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Editor: Omer Rizwan

US troops drill for Taiwan war – Media

- Army special forces have for the first time reportedly practiced defending against a Chinese attack on the self-governing island -

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) has reportedly carried out drills simulating its response to a Chinese seizure of Taiwan for the first time, reflecting rising concern in Washington that Beijing may try to seize control of the self-governing island by force. The Taiwan scenario was played out as part of the USAOC's annual capabilities exercise, known as CAPEX, at North Carolina's Fort Bragg, Military.com reported on Saturday. Troops practiced being inserted into Taiwan to help defend against a Chinese offensive, using a concrete mock-up on the base to simulate the environment in which they would fight the People's Republic of China (PRC). "The PRC, in accordance with our national defense strategy, is our true pacing challenge out there," Lieutenant General Jonathan Braga,

commander of USASOC, said in a speech before the exercise on Thursday. "Ultimately, what we're trying to do is prevent World War III. That's our job." The drills included firing recoilless rifles, breaching tunnels and operating Switchblade drones, the media outlet said. The special forces used some of the same weaponry and tactics employed during Washington's so-called War on Terror, along with "other tools reflecting a seismic shift for the command as it prepares for potential conflict against major military rivals." It's unusual for USASOC to identify the opposition force so directly during APEX, "given the military's hesitancy to overtly suggest conflict," according to Military.com. US-China relations have deteriorated in the past year amid Beijing's refusal to join in a Western sanctions campaign against Russia over the Ukraine crisis. Chi-

nese officials have accused US leaders of emboldening separatists in Taiwan, such as when then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi traveled to Taipei last August. China responded by breaking off defense and climate ties with Washington and launching massive military drills in the Taiwan Strait. The US government recognizes, without endorsing, China's claim to sovereignty over Taiwan. For decades, Washington has maintained a policy of "strategic ambiguity," keeping Beijing and Taipei guessing as to whether, and to what extent, the US military would intervene if China invaded Taiwan. However, President Joe Biden has repeatedly hinted that Washington would come to Taiwan's aid militarily in the event of a Chinese offensive. Washington think tanks have conducted wargaming exercises in recent months to simulate how a war over Taiwan might play out.

Kuwait deports 11,000 expats violating residency laws since 2023

KUWAIT CITY (Agencies): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior deported 11,000 residency law violators, of different nationalities, between January and April. On Friday, local newspaper Al Rai quoted security sources confirming that the deportation of violators comes within the framework of regulating the demographics and prosecuting violators of residency and employment laws. It noted that the deportation of the violators was carried out under the instructions of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Interior and Defence Sheikh Talal Al-Khalid and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Barjas. The deportations were intended to intensify campaigns in all governorates of the country to maintain security and monitor and control all residency violators. The sources

stressed that the ministry continues to pursue violators, prevent illegal workers from working and investigate those harbouring violators, referring them to the concerned authorities. Last January, Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nawaf assigned the interior minister to implement the law regulating the demographics, considering the imbalance with expatriates. On 9 September, 2021, the Kuwaiti government formed a committee to study mechanisms to address the imbalance of the demographics. The government says it aims to reach a balance of 70 per cent citizens and 30 per cent expatriates. Nevertheless, Kuwait is one of the Arab countries that most attracts expatriate workers. The total population is over four million, including more than three million male and female expatriates, while the number of citizens is 1.3 million.

Afghanistan thanks Saudi Arabia for help in Sudan evacuation

KABUL: Afghanistan is grateful for Saudi Arabia's help in evacuating its nationals from Sudan, the chief spokesman of the Taliban administration told Arab News on Friday after the first batch of Afghan evacuees reached Jeddah. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul, at least 120 Afghan citizens were trapped in Sudan when fighting broke out between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces on April 15. More than 500 people have been killed since and at least 4,200 injured as clashes continued despite a ceasefire that started on Monday and has been extended until the end of Sunday. Foreign nationals have been evacuated by land to neighboring Egypt and by sea to Saudi Arabia, as major airports have become battlegrounds. Afghan evacuees, who arrived from Port Sudan to Jeddah on Thursday, were among the nearly 2,800 people brought to safety by Saudi forces, which are spearheading rescue efforts. The Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that it was "deeply grateful" to Saudi Arabia for its assistance, while Zabihullah Mujahid, chief spokesman for Afghanistan's Taliban administration, said it was not the first time Afghans received critical aid from the Kingdom. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate has struggled a lot to evacuate a number of Afghans trapped in Sudan. With the coordination of Saudi Arabia, efforts are underway for the safe evacuation of the remaining Afghans too," Mujahid told Arab News. "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always supported Afghans and Afghanistan. We want to thank it."

Russia blames Ukraine drone attack for major Crimea fuel depot fire

LONDON (Reuters): A Ukrainian drone strike set ablaze a Russian fuel storage facility in the Crimean port of Sevastopol early on Saturday, sending a vast column of black smoke into the sky in the latest attack on the Russia-occupied peninsula. The city's Moscow-installed governor blamed Ukraine and later said the fire had been put out before a disaster occurred. A Ukrainian military intelligence official said more than 10 tanks of oil products with a capacity of about 40,000 tonnes intended for use by Russia's Black Sea Fleet were destroyed, RBC Ukraine reported. The strike came as Ukraine prepares for a long-promised counter-offensive to push Russian forces back from territory they seized since invading in February 2022.

Air strikes, artillery fire heard in Khartoum as Sudan fighting enters third week

KHARTOUM, (Reuters): The sounds of air strikes, anti-aircraft weaponry and artillery could be heard in Khartoum early on Saturday and dark smoke rose over parts of the city, as fighting in Sudan entered a third week. Fighting between the army and a rival paramilitary force continued despite the announcement of a 72-hour ceasefire extension on Friday, when strikes by air, tanks and artillery rocked Khartoum and the adjacent cities of Bahri and Omdurman. Hundreds have been killed and tens of thousands have fled for their lives in a power struggle between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that erupted into violence on April 15, derailing an internationally-backed transition toward democratic elections. The fighting has also reawakened a two-decade-old conflict in the western Darfur region where scores have died this week. The army has been deploying jets or drones on RSF forces in neighbourhoods

across the capital. Many residents are pinned down by urban warfare with scant food, fuel, water and power. At least 512 people have been killed and close to 4,200 wounded, according to the United Nations, which believes the real toll is much higher. More than 75,000 people were internally displaced within Sudan just in the first week of the fighting, according to the United Nations. Only 16% of hospitals were operating as normal in the capital. The latest ceasefire, brokered by foreign powers, is supposed to last until Sunday at midnight. The RSF accused the army of violating it with air strikes on its bases in Omdurman, Khartoum's sister city at the confluence of the Blue and White Nile rivers, and Mount Awliya. The army blamed the RSF for violations. The violence has sent tens of thousands of refugees across Sudan's borders and threatens to stir instability across a volatile swathe of Africa between the Sahel and the Red Sea.

More than 82 percent of population in China has contracted COVID-19 between December and February: Chinese CDC

BELJING (Agencies): A weekly report published by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concluded that more than 82 percent of the Chinese population contracted coronavirus between December 2022 and February 2023. The report said that COVID-19 cases surged during December 2022 through to January 2023. Since many of those infected did not undertake a nucleic acid test or antigen test, the CDC could not accurately count exact infection numbers. A research team from the Chinese CDC conducted online surveys from December 2022 to February 2023, asking respondents for their basic information and infection details. The results revealed that the self-reported infections

in China peaked during December 19 to 21, 2022. As of February 7, 2023, more than 82.4 percent of the country's population contracted the coronavirus. The team also discovered that domestically developed COVID-19 vaccines are effective in preventing COVID-19 symptoms, including fever, sore muscles and fatigue. The effectiveness of the booster shot against infection by the Omicron subvariant was 49 percent within three months of vaccination and 37.9 percent three to six months after vaccination. The research team admitted that the research methodology had certain limitations as the survey is limited to only WeChat users, and only covered a sample of 2,316 participants who were infected within certain dates.

UK nuclear submarine plans found in pub bathroom – media

LONDON (Agencies): The plans of the torpedo mechanism for the Royal Navy's newest nuclear-powered submarine were found lying on the floor inside a bathroom stall in a pub, British tabloid The Sun reported on Friday, citing a source. The files regarding HMS Anson, an Astute-class vessel, were reportedly marked 'official-sensitive', he second level in the UK government's three-tier classification scheme. People handling official-sensitive information must abide by the 'need to know' principle, especially if documents "might be shared outside

of a routine or well understood business process," the Ministry of Justice website states. According to the newspaper, the files were discovered in a pub in the port town of Barrow-in-Furness, northern England. The establishment is located not far from the BAE Systems' shipyard where naval vessels are built. The files reportedly included a description of the submarine's hydraulics, which "control torpedo hatches, steering and buoyancy." The Navy describes HMS Anson as "the cutting edge of the UK military capabilities".



LONDON (Agencies): Researchers have embarked on an ambitious global initiative to discover and record marine life hidden in the world's oceans. Ocean Census aims to identify 100,000 unknown species in the next 10 years, allowing scientists to better understand and protect the deep-sea ecosystem. There are huge gaps in our knowledge of the ocean depths. Of the 2.2 million species believed to exist in the Earth's oceans, only 240,000 have been described by scientists, according to the census. The initiative builds

on past projects such as the Census of Marine Life, which concluded in 2010 and identified 6,000 potential new ocean species. New advances in technology include high-resolution underwater imaging, machine learning and sequencing of DNA contained in seawater. The innovations will help accelerate the speed and scale of discovery of new life-forms, said marine biologist Alex Rogers, the project's science director. He is a professor of conservation biology at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom.

