



## RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

### Ukraine pushes back Russian troops from Kharkiv Fighting continues on Snake Island

Belarus hikes up troops on the border. US says Putin is preparing for a long war



KIEV: Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy said that the military was gradually pushing Russian troops away from the key city of Kharkiv and back towards the border with Russia.

The Ukrainian military's general staff said its forces drove the Russians out of four villages to the north-east of Kharkiv, a key city that has been under attack from the Russians since the beginning of the conflict. Ukraine's government suggested that Kyiv could expand its own war aims with an intensifying counteroffensive against the Russians, and said it would suspend

the flow of Russian gas through its country to Europe. With the war now in its 11th week and Russia pounding the vital port of Odesa with missile strikes in an apparent effort to disrupt supply lines. The war between Russia and Ukraine is continuing for over 10 weeks without any signs of peace so far.

US official has said that Russian president Vladimir Putin will not end the Ukraine war with the Donbas campaign and is determined to build a land bridge to the Russia-controlled region in Moldova.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian resident Volody-

myr Zelenskiy stated that Ukraine was gradually pushing Russian forces out of Kharkiv in the country's northeast - which has been under perpetual bombardment since the war began.

Thousands of people have been killed in the war so far - with no specific number yet. Several buildings, roads have been destroyed due to Russia's constant shelling and bombing in the war-torn country. The war has also led to millions of Ukrainians fleeing the country.

Fighting between Russia and Ukrainian forces has continued on Zmiinyi Island, also known as Snake Island, with Russia repeatedly trying to reinforce its exposed troops. "If Russia consolidates its position on Zmiinyi Island with strategic air defense and coastal defense cruise missiles, they could dominate the north-western Black Sea," the UK Ministry of Defence tweeted in a regular bulletin. The Belarusian Defense Ministry said on Wednesday that Belarus had deployed a number of special operations units to its border with Ukraine. (Agencies)

### US approves \$40b of aid to Ukraine



WASHINGTON: US lawmakers voted to send a US\$40 billion aid package to Ukraine as Washington warned that Russia was likely girding for a long conflict with its neighbour.

The defence, humanitarian and economic funding passed the House of Representatives by 368 votes to 57, with the two

parties' leaders having already reached an agreement on the details, and it will likely pass the Senate by the end of the week or next week. All the dissenting votes came from the Republican ranks.

"With this aid package, America sends a resounding message to the world of our unwavering determination to stand with the courageous people of Ukraine until victory is won," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told her Democratic colleagues ahead of the vote.

Congressional leaders struck a deal Monday to release US\$6.8 billion more than the US\$33 billion previously requested by the White House to help the Eastern European nation ward off Moscow's invasion. (Agencies)

### Finland holds military exercises near Russian borders

Helsinki: Finland holds unprecedented military exercises near the Russian border. They involve more than three thousand Finnish soldiers and a wide contingent of NATO soldiers. The exercises are underway under the command of the military of the United States, Great Britain, Estonia and Latvia, reports the Wall Street Journal.

The exercises have become a kind of response to Moscow, which allowed itself to aggressively threaten Finland "not to leave unanswered" the country's entry into NATO. It was not without "muscle flexing" - Russian military aircraft began to regularly violate the airspace of the Finns and missile equipment was deployed to the border.

The details of the military exercises are not made public. According to US media reports, more than three thousand Finnish soldiers and soldiers from the United States, Great Britain, Estonia and Latvia take part in the two-week Arrow 22 exercises.

The Finnish army has about 300 thousand army personnel and 900 thousand reservists. It is considered one of the strongest in Europe, and Helsinki may start the procedure for joining NATO in a few weeks. (Agencies)

### Bill Gates tests positive for Covid-19

WASHINGTON: Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates said he has tested positive for COVID-19 and is experiencing mild symptoms.

Via Twitter, the billionaire philanthropist said he will isolate until he is again healthy.

"I'm fortunate to be vaccinated and boosted and have access to testing and great medical care," Gates wrote.

The Seattle-based Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is the most influential private foundation in the world, with an endowment of about \$65 billion.

Bill Gates has been a vocal proponent for pandemic mitigation measures, specifically access to vaccines and medication for poorer countries.

The Gates Foundation in October said it will spend \$120 million to boost access to generic versions of drugmaker Merck's antiviral COVID-19 pill for lower-income countries. (Agencies)

### Shoot-on-sight orders in Sri Lanka after deadly violence



COLOMBO: Sri Lankan authorities issued shoot-on-sight orders to quell unrest that has seen buildings and vehicles set ablaze a day after the island was rocked by deadly violence and rioting.

With thousands of security forces enforcing a curfew, the defence ministry said troops "have been ordered to shoot on sight anyone looting public property or causing harm to life".

On Monday, government supporters with sticks and clubs attacked demonstrators in Colombo protesting peacefully for weeks over a dire economic crisis and demanding President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's resignation. Mobs then retaliated across the country late into the night, torching dozens of homes of ruling-party politicians and trying to storm the prime minister's official residence in the capital.

Police said Tuesday eight people had died. Protests continued on Tuesday despite the curfew, with some people defying the shoot-on-sight order to torch buildings and vehicles.

A luxury hotel said to belong to a Rajapaksa relative was set on fire on Tuesday evening on the edge of the Sinharaja rainforest. And police shot into the air at two locations to disperse mobs trying to burn

vehicles. Earlier, a crowd had attacked and set fire to a vehicle carrying Colombo's most senior policeman. (Agencies)

### India refutes reports on sending troops to Sri Lanka

NEW DEHLI: The denial from the Indian mission came a day after it refuted as "fake and blatantly false" local social media speculation that former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and his family members have fled to India.

The Indian High Commission here on Wednesday categorically dismissed speculative media reports about New Delhi sending its troops to Colombo, saying India is fully supportive of Sri Lanka's democracy, stability and economic recovery. The denial from the Indian mission came a day after it refuted as "fake and blatantly false" local social media speculation that former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and his family members have fled to India.

The whereabouts of Mahinda Rajapaksa has been speculated since his resignation on Monday. It was reported that Mahinda had left his office-cum-official residence, Temple Trees. (Agencies)

### China warns US warship as it transited Taiwan Strait

SHANGHAI: China's military said on Wednesday that it had monitored and warned a US warship that had sailed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait, a mission that happened shortly after China carried out drills near the island.

The US Navy's 7th Fleet said the guided-missile cruiser USS Port Royal conducted a "routine" Taiwan Strait transit through international waters "in accordance with international law" on Tuesday, the second such mission in two weeks.

The US has been carrying out such voyages about once a month, angering China, which views them as a sign of support for Taiwan, the democratically governed island.

Beijing views as Chinese territory. The

People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theatre Command said in a statement that its forces had monitored the ship throughout and "warned" it.

"The US frequently stages such dramas and provokes trouble, sending wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces, and deliberately intensifying tensions across the Taiwan Strait," it added.

"Theatre troops maintain high alert at all times, resolutely counteract all threats and provocations, and resolutely defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

The US Navy said the ship "transited through a corridor in the Strait that is beyond the territorial sea of any coastal State". (Agencies)

### Nearly 8m internally displaced in Ukraine: UN

GENEVA: More than eight million people are estimated to have been internally displaced by Russia's war in Ukraine, having fled their homes and stayed within the country, the United Nations said Tuesday. This is in addition to the more than 5.9 million Ukrainians who have left the country entirely since Moscow invaded on February 24.

The figure for the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) as of May 3, issued by the UN's International Organization for Migration, is up from the estimate of 7.7 million that the IOM gave as of April 17.

"The needs of those internally displaced and all affected by the war in Ukraine are growing by the hour," said IOM director general Antonio Vitorino.

"Access to populations in need of aid remains a challenge amid active hostilities, but our teams are committed to contin-

ue delivering urgent assistance inside Ukraine and in neighboring countries." The IOM conducted its latest survey between April 29 and May 3. Sixty-three percent of current IDPs are estimated to be women.

Almost half of the IDPs have fled their homes in the eastern region of Ukraine, where Russia is now concentrating its assault.

More than 3.9 million people are estimated to have fled their homes in the east; 1.65 million have fled the Kyiv region and 1.3 million have fled the north.

The survey found that 36 percent of IDPs - 2.9 million people - are now in the relatively safer west of the country.

The IOM study found that financial support was the overwhelming need among IDPs, with shelter another pressing need. (Agencies)

### Al-Jazeera reporter shot dead in West Bank

JERUSALEM: A journalist for Al-Jazeera was shot and killed while covering an Israeli raid in the occupied West Bank town of Jenin early Wednesday. The broadcaster blamed Israeli forces, who said they were investigating the incident.

Shireen Abu Akleh, a well-known Palestinian female reporter for the broadcaster's Arabic language channel, was shot and died soon afterward. Another Palestinian journalist working for the Jerusalem-based Al-Quds newspaper was wounded but in stable condition, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

The Qatar-based broadcaster blamed Israeli forces. In a statement flashed on its



channel, it called on the international community to "condemn and hold the Israeli occupation forces accountable for deliberately targeting and killing our colleague, Shireen Abu Akleh." In video footage of the incident, Abu Akleh can be seen wearing a blue flak jacket clearly marked with the word "PRESS." (Agencies)

### Pakistan urges world to take note of Islamophobia in India

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has called upon the international community to take note of the aggravating situation of Islamophobia in India, and play its due role in ensuring the religious freedom and safety of the beleaguered Muslim community living in India.

As violence against Muslims in India reaches a new high, the Foreign Office also asked the Indian government to transparently investigate the incidents of widespread violence against minorities, particularly Muslims, and their places of worship and take measures for stopping such incidents in future. "The government of India must ensure the safety, security and well-being of minorities," Foreign Office said.

Earlier, Pakistan condemned in the strongest possible terms the highly deplorable incidents involving playing of Hanuman Chalisa and other Hindu devotional songs on loudspeakers as a counter to the Mus-



lims' call to prayer (Azaan) at various mosques in Indian state of Karnataka.

"The disturbing incidents occurred only a day after Sri Ram Sena chief made the despicable call for "drowning" the Azaan through the provocative playing of Hanuman Chalisa and other Hindu religious hymns. It is condemnable that a reprehensible so-called "Azaan se Azaadi" campaign has been launched by Hindu fanatic groups in Karnataka which lays bare the new level of religious radicalism in the BJP-ruled India," the Foreign Office added. (Agencies)

**About Khyber Mail** The Khyber mail was first published in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1932. A newspaper in English by the eminent journalist Sheikh Sana Ullah. From 1932 to 1989 it has survived as leading English newspaper in the region by the sons of Sana Ullah i.e. Sheikh Zaka Ullah, Sheikh Inayat Ullah and Sheikh Saleem Ullah.

The publication was shut down in 1989 due to various reasons. The current owner Rizwan Inayat son of Sheikh Inayat Ullah and grandson of Sheikh Sana Ullah, has restarted the family heritage but meeting with the requirement of the century, by giving the readers current happenings around the world with one touch anywhere any time and updating the reader to pace up with the world.

## No shortage of flour, says KP food minister

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Food Minister Atif Khan on Monday denied reports of any shortage of flour in the province and said that the masses should not fear as neither its prices would be raised nor a shortage would be created. According to food ministry, from 29 April until today, the KP markets have been provided with 707 trucks of flour that carried 11,127 metric tons of special fine and 4542 metric tons of special flour while they have also been supplied with 17,554 metric tons of locally-produced flour. "There is a sufficient quantity of flour in the market," Atif Khan said, adding people should not fear any shortage or hike in the



prices of the commodity. "Some people are spreading rumours regarding a shortage but masses should not pay heed to them," he said and directed food ministry officials to take stern action against those spreading rumours and involved in hoarding of the commodity. The details have emerged after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif made a unique

announcement by saying that he will reduce the flour price even if he has to sell clothes during a public gathering in KP. While addressing a public gathering of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) in Bisham tehsil of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) Shangla district, PM Shehbaz Sharif vowed to reduce flour prices in the province. He directed the KP chief minister to continue free medical treatment and free medicine in all hospitals. The prime minister announced that he knew well how to reduce flour prices in the province. He directed the provincial government to make the reduction at its own expense. (APP)

## Health, education priority of govt for the last nine years: Shahram

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Education Shahram Khan Tarakai said health and education has been the priority of the provincial government since last nine years.

Addressing the concluding ceremony of Inter Schools debate competition in Peshawar on Monday, he said two point six million children are being provided furniture in the schools.

The Education Minister said the recruitment process of twenty-five thousand teachers on merit is also underway. Prizes, shields and certificates of appreciation were given to the students who achieved prominent positions in the speech competitions, held here at Shaheed Mubeen Shah Afridi Higher Secondary school No1, jointly organized by Education Department and Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Mona, a student of Lady Griffith School Peshawar won first, Abdullah second and Muhammad Yahya got third passion in the competition. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Shahram Tarakai said that teachers should focus on character building along with education of children.



