framework Agreement recently signed by both sides". "We earnestly seek relocation of Chinese industries in these SEZs and Chinese companies can relocate their manufacturing units in these SEZs and take benefits from the cheaper labour force, high return on investment and easy and cheaper access to world markets. The government proposes to convene the Pakistan-China Business Forum in collaboration with NDRC for matchmaking between Pakistani and Chinese enterprises," he said. Ahsan said that the steady progress CPEC has made since its inception in 2013 and in the energy sector, "we have successfully completed 16 projects, with generation capaci-

ty of 8,020 MW, along with two coal mines and a 660 kV HVDC transmission line and the total investment in these projects is around USD 16 Billion. Currently, one hydropower project 884 MW Suki Kinari worth of USD 1.707 Billion is under construction expected to be commissioned by November 2024." He said that three power projects, including two hydel (Azad Pattan 700 MW and Kohala 1124 MW) and one coal based (Gwadar) are with generation capacity of 2124.7 MW worth USD 4.157 Billion are at the advance stage to achieve financial closing and we urge Chinese side for their support in achieving groundbreaking of these projects as soon as possible. He said that in the transport infrastructure sector, eight (08) projects have been completed thus far at a cost of US\$ 6.7 billion and several projects including roads, Airport (Gwadar) and Digital Media projects are well underway. "We hope to see Gwadar Airport in service soon. CPEC has contributed in the construction of around 888 km of motorways and highways with both Chinese and local financing.

Senate adopts motion

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Friday adopted a motion, presented by Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Azam Nazeer Tarar, to elect the Senate House Committee, consisting of members as per the proposed list. The House further granted authorization to the Chairman of the Senate to make adjustments in the composition of the committee as deemed necessary. The minister informed the House that the eight-member committee, with representatives from all major political parties, had been formed in consultation with parliamentary leaders.—APP

ANF foils bid to smuggle huge quantity of ice abroad

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting an intelligence-based operation at Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore managed to foil a bid to smuggle huge quantities of ice abroad through cargo. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, ice was being smuggled to Sharjah by absorbing it in clothes. Two suspects, residents of Lahore, who booked the cargo, were also arrested during the operation.—APP

COMSTECH webinar on armed conflicts, war and brain health

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH organized a webinar on armed conflicts, war and brain health on Friday.

The webinar was moderated by Prof. Dr. Wasay, Professor Neurology, Aga Khan University. Prof. Wasay said that the topic of today's webinar is most important. He said that this issue is not only affecting the people in the war zones but the entire humanity around the world. Prof. Dr. Foad Abdallah, past president, African Academy of Neurology, and Professor

of Neurology and Stroke Medicine at Cairo University, Egypt. He talked about the genocide and its effect on brain health. He talked about genocide, examples of recent genocide, the brain behind the genocide act, the brain of genocide observers, and the effect of genocide on the brain. He said genocide is an act of evil. He said that developing plans for improving health infrastructure during conflict & post-conflict time is crucial. Prof. Abdallah concluded that we need to end this genocide now and live together. Prof. Dr. Adel Musk from Gaza

highlighted the topic of the regional impact of Palestine war. He gave comprehensive account of the genocide impact on Gaza strip. He said Gaza hospitals have been targeted intentionally and many times during the aggression. He said 147 media workers have been killed with the majority being Palestinians. He said reports indicate that 38 journalists have been arrested since the start of the war and several journalists have lost family member. He said currently 100% Gazans are facing crisis of food security and the entire

infrastructure has been completely destroyed. Prof. Dr. Mian Afzal Javed, past president, World Psychiatry Association talked on the topic of global mental health impact of armed conflicts. He talked about the importance of mental health. He recommended to the countries to expand disaster management system to cope such calamities. Prof. Dr. Serefur Ozturk, Environment Neurology Group, World Federation of Neurology, Professor, Department of Neurology, Konya -Turkey discussed the topic of environmental impact of war.

Chinese Food and Cultural Festival

The festival offered a unique opportunity for students and participants to immerse themselves in the diverse flavors and culinary traditions of China

ISLAMABAD: Karakoram International University (KIU) in Gilgit-Baltistan hosted a vibrant Chinese Food and Cultural Festival, bringing the rich flavors and traditions of China to its campus. The event was held to celebrate the deep-rooted friendship between Pakistan and China, especially on the 73rd anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations, Gwadar Pro reported. Chinese Food and Cultural Festival held at KIU to celebrate 73rd anniversary of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations The festival was a culmination of weeks

of planning and preparation, with China Study Center, International Office, and the Confucius Institute at KIU working closely together to ensure a successful event. The venue was transformed into a bustling marketplace with stalls showcasing a wide array of Chinese delicacies and cultural artifacts. The festival offered a unique opportunity for students and participants to immerse themselves in the diverse flavors and culinary traditions of China. Local teachers guided them through the preparation of various local and Chinese delicacies,

including dumplings, which were then enjoyed by all. The hands-on experience allows participants to not only taste the food but also understand the art and craftsmanship behind its preparation. The enthusiasm of the students was palpable as they participated in workshops on using chopsticks, learning the finesse of eating traditional Chinese dishes such as noodles and dumplings with this ancient utensil. The joy of mastering a new skill was evident on their faces. In addition to the culinary aspect, the festival also showcases China's rich cul-

tural heritage. As a highlight of the event, Prof Dr Sajjad, Director International Office of KIU performed Chinese Tai Chi, demonstrating his deep understanding and love for Chinese culture having lived in China himself. The festival was a lively affair, attracting over 100 participants. China Study Center and the Confucius Institute at KIU plan to continue hosting such cultural festivals in the future with the aim of further strengthening the bonds between Pakistan and China through cultural exchange and mutual understanding.—DNA



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Briefs

PM visit to UAE to yield fruitful results

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Envoy to the United Arab Emirates, Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi Friday said that Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif's much-anticipated and comprehensive visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was highly successful which would eventually bring about extensive positive results within the next few months. In his exclusive talk with PTV news, he said that the visit will yield positive results not only in terms of economic and other cooperation but also in terms of forging alliances and friendship. He said that the Saudi "believes in the economic potential of Pakistan" including its demography, location and natural resources, adding, the UAE will be "moving ahead significantly" to invest in projects in Pakistan. He further mentioned that the UAE's priority is to invest and cooperate with Pakistan in the agriculture, information technology and energy sectors which will bring new employment opportunities for youth. He said that Pakistan is keen to enhance ties with the United Arab Emirates in all sectors, especially in the IT sector and tourist sectors, adding, Pakistan has a potential tourism industry which can attract the UAE population and residents living there from other countries. "The government of Pakistan will play every possible role in bringing together businessmen and industry cooperation of both countries, he assured. He mentioned that the emirate has allocated "\$10 billion for investment in promising economic sectors in Pakistan, adding, the PM discussed bilateral relations, including cooperation in political, economic, social, cultural and defence sectors. Ambassador also said that United Arab Emirates will develop renewable energy projects in Pakistan, as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif urged more companies to exploit the country's potential in the alternative energy sector.—APP

Pakistan Post warns customers of parcel tracking scams

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to safeguard its customers from potential scams and fraudulent activities, Pakistan Post has issued a stern warning, urging them to exercise caution when tracking their parcels. With the proliferation of online platforms claiming to offer tracking services, the national postal service has emphasized the importance of exclusively utilizing its official website, <http://ep.gov.pk/>, for all tracking endeavors. Emphasizing on the authenticity of its digital presence, Pakistan Post has made it unequivocally clear that any other website or link purporting to provide tracking services is entirely independent of its operations. This proactive measure seeks to shield customers from falling prey to malicious entities seeking to exploit unsuspecting individuals. Furthermore, Pakistan Post also shed light on its operational procedures regarding duty and tax collection, underscoring the absence of an online system or call center designated for such transactions. Customers are duly cautioned against engaging with any online links, phone calls, or digital payment platforms purportedly associated with tracking orders. The risks associated with unauthorized transactions through cash apps or credit/debit cards are explicitly highlighted, urging customers to exercise vigilance and discretion. In the wake of escalating cyber threats and fraudulent schemes, Pakistan Post has assumed a proactive stance, issuing a clarion call for heightened awareness and diligence among its clientele. The ramifications of falling victim to fraudulent transactions could be dire, potentially resulting in financial losses and compromised personal information. As a beacon of trust and reliability in the realm of postal services, Pakistan Post said it remains committed to fostering a secure.—APP

ISSI-NIMA Seminar focuses on "India's Maritime buildup"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Study Centre (IOSC), National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA), hosted a seminar on "India's Maritime Buildup: Implications for the Indian Ocean," to address crucial geopolitical and security dynamics of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The speakers at the seminar included: Vice Admiral (R) Ahmed Saeed HI(M), President NIMA; Vice Admiral (R) Khan Hasham Bin Saddique, former Vice Chief of Naval Staff; Brigadier Zahir Kazmi, Director General, Arms Control and Disarmament Affairs (ACDA), SPD; Mr. Baber Bilal Haider, Vice President NIMA and Director IOSC, NIMA; and Rear Admiral (R) Syed Faisal Ali Shah, Honorary Research Fellow, NIMA. The seminar was moderated by Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director, ACDC-ISSI.

Vice Admiral Ahmed Saeed, in his keynote address, highlighted that the Indian Ocean (IOR) was crucial for global maritime trade, with around 80% of global oil trade passing through its chokepoints. Controlling these passages equates to significant geopolitical influence, underscoring the region's role as a critical axis in global economic and security frameworks. The shift in the global world order post-Cold War, the strategic use of chokepoint diplomacy, and the potentially destabilizing effects of the AUKUS model in the IOR were discussed. The presence of major powers complicates the geopolitical landscape, making the IOR a focal point for economic advancement, strategic competition, and diplomatic engagements. He stressed that regional cooperation and dialogue are needed to mitigate tensions and promote stability. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail



Mahmood, in his welcome remarks, stated that the Indian Ocean plays a critical role as a vital maritime corridor, connecting nations across Africa, Asia, and Australia, and highlights its immense geopolitical significance on a global scale. He also elaborated on the Indian Ocean's role as a crucial arena for diplomatic engagement and regional collaboration. He further pointed out that controlling the Indian Ocean often equates with dominance over Asia, emphasizing its pivotal

role in shaping regional dynamics. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted the active involvement of major powers such as the United States, UK and China and countries like Japan and India in the region, underscoring that the IOR is a focal point for economic advancement, geopolitical competition, and strategic maneuvering. He also dilated on India's expanding naval capabilities, the role of Indian maritime buildup in IOR's militarization, and the impact of these developments on Pakistan's

security and economic interests. Earlier, in his introductory remarks, Malik Qasim Mustafa pointed out that India wants to ensure dominance of the Indian Ocean with the help of extra-regional powers and strives to play the role of 'Net Security Provider.' It militarized the Indian Ocean while rapidly modernizing and building up its blue-water capabilities. It has nuclearized the Indian Ocean. This growing Indian naval presence is endangering the peace and stability of the region. It has heightened Pakistan's threat perception and security concerns, and it could spark a conventional and nuclear arms race in the region. Vice Admiral (R) Khan Hasham Bin Saddique elaborated on the great power competition in the IOR. He discussed the strategic significance of the IOR, and the military dimensions shaping the region's environment. He underscored the nontraditional challenges that accompany this competition, including piracy, terrorism, and human trafficking, which complicate the already tense maritime security landscape. His remarks provided a broad overview of geopolitical tensions and underscored the need for cooperative security frameworks to address these multifaceted challenges. Brigadier Zahir Kazmi shared his insights on the Indian sea-based nuclear capabilities and their impact on deterrence stability.