Oral Sex Is a Leading Factor in the Throat Cancer 'Epidemic' in the United States, and UK: Doctors

NEW YORK (Agencies): Oral sex may be the biggest factor in the rise of throat cancer in the United States. Dr. Hisham Mehanna, a professor at the Institute of Cancer and Genomic Sciences at the University of Birmingham, said that there has been a "rapid increase" in oropharyngeal cancer, a type of throat cancer, in the past two decades, calling it an "epidemic" in both the U.S. and U.K. "For oropharyngeal cancer, the main risk factor is the number of lifetime sexual partners, especially oral sex," Mehanna wrote for The Conversation. "Those with six or more lifetime oral-sex partners are 8.5 times more likely to develop oropharyngeal cancer than those who do not practice oral sex." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that 70% of oropharyngeal cancers in the United States are caused by HPV, or human papillomavirus. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection, with 3 million new cases in the U.S. each year. Many people will live their lives without ever knowing

that they have HPV, but for some, it can develop into cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, cases of oropharyngeal cancer linked to HPV increased yearly by 1.3% in women and by 2.8% in men between 2015 and 2019. Though people with HPV infections often "clear them completely," Mehanna said others can develop severe symptoms. "A small number of people are not able to get rid of the infection, maybe due to a defect in a particular aspect of their immune system," he explained. "In those patients, the virus is able to replicate continuously, and over time integrates at random positions into the host's DNA, some of which can cause the host cells to become cancerous." The CDC notes that it typically takes years after being infected with HPV for cancer to develop. The health agency also states that it is unclear if having HPV alone is enough to cause oropharyngeal cancers, or if other factors, like smoking or chewing tobacco, interact with HPV to cause these cancers.

Kim's sister calls Biden "old man with no future"

PYONGYANG (Agencies): North Korea has accused US President Joe Biden of being senile after he threatened to annihilate the DPRK in the event of a nuclear attack, denouncing the US for its "extreme" and "hostile" policies. The comments followed Biden's latest meeting with his South Korean counterpart, in which he

vowed to boost nuclear cooperation between the two allies. Senior North Korean official Kim Yo-jong, the sister of leader Kim Jong-un, issued a harsh statement condemning Washington and Seoul on Friday, singling out comments from Biden following a meeting with South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol in the US capital this week.

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.

CDM demands to complete work on infrastructure projects in Chitral

PESHAWAR (APP): Chitral Development Movement (CDM), an organization of volunteers while expressing concerns over unfinished work on infrastructure projects including Mastoj bridge, demanded of the government to complete these projects at the earliest keeping in

view the miseries and problems of the people. Inayatullah Aseer, Senior member of CDM said that work was started Boni Mastooj road last year but the work was stopped and now it was very difficult to travel on road due to its dilapidated condition. The CDM also demanded repairmen

of Mastoj Bridge and said that the bridge would collapse of work was not stated on time. They said that improvement of infrastructure was important to connect these areas with Central Asian States and to improve socio-economic conditions of Chitral people.

Patient’s photograph mandatory for treatment under Sehat Sahulat Program

PESHAWAR (APP): State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan has advised the health authorities to capture a picture of a patient being admitted to hospital under Sehat Sahulat Program for ensuring transparency. According to a notification issued here on Saturday, the requirement of capturing patient’s photograph would be mandatory from April 25, 2023. In order to en-

hance the gatekeeping mechanism and transparency in-term of patients treated under Sehat Sahulat Program, it is advised to all health facilitators (HFs) to capture a picture of patient before the admission. All panel hospitals are advised to arrange a webcam at the HFO Desks, for identification management and records of the patients admitted under Sehat Sahulat Program. All

health facilitators would ensure capturing photograph through integrated webcam at health desk and avoid use for mobile phones. In case, the patient is in ER or unable to visit the HF’s counter before admission, the photograph may be taken with patient’s consent, however, under no circumstances admission would be allowed without capturing identity.

Rummaging over waste dump in Peshawar, ears, tail chopped stray dog finds home in London

PESHAWAR (APP): Lying in the mid of a garbage dump, a brown and white color puppy of around one month was groaning in pain because of mutilated ears and tail that were chopped by animal dealers to increase the selling price of the canine. The pain-filled moaning of the baby dog attracted the attention of a young passerby in Gulbahar area

of Peshawar who on search found the puppy in very miserable condition due to bleeding from chopped ears and tail. Manzar, who runs a welfare organization in the name of Pukhar, moved over the heart-breaking condition of the timid puppy and decided to do something for providing relief from extreme pain and distress to the little soul. He contacted Zeba Masood, a US national with roots in Peshawar and founder of Lucky Animal Protection Shelter (LAPS), the only sanctuary for maltreated, beaten, injured and starving stray dogs in provincial metropolis of Khyber Pakh-

tunkhwa. Over listening pitiful condition of the pup, Zeba forthwith expressed her consent for adoption and asked Manzar to bring the victim of cruelty to her shelter home. “The puppy was shifted to LAPS around an year earlier and provided necessary treatment for healing of wounds and relieving of pain,” informs Javed, husband of Zeba Masood who helps his spouse in care of dogs taking shelter at LAPS. Soon after getting treatment and recovering from the trauma, ear and tail sliced puppy started showing affection towards his caretakers including Zeba, Javed recalls.

Martyrs of Lakki Marwat terrorist attack laid to rest with full military honours

PESHAWAR (Agencies): The funeral prayers of martyrs of Lakki Marwat terrorist attack were offered and laid to rest with full military honours at their respective hometowns. Naib Subedar Taj Mir (age 40, resident of District Nowshera), Havaladar Zakir Ahmed (age 38, resident of District Abbottabad) and Sepoy Abid Hussain (age 29, resident of District D.I. Khan) who embraced shahadat while fighting gallantly with terrorists in Dis-

trict Lakki Marwat on the night of 27/28 April 2023, were offered at their respective home towns, an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. A large number of serving, retired military and civil officials, relatives and people from all walks of life attended the funeral prayers. “These sacrifices only strengthen our resolve to eliminate the menace of terrorism from Pakistan, Insha Allah,” the ISPR said.

Govt’s priority to resolve journalists’ issues: Kundi

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi on Saturday said that resolving issues being faced by the media was among the top priorities of the incumbent coalition government. He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of Press Information Department’s (PID) Sub-office Dera Ismail Khan led by Information Officer Fazal ur Rehman and PID’s former Deputy Director Qazi Fazal Ahmad. The state minister assured the delegation that all the issues of PID sub-office and local journalists would be addressed on priority. He said the PID office in Dera Ismail Khan was closed during the previous tenure of

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) which was an injustice not only with Dera Ismail Khan but all the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said the restoration of PID office would help resolve issues of press clubs and media persons besides highlighting the problems of the area. He said full support would be extended by the federal government to address the deprivations of the area. Earlier, the delegation lauded the efforts of Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) Central Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Maryum Aurangzeb and high-ups of PID offices in Islamabad and Peshawar for restoring the PID office in Dera.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assures of his Support for Academia

PESHAWAR (APP): Under the auspices of Prime Minister’s Youth Programme (PMYP), Higher Education Commission, Pakistan (HEC) in collaboration with selected Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) kick-started Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Volleyball Provincial League here at University of Peshawar. Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali was the Chief Guest of the Ceremony whereas Chairman HEC was the Guest of Honor. Prior to formally announcing the opening of the Volleyball Provincial League, the guests jointly laid the foundation stone of the state-of-the-art Volleyball Academy at the University. The purpose of PMYP initiatives is to hunt talent and build infrastructure in the country for inculcating sports culture and providing youth with an opportunity to indulge in physical activities. In the league, the teams of both men and women from five regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa namely Peshawar, Mardan, Swat, Hazara, and Bannu will compete. The outperforming players from these teams will then be selected for attending extensive training camps. The players will be given coaching, training, and mentorship in these camps to enhance their capability. After successful



completion of training, two teams from each province would fight for National League. While addressing the gathering, the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali said that nations’ progress is the fruit of visionary leadership, and we foresee our youth to be able leaders who will make us proud. He further said that it is the time for educational institutions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to take up the challenge and make our country a self-sustainable state by revolutionizing the agricultural sector along with conducting research

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government and UNDP join hands to Promote Eco-Tourism

Upper Chitral (Agencies): The Culture and Tourism Authority (CTA), the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and UNDP Pakistan have signed an agreement of PKR 300 million to implement the third phase of the Eco-Tourism and Camping village project at five locations across the province. In addition to increasing livelihood opportunities for the local youth, this initiative will provide tourists with an opportunity to partake in adventure tourism and experience the scenic beauty of Pakistan. Moreover, promoting eco-tourism also promotes responsible travel to natural areas, while preserving and respecting the local environment and heritage. The initiative is the continuation of two phases of the project since 2017, where UNDP Pakistan and the Tourism Department have already established 6 camping sites at various locations across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and an additional 4 sites are expected to be completed by June 2023. Each site has 10 modern, state-of-the-art camping pods with attached washrooms and common kitchen facilities that can accommodate 26 tourists. The agreement of the third phase of the project is signed between the UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Knut Ostby, and Project Director, Culture and Tourism Authority, Mr. Muham-



mad Ali Syed, at Sor Laspur, Upper Chitral where the recently completed camping village under Phase 2 of the project was handed over to the CTA. Mr. Khalid Zaman, Deputy Commissioner, Upper Chitral and local community members were also present at the event. “This facility at Sor Laspur will provide tourists with excellent lodging facilities to enjoy the landscape and will also serve as a base for hiking/trekking trips in the region. We appreciate UNDP’s efforts in efficiently executing this project and its timely handover,” said Mr. Muhammad Ali Syed, Project Director, CTA. While speaking at the event, Mr. Knut Ostby UNDP Pakistan Resident Representative highlighted, “It is encouraging to see the community’s response and government’s ownership for this initiative. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to promote eco-tourism and local livelihoods in the province.”