He said "Significant reforms have been made in the fields of education and health. He said that every child in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is getting the best educational facilities and every person in the province is getting free health facilities." "Billions of rupees worth of furniture is being provided to 70 percent schools of the province, adding recruitment of 25,000 teachers is also in the process that would be completed soon. All preparations for holding metric and intermediate examinations are completed," minister added.

The ban on the use of mobile phones in schools is aimed to provide quality of education to children. (APP)

### Emergency Phone Numbers

Organization	Phone No
Rescue 1122 HQrs	091-2264224-25
Rescue 1122 Mardan	0937-9230770
Fire Brigade Cantt:	091-9212534
Fire Brigade City	091-2566666
Police Emergency	091-9212222
Edhi Ambulance	091-2214575
Red Crescent Ambulance	091-2210836
Emergency Ambulance	091-2590846
Civil Defence, Peshawar	091-9212176
Lady Reading Hospital	091-9211430
HMC Peshawar	091-9217140-46
KTH Peshawar	091-9216340-8
Irnam Hospital	091-9216115
Mission Hospital	091-2212371
Al-Khidmat Hospital	091-2215945
Fauji Foundation Hospital	091-9212771-4
Frontier Foundation Blood Services	091-5703463
Hamza Foundation, Peshawar	091-5841632
Sui Gas, Peshawar	091-9213016
Wapda Complaint Peshawar	091-9212041
PIA, Peshawar	091-9213351
Airport Inquiry	114
Railway Inquiry	117

## KP govt to regularize 62,000 adhoc, contract teachers in budget 2022-23

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is considering to regularize services of 62,000 contract and adhoc teachers and hundreds of doctors in budget 2022-23.

An official in Civil Secretariat told APP on Monday that proposals regarding regularizing of 62,000 contract and adhoc teachers, up-gradation of primary schoolteachers (PST) to grade 15 and 16 and hundreds of doctors have been sent to the Chief Minister Secretariat for approval. The official said mega development projects including uplift of education and health infrastructure, increasing enrollment of students,

equipment in hospitals and providing relief to masses have been proposed in the Annual Development Programme in budget 2022-23. Swat Motorway Phase-II is ready for ground-breaking and after its completion would turn entire Malakand Division into a hub of tourism, trade and investment. He said over three lakh tourists have visited Swat, Chitral, Dir and Malakand during Eid holidays.

He said Swat was going to become a tourism city of Pakistan due to its unique features of pleasant climate, Swat Motorway, trout fish, adventure sports, river, paragliding and snowfall features. (APP)

## Govt mulling to increase minimum wages to Rs 25,000 per-month in next budget

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government is mulling to increase minimum wages to Rs 25,000 per month in fiscal budget 2022-23 to facilitate labourers and low-income groups of the province.

The Finance Department's official told APP on Wednesday that minimum wages would likely be increased to the tune of Rs 25,000 per month in budget 2022-23 to facilitate labourers, and underprivileged and low-income groups of the province.

He said currently minimum wages of labourers is fixed at Rs 21,000 per month. He said all relevant stakeholders including the Department of Labour were directed to compile their action plan and strategies in this connection by May 17.

The official said a high-level meeting of all stakeholders was convened on May 17 in which Provincial Chairman Pakistan Workers Welfare Federation and member of the board Asim Adil, Deputy Director

Minimum Wages Abdul Hafeez and Director Pharmaceutical Limited and Member of the Board, Muhammad Yousaf Sarwar were invited.

He said the budget would be pro-poor and friendly in which maximum relief would be provided to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

A substantial allocation would be made for Annual Development Programme (ADP-2022-23) with special focus on developmental projects of education, health, road infrastructure and uplift of merged tribal districts. Besides ongoing projects, he said a record amount would be allocated for new development projects for strengthening of education, health and roads infrastructure under an accelerated implementation programme in erstwhile FATA.

He said salaries and pension of government employees was expected to be increased in KP's budget. (APP)

## PESCO asked to end unannounced load shedding at Nazimpure

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Muslim League-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Spokesman and Member Provincial Assembly, Ikhtiyar Wali Khan Monday directed Peshawar Electricity Supply Company (PESCO) to immediately end unannounced load shedding in Nazimpur and adjoining areas in Nowshera district.

Ikhtiyar Wali visited the Kahi grid station where he was given a detailed presentation about line losses, recovery, demand, and supply of electricity.

The PESCO officials sought the MPA's help in the removal of illegal connections in the area.

Ikhtiyar Wali while assuring support directed PESCO officials to immediately end unannounced load shedding at Kahi and Nizampure and take strict action against power stealers.

He said power stealing would not be tolerated. He said Nawaz Sharif's Government had added 12,000MW of electricity to the national grid.

He said had the previous PTI Government fulfilled the oil and gas requirement of PMLN's established power projects then there would have been no load shedding today



in Pakistan.

Wali said the present load shedding in the country, especially in KP was due to the lackluster approach and poor policies of the former PTI Government towards the energy sector.

He said PMLN's Shangla and Fateh Jhang mammoth public gathering had unnerved political opponents including PTI.

He said dragging national institutions into politics would make negative effects on democracy.

He said PMLN Government believed in strengthening democratic institutions and democracy in the country and was working tirelessly to take the country out of existing challenges. (APP)

## BRT to add new buses soon

PESHAWAR: TransPeshawar Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) has decided to add 86 new buses to its current fleet following an increase in usage. The news came via TransPeshawar's official Twitter page, adding, "The ridership has now crossed 250,000 daily commuters 25% of whom are females."

According to the tweet, the new buses are almost ready to hit the track and will traverse from Pishtakhara to Mall Road, from Warsak Road to Main City, and from Chamkani to Malik Saad station on a priority basis.

Finance and Health Minister, Taimur Khan Jhagra, apprised the media about this de-

velopment in March, stating that the government has prioritized the optimization of public transport sector. He added that 6 additional feeder routes have been approved to further facilitate the public.

Jhagra further mentioned that the new feeder routes will stretch along Hayatabad Phase 1 extension, Nasirbagh Road, Regi Model Town (RMT), Chamkani - Jhagra, Pabbi, Warsak Road, Khyber Road, and Charsadda Road. TransPeshawar has received appreciation from the general public for the comfort, utility, and value that it offers. Its recent rise in popularity has prompted the company to expand its service further. (APP)

## Hindko music gala on May 15

PESHAWAR: A Hindko music gala under the auspices of Gandhara Hindko board Peshawar would be held on May 15th (Sunday) at 11:00 a.m. in the Cultural Hall near Nishtar Hall here.

The Gandhara Hindko Board said on Monday that Hindkoan artists would perform at the gala and arrangements were in full swing to make it a successful event. Registration for taking part in the competition was also in progress.

The last date for registration has been fixed as May 14th after which no application would be accepted, the Board said. (APP)

## No Corona case in KP

PESHAWAR: Not a single new case of corona reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during last 24 hours, said Provincial Health Department here on Monday. The number of corona detection tests conducted were 1267 in 24 hours while the number of recoveries was four.

The tally of corona tests so far was 4781307 and the number of recoveries 212886. (APP)

## Killing of nurse condemned

PESHAWAR: Woman lawmaker of Pakistan Peoples' Party Nighat Yasmeen Orakzai Tuesday condemned killing of senior Nurse Rukhsana in Nowshera district three-day ago. In a statement issued here Nighat Orakzai said that medical staff are serving for the treatment of patients in hospitals. She said that unknown culprits riding a car sprayed bullets at the senior Nurse near Nowshera Kalan Chungi when she was on her way in an auto-rickshaw. (APP)

## Measures taken to cope with forest fire

PESHAWAR - Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has taken measures to cope with forest fire expected during the week-long heat-wave the province is facing from Sunday (May 8) and in this connection concerned departments are taken on board.

"We have taken all preventive measures to pre-empt any such happening and for safety of forest and wildlife," informed Ibrahim Khan, a senior official of the Forest Department.

Talking with APP, Ibrahim Khan said that teams have been constituted in all forests of province for monitoring round the clock.

This year the department has also worked on creation of fire line in forest to reduce spread of fire which usually passes very fast. "The fire line technology is developing a distance among trees by removal of weeds and bushes which usually catch fire and spread the blaze very fast," he added.

Similarly, Ibrahim continued, concerned Deputy Commissioners are in contact with Forest Department and are taking measures for protection and in case of fire will extend help for extinguishing. Rescue 1122 is also taken on board and its well-trained fire-fighter are fully ready to meet any emergency in case of fire in forest, Ibrahim told APP.

He said awareness material in shape of printed pamphlets is also distributed among people living in forest and in its vicinity to educate them about public response in case of fire. The same material is also shared with tourists visiting scenic sites and were made request to avoid fire lit in forests.

The Forest Department, Ibrahim added, has also issued two separate advisories for protection of forest and wildlife in the province.

Both Forest and Wildlife Departments have been asked for strict adherence of advisories, he added. (APP)

## P&D monitoring teams visit development sites

PESHAWAR: The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is working on strengthening and improving existing government Fruit Nursery Farms.

Team of Monitoring and Evaluation (Mardan Division), Planning and Development, along with a staff of the Agriculture Department visited a Nursery Farm in Charbagh District Swabi and checked progress.

The review and monitoring team of the Planning and Development Department of KP is continuously monitoring the ongoing development projects to maintain the quality. In this regard, the supervision team of the Mardan Division

inspected the construction work of the Government Higher Secondary school Shaftal Banda in the Mardan District.

The team reviewed the progress of the ongoing scheme and issued instructions. Similarly, the Monitoring and Evaluation Team of Planning and Development Department visited the ongoing scheme GHS Pagori in Shangla District which is now being upgraded to Higher Secondary level.

The project is one of fifty high schools that are working on higher secondary level upgrades. The team reviewed the financial and physical progress of the project. (APP)

## CS directs finalizing arrangements to cope with heatwave

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Shahzad Bangash has directed the relevant authorities to make proper arrangements to effectively deal with any emergency amid the heatwave forecast for the province.

He has directed the concerned departments to complete preparations to cope with any emergency situation, as met office has forecast a rise of seven to nine degrees in temperature in the coming week.

Dr. Shahzad asked people to increase water intake and cover their heads with soaked clothes while coming in open places. He said that PDMA operation centre is fully operational to handle any emergency, adding that people can call on helpline 1700.

Dr. Bangash further advised people to take precautionary measures during heatwave adding senior citizens and children should avoid unnecessary traveling. (APP)



PESHAWAR: Farmer harvesting wheat crop in Pakha Ghulam village on Dilzad Road. APP photo.

Editor-in-Chief: Rizwan Inayat

Editor: Omer Rizwan

First Floor, Town Heights, Old Bara Road, University Town Peshawar  
 Website: www.thekhybermail.com  
 E-mail: khybermail@gmail.com  
 Phone: 091-7081579

## Danger of heatwave

A fresh heatwave has been predicted for the week starting this week. That the weather has turned hot over the last few days of April is no surprise, but the increase in temperature is abnormal. Well, actually, because of climate change it is the new normal, and the government must get ready not just to deal with the current crisis, but to deal with the repetitions of coming years. Pakistan is in the list of top 10 countries to be affected by global warming. It was stated in a report, which has been compiled on the basis of data from 1999 to 2018 that Pakistan was included in the list of countries that seem helpless in the face of global warming.

The heat in April this year has broken all records. According to the Meteorological Department, the country's temperature in April this year is 4 degrees Celsius above average. April 1961 was the hottest month in the country. Daytime temperatures in several cities of the country recorded at 5.2 degrees Celsius above average, while nighttime minimum temperatures were 3.2 degrees Celsius above average. Meteorological Department predicts worst heatwave across the country this week and heatwave will increase further. Meteorological Department warns that daytime temperatures in Upper Punjab, Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir expected to be 7-9 degrees Celsius higher than normal, while daytime temperatures are expected in upper and central Sindh, southern and central Punjab and Balochistan likely to be 6 to 8 degrees higher than normal. Keep in mind that the demand for electricity is also likely to increase due to the rise in temperature and the flow of rivers may go up during this week. In these circumstances, citizens should avoid exposure to the sun unnecessarily; use as much water as possible, while the government also needs to take urgent steps to overcome this serious global crisis.



## Flawed Taxation

By Muhammad Umair Zeb

POOR tax policies have historically curbed economic growth and development. Rather than carefully developing a policy with adequate legal basis, the hunger for revenue leads to more and more brutal tax regimes and new taxes added on to the existing ones regardless of their consequences for the economy.

"The rub becomes more abrasive when taxpayers feel the state does not give anything back to them."