Expansion in unregistered economy is failure of FBR

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Muhammad Hanif Mughal, Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Shadbad, said on Sunday that the size of the undocumented economy is increasing rapidly in Pakistan, which is the failure of FBR. He said the business community and the masses use all possible methods to avoid FBR because they do not trust this institution. On the other hand, the tax authorities have never tried to reduce the distance from the taxpayers but have caused it to increase, which has hindered tax collection. In a statement issued here today, Dr. Hanif Mughal said that many former finance ministers had described FBR as a hub of corruption. According to a former chairman of FBR, 70% of the employees in

this institution are unnecessary because they come to office for the sake of corruption. The former chairman of FBR was optimistic that reducing the number of FBR employees would save a lot of funds, reduce corruption, and increase the organization's efficiency. He said that whenever lenders pressure the government to raise revenue, the FBR targets existing taxpayers instead of expanding the tax net, which upsets investors. As a result, many investors leave the country, and those who stay turn to the courts to avoid the harassment of government officials. As a result, billions of rupees are stuck in the courts. He said that if taxes are collected from the non-paying sectors, the government's income can increase by several hundred billion rupees. Still, tax officials are the

main obstacle to tax collection. He said some black sheep in the FBR do not want to improve the investment environment in Pakistan, adding that as long as our tax structure remains complex, the informal sector will continue to flourish. One of the main reasons for the expanding undocumented economy is the tax authorities' dependence on indirect taxes. Instead of taxing income and assets, the tax bureaucracy relies on taxation of transactions. Abiding by the current tax regime is a complex process for businesses. Traders and industrialists who need to register their businesses have to obtain various licenses, permits, and approvals from multiple federal and provincial departments, which wastes their time and increases the cost of doing business.

First batch of 720 Pakistani pilgrims arrives Jeddah

ISLAMABAD: Two planes of Saudi Airlines landed at the King Abdulaziz International Airport here on Friday morning carrying 720 intending Pakistani Hajj pilgrims from Karachi and Islamabad under the Road to Makkah Initiative, following the diversion of the pre-Hajj-flight operation from Madinah which concluded the other day. As they stepped out of the planes, donning their Ihram and reciting the Talbiyah, their voices echoed with longing: "Labbaik Allahu Labbaik (Here I am, O Allah, here I am!), Labbaik La Sharika Laka Labbaik (Here I am, no partner do You have, here I am), Inna Al-Hamda Wan-Ni'mata Laka Wal-Mulk (Indeed, all praise, grace, and sovereignty belong to You), La Sharika Lak! (No partner do You have)." The first flight SV-3705, with 370 passengers on board, arrived by 5 a.m. (local time) and the second SV-3727 landed at 6:10 a.m. carrying 350 Hajj pilgrims, Director General Jeddah/Head of Pakistan Hajj Mission Abdul Wahab Soomro, Consul General Khalid Majeed, senior officials of the Consul and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and representatives of the Saudi government welcomed guests of the Allah Almighty. The guests of Allah Almighty were greeted with a warm welcome, showered with rose petals and presented bouquets, drinks, dry fruits and a variety of dates.—APP

Chairman PRCS visits Kuwait Red Crescent Society

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, visited the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) headquarters in Kuwait on Thursday. He was warmly welcomed by esteemed Chairman Kuwait Red Crescent Society H.E. Dr. Hilal MUSAED Al-Sayer along with Deputy Chairman Dr. Anwar Abdullah Al-Hasawi, Secretary General Ms. Maha Barjas Hamoud Al Barjas, Director General KRCS Mr. Abdul Rehman Al Aoun and board members. During the visit, Chairman Laghari engaged in discussions with the senior officials of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), focusing on strengthening bilateral humanitarian relations and addressing the current humanitarian challenges in the region. In his remarks, Chairman Laghari highlighted Kuwait's steadfast support during times of peace and crises. He emphasized the historic and enduring partnership with KRCS, acknowledging its crucial role in joint humanitarian efforts in Pakistan. Specifically, he praised the significant assistance provided by KRCS, especially during the 2005 earthquake, 2010 and 2022 monsoon floods, which greatly benefited affected communities across the country. Chairman Laghari noted the importance of this visit, emphasizing the shared bond between the two Muslim countries and the entire muslim ummah. He is visiting national societies in the Middle East and Gulf states, recognizing KRCS as a particularly strong and historic partner. The aim is to further strengthen this relationship. Dr. Hilal MUSAED Al-Sayer, Chairman of KRCS, praised the long-standing and resilient relationship between Pakistan and Kuwait. He highlighted the historical collaboration between PRCS and KRCS and commended the exemplary services of PRCS under Chairman Laghari's leadership. He reaffirmed KRCS's commitment to extending all possible cooperation. On this occasion, KRCS and PRCS signed a cooperation agreement to enhance relief collaboration and support humanitarian efforts. The agreement was signed by Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer for KRCS and Chairman Laghari for PRCS.—DNA

Spanish Ambassador visits archeological site

ISLAMABAD: Spanish Ambassador to Pakistan Jose Antonio de Ory has visited archeological and historical site Bhanbhore, located in Thatta district of Southern province of Sindh. The Spanish envoy inspected archeological monuments in life museum and the historical mosque. The provincial Culture and Tourism Minister Sayed Zulfiqar Ali Shah received the Ambassador on his arrival at Bhanbhore and briefed the dignitary about the archeological site and its historical background. The Ambassador showed interest in the history, culture and heritage of Bhanbhore and expressed the idea of mutual cooperation in the field of joint research on archeology. Ambassador Jose said history and monuments of Bhanbhore are the manifestation of the past glory and prosperity of the region. Speaking on the occasion, Sindh Culture Minister Zulfiqar Shah said Pakistan and Spain have long historical and cultural ties and there was a need to further promote these relationship in the field of tourism. He wished to utilize the Spanish expertise for promotion of archeological tourism in Sindh. He said the provincial government was providing favourable environment to foreign tourists in Sindh. The Spanish envoy was also presented traditional gifts of Ajrak, Sindhi cap and the 'King Priest' memento.—APP

Int'l day of Markhor observed

ISLAMABAD, May 24 (APP): Member, Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB), Waqar Zakaria, on first-ever International Day of the Markhor stressed to raise awareness in public and authority concerned for promoting the conservation of this iconic and other ecologically significant species present in Central and South Asia. Talking to PTV news he said the greatest threats to the survival of the Markhor are habitat loss, illegal hunting (poaching), and climate change issues. "We have strong attachment with Markhors as they symbolize national pride of our country," he said. He said that preserving and protecting the Markhor and its natural habitat is an ecological imperative and a significant opportunity to bolster the regional economy, foster conservation efforts and promote sustainable tourism and economic growth and that conservation efforts will benefit the ecosystem. He called upon all member states, organizations, civil society—APP

Mufti condemns New Delhi's actions

ISLAMABAD: People's Democratic Party chief Mehbooba Mufti has criticised the BJP-led Indian government for its atrocities committed against the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir since August 2019. Addressing media in south Kashmir's Bijnbehara, Mehbooba Mufti emphasised the necessity of expressing dissent against the Modi government's actions since August 5, 2019, which are aimed at disempowering the Kashmiri people, Kashmir media service reported. She maintained, "People want to give a message to the government in Delhi that the atrocities committed since 2019 are no longer acceptable and they will answer to it via vote". Mehbooba Mufti cited the significant voter turnout in the Srinagar and Baramulla parliamentary polls as evidence of the current suffocation felt by the people in the occupied territory. She highlighted the plight of thousands of Kashmiri youth imprisoned outside occupied Jammu and Kashmir, whose parents struggle to navigate the legal system. She termed the ongoing Indian parliamentary elections in IIOJK as a crucial opportunity to amplify the voice of the territory's people in the Parliament. The PDP chief is contesting from the Islamabad-Rajouri constituency, polling for which will be held on May 25 (tomorrow) in the sixth phase of the Indian parliamentary polls.—DNA

Qatari delegation visits PNCA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Qatari delegation, led by Abdulaziz Hamad A.H Al-Thani (Member ruling family of Qatar) visited the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) and was warmly received by the Director General of PNCA, accompanied by PNCA officers. During

their visit, the delegation toured the galleries, showcasing Pakistani artists' impressive calligraphy and paintings, and expressed their admiration. The two sides engaged in fruitful discussions on shared interests and potential collaborations in the fields of arts and culture between Pakistan and Qatar. The Director General of PNCA

extended their gratitude to the delegation and presented an overview of the council's initiatives and accomplishments. Head of delegation, during a joint sitting, introduced Qatar's museums vision of expansion and international collaborations. He desired for a Pakistani presentation in the field of calligraphy for an upcoming event in

Qatar. The visit culminated in a musical program specially arranged for the esteemed guests, further enriching the cultural exchange. The DG PNCA presented souvenirs to the delegation also. After having lunch at PNCA, the delegation left for the taxila museum and visited Dharmarajika stupa monastery.