Prime Minister Talent Hunt Women, Men Volleyball League begins

PESHAWAR (APP): Women and Men Volleyball Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inter-Region League under Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif Youth Talent Hunt got underway here at Agriculture University Peshawar on Saturday. Director Distance education University of Peshawar Dr. Noor Zada and Director sports Hazara University Khalid Jalal Shah graced the occasion as guests and formally inaugurated the Volleyball Women and Men League wherein five teams each of the Women and Men from as many Regional including Swat, Mardan,

Hazara, Bannu and Peshawar are taking part. Regional Sports Officer Bannu Shafqatullah, Peshawar Team Manager Rahm Bibi, Mardan Team Manager Mohammad Asim and other personalities were present Before the start of the matches, the players were introduced to the guests. Former Pakistan team skipper Abdur Rahim Khan and national women team skipper Urooj, the two selectors were also there to select two teams each of the Women and Men to represent the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the forthcoming coming national league.

PPP to celebrate Labor Day in dignified manner: Bacha

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial President Pakistan Peoples’ Party Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Minister of State Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha on Saturday said that the Labor Day will be celebrated in a dignified and grand manner on May 01. In a statement issued here, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said that directions have been issued to all concerned provincial leaders of PPP to start full preparations regarding the Labour Day. Minister of State Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said that the rights obtained by the long struggle and sacrifices were snatched from the laborers. He said that the constitutional right of forming a union by the

laborers was being taken away from the workers which is injustice to them. The PPP is with the workers, farmers, youth and the poor and will support them till getting their rights, he added. In the government of Shaheed Bibi, the employees were given due shares in the national institutions, said Bacha. Bacha said that unfortunately, the previous government could not cross any milestone for the working class and deprived them of all their basic rights. The state minister said that under the new labor policy of their government, 400 percent of workers’ salaries were increased and made permanent for millions of temporary workers.





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Risky Migration

57 bodies washed ashore in different towns of western Libya after two boats carrying Pakistani, Syrian, Tunisian and Egyptian illegal immigrants sank earlier this week. This unfortunate incident is just one from the many that have created a pattern of death for those looking to avail a new life abroad. The main motivation for such individuals is to seek better economic opportunities abroad and to nurture a better quality of life, but the dangerous route they opt for often results in their demise. The only solution to a problem like this is for governments to focus on grass-root problems—like inequality, poor economic performance, unemployment, internal conflicts and the propensity of violence—and attempt to solve them to whatever degree possible. The bodies of the migrants were discovered by a coast guard officer and aid workers who moved quickly to address the situation. They were immediately retrieved, put in black bags and pictures were taken for the purpose of identification. The authorities claim that they will soon release these bodies but have simultaneously called attention towards this recurrent problem of illegal immigration. Hundreds of people attempt to cross the treacherous Mediterranean Sea to go to Europe where they feel they will get better opportunities, along with a change to improve their overall quality of life. In the process, 441 people have already drowned in the first few months of 2023 according to the International Organisation for Migration. Most of the illegal immigrants were those form underdeveloped or struggling countries where not only does the government fail to provide adequate opportunities for people to sustain a livelihood, but human rights abuses and inequality is rampant. These countries further get trapped in a vicious cycle of stagnant development because they suffer from brain drain. The only way forward is to address these problems and devise solutions that aim to provide basic necessities to the population, in all realms of their life.

Are we in for water wars?

— By Khalid Saleem

COMING upon one of those billboards that blight the skyline of the major cities of this blessed land, one learnt to one's horror that a certain bottled brand had the distinction of being "Pakistan's favourite water". This was news indeed, since local lore one had grown up with always had it that any locality's favourite water was the one that came out of the deep well next to the mosque. Maybe, unbeknown to one, the situation had radically changed after nine/eleven, just as everything else has. But, then, why announce it on billboards? The one reason that one can think of for this haste to announce it from the house-tops (read, billboards) is that our economy whiz kids have all of a sudden realized that there is big money to be made from water. This commodity, that was once not only freely available but was also considered nature's gift to humankind, has now – thanks to the mixed priorities of our merry band of planners – become a saleable commodity and one out of which millions could be earned without much effort. The only hurdle in the way of the cut-throat brigade aforementioned was the way this precious commodity was available in plenty in this Land of the Pure (read Poor). So, what better way to vault this hurdle than to contaminate our natural sources of water so as to oblige an already impoverished multitude to get addicted to bottled water they could ill afford? What will they think of next? Bottled fresh air, perhaps! One would crave the indulgence of the gentle reader to digress a bit from the matter at hand. One may be old fashioned, but one can distinctly remember the time when the ultimate thirst quencher was, well, plain water! When one felt thirsty one instinctively went for a refreshing glass of fresh water. And if one felt like living it up a bit when the weather was warm, one opted for the luxury of iced water. That appears now to be history. This is not the done thing any more if you happen to belong to the benighted but bejewelled brigade. It is considered to be infra-dig to imbibe water if you happen to be thirsty; you are supposed to go for what is euphemistically called 'a beverage'. For those who still thirst for plain old water, the powers that be happen to have another trick up their sleeve. They have thought up what is now known as 'designer water'. Public Relations agents have thereby managed to give a whole new meaning to the phrase 'liquid assets'.

The resultant 'war of beverages' has been on for a while. Aerated waters and colas have enjoyed a monopoly of sorts over the beverage market for quite some time now. The investors, it would appear, are further looking at the emerging market of some twenty billion dollars for what are known as 'alternative beverages'. The mind boggles! If this were the story confined merely to the so-called developed world one would not get overly excited about the affair. But there is more to it than meets the eye. The irony is that while this game is being played in the prosperous societies – and by association in the prosperous segments of the poorer societies – the overwhelming majority of the world's population does not have access to clean drinking water. Those (among them the inhabitants of our blessed land) whom nature has endowed with abundant water resources are being deliberately denied access to this natural resource by their 'planners' in order to swell the local market for the beverage multinational giants. Meanwhile, children of numerous societies around the world continue to die by the hundreds of thousand every day because they are condemned to drinking contaminated water. At this point, one could perhaps take the liberty of reminding the multinational beverage giants of their duty towards humanity at large. Profits from the sale of bottled beverages (even if we are to count only the developing world markets) are astronomical. Would it be too much to expect these multinational giants to put aside a small proportion of their profits (say ten percent) to be utilized – under the general supervision of the United Nations – for projects intended for the express purpose of making clean drinking water available to the deprived sections of the world populace? Such projects could help raise the image of the United Nations from an ineffectual debating society to that of a utilitarian Organization working for the general uplift of the 'peoples' it is supposed to represent. Meanwhile, the beverage wars go on unabated. Bottled water and the alternative drinks with their eye-catching names add to the flavour of the contest. The multinational giants continue to rake in billions. The Third World and the common man, as is the norm, remain on the receiving end where they belong! History as we know has seen wars over the control of various natural resources. Courtesy: Pakistan Observer

Defusing the census controversy? – By Naseer Memon

UNLESS extended again, the first-ever digital census of Pakistan will be concluding at the end of the month, with the results expected soon after. The census has been a chronic source of controversy in Pakistan, at least for the last three decades. The census of 1991 was not carried out and that of 2011 was aborted at the stage of house counting. On both occasions, the data deviated from the previous trend by a wide margin and was deemed unrealistic. The census exercise is critical to the planning process. The resultant demographic data not only helps governments and the private sector to improve development planning, it also offers useful insights for setting or redefining long-term national priorities in key sectors of human development. In Pakistan, though, the census has been tied with economic and political incentives like the extent of the share in the National Finance Commission Award, allocation of seats in parliament, quotas for government jobs and admission to public-sector universities. This stimulates provinces to compete for a bigger share of the pie. The NFC share is the biggest attraction among all incentives and is tied to the population share. For years, population was the sole criterion for the horizontal distribution of finances. However, the seventh NFC Award, issued in 2010, departed from past practice and added three other criteria to make the award more inclusive. Nonetheless, population still remained the dominant factor with 82 per cent weightage in the NFC formula. Smaller provinces have been protesting that making population the only or dominant factor favours Punjab that is home to more than half the national population. In the spirit of a just federation, the NFC formula should have been made more balanced by assigning reasonable weightage to other vital indicators, such as backwardness, penury, resource contribution, state of human development and geographic sprawl. It took decades to introduce a minor shift in favour of such indicators. This shift created fiscal

space for the smaller provinces and was bolstered by the 18th Constitutional Amendment that abolished the Concurrent List and devolved various functions to the provinces. After the 18th Amendment, a census was conducted in 2011. However, it was terminated at the stage of house counting as the data depicted an abnormal trajectory. Another census was conducted in 2017. This time Sindh rejected the data by challenging the questionable average family size in the province. This prompted a discussion and a decision by the Council of Common Interests to conduct a fresh census within five years as against the normal intercensal span of 10 years. To make it credible and comprehensive, the then government decided to conduct the census through digital devices rather than archaic paper stacks. Like any digital platform, the census software also encountered technical hiccups at the outset, triggering resentment especially among political parties and civil society in Sindh. Intriguingly, the ruling parties didn't object to the digital census while being staunch opponents of digital elections. The data collection process was rattled, mid-course, by the Sindh government. The chief minister and the ruling party chairperson made serious charges and explicitly warned that the data would be trashed if the process were not reset to their satisfaction. Some preliminary data also invited the ire of certain quarters. A pall of apprehension has fallen on the census exercise and it might possibly end up in shelves and the graveyard of cyber data. Since the next general elections require the delimitation of constituencies based on this census, any controversy may jeopardise the electoral process, whose fate is already hanging by a thread. India averted controversy regarding the census exercise there by adopting a novel approach. Initially, population data used for its NFC Award was frozen and kept to 1971 census data. After the census of 2011, Indian states demanded the unlocking of the 1971 population benchmark as the popula-