Recognising the weakness of the tax administration, withholding income taxes were imposed on all manners of transactions, including utility bills, school fees, bank transactions, telephone bills, etc. Businesses, utilities, banks and even schools have become tax-collection agencies, adding to their costs of doing business. One of the bigger issues with our tax system is the deep-rooted unfairness that has been built, by default but often by design, into the system. Those who are documented and in the tax net, by choice but often due to the nature of their job/business, pay a lot. At the same time, those who are able to avoid documentation have been getting away with paying very little or nothing for a long time, and, to add insult to injury, many have been rewarded repeatedly by the state through amnesties of one sort or another. In addition, the state has removed many taxes to again benefit particular classes, while there are also entire sectors that have, at one time or another, been exempted from taxation. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, successive governments have used taxation as a tool to extort from the masses as much as possible for their own comforts and luxuries. By resorting to repressive tax laws, they have been making the rich, richer, and the poor, poorer. This, in turn, is stifling growth and discouraging business transactions through complex laws and cumbersome procedures. Our financial managers are caught up in

a dilemma. On the one hand, there is a mounting pressure to reduce fiscal deficit through improved collections, while, on the other, they are not ready to abolish innumerable tax exemptions and concessions available to the rich and the mighty. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its parleys with Pakistan has never raised the issue of violation of constitutional provisions and burdening the poor with unprecedented taxes on basic consumption products. Over time, our tax system has become rotten, oppressive, unjust and target-oriented. We should liberate ourselves from the reform game of the foreign donors. The tax policies implemented by us on the dictates of foreign lenders have led to abject poverty for the vast majority of people.

These policies are not making us self-reliant. On the contrary, they are destroying our industry and businesses. If we manage to formulate a rational tax policy through public debate and parliamentary process, and implement it through consensus, and not coercive measures, there is every possibility to get rid of the lenders in the years ahead.

The culpability of IMF 'bosses' who put pressure on our economic managers to follow their faulty prescriptions is undeniable. They demand the imposition of more regressive taxes and do not care even if it means phenomenally raising the sales tax rate. They know that such actions not only put burden on the poor, but also constitute an open violation of Articles 77 and 162 of the Constitution. In their own countries, they love to talk about the 'rule of law', but in countries like Pakistan, they force the governments to violate the supreme law of the land. This is blatant hypocrisy.

- Muhammad Umair Zeb is a Peshawar-based freelance journalist, columnist & finance and tax analyst.

## Invest in water, sanitation to avert another pandemic

Coronavirus is the deadliest viral outbreak we've seen in over a century, but it may not be the last in our lifetime. Experts have warned zoonotic diseases – spreading from animals to humans – comprise nearly 75 per cent of emerging diseases. Additionally, the World Health Organization lists an influenza pandemic and other high-threat viral diseases such as Ebola and dengue among the top ten biggest threats to public health. The question of another global health crisis is not if, but when.

Yet despite the imminent threat, the 2021 Global Health Security Index estimates all 195 countries remain dangerously unprepared for future pandemics. Additionally, only 33 countries have emergency preparedness and response plans in place that include considerations for vulnerable populations.

Our collective failure to invest in preventative measures means that when diseases appear they can rage out of control, destroying lives and triggering massive health crises that take decades to resolve. We can either allow this information to scare us, or we can use it to prepare us. And one urgent policy solution for preventing disease is universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene.

From 18-19 May, the Sanitation and Water for All partnership, of which Pakistan is a member, together with UNICEF, will bring together government ministers of water, sanitation, health, climate and the economy, at a Sector Ministers' Meeting hosted by the Government of Indonesia in Jakarta, Indonesia. High on the list of priorities will be how to stop infectious disease, through investment in water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as through vigorous action on climate change.

Hygiene is perhaps the most obvious tool in the belt. Last year the World Economic Forum estimated that handwashing with soap and clean water lowered the risk of contracting COVID-19 by 36 per cent.

However, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 3 in 10 people worldwide, and 2 in 3 people in least developed countries, could not wash their hands at home.



Catarina de Albuquerque

Additionally, 1 in 4 health care facilities currently lack basic water services, and 1 in 3 lacks hand hygiene stations at points of care.

In Pakistan, only about 33 percent of the rural population, and just over 40 percent of those in urban settings have access to safely managed water.

When a leading recommendation for containing a deadly virus is such a simple step, it is unconscionable to deny one third of the world's population this basic level of protection. And perhaps the biggest lesson of this pandemic is that our communities are only as healthy as our most vulnerable members.

Access to clean water is also vital to disease prevention beyond COVID-19. Nearly 1.8 billion people use contaminated drinking water, putting them at risk of contracting cholera, dysentery, polio and typhoid fever.

Antimicrobial drugs prescribed for infectious disease enter water sources via wastewater, run-off and sewage, spreading drug-resistant organisms and antimicrobial resistance. Insufficiently treated wastewater compounds the problem by failing to neutralize antibiotic resistant bacteria.

Alarming, only 8 per cent of wastewater in low income countries undergoes treatment of any kind and experts estimate that over 80 per cent of discharged wastewater worldwide is untreated. This can have severe impacts on human health, not only through antibiotic-resistant pathogens, but also through outbreaks of food, water and vector borne diseases.

For example, inadequate management of

waste was one of the attributing factors of Ebola transmission in West Africa, contributing to the deaths of thousands. The World Health Organization has recommended water and sanitation improvements as a vital first line of defence.

However, our sanitation services are not just vital to stopping the spread of disease, but also to understanding its impact. As COVID-19 test shortages hamper reporting processes, faecal matter has provided a vital indicator of the pandemic's spread. According to health professionals at the University of California, San Diego, wastewater analysis alerted researchers to about 85 per cent of COVID-19 cases in university housing before they were diagnosed, helping them to stop further infection.

Leaders and decision-makers have a choice. Our mistakes during COVID-19 have demonstrated the immense cost of inaction, but we have the wisdom to learn from them. We can invest heavily in pandemic prevention and mitigation – including ensuring that communities everywhere have access to clean water and reliable hygiene and sanitation services. Or we can ignore the catastrophic lessons learned, placing the world at grave risk for future public health threats.

And we do not have to wait for the next pandemic to take action. There are other global health crises happening right now, responsible for the deaths of millions, that can be solved by prioritising the provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene services.

From cholera to coronavirus, the message for government leaders is clear: if we want to get ahead of the next pandemic, we must urgently invest in water, sanitation and hygiene. To make any other choice could have devastating consequences.

Catarina de Albuquerque is CEO of Sanitation and Water For All. She was appointed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2008 to become the first UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation.

## Cost of War

By Muhammad Sohail Ahmad

What is the cause of political unrest in Pakistan? Why are the events around happening, and how are they affecting us? In order to find the answers, we need to examine developments in the international arena. Russia has attacked Ukraine 32 years after the demise of the USSR. The decline journey continued as the after-effects of the defeat in Afghanistan haunted the Russian Federation. The vision to reach the warm waters of the Indian Ocean through Afghanistan and then Pakistan met with defeat to the Soviet forces and the reversal of its army out of Afghanistan. The journey was further augmented with NATO advances in the neighbouring countries of eastern Europe, the central Asian republics and above all, Ukraine.

The Russian Federation continued to absorb all these advances with patience until 2014 when it realized that US-NATO allies were knocking at their doorsteps from the Ukrainian borders. Initially, the eastern half of Ukraine was part of Russia, with Kyiv as the capital. The population of orthodox Christians and ethnic Russians made it an integral part of Russia, but Leonid Brezhnev had gifted this part to Ukraine about 65 years ago. The western part of Ukraine comprised Czech and Polish ethnic groups and was previously part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

It would be interesting to trace back the history of the Russian Empire to understand the greater picture. It was under the rule of Chengiz Khan (1162-1227 AD) and then later Barqi Khan (1209-1266 AD) who nominated representatives in Moscow to collect kharaj from that region. Moscow remained under Mongol rule until the

Czar's kingdom emerged while transcending imperial Russia (1480 AD). The Czarist kingdom rose in 1721, which continued till the dawn of the 20th century. The evolution of history had made tax collectors emperors. The present Russian communist arrangement eyed Crimea as a critical seaport that provided access to the Black Sea. When the US-NATO forces started the exercises at the Ukrainian Russian border, the Putin administration decided to take back Crimea, where the strategic Sevastopol naval base provided seaward defences. Ukraine, which had broken away from ex-USSR, had no navy, barring a few small boats which were neither sufficient nor were designed to provide seaward protection to Ukraine's mainland. The failure of the Ukrainian government to develop a navy in the last 32 years is costing the state heavily now. Russia attacked Ukraine to overcome its challenges in securing access to the Black Sea.

The objective of USA-NATO was to deprive Russia of access to the Black Sea and thereby use Ukraine to take over control of the Black Sea. The reversal in Afghanistan was likely to be completed with the closure of the Black Sea to Russia. Therefore, Russia opted to go to war to gain land access for mainland Russia Crimea. It is like opening breathing space for oneself when faced with asphyxia.

The war in Ukraine is a war for survival for Russia. For USA-NATO, it is required to dominate Russia to continue enjoying economic supremacy and access to Russian natural resources such as natural gas and petroleum. All sea trade for Ukraine stands blocked and the Russian fleet continues to patrol the southern coast of Ukraine. The

economic strangulation of Ukraine could occur in a short frame of time, but the involvement of military supplies from Europe has prolonged this war.

Besides, warfighting expertise is also being exported to Ukraine. The cruiser Moskva, which played a dominant role in the sea blockade, was targeted using land-based Neptune missiles, providing targeting data through drones and commercial satellites. Despite air defence, weapons, and sensors against aircraft and missiles, the ship sank. It is evident that Ukraine, without a navy, could never successfully attack this ship without the support of US-NATO forces that provided operational information and intelligence, along with naval warfighting expertise. Saturating missile defence comprising short and medium-range anti-missile missiles and a close-in weapons system is highly complex and challenging to neutralise a cruiser. Providing commercial data at sea to achieve war objectives is another violation of international law. Russian authorities threatened nuclear war or a third world war in response to this aggression. Both these scenarios are hazardous.

Ukraine has become the Afghanistan of Europe, where both the losers of the Afghan wars are fighting. All this started with a great power struggle between two major powers of the world and is threatening world peace today. The Russian Navy plans to control the Black Sea and both the powers are likely to remain engaged in the war till one of them achieves its war objectives. If USA-NATO loses the conflict, the destabilization process in Pakistan would also end, providing Pakistan with the opportunity to emerge as a significant power in the new world order.

## Letters to the Editor

### My way or highway

Pakistan, a nuclear power and a country of over 220 million people, has been embroiled in a constitutional crisis. This is because individual ego seems to prevail over the collective national interest. This country also faces an acute economic crisis because of years of mismanagement, poor governance and political engineering. This needless prolonging of political uncertainty is not only having

an adverse impact on an already ailing economy but is also sowing seeds of hatred and division among the masses. In the process, the Quaid's motto of "unity" between all citizens who have "faith" in the constitution and "discipline" enforced through laws to which all citizens must submit to is being ridiculed. Who gains if Pakistan and its citizens suffer needlessly because of the egoistic pursuits of a few? A political party which

enjoys the support of the majority in the parliament is allowed to form a government and exercise all the powers given by the constitution. The moment the political party loses support of the majority, it stands removed from office. It is the constitution which allows a vote of no-confidence to be moved against the ruling party. There is no rocket science involved.

Muhammad Shahzain, Lahore

## Sanaullah Baloch inaugurates nursing training college in Kharan



QUETTA: Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) Sanaullah Baloch along with Director General, Health Balochistan Qazi Noor inaugurated Nursing Training College Kharan on Saturday.

On this occasion, District Health Officer (DHO) Dr. Muhammad Anwar Gola, MS Dr. Mehboob Baloch, Former Divisional Director Health Services Dr. Sher Ahmed Baloch, Former DHO Dr. Muhammad Anwar Baloch, Dr. Bashir Ahmad Kabdani, Deputy DHO Dr. Javed Hassan Siyapad, Deputy MS Dr. Chakar Anwar Baloch and other officers were also present. He also inspected the Ward-Madison store, while

MS Dr. Mehboob Baloch gave a briefing about the institution. On this occasion, Sanaullah Baloch said that not only the shortage of doctors but also nurses and paramedical staff in the Divisional Headquarters Hospital would be addressed but also all the basic facilities and necessities would also be provided.

He said that higher education and training could provide employment opportunities to many middle class women at local and national level saying that in this regard, the curriculum and training procedures of nurses and paramedical staff should be designed in such a way that they could succeed in national level examinations.

He said that our aim and vision were to take a step in the field of medical education and provide affordable medical facilities to the people saying that by laying the foundation of Nursing Training College, we have fulfilled another promise. He said that the Nursing Training College would be equipped with the latest educational standards and medical facilities and this journey of women education and development would continue in the interest of the province. (APP)

## 'Chilam Josh' festival to start from May 13

CHITRAL: A four-day Chilam Joshi festival, will kick off from May 13 in Kalash Valley, the festival commemorates the arrival of summer and celebrates the abundance of dairy products during the season. The people of Kalash love music and dance to the beat of drums. Both men and women partake in dancing festivities, where they make circles and enjoy the sound of music.

This festival gives an excellent opportunity to celebrate the beginning of summer and to give a message of peace to the world. During this festival, the people of Kalash pray for the safety of their fields and animals.