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Off 11: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

Shadowy world of spying

Whether spying can claim to be the world's second-oldest profession after prostitution is highly contestable. But according to at least two sources, it has been skulking around for quite some time. First, the Book of Joshua in the Old Testament: "Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, 'Go view the land, even Jericho'. And they went, and came into a harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there." Second, and much more recently, William Burns, head of the CIA and one of the US' most seasoned diplomats: "For as long as countries have kept secrets from one another, they have tried to steal them from one another." Recently, there has been remarkable resurgence in concern about espionage. This is in response to geopolitical stress, wars being fought in Ukraine and Gaza, the explosion of new technologies which empower the world's spymasters and the global contagion of national security paranoia. The espionage business is back in vogue. Perhaps not yet in the likes of James Bond films or John le Carre novels, but these might come soon. Seemingly wherever you look, espionage is in the headlines. Michael Jonsen, deputy research director at the Swedish Defence Research Agency, wrote in Politico: "It's starting to look like the 2020s may well turn into Europe's 'decade of the spy' - much like the 1980s was America's." The spy business might not have reached the fever pitch of the Cold War era, and much attention is focused on the more tawdry industrial espionage business of intellectual property and technology theft. However, it is getting hot nevertheless. In February, one headline in The Economist read: "Russian spies are back - and more dangerous than ever." The report noted that Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service saw around 600 officers expelled from embassies across Europe. But embarrassing leaks of government documents, the new intrusive power of internet technologies and the brilliant resourcefulness of investigative sleuths such as Eliot Higgins' Bellingcat have offered the public a glimpse into this opaque world. They have unveiled the ubiquity of espionage and demonstrated the hypocrisy of many of its busiest players. As my mother used to tell me, "It takes one to know one." While my mother was not talking about spies, the adage still applies. Almost by definition, no government is going to uncover clandestine activity by potentially unfriendly foreign powers unless it is not also busy developing its own clandestine capabilities. No spy agency is likely to discover or worry about spy balloons or satellites unless it is using them itself - or at least has evaluated the value of using them. Why fret about secret back doors unless you are using - or considering using - such nefarious tricks yourself? No one loses sleep over the subversive power of TikTok videos and other social media unless they had considered using the videos subversively themselves. Absent the angst and paranoia that is fuelled by war or similarly alarming threats, our spymasters face three particular challenges. First, how do you prove the reality of a threat? Second, how do you prove that spycraft is indispensable in fending off that threat? The current international turmoil - which Burns describes as a "fiendishly complicated international landscape" - provides perhaps the perfect time to prove the gravity of the threat and promote indispensability.

Defying US pressure to entrench the occupation

The US appears to be ploughing ahead with efforts to strike a major defence pact with Riyadh in exchange for unwarranted recognition of "Israel". As occupation genocide carries on, Washington insists that this defence-for-recognition is a "package" deal. But these blatant attempts at normalizing support for the occupation are facing substantial pushback. Look no further than Saudi attempts to secure formal guarantees from the United States to defend the kingdom, and improve access to sophisticated US weaponry. It is reportedly opting for a bilateral deal that doesn't involve any endorsement of the pro-genocidal regime, dashing US hopes. As Washington's pro-Israeli lobbyists continue to pitch normalization and ignore Palestinian bloodshed, facts are increasingly clear: these brazen normalization schemes will only entrench "Israel's" illegal occupation and run counter to the undeniable right of Palestinian statehood. On the all-important matter of Palestinian liberties, Washington's shortcomings have been strikingly clear. After "Israel's" Gaza onslaught began, Riyadh made clear that it needed to see "Israel" take "irreversible steps" towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. But Washington has pressed ahead with its condemnable normalisation plot without this actually happening. Let's be clear. There was never a credible move towards a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, and US President Joe Biden's administration has been reluctant to guarantee it in practice. Washington has chosen to look the other way as "Israel" intensifies its bombing campaign in Rafah, similar to its cold indifference towards thousands of Palestinians pressed to flee immediately. Thus, there is zero credibility to US rhetoric about prioritizing a "credible" pathway for Palestinian statehood in exchange for normalisation. Palestine's unwavering resistance, innumerable sacrifices and staunch opposition to the Israeli occupation underline the nobility of self-determination. Who is Washington to use Palestinian statehood as mere rhetoric to advance occupation interests? As the US-sponsored genocide in Gaza drags on, Washington is faced to reckon with its glaring contradictions on Palestine as they come out into the open. For instance, Riyadh's resistance is unmistakable: it is pushing for a "plan B" defence pact that totally excludes "Israel", no matter Washington's desire. In truth, pro-Israeli lobbyists in the US want to gift Saudi normalization to war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu. But several reasons indicate why such a notorious plot cannot succeed. For months, the occupation leader has vowed to forge ties with Riyadh, but refused to cede any ground for Palestinian statehood. If left solely to the United States, normalisation in the midst of "Israel's" genocide could enable "Israel" to further encroach upon Palestinian rights without compromising on its illegal occupation. But gone are the times when Washington could use its divisive influence over the Middle East to sustain a pro-occupation status-quo. "Israel" is already facing substantial isolation on the world stage, and is exposed as a pariah. So any alignment with a genocidal regime would only mirror the interests of none but Washington, its chief sponsor.



Peace in South Asia and the Middle East

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The ties between the Middle East and South Asia have a rich and complex history, spanning centuries of commercial, religious, and cultural interactions. These connections have endured through various historical epochs, but recent times have seen significant developments, particularly since the establishment of modern Middle Eastern

The rapidity with which the newly appointed Pakistani Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, embarked on his inaugural official visit to Saudi Arabia underscored the significance of the relationship between the two nations. However, what truly captured global attention was the outcome of this visit, marked by a joint declaration that not only reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's commitment to invest \$5 billion in Pakistan but also urged for the resolution of longstanding disputes between Pakistan and India, notably the contentious issue of Jammu and Kashmir. This diplomatic move by Saudi Arabia aligns with a broader trend of Gulf nations actively engaging in efforts to facilitate peace between India and Pakistan. The United Arab Emirates, in particular, had previously brokered a crucial ceasefire between the two South Asian neighbors in 2021, effectively diffusing escalating tensions and averting potentially catastrophic cross-border conflicts that had flared up since 2019. The motivations driving Saudi Arabia and the UAE to step into the role of

mediators in the India-Pakistan conflict are multifaceted and rooted in both regional geopolitics and historical dynamics. Understanding the complexities behind their intervention necessitates a nuanced appreciation of the evolving landscape in both the Middle East and South Asia. Firstly, the Gulf states have strategic interests in fostering stability in South Asia, given its proximity to the energy-rich region they inhabit. Instability or conflict in the Indian subcontinent could have ripple effects on global energy markets, which the Gulf economies heavily rely on. Additionally, Saudi Arabia and the UAE seek to position themselves as key players in regional diplomacy, enhancing their geopolitical stature and influence on the world stage. Furthermore, both countries have historical ties with Pakistan, shaped by shared religious affiliations and longstanding economic partnerships. However, they also maintain significant relations with India, the world's largest democracy and a crucial trading partner. By advocating for peace between Islamabad and New Delhi, Saudi Arabia and the UAE aim to navigate a delicate balancing act, maintaining cordial relations with both countries while promoting regional stability. Moreover, the Gulf States' involvement in mediating the India-Pakistan conflict reflects a broader trend of increased diplomatic activism in the region. As traditional power dynamics undergo shifts and new geopolitical fault lines emerge, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are seeking to assert themselves as key arbiters of peace and stability, not only within the Middle East but also in neighboring regions. The ties between the Middle East and South Asia have a rich and complex history, spanning centuries of commercial, religious, and cultural interactions. These connections have endured through various historical epochs, but recent times have seen significant developments, particularly since the establishment of modern Middle Eastern states after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the partition of India and Pakistan. Saudi Arabia emerged as a crucial supporter of Pakistan shortly after its inception in 1947. Despite being resource-constrained, Pakistan, with its substantial Sunni-majority Muslim population, found a reliable ally in Saudi Arabia. Over the years, Saudi Arabia, along with the UAE, has provided Pakistan with essential financial assistance in the form of loans, grants, and concessional oil. Pakistan reciprocates by sending a significant portion of its workforce, numbering 12.4 million overseas workers, predominantly to these Gulf states. These workers, constituting over 77% of nearly 830,000 who ventured abroad for employment in 2022, contribute substantially to Pakistan's economy through remittances. The relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia extends beyond economics to encompass strategic and security dimensions. Pakistan played a pivotal role in training "holy warriors" alongside Saudi Arabia and the US to combat the Soviet Union's presence in Afghanistan following its occupation in 1979. Furthermore, during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, Pakistan stationed tens of thousands of troops in Saudi Arabia. Military collaboration, including training and arms exports, has been a consistent feature of Pakistan's engagement with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Additionally, Pakistan, along with Saudi Arabia and the UAE,

supported the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan during the early 1990s, perceiving it as a buffer against India. This stance contrasted with India and Iran's backing of the multi-ethnic Northern Alliance, reflecting broader regional power dynamics. Despite its close ties with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Pakistan also seeks to maintain relations with Iran, mindful of its significant Shi'a minority. Iran was the first country to recognize Pakistan's independence, and both nations enjoyed closer security cooperation during the reign of the shah, particularly through their involvement in the Baghdad Pact. However, the 1979 Iranian revolution altered the geopolitical landscape, fracturing alliances and forcing Pakistan to navigate a divided Middle East marked by the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan found itself embroiled in a sectarian proxy war, exacerbated by the rise of Sunni militant groups nurtured by Saudi and American support for the Afghan jihad. Consequently, sectarian tensions have become entrenched within Pakistan, posing challenges to its internal stability. In recent years, Pakistan has made concerted efforts to strengthen its ties with Iran, albeit hindered by American sanctions on Iran and concerns regarding cross-border militancy. The prospect of being drawn into Saudi-Iranian proxy conflicts has further complicated Pakistan's diplomatic stance, notably demonstrated by its 2015 parliamentary decision against joining the Saudi-led coalition aimed at combating the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen and reinstating Yemen's internationally recognized government. This neutrality in Yemen's conflict was a difficult choice for Pakistan, given its historically strong relationship with Saudi Arabia, which has provided crucial diplomatic and financial support, particularly during times of international isolation following Pakistan's nuclearization in response to India's tests in 1998. Former Prime Minister Imran Khan's efforts to foster alliances with Muslim-majority countries such as Qatar, Turkey, and Malaysia have strained Pakistan's ties with traditional Gulf allies, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE. These tensions have inadvertently allowed India to enhance its trade and security relations with the Gulf states. While India's engagement with the Gulf historically revolved around energy imports and labor exports, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sought to deepen bilateral ties, both economically and strategically, with countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Iran. Pakistan, recognizing the shifting dynamics, has attempted to mitigate strains with its traditional Gulf partners. For instance, former Army chief Gen. Raheel Sharif assumed leadership of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, comprising 42 nations, in 2017. However, Prime Minister Khan's decision to forgo participation in the alternative Muslim Summit in Malaysia in 2019, seen as a challenge to Saudi leadership, failed to fully assuage tensions. Meanwhile, India's growing clout in the region was underscored by the UAE's decision to confer its highest civil honor on Prime Minister Modi, even amidst controversy over India's Citizenship Amendment Act, which discriminates against Muslim refugees. Despite Pakistan's pleas, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have refrained from openly opposing India's actions, including the revocation of Kashmir's special status in 2019. However, the fluidity of bilateral relations in the region suggests that these dynamics are