tion had considerably increased over four decades. In the 15th NFC Award (2021-26), the Finance Commission of India used the 2011 census data for the award. However, two important measures were taken to pre-empt any race to increase the population. One, only 15pc weightage was assigned to population numbers. Second, to de-incentivise population growth, a 12.5pc share was allocated to demographic performance. This allocation actually discourages federating units from increasing fertility rates in order to claim a bigger share of the financial pie, based on population figures. The commission report noted that "we feel that the use of the latest Census data, and sudden change of underlying data, should not unfairly put some States which have performed well on the national objective of demographic management at a disadvantage". The commission intelligently reined in any propensity to distort the census process through an inflated head count. Although Pakistan's political anatomy is far different from India's and it may not be easy to drastically reduce the population share in Pakistan's NFC Award, some structural measures are required to gradually deflate the population share in the Award. Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal recently extended a similar suggestion. Pakistan adds sizeable numbers of at least four million to 5m every year to its population. Amid prolonged spells of a faltering economy and frequent natural disasters, the sustained population growth has dwarfed our meagre economic gains. A population growth rate of 2pc will exert disproportional stress on our resources when our GDP is estimated to grow at only 0.8pc this year, for example. Our current NFC regime not only provokes provinces to fight over census results but also discourages the provinces from arresting the pace of population growth. A paradigm shift is overdue and should not be delayed further if future censuses are to be saved from perpetual controversy. - Courtesy: DAWN

India should be wary of the West's trap of "China vs. India" narrative

— Global Times

The United Nations said on Monday that India is about to surpass China to become the world's most populous nation - a status long held by China - by the end of this week. However, some Western media outlets have already taken this opportunity to exaggerate the contrast between China and India, trying to provoke new strife between the two. What has really attracted the most attention in the past two days is a cartoon from the German magazine Der Spiegel. The cartoon shows two different trains standing side by side: One is old and crammed with people all around it, with one of them holding the Indian flag; the other is an advanced bullet train with the Chinese flag on its body, seemingly falling behind the first train. The cartoon quickly sparked huge controversy among Indian people. Many Indian netizens and even politicians criticized the cartoon as "racist." Although Der Spiegel may want to show that China is technologically advanced compared to India, undoubtedly it also clearly harbors malicious intentions that some Western forces have demonstrated constantly in comparing China and India. The

world will now pay more attention to India as it becomes the most populous country in the world. At the same time, everything New Delhi does will inevitably be compared to Beijing. In particular, some Western forces that don't want to see China and India develop will certainly bash India for what China does better, and vice versa. People from both countries must be mentally prepared for this. At such a historical moment of demographic change, the path before both China and India is not easy. India will have to find a way to benefit from its new found position. Instead of being distracted by Western hype and focusing too much on the "China-India comparison," both countries should focus more on tackling their pressures at home. They need to develop their own economies and improve people's livelihoods, which will make them stronger and better capable to deal with future challenges. Long Xingchun, a professor at the School of International Relations at Sichuan International Studies University, told the Global Times that with an enormous population of similar size, China and India should enhance bilateral co-

operation on the basis of such common ground. They should be more empathetic to each other and regard development as the most crucial issue. At the same time, with such a similarity, Beijing and New Delhi can create more opportunities to cooperate in the international arena. As the world's two biggest developing countries, they can stand up more firmly and proactively for the interests of the Global South, particularly in the face of developed countries, if the two nations can join hands. The combined population of China and India is nearly 3 billion, accounting for more than 30 percent of the world's population. The cooperation between the two is the one between two giants. If both countries can feed these 3 billion people and lead them eventually to a well-off life, it will be a great pillar for world peace and stability. India should hold a more broad-minded perspective as it surpasses China in terms of population. It needs to understand that falling into West's trap of the "China vs. India" narrative will only cause unnecessary strife that may hinder the prospect of win-win cooperation and common development.

Letters to the Editor

Corruption in government offices
Please allow me to use some space in your esteemed newspaper to protest against the pervasive evil of corruption in government offices. Corruption is a troublesome problem, and hardly any department or office in Pakistan is free from it. The prevalence of corruption has created deep disappointment among people, and they have lost faith in justice. Societies, where corruption and bribery

take firm roots, become morally destroyed. People take the law into their own hands, and dacoits, criminals, and thieves become dominant forces. The distinction between right and wrong disappears. Every student of history knows that corruption is one of the greatest reasons for the downfall of nations. I strongly suggest the following measures to eradicate this problem: Salaries of government employees should be increased to such an extent that

they do not feel the need to engage in corruption. Additionally, the political, ethical, and social systems should be completely changed, wide discretionary powers of public servants should be taken away and the anti-corruption department should be completely overhauled and made effective. I hope that these suggestions can improve the situation to some extent.

– Muhammad Amjad Noor
– Karachi

A Bid Farewell Reception held in honour of Ambassador of Iran in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (KhyberMail): In a bid to farewell the Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan H.E. Seyed Muhammad Ali Hosseini, a farewell reception was hosted in his honour by the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Islamabad on April 28, 2023. A great number of Media alongwith senior former diplomats and intellectuals attended the reception. The Iranian envoy was of the view that journalists and media members can help in promoting ties, boosting cooperation, removing misunderstandings, lifting tensions and bridging the gaps. Ambassador said, "We pay tribute to all the journalists that sacrificed their most loved life in engaging their careers to promote justice, truth and love around the world". While talking to his opening remarks, the Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed said, Iran was the first country to recognize Pakistan after its independence in 1947. Since the relations between the two countries are on the move, he added. Senator Mushahid also talked about



rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia and termed it a positive development in terms of peace and stability in the region. He was of the view that China, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan can surely constitute a force to be reckoned with. Mushahid also declared sanctions on Iran as unwarranted adding despite these

sanctions Iran has shown phenomenal progress in all spheres. He said Pakistan too had faced severe sanctions in the past. Senator said the world has changed altogether and those who impose such sanctions must realize the ground realities.

Only Parliament has the authority to rewrite the Constitution of Pakistan, Speaker National Assembly

Clash of any sort between institutions is not in the interest of the country, Raja Pervez Ashraf

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf while addressing a reception in honor of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) representatives at the Parliament House commended journalistic community of Pakistan for performing their duties in a responsible and thoroughly professional manners. Media was an important pillar of the country and it had always played an instrumental role for the restoration of democracy

in the country. They stood alongside politicians for ensuring the supremacy of the Constitution and the Parliament, he added. The Speaker emphasized that the Parliament would continue to play its role in solving all the problems of the journalistic community. The journalists should also continue to do their bid in upholding and maintaining the honor and respect of the Parliament as it belonged to all. He stressed that the Parliament was the home of 22 crore

people. There could be no compromise on the supremacy of this Parliament. He underscored that the Constitution was a sacred document and its protection was the responsibility of all of us. He also expressed his respect for the Supreme Court and stressed upon the importance of avoiding conflicts between institutions for the country's benefit. He underscored that only Parliament had the authority to re-write/amend the Constitution, if needed.

Elections to be held on set time & date: Mian Javed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister Mian Javed Latif on Saturday said that his government would hold general elections in the country on a fixed time and date as per the Election Commission of Pakistan. Talking to a private news channel, he highlighted that Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's main motto was to come back in power by holding early elections which is not possible. The minister said that Imran should respect the institutions of the country and he must abide by the rule of law of honourable courts.

Commenting on his behaviour, the minister said that Imran Khan had always used abusive language to others so he should have looked first at what he himself and his party members had done in their tenure. Replying to a question Mian Javed said PTI made the country economically disabled and created a financial crisis whereas the govt always supports dialogues to resolve important state matters. He said PTI made false cases towards PML-N and he always misguided the public in his so-called public gatherings.

14,200 wheat bags seized in Kot Momin

SARGODHA (APP): The district administration is striving hard to stop smuggling and hoarding of wheat on a war footing basis. In this regard, Assistant Commissioner Kot Momin Ch Rab Nawaz Chadhar launched a comprehensive crackdown in the tehsil and recovered 10,200 wheat bags of 100-kg and 4,000 bags of 50-kg from hoarders during the last nine days. He said the government would not allow

any body to hoard and illegal stocking of wheat. Meanwhile, in another crackdown against sugar and Ghee hoarders on Saturday, Chaudhry Rab Nawaz Chadhar visited various stores and imposed a fine of Rs 35,000 on them over undeclared stock of sugar and ghee in Sail Morr area. He also checked several petrol pumps and imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on three petrol pumps in Midh Ranjha.

9 dacoits arrested, 5 motorcycles, cash, weapons recovered

FAISALABAD (APP): The police have busted three dacoit gangs and arrested their nine active members from different parts of Faisalabad during the past 12 hours. A police spokesman said here on Saturday that SHO Ghulam Muhammad Abad police station Asim Rasheed Min-hais, on a tip-off, conducted raid near Qaim Sain graveyard and arrested four outlaws -- Arsalan, Liaquat, Zain, and an unidentified gangster, along with three motorcycles, illegal weapons, mobile-phones and cash. Similarly, Sub Inspector (SI) Mian

Waqas Ahmad of Sargodha Road police station also arrested three alleged members of a dacoit gang including Tahir, Adeel and Waqas from Makko Mor graveyard, and recovered two motorcycles, weapons and other items from them. Spokesman said that SI Ziauddin of Sadar police station also caught two dacoits, Faisal and Suleman, from Jahangir Mor, Sammundri Road, along with cash, mobile-phones and other items. All the accused were wanted to police in dozens of dacoity, robbery and other cases, he added.