The people of Kalash adore the music and dance to the beat of drums. Both men and woman share these moments of dancing together during the festivities. The Kalash are for their music and dance festivals. (APP)

## Poultry prices reaching new heights in Hazara

ABBOTTABAD: Following the passing of Eid ul Fitr, the prices of the poultry products could not reduce and a new wave of price hikes hit the market. The demand for the chicken has increased while supply remained stable over the last few days all over the Hazara division.

Similarly, the prices of essential food items including wheat flour, fruits and vegetables also crossed the highest ever before where district administrations of the region have failed to control the price hike. According to the market, chicken price crossed 335 per kilogram, practically it has become an unavailable commodity for the middle class. A week earlier, the

poultry price was below Rs 200 per kilogram and now the retail price has been hiked to 335 rupees per KG.

During the wedding season, the consumption of chicken increased significantly which is a major cause of poultry price increase, Sardar Saeed a poultry wholesaler told APP. He further said that keeping in view of current circumstances and heat-wave it is expected that in the coming days poultry prices will increase.

From April to August, Hazara division and some other areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa bear the load of poultry shortage which caused a price hike in poultry products. (APP)

## Pak has varieties of precious gemstones deposits: RCCI

RAWALPINDI: A three-day exhibition of gems, jewellery and fashion organised by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce will be held from May 20 to 22.

RCCI president Nadeem Rauf said in a statement said that the purpose of the exhibition was to develop the SME sector. And to encourage local traders and industrialists to take the gemstone business forward.

He said that gemstone was the million-dollar export market, and this exhibi-

tion would help identify critical areas that hinder the promotion of this sector.

"No doubt gems sector is a hidden treasure of Pakistan, which requires govt patronage to take exports to new heights", he added. Nadeem further added that Pakistan was blessed with varieties of precious gemstone deposits and ranked fifth among world countries having its largest reservoirs in the northwest of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir and southeast of Balochistan. (APP)

## Int'l 'Families Day' on May 15

ISLAMABAD: International Day of Families will be marked on May 15 (Sunday) across the globe including Pakistan, celebrates the importance of families and the work started during the International Year of Families.

International Day of Families promotes the importance of a healthy and well-balanced family.

A wide range of events are organized at local, national and international levels. These include: workshops, seminars and policy meeting for public officials; exhibitions and organized discussions to raise awareness of the annual theme; educational sessions for children and young people; and the launch of campaigns for public policies to strengthen and support family units. In some countries, tool kits are created to help people organize celebrations aimed at a particular section of the population, such as school children or young

adults.

The year 1994 was proclaimed as the International Year of Families by the United Nations. This was a response to changing social and economic structures, which have affected and still affect the structure and stability of family units in many regions of the globe. The International Day of Families, on May 15, is an occasion to reflect on the work started during 1994 and to celebrate the importance of families, people, societies and cultures around the world. It has been held every year since 1995.

The symbol of the International Day of Families consists of a solid green circle with an image in red. The image consists of elements of simple drawings of a heart and a house. This indicates that families are the center of society and provide a stable and supporting home for people of all ages. (APP)

## Helpline setup to facilitate Hajj pilgrims

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has established a dedicated Hajj helpline for prompt registration, guidance and resolution of the complaints of intending pilgrims of Hajj 2022. According to official sources in the ministry, the intending pilgrims would get quick answers about their Hajj related queries by contacting 051-9216980; 051-9216981; 051-9216982; 051-9205696.

Pakistan had received a Hajj quota of 81,132 pilgrims this year with 40% under the government scheme and 60% under private scheme.

The upper age limit for pilgrims had been fixed at 65 years.

Applications were being submitted via online and banks from May 1, to May 13 while the token money could be deposited from May 9, to May 13. Group based hajj

balloting would be conducted on May 15. Applicants were required to deposit token money of Rs50,000 with the application being submitted in scheduled banks designated by the ministry. As per the policy, pilgrims would be required to be fully vaccinated with a booster dose and have to undergo a PCR test at least 72 hours before the departure to make sure they were coronavirus-negative. (APP)

## Health experts advise against heat exhaustion, dehydration during summer

ISLAMABAD: Health experts on Sunday advised the citizens to avoid unnecessary outdoor activities during the summer especially if they are diabetic as direct exposure to sun not only causes dehydration and heat exhaustion but also damages the skin.

"Water and salt intake should be increased during summer. Be sure to drink water frequently even if you are not feeling thirsty. Going outside during 11 am to 6 pm must be avoided if possible", Prof Dr Zafar Haider said while speaking to a private news channel.

Drinking plenty of water remains the best way to stay hydrated in the summer, he said, adding, be sure to drink more water than usual and schedule regular "water breaks" during the whole day.

The elderly and those who have diabetes

or heart disease may need more water to remain hydrated than others, he mentioned.

While explaining the symptoms of heat exhaustion, he said that patient can feel faint or dizzy, tired and weak, decrease the blood pressure, cause muscle cramps, sweating, an intense thirst, a fast pulse and urinating less than usual.

We should be mindful of the symptoms of heat stroke and take early precautions to avoid a situation that makes us vulnerable to one, he added.

Parents should make sure children get plenty of opportunities to be cooled and are drinking liquids. In any heat exhaustion situation, public should go with water or keep themselves hydrated, he urged.

Another physician Dr Seemi Jamali said that there was need to create awareness

among public on key signs and symptoms of heat related disorders including heatstroke that might be life threatening in case of ignorance. Heat exhaustion is milder illness than heatstroke which is generally caused by imbalance or inadequate replacement of water and salts lost in perspiration due to thermal stress. Dehydration in Summer can be a serious heat-related disease and it is also a dangerous side effect of diarrhea, vomiting, and fever. Children and people over the age of 60 are particularly susceptible to dehydration, she mentioned.

Dr Seemi said, take precautionary measures to avoid the harmful effects of dehydration, she said, adding, it is important for the person to be treated immediately as heat stroke can cause permanent damage or death. (APP)

## PMC to improve dental colleges admission percentage

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) was committed to improve the admission percentage in dental colleges of the country.

According to PMC, the commission has called a meeting of Sindh dental colleges on May 11 and a seminar of all Pakistan dental colleges on May 12 to discuss the issues regarding the reducing number of admissions in dental colleges.

In this regard, a letter has been received from the President PAMI Sindh chapter setting out proposals which along with other issues and proposals presented by colleges will be discussed in the said meetings.

One of the key proposals put forth by PAMI Sindh is to remove the 'conflict of interest' clause from the PMC Act 2020 and consequently to allow those regulated to be a part of the regulator and decision making while also suggesting the removal of the requirement to qualify the MDCAT for admission and consequent grant of a medical license.

This, however, is a matter for the Parlia-



ment to decide and not the Commission. Similar issues were raised by the Sindh Government on which a report was sought by the Ministry of Health from the Commission.

The Commission has submitted a detailed report addressing all the concerns including that all Provinces and sectors have representation and presence at the Commission with nominated members from each Province as part of the National Ac-

ademic Board. It is the Academic Board that primarily formulates the standards of education including curriculum and examination standards including the MDCAT. The detailed report also addressed the concerns raised by the Sindh Government regarding lowering the pass percentage of MDCAT which was determined by the Academic Board and the subsequent decisions of the larger bench of the Sindh High Court and previously of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

However to address these issues for future admissions the Commission will be seeking the proposals from the dental colleges in the upcoming seminar and forward these to the Academic Board for its consideration.

It is pertinent to mention here that MDCAT 2021 was conducted in 25 centers across 22 cities nationally and in six international centers.

Another misleading information being circulated by certain quarters is that the MDCAT curriculum ignores the curriculum of different provinces. (APP)

## 10 beggars caught

FAISALABAD: The social welfare department caught 10 habitual beggars from various intersections and roads of the city during past 24 hours.

Social Welfare Officer Muhammad Tahir said here on Sunday that anti-beggary campaign was in full swing in the city and 10 habitual beggars were rounded up from various parts of the district including Partab Nagar Jhang Road, Dhuddiwala Jaranwala Road, Fish Farm Satiana Road, Islam Nagar, Millat Chowk, Narwala Road and Samanabad.

The beggars were handed over to the area police. Further action against them was underway. (APP)

## Two killed

KASUR: Two persons were killed in separate road accidents in nearby localities.

According to police, Muhammad Ayub along with his eight-year-old daughter Zuneira Bibi was crossing a road near Bhoneki Morh, Pattoki when a rashly driven car hit the girl. She died on the spot while her father sustained injuries.

In another accident which occurred at Phoolnagar where rickshaw driver Sarfraz, 28, died on the spot when his tri-wheeler rickshaw was rammed into a bus. The victim was belonged to Chichawatni. Police were investigating. (APP)

## Teenager dies

SARGODHA: A teenager was killed when a motorcycle was hit by a tractor-trolley in the jurisdiction of Khushab police station, here on Sunday. Police said that Muhammad Fazal, 17, was riding on a motorcycle when a tractor-trolley hit him near Jorra village. He died on-the-spot and the body was handed over to the family. The police have registered a case against the driver. (APP)

## Summer wear stalls fascinate purchasers after pandemic

MULTAN: The vendors of summer wear stalls hailed and looking so happy as their sale increased compared to last two years as coronavirus damaged the economy badly.

People from all walk of life come to stalls on daily basis and purchased their choice things from the stalls. In last two years summer wear stalls holders were spending their lives with full of worries because pandemic of coronavirus destroy their business. A vendor named Muhammad Adeel from Hussain Agahi bazar while taking with APP on Sunday evening said that Alhamdulillah he has started his business this year and was getting a lot of profit in the early start this year, because sale of summer wears has increased 80 percent compared to last two years.

He also said that he opened his stall early Sunday morning and now it was evening he has earned Rs. 5000 profits yet, it all due to ending of coronavirus in Pakistan and people were freely purchasing their choice wear summer items from the stalls. Muhammad jamaat khan a staller in Dol-

at gate area said while talking to APP that coronavirus effected badly and we all were facing hard days of life because our businesses were finished, but now this year in the early stage of summer season we were earning a lot of money through summer wear stalls.

APP also took the views of some purchasers which were present in the stalls to collect their views about the importance of these stalls. Ali hamza a citizen while talking to APP said that these stalls were very necessary for every one of us as we can purchase every choice summer wearing items on cheap rates, but due to Corona pandemic difficulties were increased for all of us.

He also said that he has bought summer cap from a stall on cheapest rate compared to bazaar. Muhammad Afan yasir also said that he was feeling pleasure after opening summer stalls this year and he always used to buy things related to summer Wearing from these stalls. Hareem Fatima said that she has bought his summer wearing clothes on very reasonable rate. (APP)

## Neurosurgery unit inaugurated at DHQ hospital D I Khan

D. I KHAN: Focal Person to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Asyia Asad on Saturday inaugurated Neurosurgery unit constructed at cost of RS. 90 million in DHQ hospital Dera Ismail Khan.

Provincial Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, Faisal Amin Khan and PTI MNA Ali Amin Khan Ghandapur were also present at the inauguration ceremony.

Dr. Asyia Asad, speaking on the occasion, said that DHQ hospital D.I Khan had a 34 bed trauma with a daily admission of more than 300 patients and the extension

of trauma was urgently needed to save precious human lives.

She appreciated Chief Minister Mahmood Khan and Health Minister Taimur Khan Jhagra for establishing the Neurosurgery unit.

She said that D.I Khan is the second largest district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with vast catchment area including merged districts having no neurosurgery unit.

And patients with head injury would be referred to either Multan or Peshawar, resulting in death of most patients. (APP)

## BISP Kafaalat outreach up to 8m families by June 22

ISLAMABAD: The present government has set a target to expand the outreach of Benazir Kafaalat Program up to eight million families till the month of June and then 10 million afterwards in order to reduce the impact of rising inflation on the poor families.

Talking to APP, Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Shazia Marri said that the scope of Benazir Kafaalat program would be expanded soon. "Unfortunately the increased ratio of poverty, inflation and unemployment in the country has led to economic instability during last few years which require expansion of BISP to provide financial relief to the poor masses".

"The Program, serving seven million families now, will expand with its outreach up to eight million families till the month of June however, we want to increase its coverage up to the 10 million families in future as per the poverty ratio and the economic indicators," she said. To a question on re-inclusion of the expelled BISP beneficiaries, the federal minister said it is very unfortunate that around 8, 20,000 beneficiaries were expelled from the BISP program in the year 2019 without any verification or investigation through giving an impression that they were ineligible and affluent. She said that many questions were raised at that time when these beneficiaries



were expelled on the basis of unjustified filters but those responsible during the previous government didn't respond. "I have decided after receiving briefing from the officials that those disqualified on the basis of unjustified filters including phone bill of up to Rs. 1000, making of urgent Passport and urgent CNIC, foreign travel etc. will be given a right to appeal", she said. It needed to understand that how a person can be declared ineligible if he has traveling abroad for performing Umrah through some lucky draw and made CNIC in urgency to apply for BISP. All such filters are not satisfactory and cannot determine the financial condition of the person. This decision of expelling BISP beneficiaries was taken without verification, investigation or giving them right to register complaint which is injustice", she said. (APP)

## DC bans swimming in eivers, streams, lakes, ponds

MANSEHRA: Deputy Commissioner Mansehra Monday imposed a ban on swimming in rivers, streams, lakes and ponds of the district keeping in view the flood threat. The ban was imposed to protect precious human lives. The decision was taken because of the heatwave expected within the next few days due to which snow melting process would be increased and floods are also expected in River Kunhar, Indus, streams and lakes of the district. According to the notification issued by the DC office in Mansehra, the police has been directed to monitor the rivers Kunhar, Indus and streams and make sure nobody was violating the ban.