subject to change. The interplay between major Middle Eastern powers and South Asian states, particularly India and Pakistan, is increasingly influenced by broader strategic considerations amidst the emerging great power competition between China and the United States. As such, the geopolitical landscape in the Middle East and South Asia remains in flux, with implications for regional stability and global power dynamics. The intensifying rivalry between China and the United States in the Middle East and South Asia has significantly heightened regional insecurities while simultaneously presenting unforeseen opportunities for reconciliation. As China seeks to challenge American dominance in the Middle East, India, too, endeavors to expand its influence to counterbalance China's growing presence in the region. India's collaboration with Iran, exemplified by its investment in the Chabahar seaport, has emerged as a direct challenge to China's investment in Gwadar via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Conversely, China's substantial investment plans in Iran signal its ambition to deepen ties in the region, further solidifying its status as Iran's largest trade partner and facilitating Iran's integration into influential regional blocs. Despite Pakistan's aspirations to mediate between Iran and Saudi Arabia, China achieved a significant breakthrough by brokering the restoration of diplomatic ties between the two Middle Eastern rivals. Amid escalating regional tensions triggered by conflicts such as the Gaza war, Saudi Arabia and the UAE demonstrate a willingness to de-escalate tensions with Iran rather than exploit them for strategic advantage. Recent efforts to repair ties between Iran and Pakistan, following tensions sparked by missile exchanges, reflect a renewed commitment to enhancing bilateral relations and fostering security cooperation. While the US appears open to increased Saudi and UAE investments in Pakistan, it is concerned about Islamabad's growing reliance on Beijing. With the US bolstering military cooperation with India to counter China, its neutrality in potential Indo-Pakistani crises is increasingly questioned. Consequently, the US may encourage regional actors with influence over both India and Pakistan to establish crisis management mechanisms to prevent cross-border escalation. Secret talks facilitated by the UAE between Indian and Pakistani intelligence officials, along with Saudi statements advocating dialogue on the Kashmir dispute, suggest a regional push for conflict resolution. While Indian media views such statements as endorsing its stance against third-party involvement in Kashmir, Pakistan interprets them as a show of solidarity against India's reluctance to engage in Kashmir talks. Despite diplomatic overtures, challenges persist, including India's upcoming elections and the delicate security situation in Kashmir. Despite the potential benefits of reconciliation for India and Pakistan, the current political climate may not favor immediate rapprochement. India's domestic politics and security concerns, coupled with ongoing tensions in Kashmir, present obstacles to meaningful dialogue. However, incremental confidence-building measures and continued international encouragement, particularly from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the US, could pave the way for constructive engagement between India and Pakistan, reducing Pakistan's dependence on China and fostering regional stability and cooperation.

Shift of R&D to Asia, and so does the power...

Qamar Bashir



This translates to wealth creation via high-paying jobs, intellectual property, and a reputation for leadership that attracts talent and boosts international standing. R&D and research publications don't just benefit the economy; they fuel social progress by tackling global challenges and improving

R&D and publication of research papers are the lifeblood of a nation's prosperity. By fostering innovation, they fuel economic growth through new products, efficient processes, and a competitive edge in the global market. This translates to wealth creation via high-paying jobs, intellectual property, and a reputation for leadership that attracts talent and boosts international standing. R&D and research publications don't just benefit the economy; they fuel social progress by tackling global challenges and improving lives. In essence, strong R&D, quality research publications are the key to unlocking a nation's full potential on the world stage. This statement is fully endorsed when one browses through World Bank data (<https://data.worldbank.org/>) can draw two conclusions: a country's wealth, prosperity, power, and global leadership are directly proportional to the amount of spending on R&D as a percentage of GDP and from the 1990s onward, there has been a marked shift in R&D spending from the US and Europe to Asian countries, primarily led by China, South Korea, Singapore, Israel and India. According to World Bank data, the countries that prioritize spending on R&D as a percentage of their GDP are the USA which spent 3.4%, the UK 2.9%, Sweden 3.4%, Singapore 2.16%, South Korea 4.93%, Japan 3.35%, Israel 5.56%, Germany 3.145%, and China 2.43%. Followed by at 0.65%, while Pakistan and Afghanistan are lagging behind with only 0.16% and zero percent spending on R&D, respectively. Historically, the USA and Europe maintained their dominance during the 1970s and 1980s with Japan closely following, particularly in the automotive and electronics industries, challenging Western dominance. However, the trend started shifting toward Asia in the 1990s when South Korea began investing heavily in R&D, particularly in electronics and semiconductor technology, leading to the rise of companies like Samsung and LG as global innovators. In the 2000s, China's R&D landscape started to transform rapidly, fueled by government investments, a growing economy, and a focus on developing indigenous innovation capabilities. India followed particularly in the software and pharmaceutical sectors, leveraging its large pool of skilled talent.

This shift in R&D became even more significant in the 2010s when China surpassed Japan to become the world's second-largest spender on R&D after the USA, focusing on areas such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and renewable energy. Other Asian countries, including Singapore, Taiwan, and Malaysia, continued to invest in R&D infrastructure and capabilities especially in electronics while also investing in emerging technologies such as 5G and robotics. In the 2020s, the COVID-19 pandemic countries like China, South Korea, and India made significant contributions to vaccine development and medical research. During this period, China's focus on becoming a global leader in science and technology intensified, with initiatives such as the "Made in China 2025" plan aiming to strengthen domestic innovation and reduce dependence on foreign technology. The second most important factor pivotal for achieving fast-tracked prosperity and development is the number of research publications a country can produce. The US and Europe dominated this domain for a long time, but after the 1990s, the number and quality of publications began shifting toward Asia, highlighting changes in global academic and scientific output, as well as the power centers. During the 1970s and 1980s, the USA and Europe produced thousands of publications in fields like physics, chemistry, and medicine while Japan followed especially in electronics and automotive research. In the 1990s, the USA consistently produced over 200,000 scientific papers annually while Japan solidified its position with over 30,000 publications mostly in engineering and technology. Meanwhile, South Korea and Taiwan began to emerge as players, each producing thousands of publications annually due to increased funding and international collaboration. During the 2000s the USA produced 300,000 publications and Europe exceeded 500,000 publications annually. But during this period, Asia started challenging their dominance. China increased its publication to 200,000, South Korea reached around 50,000 and India followed closely by increasing its output to 50,000 by the end of the decade but with questionable quality. In the decade of the 2010s, the USA and Europe produced approximately 400,000 and 600,000 publications, China

surpassed the USA by reaching over 500,000 high quality and hi impact publications. India produced around 130,000 publications, particularly in engineering and computer science. South Korea reached around 80,000 annually, primarily focusing on fields like electronics and biotechnology. In the 2020s, the USA produced around 450,000 publications annually, and Europe produced 700,000 publications annually. However, they were faced with a strong rival in China, which produces 600,000 high-quality publications annually, with significant contributions in fields like AI, biotechnology, and environmental science. India follows with 150,000 publications in pharmaceuticals, engineering, and IT, and South Korea with 100,000 publications annually in high-impact research, especially in technology and life sciences. This shift is also translated into a proportional increase in their wealth, prosperity, credibility, international status, and power, transforming the world from bipolar to multipolar and breaking the hegemony of traditional power centers. It is the time for Pakistan to rise to the occasion and contribute its share to make Asia the powerhouse of R&D and research publications. Pakistan must understand that, without substantially increasing its spending on R&D and promoting the publication of high-quality research, it has no choice but to heavily invest in R&D and higher education and create robust infrastructures for scientific research. It must bring about education reforms to substantially increase the quality and accessibility of education and produce a larger pool of researchers and scientists. Pakistan must also focus on international collaboration with top Western and Asian institutions to facilitate knowledge transfer and boost publication output, while ensuring the presence of vibrant innovation ecosystems. Failing to do so, Pakistan will remain a poor country, and its dream to bring half of the population out of the abject poverty trap and to gain a leadership role in the comity of nations will remain elusive.

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

Briefs

ICJ rules
Israel must
immediately
halt Rafah...

FROM PAGE 01
operation in Rafah and withdraw its troops from there. He also made a ruling on border crossings, that they must be reopened as soon as possible to get humanitarian aid in," Vaessen added and said that the judge also stressed that observers from the UN have to get access as soon as possible to make sure that no evidence of any possible war crimes disappear from the region. The ICJ has also ordered Israel to report back to the court within one month over its progress in applying measures ordered by the institution.

900,000
have been...

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Israeli army targeting of a horse cart at the Kir intersection in the center of Rafah. The occupation forces continued to carry out air strikes, shell houses, and fire artillery shells in various areas of the city. Meanwhile, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) said that about 900,000 people have been forcibly displaced from the city of Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, due to the ongoing Israeli military operation. It explained, in a statement on Friday, that the displaced have moved to areas hosting large numbers, which are suffering from lack of services.

Pakistan
rejects...

FROM PAGE 01
The spokesperson welcomed the announcement by Ireland, Spain and Norway to recognise the Palestine state, following a similar announcement by Bahamas, Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados, and called it a milestone in the decades-old quest of the Palestinian people for their right to self-determination. She said that the Gaza genocide and dire humanitarian situation underlined the urgency of the establishment of an independent Palestine state with Quds Al-Sharif as the capital.

43 Pakistani
prisoners...

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The arrangements for the return of Pakistani prisoners will be finalised in a few days, Mohsin Naqvi said in his statement. The minister said that relations between Sri Lanka and Pakistan have been going from strength to strength over the past seven decades. He said that Pakistan wants to further develop mutual relations in various fields with Sri Lanka. In the meeting, it was agreed to take immediate steps to return the prisoners of both countries to their country.

No respect
for anyone...

FROM PAGE 01
otherwise, no one should set high expectations". He also clarified that the legal fraternity would not work above the law at any cost. The senior jurist urged the judges, who completed their pre-service training course, to realise a big responsibility on them which demands them to work fearlessly, without accepting any pressure and greed. "Fear the God on the throne... we will not be afraid of those on the ground," he said.

IHC, LHC
issue...

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notifications prohibiting television channels from airing news of court proceedings and directing them to only report on written orders. The Lahore High Court (LHC), during the hearing of pleas conducted by Justice Abid Aziz Shaikh, also ordered the electronic media watchdog to respond to its notice on May 29. The notice comes after the electronic media watchdog issued two notifications ordering TV channels to not run reporting of court proceedings and for reporters to only report courts' written orders' on May 21.