Environmental pollution worsens due to plastic shopping bags: DC

SIALKOT (APP): Deputy Commissioner Sialkot Adnan Mehmood Awan has said that environmental pollution has worsened due to plastic shopping bags. The district administration would conduct a systematic campaign to encourage the use of plastic bags in the Sialkot district and encourage the public to replace them with bags made of environmentally friendly materials, the DC said, adding that the Environment Protection Department would prepare a report based on its recommendations and suggestions. He expressed these

views while addressing the meeting of District Environmental Approval Committee Sialkot. Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Revenue Muhammad Iqbal, District Officer (DO) Environment Waseem Cheema and Assistant Director Mines were also present. The deputy commissioner, while rejecting the request for approval for sand mining in Randhirbagriyan, directed the DO Environment Protection to submit an assessment report on the environmental impact of the proposed dryland due to sand mining last year.

FIA arrests outlaw for harassing girl

MULTAN (APP): Federal Investigation Agency's Cyber Wing claimed to have arrested an alleged outlaw for harassing a family in the city. According to official sources, an alleged outlaw namely Umair Abbas son of Ghulam Abbas, resident of Multan, was allegedly found involved in sexual harassment and blackmailing through WhatsApp and Instagram account. The accused has objectionable pictures of the complainant's sister. FIA Team led by SI Saeed Ahmed and ASI Zeeshan Khan raided and managed to arrest the alleged outlaw. The team also recovered the outlaw's mobile phone.

A batch of 97 Pakistanis from Sudan arrived Karachi

ISLAMABAD (APP): A third batch of 97 Pakistani nationals from Port Sudan arrived at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi from Jeddah via C-130 aircraft of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF). "The government of Pakistan will continue to facilitate the safe return of stranded Pakistanis," a Foreign Office spokesperson on Saturday posted on her Twitter handle.

Man kills sister on 'honour' issues

SARGODHA (APP): A man killed his sister on so-called 'honour' issues in Kalabagh area on Saturday. Police said Wayaat Khan (38), a resident of Kot Chandna, had objection over his sister Skeena Bibi's relationship with some persons. On the day of the incident, he shot dead his 28-year-old sister after exchange of harsh words on the issue. Further investigation was under way by the police concerned.

Elderly man allegedly committed suicide

MULTAN (APP): An old man allegedly committed suicide by jumping in front of a train near the Seetal Marri railway track here on Saturday. According to Rescue officials, a 60 years old person named Ghulam Shabbir s/o Kareem Bukhsh resident of Fahad town suddenly jumped in front of the train. As a result, he sustained serious injuries and died on the spot. Upon receiving the information, the Rescue team rushed to the spot and shifted the body to Nishtar Hospital in the presence of police and heirs.

Sindh refuses to accept census results unless correct numbers reported: CM Sindh

HYDERABAD (APP): Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that the results of the digital census will not be acceptable to Sindh unless the correct numbers of its population were reported. Talking to the media after offering condolences to Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP's) local leader Irfan Gul Magsi here on Friday, Shah said that the inexplicable disparities have surfaced in the average size of a family in the ongoing Digital Population Census 2023. Shah said the average size of a family in other provinces had been calculated at 6.2 to 6.3. Whereas the same measurement in Sindh had been incomprehensibly recorded at 5.4, he added. According to the CM, the difference in the average was difficult to figure out. Shah said Sindh's population could not be less than 75 million

at present. The CM added that his provincial government had already raised certain objections against the digital census. He disclosed that the provincial government had so far written 11 letters to the center in that regard. Responding to a question, the CM said the disbursement of funds for repair and reconstruction of flood-damaged or destroyed houses in Sindh would start soon. According to him, Rs300,000 in total would be released with the first instalment of Rs75,000 expected soon after verification of the flood-hit homes. Shah said the law and order situation in the province was showing improvement as there had been a drop in the crime rates. However, he added that the police had to deal with the dacoits of the riverine forests both in Sindh and Punjab.

NA Speaker commends exemplary professionalism of journalists

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf has commended the Pakistani journalistic community for their responsible and professional work, recognizing them as an essential pillar of the country. Addressing a reception in honor of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) representatives at the Parliament House last night, Speaker credited the media for playing an instrumental role in restoring democracy by supporting politicians and ensuring the supremacy of the Constitution and Parliament. The Speaker emphasized the Parliament's commitment to solving all problems faced by the journalistic

community while urging journalists to uphold and maintain the honour and respect of the Parliament, which belongs to all. He stressed the importance of the Parliament as the home of 220 million people, and its supremacy as non-negotiable. Additionally, he underscored the sanctity of the Constitution, emphasizing that its protection was a shared responsibility. Expressing his respect for the Supreme Court, the Speaker highlighted the importance of avoiding conflicts between institutions in the interest of the country. He emphasized that only the Parliament holds the authority to amend or rewrite the Constitution, if necessary.

DC visits Municipal corporation office, inspects issuing certificates process

NAWABSHAH (APP): Deputy Commissioner Shehryar Gul Memon paid a surprise visit to the Municipal Corporation Office and inspected the issuance of free certificates to the public. Persons present on the occasion of the visit thanked DC for the free issuance of different certificates. In their briefing, the officials of Municipal Corporation informed that from April 10 to

April 28, 2023, the corporation has issued 1600 Birth certificates, 200 Residence Certificates, 49 Death Certificates, 70 Marriage Certificates and 70 Divorce Certificates free of charge. He said that in one-month period, citizens have lodged 29 different complaints out of which ten complaints are resolved while work on the remaining complaints is in progress.

PTI, BJP same page over Bilawal upcoming India's visit: Shazia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Shazia Marri has said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are same pages as Foreign Minister, Chairman Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari upcoming visit to India. In a statement issued here on Saturday, the minister said PTI is unaware of the current political scenario and foreign affairs, adding it is doing dirty pol-

itics for reprehensible and negative motives. She said Bilawal Bhutto Zardari would attend the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to deliver a historical address. The presence of a foreign minister in SCO would be in the best national interest of the country, she added. Shazia Mari claimed that incompetent PTI chief Imran Khan had destroyed the image of the country internationally as he did not aware of foreign-related affairs.

47th death anniversary of film actor Munawar Zarif observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 47th death anniversary of famous Pakistani comedian and film actor Munawar Zarif observed on Saturday. According to a Private news channel, Munawar Zarif was a versatile actor and comedian best known for his work in the Pakistani cinema of the 1970s and was named "Shehenshah-i-Zarafat" by his fans in the film world. He appeared in over 321 movies and was famous for his

out-of-script dialogue delivery. Munawar Zarif started his film career with a Punjabi film Dandian in 1961 and got a breakthrough from the film Hath Jori. His other famous films are Pardey Mein Rehney Do, Banarsi Thugg and Jeera Blade. He was awarded the Nigar Award for his outstanding performance in Baharo Phool Barsao, Zeenat and Ishaq Deewana. Munawar Zarif died on April 29, 1976, in Lahore.

AJK PM, political leadership welcome COAS statement on Kashmir

MUZAFFARABAD (APP): Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Anwarul Haque and other political leaders welcomed the statement of Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir on Kashmir who was addressing the passing out parade in Abbottabad. The PM said there were deep bonds between Pak Army and the Kashmiri people. The prime minister said that no power can vanish from the love of the Kashmiri people towards the Pak Army and also the unflinching support of Pakistan to the Kashmiri people. The ex-prime minister of AJK

Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider also appreciating the stance of COAS said India was a cunning enemy of Pakistan which was persistently engaged in weakening Pakistan at every front. Pakistan People's Party President AJK and member of the Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin also appreciated the statement of COAS on Kashmir. Yasin said Army Chief's statement not only encouraged the struggle of the Kashmiri people but also gave a strong message to India that all its efforts to curb the peaceful struggle of Kashmiri would dash to the ground.

PM for effective measures over improved power supply in summer season

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday directed for taking of effective measures to ensure improved power supply during the summer season. The prime minister was taking to Minister for Power Division Engineer Khurram Dastagir who called on him, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The minister briefed the prime minister about the ongoing development projects in the power sector. The prime minister



also directed for expeditious completion of new power transmission lines to provide all possible relief to the consumers.

CEO Etisalat International Pakistan called on Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar

ISLAMABAD (Staff Report): Mr. Abdul Rehman Al Raheem Al Nooryani, CEO Etisalat International Pakistan called on Federal Minister for Finance and revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, today. SAPM on Revenue Mr. Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Special Secretary Finance and Senior officers from Finance Division attended the meeting. Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar welcomed Mr. Abdul Rehman Al Raheem Al Nooryani and shared the close and brotherly relations between



Pakistan and the UAE. The two sides discussed and resolved to amicably settle all outstanding issues related to PTCL.

In-House Session H.E. Markian Chuchuk, Ambassador of Ukraine to Pakistan



ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized an In-House Session with Markian Chuchuk, Ambassador of Ukraine to Pakistan, on Pakistan-Ukraine bilateral relations and regional developments. The In-House Session was chaired by Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI. Participants included: Major General (Retd.) Nadir Khan, Ambassador-designate to Ukraine; Former Ambassador Fauzia Nasreen, COMSATS; Ambassador (R) Nadeem Riyaz, President,

IRS; Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas (Retd.), Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Ukraine; Dr. Tughrul Yamin, Senior Research Fellow, IPS; Dr. Farah Naz, Assistant Professor, NUST; Dr. Adil Sultan, Air University; Mr. Asadullah Khan, Senior Research Fellow, CASS; Mr. Joshua Arthur, AD, Europe, MoFA. Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director CSP, and members of CSP research team were also present. The deliberations were focused on the state of Pakistan-Ukraine relations, which were characterized as longstanding, cordial and growing in depth and breadth.