This order shall come into force with immediate effect and shall remain in force for a period of 60 days. The DC warned that any person contravening this order shall render himself liable to punishment under Section 188 PPC. Locals have appreciated the ban on swimming in River Kunhar and demanded strict enforcement of section 144 and punishment for offenders. Every year dozens of people lose their lives during the months of April to July despite the ban on swimming and bathing in the rivers, streams and lakes as there is no monitoring system or punishment for the violation of the ban. (APP)

## Cholera claims 2 lives, leaves 979 affected in Dera Bugti

QUETTA: The cholera disease outbreak in the Dera Bugti district of Balochistan on Monday claimed two lives, while 979 others were badly affected by the widely spread infectious disease, according to the Health officer.

Talking to APP, District Health Officer of Dera Bugti, Dr Azam Bugti said that the first case of cholera epidemic was reported on April 17 from Pirkoh, 25 kms from the district headquarters, Dera Bugti, and one person reportedly died of the disease on that same day.

After the incident, the number of samples sent to National Institute of Health (NIH) Islamabad were reported as 'positive.' DHO Dera Bugti further said humans and livestock of Pirkoh consumed water from the pond, which was filled with rain water and due to aridity for a prolonged time, the water of the said pond had become poisonous and contaminated. "The Deputy Commissioner Dera Bugti has provided four water bores for the

supply of drinking water to the people of the affected area but this is not a permanent solution to the problem," DHO maintained.

He also apprised that there were two government Primary health centers in the affected area of Pirkoh and all the resources available in them were being utilized. Moreover, since April 17 till now these two centers were providing uninterrupted services round the clock, the DHO added.

A 16-year-old boy and a 66-year-old woman were the fatal victim of cholera so far, while 979 cases had been reported so far, including 103 new cases emerged on May 8, said the DHO. Highlighting the preventive measures, DHO said that through social mobilization, the public was being sensitized about the Cholera's seriousness. "People are requested to boil the water before they drink it and follow the principles of hygiene and cleanliness," DHO urged. (APP)

## PANAH appeals govt to levy taxes on sugary drinks, cigarettes in next budget

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Heart Association (PANAH) General Secretary and Director Operations Sanaullah Ghumman on Saturday said this year's budget was crucial and important for the government and urged the Prime Minister and Finance Minister to levy taxes on sugary drinks and cigarettes to control heavy disease burden in the Budget 2022-23.

Ghumman said Prime Minister of Pakistan Shahbaz Sharif and Finance Minister Muftah Ismail were holding important meetings for the forthcoming budget, in which budget related proposals were being discussed, adding, "We urge the government, as a public representative, to seriously consider raising taxes on tobacco and sugary drinks, the two non-essential factors contributing to the rise in disease", said a news release.

An increase in taxes on them would not only generate an annual revenue of Rs 105 billion to the national exchequer, but

would also significantly reduce the health burden and reduce the incidence of diseases.

This revenue would help in the completion of development projects, he added. Smoking and intake of sugary drinks was making people sick badly specially our young generation causing many dangerous diseases including heart, obesity, diabetes, cancer, he warned.

"Many researchers said that One of effective way to prevent this is to increase taxes," he underlined. Sanaullah Ghumman appealed to the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister that it is the duty of the government to safe the health of the people.

"Smoking and sugar sweetened beverages are not a sign of health, they are one of major cause of diseases, the government should increase taxes on them, so that the health problems of the people can be solved," he ended. (APP)

## Lakki Marwat man strives to turn desert green

LAKKI MARWAT: A young environment enthusiast from Lakki Marwat, southern district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), has made a remarkable achievement of planting 21,000 plants in two years to improve green cover in his rain-fed native district.

Lakki Marwat is largely made up of semi desert due to its sand dunes, scorching heat and dry weather. Some parts of the district have mountains while there is a small canals-irrigated area too.

"During the last two years, I have planted more than 20,000 trees with the objective of improving green cover in my home town," claims ambitious Munir Khan, resident of Muslim Bagh, Serai Naurang. Talking to APP, Munir Khan said Lakki Marwat is a dry, sandy area and I wanted to reduce some impact of climate change by mobilising local community. Munir informed that he first took this initiative by his own from union council level and started planting saplings in the area. With the passage of time, the scope of plantation increased to Tehsil Sarai Naurang as a number of people and even organizations started supporting him, he noted.

Now he wants to expand plantation to the entire district by including areas like



Jangkhel, Lakki University site and Pezu. "In the early stage, people used to pass sarcastic remarks over my passion by saying that I have no work to do that is why I was wasting time in plantation. Some locals suggested me to do some proper work and termed plantation waste of time and resources," Munir recalled. However, such taunts and sardonic smiles did not deter my enthusiasm and I continued to work with full devotion and dedication, Munir continued.

The hard work and resultant change in the landscape of area, changed minds of people who are now supporting me, he remarked. Apart from local people, some NGOs have also acknowledged my hard work and are approaching me with offers of providing sampling and support for planting more trees in the area.

Munir gave the title of 'Sar Sabz-o-Shadab Lakki Marwat' (Greener Lakki Marwat) to his plantation drive and has set the goal of planting around 200,000 trees in his area. "I have made a pledge with soil of my native area that I will plant around 200,000 trees here and for this purpose I am working hard," he added.

Similarly, Munir said he is also concentrating on environment education, awareness and training to apprise people about importance of increasing green cover in the area and country.

He visits schools in Lakki Marwat and gives lectures to students, holds meetings with locals at community level to convince them for growing more and more trees on their lands. Munir informed that some of the plants, he planted with the assistance of WWF and Forest Department a couple of years ago had now grown up into trees and also giving fruits besides improving environment of the area. In reply to a question, he said he plants only those saplings which are suitable for environment of the area and are locally grown easily. Munir said growing plants especially in semi-arid area of Lakki Marwat is not an easy task and he has to work hard and fully concentrate on his work. (APP)

## Three POs held

MUZAFFARGARH: Daira Din Panah police arrested three proclaimed offenders (POs) during crackdown launched here Monday. Police spokesman said the court convicted including Muhammad Yunis, Ghulam Abbas and Shah Muhammad were sent to lock-up after taking into custody. A motorbike was recovered from their possession. Taking further action, accused nominated in different cases of theft and robbery being identified as Nawab, Mohsin and Fardeen Khaira were also held from different places of the district. They were booked under relevant section of Pakistan Penal Code with further investigation was underway.

Police said action against criminals would be followed indiscriminately as nobody was above the law. (APP)

## Veteran Journalist passes away

BAHAWALPUR: Senior journalist and chief editor of a local daily, Mamtaz Zaman has passed away at Bahawal Victoria Hospital due to prolonged ailment. He was suffering from long illness and was admitted to Bahawal Victoria Hospital. Zaman was the chief editor of Daily Dastoor, one of the oldest newspaper of Bahawalpur. His final rituals were offered in Fawara Chowk area, attended by a large number of people including journalist community and political leaders.

Prominent journalists including Qasim Bhatti, Shah Saqlain Haider and Hamid Gulzar prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and grant of courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss. (APP)

## Woman found dead

SARGODHA: A woman was found dead at nearby fields, in the area of Jhal Chakian police station. Police said on Monday that some passersby spotted the body in fields near Chak No.106-NB Jhal and informed the police which reached the spot and shifted the body to mortuary for post-mortem. The age of woman was stated to be 28-year-old. Her identification has yet to be established. Police were investigating. (APP)

## Int'l conference on global sustainable development concludes

KARACHI: The 3rd International Conference on "Global Sustainable Development (GSD): Challenges and Solutions 2022" concluded here.

The 2-day conference was jointly organized by Dadabhoj Institute of Higher Education (DIHE) Karachi; Sindh Institute of Management and Technology (SINT); Medgar Evers College, City University of New York USA and LSi business School, Cambodia, said a statement issued here on Monday.

Keynote speeches, workshops, panel discussions, PhD thesis seminars, and presentation of research papers were on the agenda of the hybrid type conference the experts and scholars from different countries including the USA, China, Cambodia, Nigeria, India and different universities of Pakistan presented their papers and other research material online or physically.

It further informed that the conference's chairs comprised of Dean MEC of the City University of New York USA, Pro-

fessor Dr. Jo Ann Rolle; Registrar Dadabhoj Institute of Higher Education (DIHE) Karachi Pakistan, Professor Dr. Gobind M Herani; Dean of LSi Business school Cambodia Professor Dr. Pahlaj Mooli; Director Business Administration, Professor Dr. Sana Arz Bhutto. It is the first conference of its nature which was jointly organized by four universities and two of them are from USA and Cambodia, said the Registrar DIHE Karachi, Professor Dr. Gobind M. Herani.

Besides, a large number of academicians, students and other people joined the conference in person and virtually from across the globe to address the challenges impacting the Global Sustainable Development, he maintained. "We jointly brought different universities around the globe together and participants from more than eight countries watched its sessions online and experts from six countries contributed papers, workshops and panels for discussions," he reiterated. (APP)

## CM GB chairs high level meeting regarding Shashpar Glacier

GILGIT: A high level meeting was held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Khalid Khurshid to assess the damage and rehabilitation works following the Shashpar Glacier burst.

Provincial Home Secretary gave a detailed briefing in the meeting. Talking on the occasion, Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid said that a steel bridge should be constructed immediately in place of Hassanabad bridge with the help of NHA. He said that the relief process in the affected families should also be expedited. He told that the Chairman NHA had promised to construct RCC bridge in Hassanabad within six months.

Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid said that Pakistan's major glaciers were located in Gilgit-Baltistan due to which Gilgit-Baltistan was most at risk of global warming. He said that an international conference of experts would be held to prevent the effects of climate change and protect glaciers.



He also directed the home secretary to prepare a detailed report on the damages and causes of glacier burst.

A committee comprising Provincial Secretary Home, Secretary Construction and GBDMA was constituted which will report on a daily basis. The purpose of the committee is to expedite the rehabilitation of the affected areas.

The Chief Minister also directed the Works and Disaster Management Department to take urgent steps for rehabilitation of drinking water, water channel and irrigation system. He said that compensation money would be paid for the affected houses and properties. (APP)

## Capital's air quality record healthy after repeated days of clean ambience

ISLAMABAD: The Federal capital has embraced record days of healthy air as the pollutants ratio was below permissible limits since the onset of the month of Ramzan that lead to decline in hazardous air pollutants causing air quality bad and health injurious.

The air quality of the federal capital on Monday was also recorded healthy as hazardous air pollutants were below the permissible limits in the atmosphere due to reduced vehicular traffic as outbound Isloites have started returning from their hometowns after celebrating Eid.

The air quality data has been collected by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) that monitors air pollutants ratio for 24 hours based on three intervals of eight hours data collection from different locations.

The Pak-EPA data revealed that the air quality throughout the three intervals



of data monitoring remained low as the pollutants were less than the permissible limits of national environmental quality standards (NEQS). The hazardous air pollutant particulate matter of 2.5 microns (PM2.5) which was a lethal atmospheric contaminant remained 16.

27 micro grammes per cubic meter on average which is below the NEQS of 35 microgrammes per cubic meter and denotes the air quality healthy. The PM2.5 is generated through combustion of an engine, industrial emissions, burning garbage or inflammable material and dust blown up by fast moving cars plying on

non-cemented patches of the roads.

However, a slight jump in previous days was mainly due to congestion of automobiles plying on the roads as tourists thronged to the capital's recreational spots, he said The nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and sulphur dioxide (SO2) were recorded below permissible ratio as it was recorded 5.87 and 17.45 micro-grammes per cubic meter in past 24 hours in the atmosphere against the NEQS of 80 and 120 micro-grammes per cubic meter respectively. These effluents were mainly produced during the operational activities of industrial plants and factories that were already under control, he said.