PESHAWAR: Players of Pakistan Hockey team posing for a picture at the Peshawar Airport prior to their departure for the Netherlands. Some of the players left for the Netherlands from the Islamabad Airport. The team will play friendly matches in the Netherlands while on May 31 the green shirts will take on Malaysia in the first match of the Nations Cup. The seen in the picture are Manager Zeeshan Ashraf, Asstt Coach Usman Sheikh, Captain Ammad Butt, Abu Bakar, Physio Dr. Waqas, goalkeeper Abdullah Ishtiaq, Sufyan, Arshad Liaqat, Zikria, M Abdullah, Muneed, Usama, Rehman and video analyst Nadeem Lodhi.—DNA

Ecclestone stars as England
down Pak in ODI series opener

Sophie Ecclestone picked up three wickets while Kate Cross, Lauren Bell and Charlie Dean took two wickets apiece. England women and Pakistan women will now compete in the second ODI of the three-match series in Taunton on May 26

DERBY: Sophie Ecclestone's economical bowling figures of 3/26 powered England women to a comfortable 37-run victory over Pakistan women in the first ODI of the three-match series here at County Ground on Thursday.

England went 1-0 up in the three-match series against Pakistan, part of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Women's Championship. Put into bat first, England notched up a commendable total of 243/9 in the allotted 50 overs despite Nida Dar's three wickets. In-form Home Capsey top-scored for the home side with a gutsy 44-run knock with the help of three boundaries. Besides her, wicket-keeper Amy Jones made a notable contribution with her 38-ball 37. Jones was closely followed by opener Tammy Beaumont (33), Nat Sciver-Brunt (31) and skipper Heather Knight (29). For Pakistan, Nida Dar picked



up three wickets, followed by Aliya Riaz, Nashra Sandhu and Umm-e-Hani, who bagged two

wickets each. Set to chase 244, Pakistan women only managed 206/9 despite a decent start to the pursuit. Pakistan women's batters had trouble scoring freely against a disciplined England bowling attack. Muneeba Ali top-scored for the touring side with a 34 but conceded 60 deliveries in the process and struck only one boundary. Besides her, opening batter Sadaf Shams (28 off 48) and wicketkeeper batter Najiha Alive (26 off 57) were the other batters, who scored at a dismal strike rate. Skipper Nida Dar (26) and all-rounder Aliya Riaz (21) also chipped in but their efforts too, were not enough to steer Pakistan to victory. Sophie Ecclestone picked up three wickets while Kate Cross, Lauren Bell and Charlie Dean took two wickets apiece. England women and Pakistan women will now compete in the second ODI of the three-match series in Taunton on May 26.—Agencies

Pakistan announce squad for
volleyball series against Australia

He said that Australian twenty member squad will arrive at Islamabad on Sunday (May 26). The first match of the three-match series will be held on May 28 at Liaquat Gymnasium, Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad, while the second match will be played on May 29 and the third match of the series will be held on May 30

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF) on Friday announced its fourteen member's squad for the three matches' volleyball series against Australia who are visiting for the first time in the country's history. According to Pakistan Volleyball Federation Chairman Chaudhry Muhammad Yaqoob, Pakistan squad comprising fourteen members with its full strength to compete in the highly anticipated event as the series against strong Australia will be a thrilling competition for both teams. He said that Australian twenty member squad will arrive at Islamabad on Sun-

day (May 26). The first match of the three-match series will be held on May 28 at Liaquat Gymnasium, Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad, while the second match will be played on May 29 and the third match of the series will be held on May 30. "All matches will be starting from 6:30 PM and entry of the fans and supporters are free", said Chaudhry Yaqoob, adding that fans must come to cheer the green shirts as they showed the excellent performance and won the Central Asian Volleyball League which was held recently. Chaudhry Yaqoob also vowed a commitment for the promotion of volleyball game which would be encouraged at national

and international level as volleyball is one of the most famous international sports, adding that despite the lack of resources we are making strenuous efforts to improve our standards to compete internationally but we need full government support to utilize maximum resources for the promotion of volleyball game. Murad Jehan will lead green shirts in the series along with Muhammad Kasheef Naveed appointed as Vice-Captain while Waleed Khan, Murad Khan, Aimal Khan, Usman Faryad Ali, Fakhar Ud Din, Afaq Khan, Abdul Zaheer, Musawer Khan, Muhammad Hamad, Haider Ali, Nasir Ali and Muhammad Yaseen will be part of fourteen members

Pakistan squad. Argentine Ruben Wolochin will be the head coach of the team. Saeed Ahmed Khan Sady and Ehsan Iqbal are named assistant coaches along with the squad. Brazilian Lucas Rodrigues, will be with the team as a physical trainer, while Muhammad Ismail Khan, Muhammad Sulaiman Amin and Juan Cobucci, Scoutman from Argentina will join the Pakistan Volleyball team as Assistant Scoutman. Matches Schedule First Match, May 28: Pakistan vs Australia at 6:30 PM Second Match, May 29: Pakistan vs Australia at 6:30 PM Third Match, May 30: Pakistan vs Australia at 6:30 PM

Giroud to retire
from int'l football
after Euro 2024

WEB DESK

PARIS: Olivier Giroud, the record goal scorer of France, is to retire from international football after Euro 2024, the World Cup-winning striker told Friday's edition of L'Equipe. Giroud, who will turn 38 in September, said it was time for the younger generation to have a chance at the international level. The former Arsenal, Chelsea and AC Milan striker, who joins MLS outfit Los Angeles FC following the European Championship, has scored 57 goals in 131 international appearances. He broke Thierry Henry's national goalscoring record of 51 at the 2022 World Cup finals in Qatar where France did not surrender the title they won in 2018 easily, losing to Lionel Messi-inspired Argentina on penalties in the final. "To be honest, this will be my last tournament with France," said Giroud, who was first capped in a friendly against the United States in November 2011. "Obviously I will miss it a lot. But I believe as regards 'Les Bleus', it will be game over after Euro. "It is time to leave the stage to the young. "If I triumph in the Euro, I can say that I won everything apart from the Premier League, which is very difficult to win," he said, adding that the 60-goal milestone was not an obsession for him. Olivier Giroud, who made his name at Montpellier by inspiring the unfashionable club to the 2012 Ligue 1 title, says he believes he still has enough in his legs to pursue a club career.—DNA

IHC summons
ISI, MI, IB
officials...

FROM PAGE 01
prosecute those responsible for his disappearance. On May 16, Justice Kayani had summoned a report from the defence secretary on the alleged role of intelligence agencies in the poet's disappearance. Earlier this week, the judge, expressing dissatisfaction with the "working" of the defence secretary, had called on intelligence agencies to shed the label of culpability in abductions. Upon seeking an explanation from the defence secretary by 3pm the same day, the court had been informed that Shah was not in the custody of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Justice Kayani then summoned the defence and interior secretaries in person the next day. However, on Tuesday, Attorney General of Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan had submitted the defence secretary's report, stating that the official was sick. The judge again said that the secretary should appear before the court in the next hearing.

PTI leaders
sound
alarm over

FROM PAGE 01
federal capital over the "violation of building rules". Addressing a joint press conference following the PTI Core Committee's meeting outside the office, Faraz said the ruling alliance could not compete politically with his party. Citing figures approved by the National Accounts Committee (NAC), the PTI leader said that investment plunged to its lowest level in 50 years. According to the official data, Pakistan's total investment has declined to its lowest ebb since 1972-3 and now it stands at 13.1% of GDP in the current fiscal year 2023-24. The "system of fascism and repression" is about to collapse, he said, adding that they have already won this fight. Slamming the authorities over yesterday's operation, the senator said: "Now they are using force." Responding to a question, the leader of the opposition in the Senate said that restoration of the Constitution was their key target.

No sign of
attack on
Raisi's...

FROM PAGE 01
The crash Sunday killed Raisi, the country's foreign minister and six other people. The general staff's statement said the communications between the control tower and the crew of the helicopter before the crash contained nothing suspicious. It said the last communication of the crashed helicopter was between it and two helicopters accompanying it some 90 seconds before the crash. There was no sign of anything shot at the helicopter and its flight path did not change, the statement said. The aging Bell helicopter went down in a foggy, remote mountainous region of Iran's northwest on Sunday. The crash site was discovered Monday morning with all eight on board dead. Raisi was buried in a tomb at the Imam Reza Shrine in Mashhad on Thursday.

Prime
Minister
speaks to...

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Government of Ireland to recognize the state of Palestine. He said Ireland's decision would send a message of hope and solidarity to the innocent Palestinians who were suffering Israel's brutal atrocities. It would also go a long way in promoting the Palestine cause and would urge other countries to follow Ireland. The Prime Minister added that Pakistan had always advocated that a two-state solution, in accordance with relevant UN resolutions, was the only way to bring lasting peace to the Middle East. He reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to the just struggle of the Palestinian people and lauded the decision of the ICJ to order Israel to stop its assault on Gaza and Rafah. He also expressed the hope that the oppressed people of Kashmir would receive similar attention from the international community, as they too have been enduring a brutal occupation and denial of fundamental human rights for the last seven decades.

Pakistan's T20 World Cup 2024 squad announced

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Pakistan on Friday named their ICC World Cup 2024 squad, which will be led by star batter Babar Azam. Prominent names like Shaheen Afridi, Naseem Shah, Mohammad Rizwan and Fakhar Zaman are part of the Pakistan squad for the World Cup, which begins in the United States and West Indies from June 1. The likes of Saim Ayub, Abrar Ahmed, Usman Khan, Azam Khan and Abbas Afridi will be featuring in their first-ever T20 World Cup while this will be Mohammad Amir and Imad Wasim's first appearance in the tournament since 2016 and 2021 respectively.