First pediatric open heart surgery performed at SIUT

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT) marked yet another milestone in its history on April 26, when a five-year-old Baby Zainab was wheeled into the Cardiac Operation Theatre for the first open heart surgery at SIUT. Baby Zainab was suffering from a hole in the heart that allowed the blood to mix and increase blood flow to the lungs, causing her to have frequent chest infections. To perform the surgery, a team of 9 doctors, 2 perfusionists (who run the heart-lung machine) and 8 nurses worked relentlessly to ensure safe and successful surgery and post-operative care.

Zainab tolerated the procedure well and made a remarkable recovery, being able to come off the ventilator within 3 hours. She has made an excellent recovery and was discharged home. A lot of planning went into performing the first open-heart surgery at SIUT. Initially, a team of cardiologists and their support staff established the Paediatric Cardiology Department at SIUT with the main purpose of not only providing a new service but also developing protocols and processes to make the new division comparable to any international unit which deals with paediatric and congenital heart disease.

Regional emergency officer reviews Rescue-1122 performance

SIALKOT (APP): Regional Emergency Officer (REO) Gujranwala Syed Kamal Abid, along with an inspection team, visited Central Rescue-1122 offices and reviewed monthly performance of the Sialkot station. The team checked working of rescue vehicles, equipment and staff. The team members also checked data entries of store, record of accounts office and technical office, emergency record of control room, flood-fighting equipment, etc.

The REO also listened to the control room calls, checked the fuel log book and register, and also signed it. Station In-charge Zia Mustafa and Rescue Safety Officer Samiullah Gondal were also present. The REO appreciated performance of District Emergency Officer Engineer Naveed Iqbal and gave necessary instructions to him. A meeting between the REO and district emergency officer was also participated by the operational staff.

Culprit dies while escaping

BUREWALA (APP):The accused involved in the physical assault of an innocent girl was shot dead while trying to escape by snatching the gun from the constable. According to details, City police had arrested an accused namely Ghulam Fareed over physically assaulting an 11-year-old innocent

girl in Mujahid colony the previous day. The accused made the excuse of a sudden heart attack late at night. The outlaw tried to escape by snatching the gun from the constable during shifting him to a government hospital and the gun fired in which accused sustained injuries and died.

President directs EOBI to pay retired female teacher's pension within 30 days

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has directed the Employees' Old Age Benefit Institution (EOBI) to issue pension to a retired female teacher within 30 days and report its compliance to the Wafaqi Mohtasib. The teacher had been deprived of her pension by the EOBI since February 2019 on the flimsy ground that the beat officer of the complainant had verified her service period of only three years. Expressing displeasure over the failure

of EOBI to address the grievances of the complainant, the president regretted that EOBI had unnecessarily wasted its precious time by submitting representation against the decision of the Wafaqi Mohtasib who had referred the case to EOBI for resolution within 45 days. He also directed the secretary, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development to take effective measures to enhance the service delivery of EOBI immediately,

President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Saturday. As per details, Zohra Bibi (the complainant) had stated that she served with the Oxford Public School, Hayatabad, Peshawar, w.e.f. 01-07-1996 to February 2019 (almost 23-years) and that the contribution from her salary had been deducted and this fact had been admitted by the Employees' Old Age Benefit Institution (EOBI) that the concerned school was registered with it.

8 promoted as Naib Tehsildar

SARGODHA (APP): Commissioner Sargodha Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti chaired divisional promotion committee meeting on Saturday and gave approval for promotion of eight 'Kanungo' as Naib Tehsildar and one senior clerk as an Assistant in the next grades. Official sources said that Muhammad Nawaz, Riaz Hussain, Akhtar Hussain, Hafiz Muhammad Ramzan, Fida Hussain, Fazal Elahi, Muhammad Shair and Shair Khan were promoted as Naib Tehsildar, while senior clerk of commissioner's office, Qazi Gulzar Ahmed, was promoted as an Assistant in BPS-16.

Minor girl dies as tractor trolley ran over her

KHANEWAL (APP): A minor girl crushed under a tractor-trolley to death near old Larri Adda Makhdom Pur. According to details, a four-year minor girl was crossing the road when a speeding tractor-trolley hit her. As a result, she sustained serious injuries and died on the spot. Police arrested the driver and launched legal action by taking the tractor-trolley into custody.

Eight 'criminals' arrested in Sargodha

SARGODHA (APP): The Sargodha police have arrested eight alleged criminals during the ongoing crackdown. Spokesman Qaiser Awan said that police of different police stations conducted raids at different localities and arrested Shahid, Rizwan, Qadir, Shoaib, Perwaiz, Tasawwar, Talha and Akram besides recovering 1.2-kg hashish, nine guns, five pistols, and 237-litre liquor from them.

MNAs call on PM

LAHORE (APP): Members of the National Assembly (MNAs), Rao Muhammad Ajmal and Irfan Dogar on Saturday separately called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. During the meeting, the matters related to their respective constituencies and the political situation were discussed, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

NHMP foils wheat, flour smuggling bid near Chakri

ISLAMABAD (APP):National Highways and Motorway Police on Saturday foiled another attempt to smuggle wheat and seized six suspicious trucks near Chakri. The NHMP spokesperson said that 135 tons of wheat and 06 tons of flour were recovered from the trucks. After completing preliminary legal proceedings.

Armed Forces will never hesitate from any sacrifice to safeguard future of next generations: COAS

KAKUL (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir on Saturday said that Armed Forces of Pakistan would never shy away from any sacrifice to stabilize, secure and safeguard the future of our next generations. The Army Chief made these remarks as the chief guest while addressing the Passing Out parade of cadets of 147th Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Long Course, 13th Mujahid Course, 66th Integrated Course, 6th Basic Military Training Course and 21st Lady Cadet Course held at Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. The Army Chief said that the people of Pakistan were central to the unity of the state. "First and the foremost is



loyalty to the State of Pakistan and commitment to the Constitutional role assigned to Armed Forces of Pakistan." The Army imbibed on the vision of our Great Quaid signifying no distinction of caste, color, creed, gender or geography, he added. The COAS said the Armed Forces' efforts for peace should never be taken as a sign of weakness. The COAS said, "We have the will, capability and capacity to protect our sover-

Japan announces 'Spring Conferment of Decoration' for Imtiaz Ahmad

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Government of Japan has announced the 2023 "Spring Conferment of Decorations" for Imtiaz Ahmad former Ambassador of Pakistan to Japan in recognition of his contribution to strengthen bilateral relations and promote friendship between Japan and Pakistan. According to a statement of the Japan Embassy in Pakistan, the former envoy will be decorated with "the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star. Imtiaz Ahmad had served as a diplomat in Japan four times, for more than 16 years and had held al-

most every post from young diplomat to the Ambassador in Japan. He has also acquired a broad knowledge of Japanese language, culture and history, which led to his significant contribution to the enhancement of our relations in many fields. In addition to his regular diplomatic activities, he has made a great contribution to the Japanese people. While paying tribute to Mr. Imtiaz, the embassy said, during his tenure as Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Pakistan in Tokyo, the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred on March 11, 2011.

IUB declares the constitutional and legal system of Pakistan as a compulsory subject in every department -VC

BAHAWALPUR (Staff Report): The Islamia University of Bahawalpur Engr. Prof Dr Athar Mahboob, Vice Chancellor, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur has said that his university has started constitutional and legal system of Pakistan as compulsory subject in every department for the students to learn about the basic rights provided in the constitution. In an exclusive video podcast interview to commemorate golden jubilee of 1973 Constitution of the country with Radio Pakistan Correspondent Sajjad Parvez. He said the 1973 constitution represents a significant milestone in the history of Pakistan, as passed unanimously. He said constitution provides power sharing structure among all its units and institution to run the affairs of the state smoothly while it also stop the concentration of power in one hand. Dr. Athar Mahboob said it gave a federal system of government, with powers divided between the central government and the provincial governments. He said



constitution gives guarantee of basic rights to masses and also exercise its authority to elect the true representative for their services. He further said the constitution guarantees fundamental rights to all citizens, including the right to equality, freedom of speech, assembly, and association, freedom of religion, and the right to a fair trial. He said the 1973 constitution established Pakistan as an Islamic Republic and it also provided protection of the rights of minorities and freedom of religion. He said the constitution provided the establishment of local governments giving citizens greater control over their own affairs while recognized the importance of women's rights and provided for the promotion of gender equality.

IBA Karachi and Synapse launch a joint initiative to foster compassion and tolerance

KARACHI (Staff Report): Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi and Synapse, Pakistan Neuroscience Institute launched Tabeer - (IBA x Synapse) Program for the IBA students, staff, and faculty. Tabeer aims to foster a culture of compassion, effective communication, and creative leadership (3Cs) within the IBA community. The first large assembly to inaugurate this program was held on Friday at IBA, Main Campus. Speakers included, Founder and CEO Synapse, Dr. Ayesha Mian; Educationist, Human Rights Activist and Social Nationalist, Dr. Arfa Sayeda Zehra; and IBA alumnus and Radio Presenter, Mr. Adeel Azhar, who participated in a fireside chat. Dean Student Affairs IBA, Maheen Ghauri commenced the session and said that through this initiative,



the management hopes to bring a positive change at IBA, aspiring for an empathetic and a kinder IBA community. Executive Director IBA, Dr. S Akbar Zaidi welcomed the esteemed speakers and attendees. He introduced Synapse, Pakistan and said that these conversations at IBA were an effective way of focusing on mental health and teaching individuals on how to communicate and interact with each other. Dr. Zaidi added that more such initiatives would take place at IBA to inculcate tolerance and a congenial environment.