He urged the masses with respiratory diseases and other critical heart or lungs diseases to avoid prolonged outdoor visits and wear face coverings and goggles when the air quality is unhealthy while venturing outdoors. (APP)

## Ukraine war turns China into net exporter of aluminum

TOKYO -- The Russian invasion of Ukraine has upended the global aluminum market, transforming China into an exporter as supplies of the energy-hungry metal flow to Europe where it fetches higher prices. China exported 26,378 tons of aluminum ingots in February, customs data shows, an increase of more than 500% from January. Imports fell 53% on the month to 18,343 tons, surpassed by exports for the first time since November 2019. China's aluminum imports in the January-February period were down 77% on the year, while exports surged from scant levels in 2021. This contrasts starkly from the previous two years, during which China imported massive amounts of aluminum. President Xi Jinping's government in 2020 proclaimed a national goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2060. This large shift in policy toward environmental

protection was tied to reduced output by big emitting industries such as aluminum. To replace the lower production at home, China's imports of aluminum increased sharply. But everything changed again in 2022. A big price differential arose between the European and Asian markets due to different supply pictures. As Russia invaded Ukraine, natural gas and other energy prices skyrocketed. European aluminum makers were forced to reduce production of the metal as electric power prices rose, creating a shortage. Aluminum prices soared on the London Metals Exchange, with the three-month contract peaking at a record \$4,000 a ton in early March. The market has softened lately as high prices discourage demand. But even now aluminum trades in the \$3,300 range, 40% more than a year ago. (Agencies)

## Bitcoin falls below \$30,000 lowest since July 2021

NEW YORK: Bitcoin extended its losses as it fell below \$30,000 for the first time since July 2021, putting its decline from a November record high at more than 55 per cent amid a global flight from riskier investments. The world's largest digital token fell by as much as 3.1 per cent to \$29,992 in Asian trading. Ether fell as much as 3.7 per cent while Solana dropped 8.2 per cent and Avalanche dipped 10.4 per cent. "We are seeing a slow-motion meltdown, partially because it is mostly been long holders selling" instead of levered liquidations, said Josh Lim, head of derivatives at New York-based broker Genesis Global Trading. "Now that some corporate treasuries are hovering near their cost basis, markets are waiting and watching to see if shareholders will force some de-risking." The decline in cryptocurrency prices comes as tightening monetary policy to combat runaway inflation curbs liquidity,



turning investors away from speculative assets across global markets. Michael Novogratz, the billionaire cryptocurrency investor who leads Galaxy Digital Holdings, said he expects things to become worse before they improve. "Crypto probably trades correlated to the Nasdaq until we hit a new equilibrium," Mr Novogratz said on Galaxy's first-quarter earnings call on Monday. "My instinct is there is some more damage to be done, and that will trade in a very choppy, volatile and difficult market for at least the next few quarters before people are getting some sense that we are at an equilibrium." (Agencies)

## Emirates unveils premium economy at ATM 2022

ABU DHABI: Flyers can look forward to another distinctive Emirates travel experience as the airline unveils its full Premium Economy offering onboard and on ground, and announces it will open this highly sought-after cabin for sale from 1 June 2022. The new cabin class, which offers luxurious seats, more legroom, and a service to rival many airlines' business offering, will be available to Emirates customers travelling on popular A380 routes to London, Paris, Sydney from 1 August, and Christchurch from December. Emirates is the only airline in the region to offer a Premium Economy cabin. Sir Tim Clark, President Emirates Airline

said: "As with everything we do, Emirates Premium Economy will be exceptional in its class, with minute attention given to every aspect of the customer experience. Customers trading up from Economy will be getting excellent value. "Since we first introduced our Premium Economy seats in January 2021, the positive response and demand has been tremendous. We currently have six A380s equipped with this cabin class, which limits our initial deployment, but our intention is to offer this experience to many more markets across our network. This November, we will begin our retrofit programme to install Premium Economy on 67 A380s and 53 Boeing 777s. (Agencies)

## Cement despatches decline by 28.6pc in April 2022



KARACHI: Cement despatches declined by 28.6 percent in April 2022. Total cement despatches during April 2022 were 3.52 million tons against 4.94 Million tons despatched during the same month of last fiscal year. According to the data released by All Pakistan Cement Manufacturers Association (APCMA), local cement despatches by the industry during the month of

April 2022 were 3.37 million tons compared to 4.06 million tons in April 2021, showing reduction by 17.06 percent. Exports despatches also suffered massive decline by 82.15 percent as the volumes reduced from 877,163 tons in April 2021 to 156,613 tons in April 2022. In April 2022, North based cement mills despatched 2.8 million tons cement in domestic markets showing a reduction of 16.93 percent against 3.3 million ton despatches in April 2021. South based mills despatched 566,538 tons cement in local markets during April 2022 that was 17.68 percent less compared to the despatches of 688,239 tons during April 2021. (Agencies)

## UAE to introduce unemployment insurance

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates will introduce a form of unemployment insurance, the Cabinet said on Monday, the latest reform by the Gulf country as it strives to attract talent and investment amid increasing regional economic competition, Reuters reports. Insured workers would receive some money for a limited time period if made unemployed, UAE Prime Minister and Vice-President, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, who is also the ruler of trade hub Dubai, said on Twitter, citing a Cabinet decision. "The intention is to

strengthen labour market competitiveness, provide a social umbrella for workers and establish a stable working environment for all," the statement said. The statement did not specify whether this would apply equally to citizens and non-citizen residents in the UAE. Permission to reside in Gulf countries like the UAE, where foreigners make up 85 per cent of the population according to the IMF, has traditionally been tied to employment, and the loss of job usually means the worker has to leave the country. (Agencies)

## World Bank assures support to govt's economic reforms

ISLAMABAD: World Bank Regional Vice President for South Asia Hartwig Schafer assured full support in future to implement projects funded by the institution and the economic reforms in the country, Radio Pakistan reported Tuesday. During a meeting with Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Dr Mohammad Jahanzeb Khan, Schafer appreciated the steps taken by the planning commission in various sectors, especially in agriculture and gender.



According to a statement, they discussed the country's development priorities and support for Pakistan's ambitious reform programme on economic growth strategy. The Planning Commission official briefed the delegation about the development in various sectors including energy, climate change, education, health, agriculture and others. Dr Jahanzeb urged the World Bank to continue to support the government of Pakistan in order to implement the projects. (APP)

## Azerbaijan plans to supply more natural gas to Europe

BAKU: Azerbaijan plans to supply more natural gas to Europe as countries in the continent aim to phase out Russian imports by the end of the year and look for alternative sources of supplies amid Moscow's continuing conflict with Ukraine. The central Asian republic is focusing on upgrading its existing energy infrastructure to export more gas to Europe, Azerbaijan energy minister Parviz Shahbazov told the World Utilities Congress in Abu Dhabi. "We are now working very intensively with the European Commission ... we are working on the ways, in a relatively short period of time, upgrade this

infrastructure and subsequently increase our energy supply to Europe in terms of natural gas." Azerbaijan currently supplies 10 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas to the Southern Europe and 6bcm to Turkey through the Southern Gas Corridor — a network of pipelines crossing through Turkey and other countries in Europe. He, however, did not give a timeline on when the country plans to boost exports to Europe but said that Azerbaijan's crude exports are "used by many European countries". "We are now going to produce more green energy in Azerbaijan and going to be later

a net exporter," Mr Shahbazov said while participating in a ministerial session at the three-day event. The EU aims to diversify its energy resources and reduce its reliance on Russia, which provides a bulk of its oil and gas exports. In 2021, the group members imported 155 bcm of natural gas from Russia, which accounted for about 45 per cent of EU gas imports and close to 40 per cent of its total gas consumption, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). The bloc plans to ban Russian oil over the next six months and is seeking alternative sources of supply from different countries to replace Russian oil. (Agencies)

## Power Ministry demands Rs329bn to reduce power outage

ISLAMABAD: The ministry of power has asked the finance division to provide Rs329 billion funds for purchasing fuel including furnace oil in order to efficiently reduce the load shedding. Sources said that the power division on Friday in a meeting held under the chair Miftah Ismail asked the Ministry of Finance to provide Rs329 billion funds till June 15, 2022, for purchasing furnace oil in order to efficiently reduce the load shedding. The power division required Rs108 billion till May 25, 2022, Rs136 billion till June 7 and another Rs85 billion till June 15, 2022, for purchasing furnace oil, sources added. Overall, the circular debt of the power sector has surged to Rs2,450 billion till today, it was also informed during the meeting. A handout issued by the finance



division states that Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Miftah Ismail chaired a meeting on funding for the power and petroleum sector on Friday at the finance division. Federal Minister for Energy, Khurram Dastgir Khan, Minister of State on Petroleum Division Musadik Masood Malik, Federal Secretaries and senior officers attended the meeting. The chair was briefed on power plants

with fuel positions and funds required for the optimal working of these power plants based on coal, RLNG and RFO. A detailed presentation was also given to the chair on the total funds required for fuel including government support for RLNG and RFO from budgeted subsidies. The Finance Minister shared that the present government is cognizant of the load shedding problem and is determined to provide relief to the masses by resolving the menace of load shedding. He stressed that required steps should be undertaken immediately to efficiently reduce the load shedding. In this regard, all the three ministers requested finance, power and petroleum divisions to work out a feasible plan for the government's support for fuel management in order to ensure smooth and sustainable power distribution throughout the country. (APP)

## Middle East tourism sector to create 3.6m jobs in 10 years

RIYADH: The Middle East's travel and tourism sector is projected to create nearly 3.6 million new jobs over the next decade — an average of 360,000 jobs each year, a new report has said. The sector will propel the regional economic recovery, with its average annual growth outpacing the overall economy for the next 10 years, World Travel and Tourism Council said in its latest economic impact report. The travel and tourism sector's gross domestic product is expected to grow at an average of 7.7 per cent on an annual basis between 2022 and 2032, almost three times the 2.5 per cent growth rate for the region's overall economy. It will reach

nearly \$540 billion — 10.1 per cent of the total economy — by 2032, the report said. "After a very difficult couple of years, the future is looking brighter with travel and tourism expected to create 3.6 million new jobs across the Middle East over the next decade," said Julia Simpson, WTTC president and chief executive. "Looking to this year and the next, the outlook is more positive with both GDP and employment set to almost reach pre-pandemic levels ... the recovery of the sector in the Middle East last year was certainly slower than expected, due in part to the impact of the Omicron variant." The travel and tourism sector's contribution to the economy is expected to grow

more than 36 per cent to about \$256bn by the end of this year, amounting to 6.5 per cent of the total GDP, the WTTC said. Employment in the sector is set to grow 8.7 per cent this year to reach more than six million jobs. The region's travel and tourism GDP is expected to almost reach pre-pandemic levels by next year, only 2.5 per cent below the 2019 levels, the global tourism body's report said. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the industry's contribution to the economy was 8.4 per cent or \$323.6bn in 2019. It dropped to just 4.5 per cent (\$162.6bn) in 2020. Last year, its contribution to the GDP climbed 15.9 per cent year-on-year, to reach \$188.5bn. (Agencies)

## Saudi economy to exceed \$1tn for first time – IMF

RIYADH: The economy of Saudi Arabia is expected to exceed \$1 trillion by the end of the year, for the first time in the kingdom's history, according to recent forecasts by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Last month, amid a surge in oil prices, the IMF revised its economic forecast for Saudi Arabia anticipating a 2.8 per cent growth. "We raised our estimates of the growth rate of the Saudi economy by 2.8 percentage points, which reflects the increase in oil production in accordance with the OPEC+ agreement, in conjunction with the more non-oil output growth exceeding expectations," stated the report entitled 'World Economic Outlook: War sets back the global recovery'. A report by Bloomberg earlier this month, citing the Saudi General Authority for Statistics suggested that the kingdom's GDP rose by 9.6 per cent year-on-year during the first quarter of 2022, with the highest quarterly growth rate since 2011. Saudi Arabia is noteworthy in being the only G20 country that the IMF raised its forecast for. The IMF report also noted that the war in Ukraine has slowed economic recovery, with the conflict contributing to a significant slowdown in global growth this year in addition to inflation. While much of the Middle East and North Africa region will be affected by the conflict in Ukraine in terms of food prices. (Agencies)

## EU to enforce new regulation to tame Big Tech in spring 2023

LONDON: The European Union (EU) is planning to enforce the new Digital Markets Act (DMA) to tame the Big Tech companies in the spring next year. Margrethe Vestager, the European Commission's executive vice president, earlier said the antitrust legislation could be implemented as early as October of this year. According to TechCrunch, Vestager announced at the International Competition Network (ICN) conference that the DMA will enter into force next spring and "we are getting ready for enforcement as soon as the first notifications come in". The Commission will act against any violations made by "gatekeepers", Meta, Apple, Google, Microsoft, and Amazon,

as soon as the law comes into force. "This next chapter is exciting. It means a lot of concrete preparations," Vestager said. "It's about drafting further legal texts on procedures or notification forms. Our teams are currently busy with all these preparations and we're aiming to come forward with the new structures very soon," she added. In a move that could reshape the online world dominated by Big Tech, the EU last month agreed on Digital Services Act (DSA) that will force tech giants to take greater responsibility for content on their platforms, else face fines of up to 6 per cent of their annual turnover. (Agencies)

## ECC approves revision of prices for atta, sugar

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has not only approved revision of prices of atta and sugar but also ordered a continued discount of Rs190 per kg on vegetable ghee. The Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Miftah Ismail presided over the meeting of ECC of the Cabinet. Ministry of Industries and Production submitted a summary on revision of the prices of atta and sugar under the Ramzan relief

package-2022. In order to provide continuous relief to the lower strata of the society from global inflationary pressure, the ECC granted approval to revision of prices of atta and sugar from Rs950 per 20 kg to Rs800 per 20 kg, Rs85 per kg to Rs70 per kg respectively and also ordered that discount of Rs190 per kg on vegetable ghee will be continued. Government will continue to absorb the cost of subsidies for the benefit. (APP)

## PHF announced 24 players for Asia Cup 2022 training camp



LAHORE: Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has called 24 players for a training camp ahead of Asia Cup 2022.