It is worth mentioning that no reserves for the World Cup squad have been announced. Pakistan's T20 World Cup 2024 squad: Babar Azam (c), Saim Ayub, Mohammad Rizwan, Azam Khan, Shadab Khan, Fakhar Zaman, Usman Khan, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Abrar Ahmed, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Amir, Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf. Player support personnel: Wabab Riaz (senior team manager), Mansoor Rana (team manager), Gary Kirsten (head coach), Azhar Mahmood (assistant coach), Simon Helmet (fielding coach), David Reid (mental performance coach), Aftab Khan (high performance coach), Cliffe Deacon (physiotherapist), Ir-

taza Komail (chief security officer), Mohammad Imran (masseur), Mohammad Khurram Sarwar (team doctor), Talha Ijaz (analyst), Raza Kitchlew (media and digital manager) and Drikus Saaiman (strength and conditioning coach). "This is an extremely talented and balanced side that has a mixture of youth and experience. These players have been playing together for some time and look well prepared and settled for next month's event," the PCB said in a press release. "Haris Rauf is fully fit and bowling well in the nets. It would have been nice if he had gotten an outing at Headingley, but we remain confident that he will continue to maintain an upward trajectory in the upcoming

matches, as he will have an important role to play along with other strike bowlers in the T20 World Cup." Pakistan are in Group A of the event, alongside India, Ireland, Canada and USA. Pak's T20 World Cup 2024 schedule: June 6: Pakistan vs USA, Dallas June 9: Pakistan vs India, New York June 11: Pakistan vs Canada, New York June 16: Pakistan vs Ireland, Lauderhill It must be noted that 55 games will be played across nine different venues in the West Indies and the USA during the T20 World Cup. The venues in West Indies are Kensington Oval, Barbados;

Brian Lara Cricket Academy, Trinidad; Providence Stadium, Guyana; Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, Antigua; Darren Sammy Cricket Ground, St Lucia; Arnos Vale Stadium, St Vincent. Meanwhile, three venues will hold the matches in the USA - Eisenhower Park, New York; Lauderhill, Florida; and Grand Prairie, Texas. Groups for T20 World Cup 2024 Group A: India, Pakistan, Ireland, Canada, United States Group B: England, Australia, Namibia, Scotland, Oman Group C: New Zealand, West Indies, Afghanistan, Uganda, Papua New Guinea Group D: South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Netherlands, Nepal

Briefs

Chinese company releases endangered fish on Biological Diversity Day

ISLAMABAD: To mark the International Day for Biological Diversity, China Three Gorges Asia Africa Ltd. (CTGAAL) released 3,500 endangered Mahseer fingerlings into the waters at the Karot Hydro Power Project (KHPP). The fish stocking was carried out under the Karot Biodiversity Management Plan at the Karot camp site. The event, organized by CTGAAL at KHPP, was attended by government officials from Punjab and Azad Kashmir, along with environmentalists, educators, students, and members of the local community. They also walked to create awareness among the masses about the endangered Mahseer fish, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. The 720 MW KHPP, a mega power project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is located at the border of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. The Karot Power Company Limited (KPCL) is the executive company of the project, with China Three Gorges as the sponsor. On the occasion, CTGAAL CEO Zhou Qiang emphasized the "role of biodiversity as the cornerstone of the company's operations in Asia and Africa." Earlier this month, CTGAAL and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) established an Implementation Office for the Biodiversity Management Plan in Beor, Punjab, to "assist in coordinating the biodiversity protection work being done around the Karot project." Last year, KPCL released around 5,000 Mahseer fingerlings into River Jhelum to protect the endangered species. Mahseer is a highly sought-after game fish known for its larger size, capable of growing up to 2.75 meters in length and weighing as much as 54 kilograms. Overfishing has significantly impacted its population, with Mahseer now frequently caught at much smaller sizes. Additionally, the species faces severe threats from habitat loss caused by urbanization and environmental degradation.—APP

Italian activist on trial in Hungary assault case

BUDAPEST: An Italian anti-fascist activist accused of attacking alleged neo-Nazis in Hungary is to go on trial in a Budapest court on Friday, in a case that has sparked tensions between Rome and Budapest. The case of Ilaria Salis, 39, has been front-page news in Italy after she appeared in court in January handcuffed and chained, with her feet shackled. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni enjoys cordial relations with Hungary's Viktor Orban but the case has caused bilateral tensions, with Rome making official complaints on behalf of Salis. The teacher from Monza, near Milan, was arrested in Budapest in February last year. Prosecutors allege Salis travelled to Budapest specifically to carry out the attacks against "unsuspecting victims identified as or perceived as far-right sympathisers" to deter "representatives of the far-right movement". She was charged with three counts of attempted assault and accused of being part of an extreme left-wing criminal organisation in the wake of a counter-demonstration against an annual neo-Nazi rally. Salis denies the charges - which could see her jailed for up to 11 years - and claims that she is being persecuted for her political beliefs. A defiant Salis told Italian newspaper La Stampa via her father in an interview published last week that she was "on the right side of history". On Friday, one of the victims and witnesses of one of the attacks are scheduled to testify, according to one of Salis's Hungarian legal representatives. Lawyer Gyorgy Magyar complained to AFP ahead of the trial that Salis has not yet received all the case documents in "her native language".—Agencies

At the UN, Pakistan backs African goals

Under the terms of the presidential statement, the Council also expressed support for progress in enhancing the role and representation of African States in global governance and decision-making processes.

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Security Council Thursday called for strengthening African countries' role in addressing global security and development challenges, with Pakistan backing their demands, saying, "Africa is on the rise". The call was contained in a presidential statement adopted by the Security Council that reiterated its "support for the role of the African Union and sub-regional organizations in promoting peace and security on the continent" and its readiness to consider appropriate support, including to African Union-led peace support operations through the implementation of Council resolution 2719 (2023) on a case-by-case

basis. "Africa rightly demands rectification of the historic injustice in its representation on the Security Council and other International organizations," Pakistani Ambassador Munir Akram told the 15-member Council during its debate on the continent's critical role in addressing global security and development challenges, convened by Mozambique, the Council president for May. Under the terms of the presidential statement, the Council also expressed support for progress in enhancing the role and representation of African States in global governance and decision-making processes. Furthermore, the Council called on the international

community to honour their respective commitments regarding financing for development and support the strengthening of the capabilities of African States to seize the opportunities for a proactive engagement with the wider world and advance African ownership of international peace, security and development efforts. "Africa is home to many examples of unity and solidarity in a fractured world," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, as he opened the debate, citing the region's focus on supporting refugees fleeing across borders, and achieving sustainable development, such as poverty and hunger eradication and renewable energy transitions. However, he

pointed out, "all of these efforts require peace in Africa and beyond," noting that "too many Africans are caught up in the hell of conflicts, or living with the relentless danger of terrorism and violent extremism in their communities." In his remarks, Ambassador Akram, noting Africa's fertile lands, plentiful resources and industrious people, recalled its colonization, enslavement and division into "European fiefdoms". Following its independence in 1947, he said, Pakistan actively participated in the liberation of African nations, and he noted that "many of our African brothers were enabled to travel on Pakistani passports to promote their national freedom struggles". Stressing that

"Africa is on the rise", he urged "new" peace operations with broader and more robust mandates, adequate resources and advanced equipment. Pakistan, for its part, will contribute actively to these objectives, including as a Council member if it is elected on 6 June, Ambassador Akram said. "Eons ago, the South Asian subcontinent was sundered from Africa by a colossal tectonic event," he added; yet, Pakistan now works to embrace African States through trade, investment and security cooperation under its "Engage Africa" policy. As connectivity grows, he observed, Pakistan will bridge Asia and Africa to bring them closer together - "a befitting reversion to our pre-historic geography".

Trump in New York to court Biden's Black, Hispanic coalition

NEW YORK: Donald Trump headed into hostile territory Thursday for a rare rally in deeply Democratic New York - hoping to woo Black and Latino voters whose support for Joe Biden has shown signs of faltering. The event, in an area where the Republican ex-president was trounced in 2020, follows a trend of Trump sorties into traditionally liberal states, most recently in New Jersey and Minnesota. But his speech in the South Bronx is more about signaling that he can draw large crowds among Hispanics and the African American coalition seen as crucial to Biden's hopes of retaining the White House. In his first rally in his former hometown since 2016, Trump was expected to focus on crime and tough economic conditions in one of the most Democratic and diverse US neighborhoods, where almost two-thirds of residents are Hispanic and one-third Black. As anticipation built for Trump's arrival, a line almost a mile long snaked through the Bronx's sprawling Crotona Park, zigzagging around basketball courts and ponds as local children climbed on a crane that held a giant banner. "He's from New York, I don't take offense to him being here," said 68-year-old Bronx resident George Marrero, who had perched himself on a wooden fence to watch. "He has a tiny bit of support here and I believe he'll do a tiny bit better this time." The Trump team did not respond to a request for details on the rally but a campaign spokeswoman told The Hill that New York state had been "decimated" by Biden, and that Trump would "re-establish law and order." In fact, New York City had a banner year for fighting crime in 2023, with murders down 12 percent year-on-year, according to police figures. Overall crime was five percent lower in April than in the same month last year. The rally caps a turbulent period for Trump, who has been kept off the campaign trail by his criminal trial in Manhattan for allegedly falsifying business records to conceal hush money payments made to cover up a sex scandal. When the rally was arranged, the tycoon had been anticipating another week in New York as proceedings draw to a close - although the judge sent the jury home on Tuesday for a week-long pause. Ocasio-Cortez, the liberal Democratic congresswoman whose district includes parts of the Bronx, said Trump was rallying in the borough "because he's got the legal version of an ankle bracelet... truly an embarrassment to him." New York state last voted for a Republican president when Ronald Reagan was reelected in 1984.—APP

Agreement reached at UN on biopiracy treaty

GENEVA: More than 190 nations agreed Friday on a new treaty to combat so-called biopiracy and regulate patents stemming from genetic resources such as medicinal plants, particularly ones whose uses owe a debt to traditional knowledge. After lengthy negotiations, delegates approved to cheers and applause the "first WIPO Treaty to address the interface between intellectual property, genetic resources and traditional knowledge", the UN's World Intellectual Property Organization said in a statement. The talks had been clouded by uncertainty, with one sticking point being sanctions for offenders, which pits developing countries against developed ones broadly speaking. Resources are increasingly used by companies in everything from cosmetics to seeds, medicines, biotechnology and food supplements. They have enabled considerable progress in health, climate and food security, according to the United Nations. After more than 20 years of discussions on the subject, WIPO's more than 190 member states began negotiating on May 13 at the UN innovation and patenting agency's Geneva headquarters on finalising a treaty. "It's a realistic text. It's a balanced text," a Western negotiator told AFP before the final agreement was reached.—APP

Gaza faces rising disease, aid shortage

UNITED NATIONS: Living conditions in Gaza continue to worsen, with reports of an increase in diarrhea and suspected cases of Hepatitis-A, UN humanitarian officials warned Thursday. The UN agency assisting Palestine refugees (UNRWA) is continuing to provide healthcare as best it can but overcrowded shelters and limited sanitation services, coupled with forced displacement, are posing severe health risks, the agency said in a post on X. Furthermore, safe water is unaffordable for many, and people are resorting to burning trash to cook with, the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) added. There are also serious concerns that humanitarian operations in the enclave "are near collapse". The UN World Food Programme (WFP) warned in a bulletin that if food and humanitarian supplies do not begin to enter Gaza in "massive quantities", desperation and hunger will spread. "The limited functionality of the southern border crossings, key arteries for getting aid in, means that barely any fuel or aid is getting into any part of Gaza. There are currently no food distributions taking place in the south of Gaza except for some limited stocks that are given to community kitchens for hot meals," it noted. All bakeries in Rafah have shut down. However, as of Wednesday, the agency was still able to support six bakeries in central Gaza, four in Gaza City and one in Jabalia. Listen below to an update on the humanitarian situation in Gaza from Shaza Moghraby, WFP Communications Officer: Also on Thursday, a UN independent human rights expert urged the Government of Israel to investigate multiple allegations of torture and other degrading treatment against detained Palestinians since 7 October last year. Alice Jill Edwards, Special Rapporteur on torture, emphasized that anyone deprived of their liberty must always be treated humanely. "They must be provided with all protections required under international human rights and humanitarian law, whatever the circumstances of their detention," she said in a statement.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Uzbek ambassador to the US Furqat Sidikov met with President and CEO of the Asia Foundation Laurel Miller and discussed a joint project to strengthen our relations in the social area.—DNA