Coca Cola and Pepsi are the latest casualties of war in Sudan

LONDON (Agencies): Sudan's eruption into conflict has left international consumer goods makers racing to shore up supplies of gum arabic, one of the country's most sought-after products and a key ingredient in everything from fizzy drinks to candy and cosmetics. About 70% of the world's supply of gum arabic, for which there are few substitutes, comes from the acacia trees in the Sahel region that runs through Africa's third-largest country, which is



being torn apart by fighting between the army and a paramilitary force. Wary of Sudan's persistent insecurity, companies dependent on the product, such as Coca Cola (KO.N)

and Pepsico (PEPO), have long stockpiled supplies, some keeping between three-to-six-months worth to avoid being caught short, exporters and industry sources told Reuters. However, prior conflicts have tended to be focused in far-flung regions such as Darfur. This time, the capital Khartoum has been brought to a standstill in the fighting that broke out on April 15, paralysing the economy and disrupting basic communications.

Apple, Amazon 'committed' to cinemas, says theatre boss

LAS VEGAS (Agencies): Movie theatre owners are confident that previously streaming-focused tech giants Apple and Amazon are now "committed" to putting their films on the big screen – even if Netflix still declines to – their trade body's new president told AFP. This week's CinemaCon event in Las Vegas, where owners of multiplex chains and arthouse screens gather annually, took place in an optimistic mood, after three ner-

vous years blighted by the pandemic and the rapid rise of streaming. Back in those dark days, some 2,000 US theatres were forced to close forever, while even traditional Hollywood studios like Warner and Disney were skipping theatres and putting major films on HBO Max and Disney+ streaming first. But since big screens reopened, even Apple and Amazon have pivoted to giving movies like "Air", "Napoleon" and "Killers of the

Flower Moon" extended runs in theatres. The two tech giants reportedly each plan to spend US\$1 billion per year on movies headed first for the big screen. "I think their commitment to the theatrical experience is amazing," said Michael O'Leary, who takes over the National Association of Theater Owners this week. "We're excited to see where it goes. We're confident that they're committed to this enterprise."

First Republic bank in limbo as shares fall further

NEW YORK (Agencies): Shares of First Republic fell further into an abyss yesterday amid mounting speculation over the US regional bank's way forward after it reported a big fall in deposits. After dropping more than 50% earlier yesterday, shares of First Republic finished the day at US\$3.51, down 43% following numerous trading halts due to volatility. Now worth only about US\$654 million, the bank



has had a stunning loss of value since its peak days in November 2021 when it had market capitalisation of more

than US\$40 billion. The latest free fall follows First Republic's disclosure on Monday that it lost more than US\$100 billion in deposits in the first quarter. The bank also said Monday that its deposit situation had stabilized following a US\$30 billion infusion of funds announced in mid-March from a consortium of 11 US private banks and that it was "pursuing strategic options."

EU country urges check of Ukrainian food exports for market violations

POLAND (Agencies): Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki has urged the European Commission (EC) to check if Ukrainian food exports meet EU standards as Warsaw seeks to protect its economy from "destabilization" caused by an influx of cheap goods from Ukraine. He announced on Friday that Warsaw would submit a request to the EC demanding an inspection of a range of goods such as poultry, eggs, and



dairy products. Earlier, the Slovak authorities had banned the processing and sale of Ukrainian grain after discovering a dangerous pesticide in

a shipment. "We want to reliably verify the impact of these products on the Polish market in the last few months and the risks related to the destabilization of the Polish market in the future," Morawiecki was quoted by the radio station RMF24 as saying. The announcement comes at a time when EU ambassadors are expected to vote on extending duty-free trade with Ukraine, which expires on June 5.

ICCI, NPC to work together for uplift of local economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that ICCI would work with National Press Club (NPC) for the better development of the city and uplift of the local economy. He said this while visiting NPC, Islamabad, to congratulate its newly-elected office bearers. He lauded the role of NPC for the welfare of the journalistic community and stressed that the government should provide better facilities to the

journalists to enable them to serve the nation more effectively. He demanded that CDA and all housing societies in Islamabad should reserve a specific quota of plots at discounted rates for the business community, journalists, lawyers and labour class. He said that NPC should cooperate in highlighting the key issues of the business community that would help in better growth of business activities. He assured that ICCI would cooperate with NPC in resolving the issues of the journalis-

tic fraternity. Anwar Raza President, Azhar Jatoti Senior Vice President and Khalil Ahmed Raja Secretary, NPC thanked the ICCI delegation for visiting to congratulate them. They said that the business community is playing an important role in the economic development of the country and NPC will extend its support in highlighting their key issues. Both sides discussed problems being faced by the economy and agreed to make joint efforts for their redress.

Revealed: All you need to know about the upcoming Wynn Casino in UAE's Ras Al Khaimah

DUBAI (Agencies): Wynn Resorts Ltd. said they will be opening their new resort in Ras Al Khaimah at an estimated cost of \$3.9 billion in a step that could contribute to the emirate's rise as a major global tourist destination. The luxury resort has recently unveiled plans and renderings in a presentation shared on its website for the development in Ras Al Khaimah, UAE. Wynn Al Marjan will also be the first to include gaming in the Middle East. It is believed that it will become



one of the world's largest gaming facilities. The property will include multiple resort amenities, including 1,500 hotel rooms and suites and will feature several high-priced vil-

las with beachfront access. Wynn CEO Craig Billings said during the presentation that the property will have 24 restaurants and lounges and other non-gaming amenities, including 120,000 square feet of retail space. The development will see a 1,000-foot-tall hotel tower rising above the island's shoreline. Billings also said they wanted the design to stand out in the region, taking into consideration that the UAE is well-known for its unique architectural buildings and monuments.

Standard Chartered says Saudi Arabia has opportunities for growth

LONDON: Saudi Arabia is an important market that is "growing and promising" and opens up large-scale banking opportunities for the region and the world, a banking official said on Wednesday. "The Saudi-UK business, trade and investment partnership is very strong and historic," Mazen Fahad Al-Bunyan, CEO of Standard Chartered Saudi Arabia, told Arab News on the sidelines of a UK roadshow that coincided with the launch of the British-based multinational bank's Q1 results on Wednesday. "The trade corridor is very strong. It has recorded SR15.3 billion last year and that was a 47-percent growth that excludes foreign direct investment, which was SR5.1 billion, give or take, which is significant and important for the two countries,

and we'd like to play a role in that as well." Standard Chartered has been operating in the Kingdom since 2011 through its capital markets license, and has already set up similar licenses in the UAE and is looking to do the same in Egypt by the end of the year. It is already present in 18 markets in the Middle East and North Africa region and Al-Bunyan says the company has a "very clear strategy" for the region. "We're not foreign to the market," he said. "In fact, it's a very important market for us. We continue to invest in localizing our coverage and bringing teams on the ground, bringing capabilities on the ground, investing in digital systems and bringing our best-in-class expertise, whether it's people or innovative products," he added.

The consumer, corporate and institutional banking, and treasury services company reported a very strong first quarter in which profits jumped 21 percent, beating expectations, as rising interest rates buoyed income from its cash management and retail banking businesses. Profits in Africa and the Middle East increased by 9 percent but were up 31 percent on a constant currency basis, as income increased 26 percent with strong growth in cash management and retail deposit income, the report said. "This was partly offset by expenses increasing 14 percent on a constant currency basis reflecting inflationary pressures in the region. Impairment charges were a net release of \$26 million, an \$18 million reduction on the prior year," it added.

'It all went south': Twitter co-founder Dorsey rues Musk deal

SAN FRANCISCO (Agencies): Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey — once a supporter of Elon Musk's US\$44 billion acquisition of the site — is now offering sharp criticism of the new owner and his handling of the deal. Asked if Musk has proven himself to be the best possible steward for the platform, Dorsey said, "No. Nor do I think he acted right after realising his timing was bad. Nor do I think the board should have forced the sale." After stock markets turned shortly following his offer to buy Twitter a year ago, Musk sought to withdraw from the deal. That prompted a legal

battle between the company and the billionaire, before the acquisition was completed at its original offer price. "It all went south," Dorsey wrote on Bluesky, the invite-only Twitter alternative that he's backing. Twitter did not specifically respond to a request for comment. Dorsey, who was friendly with Musk for years and suggested he get involved with Twitter, was previously publicly in favour of the deal. Last year, he called Musk as owner of Twitter "the singular solution I trust." On Friday, one Bluesky user said it was pretty sad how it all went down, to which Dorsey replied "yes."

Russian central bank outlines major economic risks

MOSCOW (Agencies): The Bank of Russia (CBR) held its key interest rate unchanged at 7.5% on Friday, saying the economy will recover this year and grow by as much as 2%. Commenting on the decision, CBR Governor Elvira Nabiullina said that some factors could threaten the regulator's goal of returning inflation to its 4% target. "About the risks that could lead to a deviation of inflation from the baseline forecast. There are pro-inflationary factors, we expect some acceleration, an increase in core inflation, but we do not expect double-digit figures," she stated. According to the central bank, con-

sumer demand has been recovering as the Russian economy has adapted to the sanctions faster than expected while supply has failed to keep up. This has resulted in lower inflation, Nabiullina added. "In addition, we will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the budget policy," she said. "We proceed from budget plans that the government has outlined, but if the structural budget deficit widens, it will be one of the grounds for tightening monetary policy. But we have to look at the whole set of factors, there may be disinflationary factors that will compensate for pro-inflationary influences."

Dar chairs meeting of RRMC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Saturday chaired the meeting of the Reforms and Resource Mobilization Commission (RRMC). Ashfaq Yousuf Tola MoS/Chairman RRMC, Tariq Bajwa SAPM on Finance, Tariq Mehmood Pasha SAPM on Revenue, Secretary Finance, Chairman FBR, and other senior officers from Finance Division, FBR, and RRMC attended the meeting, said a press release issued here. Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar welcomed the members of the Commission and highlighted the current economic and financial outlook of the country. He shared that in

spite of challenges, the government is determined to set the economy on a positive trajectory through introducing reforms in various sectors in order to achieve economic stability and growth. The Chairman of the Commission presented an interim report containing recommendations of the Commission to the Finance Minister. The Finance Minister further appreciated the efforts of the RRMC in recognizing issues and challenges in the existing taxation system and for devising valuable suggestions for reforms in the revenue policies for resource mobilization, ease of doing business, and taxpayer facilitation to achieve sustainable economic growth.