The list of players include Abdullah Ishtiaq (Goalkeeper), Akmal Hussain (Goalkeeper), Muneeb ur Rehman (Goalkeeper), Mubashir Ali, Amad Shakeel Butt, Abu Bakar Mahmood, Mohammad Abdullah, Mohammad Hamid Anjum, Arbaz Ahmed, Rizwan Ali, Abdul Mannan, Umar Bhutta, Rana Abdul Waheed, Ghazanfar Ali, Mohammad

Salman, Rumman Khan, Moin Shakeel, Ali Shan, Junaid Manzoor, Ajaz Ahmed, Abdul Hannan Shahid, Ahmad Nadeem, Nohaiz Zahid, Rana Sohail Riyaz. The announced players have been advised to report to camp manager Khawaja Junaid by afternoon on May 9. The camp will run till June 2 here at National Hockey Stadium.

Head coach Siegfried Ekman will lead the coaching team which also includes Ajmal Khan Lodhi, Olympian Wasim Ahmad, Olympian Sameer Hussain (all assistant coaches), Imran Butt (goalkeepers' coach), Nadeem Lodhi (video analyst), Adeel Akhtar and Mohammad Aslam (physiotherapists). The Asian mega event will be played from May 23 to June 1 in Jakarta, Indonesia. (APP)

## Equestrian Usman defies odds to qualify for Asian Games 2022

ISLAMABAD: Equestrian Usman Khan is all set to represent Pakistan in the Asian Games 2022 as he has produced a stunning show at FEI CIC 2-Star long format at Haras De Jardy in Paris to make a cut to the quadrennial sports extravaganza.

According to a message received by this agency, the 41-year-old Melbourne-based athlete said that he along with his new equine partner Eden Du Veret, a seven-year-old French horse had got 12th position in the event.

The Lahore-born rider had secured an individual Olympics quota in eventing in December 2019, becoming the first Pakistani to do so. But his New Zealand thoroughbred horse, which he named Azad Kashmir, died of a severe heart attack in September 2020, jeopardising his 15-year odyssey for the prestigious event.

He had to qualify again for the event with a new horse Kasheer but luck continued robbing him of the chance to make a debut at Tokyo Olympics 2020, as he met a tragic accident at FEI Naracoorte, SA, Australia Horse Trials CIC 4stars, which served as Olympic qualifiers.

Usman lost his horse besides suffering serious injuries. He was kept in rehab for around five months. But a man with unflinching determination, he never lost hope and made a strong comeback to the arena on Sunday to make a cut to the Asian Games. If he wins a medal in the Asian Games, he will be the second Pakistani to do so. Fatch Khan, who claimed a silver medal in the individual tent pegging event in the Games in New Delhi in 1982 is the only Pakistani to do such a feat in equestrian sport. (APP)

## WI names squad for Pakistan tour



CHAGUARAMAS: West Indies Cricket Board has announced 15-men ODI squad for Netherlands and Pakistan tour.

The newly appointed captain Nicholas Pooran will be on his first assignment with the team that includes Shai Hope (Vice

Captain), Nkrumah Bonner, Shamrah Brooks, Keacy Carty, Akeal Hosenin, Alzarri Joseph, Brandon King, Shermion Lewis, Kyle Mayers, Anderson Phillip, Rovman Powell, Jayden Seales, Romario Shepherd, Hayden Walsh Jr.

West Indies will play three ODIs on May 31, June 4 and 8 against Netherlands in Amstelveen. Later on, they will travel to Pakistan to play three ODIs on June 8, 10, 12. Initially, the tour is planned to take place in Rawalpindi but due to political situation, it might be moved to some other city. Reportedly, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has started working on a backup plan. (Agencies)

## Baseball games to return to London in 2023

MANCHISTOR: Major League Baseball is to return to London with regular season games taking place in 2023, 2024 and 2026.

The move was announced as part of a partnership to try to grow the game in the UK. In 2019, the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox played each other at the London Stadium in what were the first MLB games staged in Europe.

"The inaugural MLB games in London were an overwhelming success," said MLB commissioner Robert Manfred Jr. "We are confident in making a long-term commitment to London and are looking forward to returning to the city with more

MLB games, special fan events, and other opportunities to play and watch the game." The St Louis Cardinals and the Chicago Cubs were scheduled to play each other in London in June 2020 but their series was cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

It has yet to be announced which teams to play each other in future series in the English capital.

"Today is an historic day for London and baseball," said the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. "I want to continue attracting world-class sport to our city as part of my mission to make London the sporting capital of the world." (Agencies)

## Phil Mickelson and Tiger Woods to play US PGA Championship

MIAMI: Defending champion Phil Mickelson and 15-time major winner Tiger Woods have been named in the 156-man field for the US PGA Championship in Oklahoma.

Woods returned to competitive golf at the Masters in April, 14 months after suffering life-threatening injuries in a car crash. Mickelson, who has been on a break from golf after criticising Saudi Arabia's regime, last played in February.

Golf's second major of the year takes place from 19-22 May. Mickelson, 51, became golf's oldest major champion when he won at Kiawah Island's Ocean Course in 2021.

However, he lost multiple sponsors and saw his reputation tarnished after he sought to use involvement with a Saudi Arabian-backed golf super league to gain leverage over the PGA Tour.



The fallout saw him miss the Masters for the first time in 28 years.

Mickelson's participation would see him face the media for the first time in months and, while he has been named as a provisional starter, he could still pull out at the last minute.

Woods, 46, who nearly lost his right leg in the 2021 car crash, made the cut at Augusta after opening with a round of 71 and eventually finished 47th. Woods has already outlined plans to play The Open at St Andrews in July. (Agencies)

## Pak athletics squad to compete in Imam Reza Cup in Iran

ISLAMABAD: A seven-member Pakistan athletics squad will travel to Iran by the end of ongoing month to compete in the 2nd Imam Reza Cup, slated to be held in Mashhad from May 29 to 30.

"We've selected a bunch of highly talented athletes to represent the country in Imam Reza Cup. This is a key competition in the build-up of our athletes to the World Athletics Championships and other important upcoming international events," Major Gen. Muhammad Akram Sahi (ret'd), the president of Athletics Federation of Pakistan (AFP) told APP on Saturday.

Those scheduled to fly Iran on May 28 to feature in different categories of the competition include Shajar Abbas (100m & 200m), Abdul Mueed (200m & 400m), Sharoz Khan (high jump), Kashif Majeed



(long jump) and Muhammad Yasir (javelin throw). Two coaches Qazi Tanveer Hussain and Rana Sajjad Ahmad Khan will also accompany the athletes.

Sahi said that Imam Reza Cup would bring a great competition atmosphere, giving a much-needed exposure to Pakistani athletes. "This is a World Athletics-approved tournament. This is the same event where our javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem had

improved his personal best from 86.29 metres to 86.38 metres before featuring in Tokyo Olympics 2020. Hence, we believe that keeping in view the other upcoming international events, this tournament will help us a lot to gauge our athletes' strong as well as weak areas" he added.

According to Sahi, Pakistan's top javelin thrower Olympian Arshad Nadeem and another bright prospect Muhammad Yasir, who are getting training in South Africa at the Northwest University in Potchefstroom under the guidance of the world-acclaimed javelin coach Terseus Leibenburg will be flying back to the country on Tuesday to apply for US visas for participation in the World Athletics Championships, penciled in for July 15-24 in Oregon. (APP)

## Sports day marked

LAHORE: Athletics Federation of Pakistan (AFP) organised a celebration ceremony of kids Athletics Day here on Saturday. AFP is among Athletics Federations of over 200 countries which are celebrating and organizing Kids Athletics Day as per the announcement and compliance of the directive issued by the World Athletics (International Athletics Governing Body).

Children of the different schools showed keen interest and participated in this event and Muhammad Zafar, Secretary AFP was the chief guest of this occasion. He distributed gifts and certificates among the participating children. He commended the children who participated in the event and expressed his happiness on the big participation of children in the event. He also conveyed a message of appreciation from Major General (ret'd) Muhammad Akram Sahi, President AFP/Vice President Asian Athletics Association (AAA)/Chairman South Asian Athletics Federation (SAAF) to children and guests. (APP)

## Referee training course ends

KARACHI: The referee and judges training course has completed under Sindh Mixed Martial Arts Association (SMMAA) in which 18 clubs from across the province participated.

The course instructor was Gohar Gul. SMMAA Provincial President Qutbuddin Zarini, Senior Vice President Gulab Shah, General Secretary Gohar Gul, Sanaulah Kakar and representatives of other clubs Hayatullah, Saifullah, Mohibullah, Zakir Abbas, Akhtar Khan, Abdul Qayyum Mirani and others were also present on the occasion, said a communique.

Speaking on the occasion, District West President Iqar Khan and Qutbuddin Zarini said that they would achieve full success in this year's tournament in Afghanistan in which players from different countries are participating.

Trial will be held in May. Gohar Gul said that the results of the course will be far-reaching. Amrullah said that we are utilizing all resources for the development of mix martial arts and providing the training to martial arts players according to international standards.

He added that students have a special interest in mixed martial arts. Their skills will be enhanced by better training. Later, T-shirts and certificates were distributed among the players. (APP)

## Rashid Latif joins KPL

LAHORE: Former Pakistan captain Rashid Latif has joined the Kashmir Premier League (KPL) as Director Cricket Operations.

The 52-year-old signed an agreement with KPL ahead of season two.

Reacting to appointment of Rashid Latif, KPL President Arif Malik said, "After the prodigious success of KPL season 1, I have no doubt that Rashid Latif is the right man to shoulder the responsibility of taking KPL to the new heights of modern world Cricket." He also said, "I'm excited about this opportunity and can't wait to really get started. I'm passionate about cricket and really looking forward to helping the cricket in Kashmir grow even better and bigger." The KPL President also said, "We have a lot of talented young players in Kashmir and I aim to bring maximum number of young talent to be inducted in the league as their first introduction to global cricket opportunities and platform." (APP)

## WIFA launches int' I brand for women sports equipment

BUCHAREST: The International Women's Football Association (WIFA) announced the launch of its first international brand specialising in sportswear, equipment and accessories for women all around the world.

The media office of WIFA Federation said in a press statement today that the WIFA Federation, based in the Romanian capital Bucharest as its headquarters, has signed a partnership agreement with an international company specialized in the

production of clothing, sports equipment and luxury women's accessories and marketing them internationally according to the highest standards of quality and sophistication. The media office added in its statement that the company will adopt three Italian, Swiss and French origins in order to maintain the quality of the product and ensure its high level. The company is scheduled to announce soon the varieties and types of its products for global markets. (Agencies)

## Tunisian tennis star makes history with Madrid Open win

MADRID: Ons Jabeur has become the first Arab tennis player to win the Madrid Masters Tournament, making history on the international tennis courts.

Jabeur, 27, played in this week's Madrid Open against American Jessica Pegula, winning the match and the tournament, making it Jabeur's second career title after winning the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) title in Birmingham, UK last year.

Jabeur said after the match in Spain: "I'm not just playing for myself... I play for my country, for the Arab world, for the African continent."

Dubbed the "Minister of Happiness", or "Wazeerat al Sa'ada" in Arabic, by her countryfolk, Jabeur's win has been seen as giving Tunisians a reason to smile.

She said: "I honestly still can't believe it. I went through a roller coaster of emotions during the past few days, just after the semi-final. I was really stressed try-



ing to breathe. "I really didn't want to get disappointed again. I thought my heart was going out of my chest today. I'm very happy and trying to realise that I won today really." Born in Ksar Hellal, a small town in northeastern Tunisia, Jabeur grew up in the nearby coastal city of Sousse and started playing tennis young. Her mother Samira, who dabbled in the sport recreationally at her tennis club in Sousse, encouraged a three-year-old Jabeur to pick up her first racket and play the sport. (Agencies)

## Gaza weightlifter wins gold at Greece Junior World C'ship

GAZA/ATHENS: Mohammad Hamada, a Palestinian weightlifter from the Gaza Strip, won a gold medal on Monday at the IWF Junior World C'ships in Greece, organisers and his family said.

It was a rare international victory for an athlete from the territory of two million people, where world-class training facilities are scarce.