Armenia returns four border villages to Azerbaijan

YEREVAN: Armenia has returned to Azerbaijan four border villages it had seized decades ago, officials in Yerevan and Baku confirmed Friday, in a key step towards normalising ties between the historic rivals. The two ex-Soviet countries in the Caucasus fought two wars in the 1990s and in 2020 for control of the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan recaptured it last year in a lightning offensive, ending three decades of Armenian separatist rule and prompting more than 100,000 locals to flee into Armenia. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had agreed in March to return the four abandoned villages seized by his country in the 1990s, as part of efforts to secure a lasting peace agreement between the countries. On May 16, they agreed on the demarcation of 12.7 kilometres (almost seven miles) of their border that returned the villages of Baghanis Ayrum, Ashaghi Askipara, Khayrimli and Ghizilhajilli to Azerbaijan. Armenia's security service confirmed Friday that its border guards had "officially" taken up new positions reflecting the border deal and ceded the villages to Azerbaijan's control. Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev meanwhile announced that his country's border guards had taken control of the four settlements. Armenian residents of nearby settlements say the move could cut them off from the rest of the country and accuse Pashinyan of unilaterally giving away territory without any guarantees in return. The premier's move has sparked weeks of anti-government protests in Armenia, with thousands of demonstrators led by charismatic cleric Bagrat Galstanyan demanding Pashinyan's resignation. A fresh anti-government protest is scheduled for Sunday. Pashinyan last week described the deal as a "very important milestone for further strengthening Armenia's sovereignty and independence".—Agencies

Many feared dead in Papua landslide

PORT MORESBY: A massive landslide struck remote villages in Papua New Guinea's highlands Friday, with many homes buried and scores of villagers feared dead. The disaster hit an isolated part of Enga province at around 3:00 am local time, according to government officials, when many villagers were at home asleep. Provincial governor Peter Ipatas told AFP that "there has been a big landslide causing loss of life and property". Three bodies have so far been recovered, but there are fears that hundreds more may be entombed. The true toll may take days or weeks to become clear. Steven Kandai, a community leader at the scene, told AFP that many residents had no time to flee. "All of a sudden there was a big landslide. The mountain just collapsed all of a sudden while people were still sleeping," he said, adding their homes were "completely buried". Others "heard a huge sound from rocks falling down and then escaped. But some went to escape.—APP

Pandemic agreement talks come to the crunch

GENEVA: Countries trying to thrash out a global agreement on handling future pandemics are hoping to seal the deal Friday after weeks of creeping progress in exhausting talks. Having ploughed past several previous deadlines, the hard stop of next week's annual gathering of the World Health Organization's 194 member states is now in clear sight. Scarred by the devastation caused by Covid-19 - which killed millions, shredded economies and crippled health systems - WHO member countries have spent two years trying to hammer out binding commitments on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. The bureau steering the talks must report back to the World Health Assembly - the WHO's supreme decision-making body - regardless of whether or not they have a finalised text for the assembly to consider. Amid arm-twisting, horse-trading and 3:00 am finishes in recent weeks, the talks have gathered momentum. However, with much ground left to cover, breaking the remaining logjams by the end of Friday seems a long shot. "The fact that we're still making progress shows people are willing to push further. And there's a sense that even if we can't conclude, we will reach the World Health Assembly with something concise," one ambassador in the talks told AFP. The talks are being held behind closed doors at the WHO's headquarters in Geneva. One source in the room said negotiators were optimistic, and could see the finishing line and a way to get there. "The mood in the room: you see it, you feel it, people wanting to get onto the next thing," the source said. But civil society groups following the talks from outside the hall seemed less positive. "They are negotiating, enthusiastically fighting for a speedy conclusion - but it's not happening," K. M. Gopakumar, senior researcher with the Third World Network, told AFP. Giving the talks very little chance of successfully concluding on time, he said he thought countries would likely press for discussions to continue. Others suggested countries might opt to present the assembly with a skeleton deal and show agreement in principle. The assembly could then call for the process to pick up and carry on later in the year. The rolling draft agreement is not being made public, but a version as it stood on Thursday, seen by AFP, showed large sections have been approved. In recent days, growing chunks of text have been highlighted in yellow - meaning the wording has been agreed to in small working groups - and then ultimately highlighted in green once approved by all countries. The 32-page draft contains 34 articles, with 12 fully green and 18 partially green. The four others are almost all in yellow. Gopakumar said negotiators had this week "greened a few non-contentious areas", but on "all issues which are contentious, there is no consensus".—DNA

Yellen urges 'more ambitious' G7 plans for Russian assets

STRESA: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Thursday urged G7 ministers meeting in Italy to consider "more ambitious options" to use frozen Russian assets to help Ukraine. The ministers and central bankers from the Group of Seven world powers are meeting in Stresa, on the shores of northern Italy's Lake Maggiore, to prepare for a summit of G7 heads of state next month in Puglia. Yellen said the group would also discuss what Washington considers to be "overcapacity" of key green technologies from China such as electric vehicles, batteries and solar panels. Top of the agenda is a plan to finance crucial aid to war-torn Ukraine using the interest

generated by the 300 billion euros (\$325 billion) of Russian central bank assets frozen by the G7 and Europe. The European Union earlier this month approved using the profits from the assets it froze to arm Ukraine, hoping to raise up to three billion euros a year. In a press conference, Yellen welcomed the plan but added that "we must also continue our collective work on more ambitious options, considering all relevant risks and acting together." The United States has proposed granting Ukraine up to \$50 billion in loans secured by interest on the assets. But the details have not been finalised, including whether the debt would be issued

by the United States alone or G7 countries as a whole. Yellen had initially advocated a more radical solution - the confiscation of the Russian assets themselves. But European countries worried about creating a precedent in international law and the risk of serious legal disputes with Moscow. As the G7 ministers gathered, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree allowing the confiscation of assets inside Russia belonging to US companies or citizens. Many Western companies have left Russia since the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the Western sanctions that followed, but those that remain risk having their assets seized. In

addition to the United States and Italy - which is G7 president this year - the group includes Britain, Canada, France, Germany and Japan. Yellen said she was looking for "general agreement on the concept" of a deal on assets, to form the basis of "concrete options" to be presented to G7 leaders meeting from June 13-15. She added that while the 50-billion-euro figure was being discussed, "there hasn't been a decision on an amount". "Failure to take additional action is not an option - not for Ukraine's future and not for the stability of our own economies and the security of our peoples," Yellen said. Experts have warned any further G7

action against Russia could lead to similar reprisals against European companies still operating in the country. In April, Moscow took "temporary" control of the Russian subsidiary of the Italian heating equipment group Ariston in retaliation for what it called "hostile actions" by Washington and its allies. Italy's economy minister, Giancarlo Giorgetti, told journalists "a solid legal basis" had to be found. "Now the problem is how we are able to use the future windfall profits to build a loan facility for Ukraine," he said. "Perhaps for the next political summit in Puglia we will reach a solution," he added.—Agencies

Briefs

PSX briefly touches 76,000 milestone

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Bulls dominated the trading floor at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) as stocks climbed more than 800 points on Friday after the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said it and Pakistan made significant progress on a new loan. After the opening bell, the benchmark KSE-100 traded in the green. At 12:08pm, the index touched the 76,000 milestone, climbing up by 956.44 points, or 1.27 per cent, to stand at 76,070.91 points before slightly subsiding. Finally, the index closed at 75,983.03 up by 868.56 points, or 1.16pc, from the previous close of 75,114.47. Mohammed Sohail, chief executive of Topline Securities, said that stocks went up after the IMF mission said the global lender and Pakistan had made "significant progress" towards reaching a Staff-Level Agreement (SLA). Moreover, he said that the United Arab Emirates' pledge to invest \$10 billion along with reports of Pakistan selling its stake in RekoDiq to Saudi Arabia also supported "market positive sentiments".

Raza Jafri, chief executive of EFG Hermes Pakistan, also highlighted that the KSE-100 was "reacting positively" to the UAE's investment commitment. "Growing comfort on the external account increases the chances of interest rate cuts commencing from the next monetary policy, which can further rerate the market," he added.

Elon Musk opposes US tariffs on Chinese EVs

NEW YORK: Tesla boss Elon Musk says he opposes US tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs), just days after President Joe Biden quadrupled levies on EVs imported from China. "Neither Tesla nor I asked for these tariffs," the multi-billionaire told a technology conference in Paris via video link. Mr Musk's comments are at odds with a warning he made in January that Chinese car makers would "demolish" competitors from other countries if there were no trade barriers. Last week, the White House said new measures, including a 100% tariff on EVs from China, were a response to unfair policies and intended to protect US jobs. "In fact, I was surprised when they were announced. Things that inhibit freedom of exchange or distort the market are not good," Mr Musk said on Thursday. "Tesla competes quite well in the market in China with no tariffs and no differential support. I'm in favour of no tariffs," he added. Mr Biden has maintained a number of tariffs on China that were introduced by his predecessor Donald Trump, while increasing trade pressure on Beijing. - Agencies

Agenda being spread from Adiala: Azma

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari says an agenda is being spread in the country from the Adiala Jail. Addressing a press conference in Lahore on Friday, Bukhari said the PTI founder was the view that there was a probability of seeing the repetition of 1971-like situation in the country. "It is the party's agenda to spread unrest in the country. Whenever there is unrest in the country, there comes the name of the one party," she said, adding that those who were talking about the London Plan might remember their own plan. It was from the jail that the PTI founder wrote venomous article to British newspaper, Bukhari said. Talking about the International Monetary Fund (IMF), she said the protests were managed outside the IMF office after writing the letter.

Movie "Kazakh Khanate – Golden throne" screened at PNCA

Movie unfolds in the XV century, showcasing key events in the formation of Kazakh statehood



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Culture Attaullah Tarar, Ambassador of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov and others watching the Kazakh movie "Kazakh Khanate – The Golden Throne," at the PNCA. The minister lauded the effort of the Kazakh embassy and assured his full support in further strengthening especially the cultural linkages between the two countries. The minister promised to arrange country-wide screening of the movie. - DNA

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) and the Embassy of Kazakhstan organized screening of a movie

titled "Kazakh Khanate –Golden throne" here at PNCA, auditorium on Friday. Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Minister for National Heritage & Culture Attaullah Tarar and Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan H.E Yerzhan Kistafin along

with Director General PNCA Muhammad Ayoub Jamali and large number of people attended the movie screening. The movie "Kazakh Khanate - The Golden Throne," an exciting and highly anticipated historical movie portraying the first Kazakh Khans.