At the Athens event, Hamada, 20, won gold in the 102kg weight class for the snatch lift. He took a bronze medal in total results, which are based on a competitor's best snatch and clean and jerk lifts. Hamada travelled to the United Arab Emirates in January to prepare for the competition, spending 40 days at a training camp in the Gulf nation. He also trained alongside several world champions at another camp in Russia.



He began his career at the age of 12, taking part in local contests in Gaza.

"I wept. We all did. This is Mohammad's first world gold medal, a world gold medal for Palestine," his father, Khamees Hamada, told Reuters in Gaza.

"This is an achievement for every Palestinian. I am proud of my son," he said, after watching the event with family, friends and local sports officials. (Agencies)

## India to host 2022 Chess Olympiad from July 28 to August 10

NEW DEHLI: The 44th Chess Olympiad will be held in Chennai from July 28 to August 10, the game's world governing body FIDE confirmed.

The Olympiad, which was moved out of Russia after it invaded Ukraine, was awarded to Chennai recently, making it the second major global event of the sport to be held in India after the World Championship match in 2013.

The event is held over 11 rounds in both open and women's categories with likely participation of over 2,000 players. Several important decisions were taken, including the one to award the Olympiad to Chennai, during the FIDE Council held virtually recently.

"The Council decided to award the organisation of the 44th Chess Olympiad

to the All India Chess Federation to be organised in Chennai within the period from July 28 (opening ceremony) till August 10 (Departure)," FIDE said.

Also, it was decided that the 94th FIDE Congress would be organised by the All India Chess Federation in Chennai from July 31 to August 9 and to approve August 7 as the date for FIDE elections.

FIDE also said it had decided "to note strong preference to organise the Chess Olympiad for people with disabilities at the same dates as the 44th Chess Olympiad." Also, taking into account the current recommendations of the IOC, FIDE decided to suspend the national teams of Russia and Belarus from participation in official FIDE tournaments until further notice. (Agencies)

## S. Korea develops radar to target missile warheads

SEOUL: South Korea has developed a homegrown radar technology to identify and track ballistic missile warheads as part of efforts to strengthen the nation's air defense, its state-run military research agency said Tuesday.

The Agency for Defense Development (ADD) has secured the technology designed to discern warheads of hostile missiles from other non-explosive parts.

Such as propellants and debris created from the separation of rockets, its officials

said. "It is one of the technologies necessary for the country to conduct independent air defense operations in preparation against growing ballistic missile threats," the ADD said in a press release.

The agency acquired the technology under a development project launched in 2018, the report said.

North Korea, meanwhile, fired an apparent submarine-launched ballistic missile in waters off its east coast on Saturday in its 15th show of force this year. (Agencies)

## Ex-Israeli envoy to Belarus among Israeli 'mercenaries' fighting in Ukraine: Russia

MOSCOW: "Israeli mercenaries are practically shoulder to shoulder with Azov militants in Ukraine," the spokeswoman of Russia's Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova, told Sputnik radio.

Zakharova added that she will say something that politicians in Israel, who "exaggerate" the misinformation campaign against Russians, will not like. They will be interested soon, she said. According to media reports, the names of mercenaries fighting in Ukraine include people from 45 countries.

Safa news agency said that a Russian media source noted that the most prominent

are from the US, Britain, France and Israel. One of the names, said the source, is that of a former Israeli ambassador to Belarus.

Zakharova's comments come on the back of remarks by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov who claimed that Adolf Hitler had Jewish origins.

Lavrov appeared to be making the point that being Jewish did not preclude one from being a neo-Nazi or an anti-Semite. Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid condemned Lavrov, claiming that "The lowest level of racism against Jews is to accuse Jews themselves of antisemitism." (Agencies)

## Spain fires intelligence chief amid phone hacking scandals

BARCELONA, Spain: Spain's government fired the director of the country's top intelligence agency Tuesday following the hacking of politicians' cellphones, including the devices of the prime minister and several supporters of the Catalonia region's secession.

The National Intelligence Center, or CNI, has been under fire for its role in spying on Catalan separatists and for taking a full year to discover that the handsets of the prime minister and leading defense and security officials were infiltrated, possibly by a foreign power.

Defense Minister Margarita Robles, who was among the hacking targets, announced after Cabinet meeting that Paz Esteban would be relieved as CNI director.

"That (the hacks of government phones) took a year to discover, well, it is clear there are things that we need to improve," Robles said. "We are going to try to ensure that these attacks don't happen again, even though there is no way to be completely safe." Esteban's replacement will be Esperanza Casteleiro, "a woman who has worked for almost 40 years" at the intelligence agency, Robles said. (Agencies)

## Indonesian sailors seize \$82m of cocaine floating off port

JAKARTA: Sailors deployed to secure travel during the Eid Al-Fitr holiday made Indonesia's biggest cocaine seizure after finding plastic packages of the drugs floating at sea, the navy said.

Indonesia is a major hub for drug trafficking in Southeast Asia and has strict drug laws, with convicted smugglers sometimes executed by firing squad.

The four black packages containing 179 kilograms (nearly 400 pounds) of cocaine worth \$82.6 million (1.2 trillion rupiah) were found floating near Merak port on Java island on Sunday, the navy's deputy chief of staff said at a news conference Monday. Smuggling drugs by throw-

ing packages and a buoy into the sea is a common tactic, Vice Adm. Ahmadi Heri Purwono said. Smugglers likely put the drugs in the water near a port for them to be moved by a speedboat and were monitoring the packages when they were seized by the navy, he said.

"This is a spectacular seizure of cocaine, considering its huge value and the impact on the people as a result of the illicit drugs," Purwono said. No one has been arrested, and authorities are still investigating, he said.

The officers who spotted the package were among 5,000 navy personnel deployed to secure Eid Al-Fitr homecomings. (Agencies)

## Elon Musk says he would lift Twitter ban on Trump



SAN FRANCISCO: Elon Musk has said he would lift Twitter's ban on former US president Donald Trump if Musk's deal to buy the global messaging platform is successful. "I would reverse the permanent ban," the billionaire said at a Financial Times conference, noting that he doesn't own Twitter yet, so "this is not like a thing that will definitely happen".

The Tesla chief's US\$44-billion deal to buy Twitter must still get the backing of shareholders and regulators, but he has voiced enthusiasm for less content moderation and "time-outs" instead of bans.

"I do think that it was not correct to ban Donald Trump," Musk said. "I think that was a mistake because it alienated a large part of the country, and did not ultimately result in Donald Trump not having a voice." Trump was booted from Twitter and other online platforms after supporters fired up by his tweets alleging election fraud attacked the US Capitol on Jan 6, 2021 in a deadly and failed bid to stop Joe Biden from being certified as the victor in the US presidential election. (Agencies)

## Australia holds talks with top Indian military chiefs

SYDNEY: The head of Australia's air force has held a series of meetings with senior military officials in India, vowing to strengthen bilateral ties as Canberra warns China against further expansion into the Indo-Pacific.

Royal Australian Air Force chief Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld met separately with high-level figures in the Indian military - among them Army Chief General Manoj Pande, Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, and Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar. Each branch marked the visit with brief statements online.

"Issues of mutual interest and ways to enhance bilateral defense cooperation were discussed" at the meeting, New Delhi's air force said in a tweet, later shared by its Australian counterpart.

Hupfeld also sat down with Indian Defense Secretary Ajay Kumar for a "very warm" and "friendly" dialogue, Kumar announced in a tweet of his own, also sharing photos from the meeting. Though the officials described their discussions only in broad terms, the meetings come amid growing security ties between New Delhi and Canberra. (Agencies)

## Erdogan says Turkey will build 200,000 homes for 1m Syrians

ANKARA: Turkey plans to build 200,000 homes in northern Syria for some one-fourth of the refugees to voluntarily resettle, the Turkish president announced here.

Addressing citizens following the Presidential Cabinet Meeting, President Erdoğan said: "Turkey is progressing towards its goals without deviating from its route at a time when the world and our region are going through a painful period in the grip of wars, conflicts, political and economic crises, and social upheavals."

Describing Turkey as the center of new pursuits developments such as pandemics and wars have triggered in the global logistics and production system, President Erdoğan said: "While the global governance and se-

curity system, instituted following the Second World War, has been shaken deeply, we have revived the historical accumulation in our possession by means of political, economic and military reforms."

Stressing that Turkey not only stands on its own feet but also lends support to all of its friends, President Erdoğan drew attention to the efforts exerted with the goal of building the great and strong Turkey step by step, and said:

"We don't allow any internal or external incident, any overt or covert plot, to deter us from that goal. We consider the prices, which we as the nation pay in this struggle, to be the assurance of our safe and prosperous future." (Agencies)

## Australia to acquire 12 MH-60Rs, 29 AH-64E Apaches

SYDNEY: The Australian Government will expand its maritime helicopter fleet with an additional 12 MH-60R Romeo maritime helicopters to be acquired and based at HMAS Albatross, along with a 13th Romeo to replace one lost in 2021. This investment is worth more than \$2.5 billion and will replace Navy's existing Taipan fleet. The Government has also set aside up to \$360 million to expand facilities at HMAS Albatross to house the expanded fleet.

The Government has also finalized a more than \$5.5 billion investment to acquire and operate 29 new AH-64E Apaches helicopters for the Army, replacing Army's existing Tiger helicopters. The Government will also invest up to \$500 million to upgrade facilities to support the new Apache helicopters. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the



investments were key to the Government's plan for a safe and secure Australia in the face of regional and global uncertainty.

"Our world and our region are changing but we're investing a record \$270 billion in the defence and security of Australia over the decade to 2030," the Prime Minister said.

"Australia and our region is now in the midst of the most consequential and challenging strategic realignment since the Second World War. (Agencies)

## Aeroflot resumes flights to India, Turkey

MOSCOW: Russian flag carrier Aeroflot resumed flights to India and Turkey beginning May 6, 2022, two months after the suspension of international flights.

Aeroflot will operate two flights per week between Indira Gandhi International Airport (DEL) and Moscow Sheremetyevo International Airport (SVO) using its Airbus A330 aircraft.

The Russian national carrier has also resumed flights to Antalya and Istanbul

using the Airbus A330 aircraft. Aeroflot will operate up to two weekly flights to both cities.

The news comes two months after Aeroflot suspended most of its international flights. Since February 24, 2022, when Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, Aeroflot has been steadily reducing its international network. Flights to Ukraine and adjacent regions were canceled on the first day of the invasion. (Agencies)

## Lithuanian schools to teach public spirit, defence skills

VILNIUS: Lithuanian schools will teach national security skills and public spirit, Lithuania's education and defence ministries have announced.

Both ministries prepared a joint project for pupils in grades five to 10 with a strong practical focus on national defence skills and public spirit across multiple education programmes. The course should be introduced next spring.

"These courses are exceptional as they focus on teaching pupils defence and survival backgrounds. During the course, students will be thought how to survive in wildness, how to build tents,

introduced to safety and how to provide first aid," said Defence Minister Arvydas Anušauskas. The course will last three days per academic year. Participation in this programme will be compulsory in order to graduate from lower secondary school. "Students will apply the acquired knowledge in a hike organised at the end of the course," said Anušauskas.

Education Minister Jurgita Šiugždinienė said that "when updating all general education curricula, we pay special attention to the development of citizenship competencies in all subjects of general education. (Agencies)

## Hungary's 1st ever female president takes office

BUDAPEST: Katalin Novak, the first-ever female president of Hungary, took office here.

Her predecessor, former head of state Janos Ader, greeted Novak at the entrance to the Sandor Palace, the residence of the Hungarian President, reports Xinhua news agency.

Ader and Novak marched together on the red carpet up to the entrance of the residence, where they entered together.

Parliament elected Novak as the President on March 10.

Following her election, Novak said that she wanted to be a "President of peace". The official inaugural ceremony will take place on Saturday morning at the Kossuth Square in front of Parliament.

Novak has been elected for a mandate of five years, and can be re-elected once according to the Fundamental Law. Ader held the office for two terms. (Agencies)

## Japan to recognise same-sex partnerships from November

TOKYO: Japan will begin recognising same-sex partnerships from November after revising current rules, officials said Wednesday, becoming the largest city in Japan to do so.

Japan is the only nation of the Group of Seven countries that does not recognise same-sex unions, and its constitution stipulates that "marriage shall be only with the mutual consent of both sexes". But in recent years, local authorities across the country have made moves to recognise same-sex partnerships. Although such recognition does not carry

the same rights as marriage under the law. "We collected opinions from the public for the past two months.

And we heard opinions (from same-sex couples) who said they want to be recognised as partners," a Tokyo government spokesman told AFP.

The metropolitan government plans to ask legislators to approve revising a local ordinance next month, and will then begin accepting applications for the certificates. In October and issuing them in November. The city is considering offering various services. (Agencies)

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+92 91 5270608  
+92 333 9141117  
sheraazif1@gmail.com  
17 The Mall, Peshawar Cantt, Pakistan

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