Kazakh Khanate is referred to as the "Kazakh Game Of Thrones" by BBC, the movie unfolds in the XV century, showcasing key events in the formation of Kazakh statehood under the leadership of Khans Zhanibek and Kerey.

KP unveils surplus budget for 2024-25

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly has unveiled a surplus budget of Rs1754 billion for the fiscal year 2024-25. The budget session started two hours late which was presided by Speaker Babar Saleem Swati. Finance Minister Aftab Alam presented the budget in the attendance of the KP CM Ali Amin Gandapur. Starting his speech, the FM said the people have given a clear mandate to the PTI in the belatedly held election. Mentioning the policies implemented by the PTI, he said the PTI has fulfilled the promise of providing fair and accessible health facilities to the people, increased the number of schools, colleges and universities and introduced various programs to improve the quality of education. The FM highlighted that the projects of PTI have put the economy on the path of development. As it is the first duty of the government to provide affordable and quality health facilities to the people, a great attention has been awarded in this regard. "Under the NFC award, the annual share of the merged districts is Rs262 billion while adding the province gets less than its fair share every year," he said. Alam said that it has also been proposed to introduce fixed sales tax rate for marriage halls but in the meanwhile, a big relief has

The FM highlighted that the projects of PTI have put the economy on the path of development

been given in terms of property tax. He added that the property tax on factories is Rs2.5 per square feet and it has proposed to increase the property tax per kanal from Rs10,000 to Rs10,600. "The income of tobacco is going to the federal government instead of the province which is the right of the latter after the 18th amendment." According to the budget document, the budget of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has a surplus of Rs100 billion as the whole budget is more than Rs1600 billion and more than Rs600 billion have been allocated for salaries in the budget. On its share from the centre, the KP government was expected to get Rs1,212 billion from the federal government which included the share of the erstwhile FATA region. According to the document, the province would collect some Rs93 billion from its own resources with the tax target set at Rs63 billion. The share of the merged districts is estimated at Rs72 billion and Rs55 billion is also expected to be received from the federal government in the form of additional grants. According to the document, it has been proposed to allocate Rs34 billion for health facility card and Rs26 billion for the wheat subsidy. It has been proposed to allocate Rs9 billion for providing free books to students while Rs3 billion for the subsidy of BRT. Meanwhile, Rs2.5 billion have been proposed for relief activities and Rs12 billion for Ehsaas Rozgar, youth program, talented program and Rs3 billion for Ehsaas Apna program under which 5,000 houses would be constructed.

Successful foreign tours hard to 'swallow': Tarar

"You declared a person your redline, our redline is SIFC," says Information Minister Attaullah Tarar

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: A day after the United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced allocating \$10 billion for more investments in Pakistan, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar Friday said the government's opponents could not swallow the "successful visits" being undertaken by the new government to bring in investment opportunities in a bid to improve the economy. "Wherever we go, we talk about investment and trade. We don't talk about loans or grants," said the minister, addressing a presser in Islamabad, flanked by Commerce Minister Jam Kamal. The minister's comments came a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited the gulf nation to meet with its President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on a day-long visit focused on inviting investments in Pakistan. Tarar said the premier told the UAE that Pakistan does not need aid. The decision was taken "to strengthen the Pakistani economy, support it, and enhance cooperation between the two countries", UAE's WAM news agency reported on Thursday. Tarar, during the press conference, spoke about the role of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), which was established to attract investment in the country. Without naming any particular party or individual, he slammed the critics of the SIFC and termed them as those who

wrote to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) against granting loan to Pakistan and running an anti-GSP Plus campaign, placing the country at risk of being cornered in the world on the economic front. "You declared a person your redline, our redline is SIFC," said Tarar, adding that the council is performing well. He added that the SIFC is a joint effort of PM Shehbaz and army chief General Asim Muneer to save the country from default. "SIFC is the lifeline of Pakistan. The government is providing favourable environment for foreign investors," he maintained. Tarar maintained that the UAE government has confidence in Islamabad, as one success after another is being witnessed on the diplomatic front. "The whole world is witnessing the seriousness of the government's behaviour," said the information minister, adding that the world believes in Pakistan's immense capabilities and resources. Meanwhile, Commerce Minister Kamal termed PM Shehbaz's UAE visit "historic", stating that the government is working to improve economic development and encouraging foreign companies to invest in Pakistan. He also acknowledged the role of Pakistan's own business community as key in improving the country's economy. Kamal added that Islamabad was preparing for the UAE investment with many projects already discussed. "[We are] working in energy, trade and other sectors on a daily basis."

African culture showcased at African day event

Event emphasizes importance of afcfta in boosting trade relations

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) organized a special event to celebrate "Africa Day 2024." The theme was "Pakistan's Contribution to Peace, Security, and Prosperity in Africa." The Speakers included: Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood; Dean of African Corps/Ambassador of Morocco, H.E. Mohammed Karmoune; Additional Secretary (Africa), Mr. Shehryar Akbar Khan; Sector Commander West MINUSCA, Central African Republic (CAR), Brig. Fahad Ayub; President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Mr. Saqib Rafiq; Senior Research Fellow at Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Dr. Tughray Yamin; Senior Vice President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, and Director CAMEA, Ms. Amina Khan. The Heads of African Missions in Pakistan and Heads of Pakistan Missions in Africa also spoke on the occasion. Academics and members of the business community and students participated in the celebratory event. Stalls exhibiting African products and art work depicting African culture

were also set up by African Missions in Islamabad. During his welcome remarks, Director General Amb. Sohail Mahmood acknowledged contributions from partners including the Africa Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MO Directorate at GHQ, RCCI, African Missions in Islamabad, African students, and Pakistan's Envoys in Africa. He highlighted Africa's progress and the AfCFTA's impact, reaffirmed Pakistan's support for Africa's development, and emphasized the role of Pakistani peacekeeping. Amb. Mahmood detailed Pakistan's 'Engage Africa' policy,

which helps strengthen and expand diplomatic and economic ties through new missions and joint initiatives. He stressed the strategic imperative of deepening Pakistan's partnership with Africa and underscored the importance of a clear vision, consistent policy, and long-term strategy in this regard. Director CAMEA, Ms. Amina Khan highlighted the opening of new diplomatic missions in Rwanda, Djibouti, Ghana, Uganda, and Ivory Coast, and Ethiopia's mission in Islamabad, signifying strengthened bilateral relations. Ms. Khan also commended Pakistan's UN peacekeeping efforts and stressed the im-

portance of cultural and educational exchanges for lasting partnerships and shared prosperity. Ambassador Mohammed Karmoune discussed Morocco's significant role in African peace and development, highlighting its contribution of personnel to UN peacekeeping and involvement in stabilizing regions like Somalia and the DRC. He also emphasized Morocco's major investments in African infrastructure, banking, and telecommunications, including the Morocco-Nigeria Gas Pipeline, enhancing integration across 30 countries. Mr. Shehryar Akbar Khan commended Africa's advancements

and Pakistan's support, noting over 230,000 personnel deployed in UN peacekeeping over six decades, with 4,300 currently active. He highlighted the "Engage Africa" policy that fosters ties through training programs, reaffirming Pakistan's dedication to Africa's peace and development. Brig. Fahad Ayub and Dr. Tughray Yamin praised the dedication and significant role of Pakistani peacekeepers in Africa. Brig. Ayub noted the deployment of 4,000 troops, efforts to increase female participation, and initiatives like agricultural support, highlighting their impartiality and trust earned. Dr. Yamin emphasized the peacekeepers' professionalism and the challenging conditions they face, underlining the importance of continued support and recognition for their efforts. Mr. Saqib Rafiq and Mr. Hamza Sarosh emphasized RCCI's commitment to boosting Pakistan-Africa trade. Mr. Rafiq highlighted successful initiatives like the Pak-Africa Forum and a Cairo business event that led to several MoUs, ongoing capacity-building efforts, and proposed a Trade Help Desk. Mr. Sarosh noted the nearly \$4 billion in trade, potential for growth through the AfCFTA, and underscored Pakistan's strengths in textiles and agriculture as crucial for entering African markets.



PTI's Shibli lashes out at treasury benches

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Shibli Faraz, opposition leader in the Senate, on Friday lashed out at the treasury benches for actions taken against the PTI, which he said were being carried out "under their watch". Speaking in the Senate, a visibly furious Faraz said, "The fascism, oppression, violence that you have begun [is ongoing] and this is all happening under your watch." His statements come after the Islamabad police and local authorities demolished a part of PTI's central secretariat building in Islamabad late last night, before sealing the premises for allegedly violating building bylaws. Subsequently, the PTI approached the Islamabad police chief against 35 officials who raided the office, stating that the action was taken in the presence of a United Nations delegation. Speaking about last night's action on the PTI office, Faraz claimed that along with the demolition, party workers were baton-charged and head of party's Islamabad chapter, Amir Mughal, was arrested. "You cannot do politics by force. You can take away our party symbol, jail our [party] chairman, demolish our offices, raid our homes but cannot erase the affection for Imran Khan from the hearts of the majority of 250 million people of this country," the PTI senator said. "Whatever oppression and tyranny you may do, it will be chronicled. [...] It will be very upsetting when history will be written tomorrow," he added.

Governor urges -N govt to review defamation bill

DNA

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: Punjab Governor Sardar Salim Khan on Thursday urged the provincial government to review the defamation bill recently passed by the legislature. Speaking during a TV program Governor Khan said that there is a need to review the defamation bill of the Punjab Assembly as this bill is not the final word. He said that the Punjab government should review it again and remove the objectionable clauses. The Punjab governor also said that due to the defamation bill, a storm has arisen in the country and to end it, if needed, he will try to solve the problem by sitting with all the stakeholders. The Punjab Assembly, on Monday, passed the Punjab Defamation Bill 2024 amid a strong and noisy protest by the opposition after it was tabled by Punjab's Finance and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mujtaba Mi-an Shuja-ur-Rehman despite media bodies' requests to defer the legislation.

Moscow ready to declare ceasefire in Ukraine: Report

MONITORING DESK

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin of Russia is reportedly ready to declare a ceasefire in Ukraine with a negotiation that recognizes the current battlefield lines. Russian officials familiar with the matter told Reuters that Moscow "can fight for as long as it takes, but Putin is also ready for a ceasefire - to freeze the war." The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said freezing the conflict along current lines is a non-negotiable for the Russian leader. The officials also said that president Putin had expressed frustration to a small group of advisers about what he views as Western-backed attempts to stymie negotiations and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's decision to rule out talks. Zelenskyy has repeatedly ruled out the possibility of a ceasefire. He signed a decree in 2022 that formally declared any talks with the Russian leader "impossible."