U.S.Venture Global signs 20-year deal to supply LNG to Japan

NEW YORK (Agencies): Venture Global LNG has signed a 20-year deal to sell 1 million tons per year of liquefied natural gas from its upcoming CP2 LNG export facility in Louisiana to Japanese customer JERA, the U.S. LNG exporter said on Friday. The CP2 LNG export terminal will be located on a site adjacent to Venture Global LNG's operating Calcasieu Pass LNG facility in Cameron Parish, Louisiana. CP2 LNG, Venture Global's third export project, is expected to commence construction later this year. Venture Global has already announced Sales and Purchase Agreements (SPAs) for over a third of the 20 million tons per annum (MTPA) nameplate facility, with active discussions ongoing for the remainder of its capacity, the U.S. exporter

said. "Venture Global is thrilled to be expanding our partnership with JERA, one of the world's premiere energy providers and largest buyers of LNG," said Mike Sabel, chief executive of Venture Global LNG. Sunao Nakamura, Senior Managing Executive Officer, Optimization of JERA, commented, "LNG procurement competition has been intensifying and thus, stable procurement of LNG in a timely manner in line with the domestic electricity supply-demand situation is needed to secure a stable supply of energy in Japan." At the end of last year, Japan's INPEX Corporation signed a 20-year deal with Venture Global to buy LNG from CP2 LNG for 20 years, as both Asian customers and U.S. developers are seeking long-term agreements.

Fed autopsy on SVB faults bank's management — and its own oversight

New York (CNN): In a hotly anticipated banking report released Friday morning, the Federal Reserve said it failed to take sufficient action to prevent the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, while detailing serious management oversights by the lender's executives. The Fed, which is SVB's primary regulator, took responsibility for its own lapses, saying that supervisors "did not fully appreciate the extent of the vulnerabilities as Silicon Valley Bank grew in size and complexity" and "did not take sufficient steps" to ensure that SVB address its problems quickly. Silicon Valley Bank's collapse on March 10 — followed two days later by that of Signature Bank — sent shock waves through the global banking system. Regional banks have been hit especially hard, and investors are still bracing for pain six weeks later as First Republic Bank teeters on the edge. "Regulatory standards for SVB were too low, the supervision of SVB did not work with sufficient force and urgency, and contagion from the firm's failure posed systemic consequences not contemplated by the Federal Re-

serve's tailoring framework," the Fed report states. It recommended a sweeping re-evaluation of its regulatory and supervisory functions. "Following Silicon Valley Bank's failure, we must strengthen the Federal Reserve's supervision and regulation based on what we have learned," said Michael Barr, the Fed's vice chair for supervision. "This review represents a first step in that process." Barr, who oversaw the Fed's self-assessment, said that the central bank would welcome external reviews of SVB's failure, including from Congress. The report offers four key takeaways: - Silicon Valley Bank's leadership failed to manage risks. - The Fed's own supervisors didn't fully appreciate SVB's vulnerabilities. - Supervisors were too slow to act on problems. - A 2019 shift in Fed policy "impeded effective supervision." The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation released a similar report on Signature Bank, blaming its demise on "poor management."

Cristiano Ronaldo strikes again to keep Al-Nassr in the title race

RIYADH (Agencies): For the first time since he arrived in Saudi Arabia in January, Cristiano Ronaldo and his Al-Nassr teammates faced a must-win situation on Friday. And when the pressure was on, he, and they, delivered a 4-0 victory over Al-Raed at Mrsool Park. The result means the Yellows are once again within three points of Saudi Pro League-leaders Al-Ittihad, albeit having played one game more, and still in the running for a 10th league title. It might not have been a vintage



performance from Al-Nassr but, after a goalless draw at Al-Fayha and a 2-0 defeat against Al-Hilal in their previous two league games (as well as a shock King's Cup semi-final exit

at the hands of Al-Wehda on Monday), it was nevertheless a welcome return to winning ways. A third-successive failure to win would have dealt a major, possibly fatal, blow to their championship hopes. On Thursday, Al-Ittihad had defeated third-placed Al-Shabab, thanks to a late, late penalty, to go six points clear. Everyone was very aware that if Al-Nassr failed to match that result the following day, the Roshn Saudi League trophy would take a big step closer to Jeddah.

Dortmund held at Bochum, give Bayern title advantage

BERLIN (Agencies): Borussia Dortmund handed the advantage in the Bundesliga title race back to Bayern Munich yesterday after being held to a 1-1 draw at lowly Bochum. Bochum, who sit one spot and just two points above the relegation zone, scored after just five minutes, Anthony Losilla unleashing a screamer from outside the box. Dortmund hit back immediately, Germany forward Karim Adeyemi tapping in after a length-of-the-field team move to make it 1-1. Dortmund were camped in the Bochum penalty area in the final minutes and had the ball in the net through



Mats Hummels, but the linesman's flag went up immediately, with the defender standing half a metre offside. Bayern can go one point clear in their bid for an 11th straight title by winning at home against last-placed Hertha Berlin tomorrow. Dortmund came

into the match knowing a win would send them four points clear. But they arrived winless in their last five away matches in all competitions and faced a Bochum side kept out of the relegation places due to their strong home form. Bochum made the most of a nervy start from the visitors, Losilla latching onto a poor Dortmund clearance to rocket the ball across Gregor Kobel and into the top left of the net. Dortmund hit back 90 seconds later, Hummels curling a long pass to winger Donyell Malen on the right flank, who slipped his defender and sent the ball across.

Newcastle United record signing draws comparisons to Arsenal legend Thierry Henry

NEWCASTLE (Agencies): Since the day he arrived at Newcastle United, Alexander Isak's slender frame, running style and electric turn of pace have led fans to draw comparisons between the club's record signing and Arsenal legend Thierry Henry — one of the Premier League's greatest ever forwards. Newcastle head coach Eddie Howe has always steered away from putting that kind of pressure on the young Swedish striker's shoulders. Well, until now. Isak has given Howe little choice, with the public evidence there



for all to see. As the former Borussia Dortmund and Real Sociedad man picked the ball up on the halfway line with the score at 3-1 against Everton on Thursday, few could have predicted

the footballing magic they were about to witness. The affable frontman beat a helpless Ben Godfrey not once but twice, before twisting and turning Michael Keane and Idrissa Gana Gueye in knots with hip swivels and dips of the shoulder, the ball stuck to his right instep as if attached by an invisible cord. Isak then showed pace and guile aplenty to beat Godfrey again, just for good measure, before poking the ball past England keeper Jordan Pickford to teammate Jacob Murphy, who had the easiest of finishes.

Saelemaekers snatches late draw for AC Milan at Roma

Rome (AFP/APP): Alexis Saelemaekers snatched an incredible 1-1 draw for AC Milan at Roma on Saturday with a stoppage-time leveller moments after Tammy Abraham thought he had won the game for the hosts. Belgium midfielder Saelemaekers poked home in the seventh minute of added time to silence the Stadio Olimpico and make sure that Milan would stay in the Champions League positions. Milan are fourth, ahead of Roma on goal difference thanks to Saelemaekers' strike which cancelled out a fabulous low finish from Abraham in the 94th minute. Both teams are three points ahead of Inter Milan, who will however take fourth spot if they beat Lazio in Sunday's early kick-off. Should Inter win at the San Siro it would also give Napoli the chance to seal their first Italian title in over three decades, as Lazio trail the champions-elect by 17 points with seven matches remaining. Napoli would need to beat Salernitana on Sunday afternoon to win their third Scudetto after those conquered by talisman Diego Maradona in 1987 and 1990. The



two goals were each side's only shot on target in what was otherwise an uninspiring encounter in the Italian capital which came alive in the final seconds. Roma thought they had won the match despite an injury crisis which meant defenders Chris Smalling, Diego Llorente, Rick Karsdorp were all out and midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum was also sidelined, while star man Paulo Dybala was only fit for the bench. Jose Mourinho's team then lost Albania defender Marash Kumbulla after just 15 minutes and just before the start of the second half had to bring on Stephan El Shaarawy for Andrea Belotti, who hurt his ribs in a clash with Fikayo Tomori. Mourinho said he was proud of the performance but sad to lose two precious points. "We are

not a rich team, we don't have a big squad, every time we lose a player it is a big problem," said Mourinho. "I am sad, obviously, as we had three points in our hands, but I am more proud than I am sad." Roma will also have to do without Nemanja Matic at Monza midweek after the Serbian's late tackle on Ismael Bennacer earned him a booking midway through the first half. None of that mattered however when Abraham, whose other major contribution was to stop his own teammate Lorenzo Pellegrini from shooting into an open goal in the first half, sent the home fans wild with a great spin and finish. However with the match looking all over poor defender from Gianluca Mancini allowed Rafael Leao to float a perfect cross over to Saelemaekers, who saved his team at the last. Atalanta took advantage of the stalemate by beating Torino 2-1 Saturday's late match to move up into sixth, a point ahead of Inter. Duvan Zapata netted with two minutes remaining to move Atalanta two points behind Roma and Milan as the Champions League race heats up.

Pak vs NZ 2nd ODI: Fakhar Zaman's unbeaten 180 guides Pakistan to win

RAWALPINDI (Agencies): Fakhar Zaman smashed an unbeaten 180 runs off 144 balls as Pakistan chased down the target of 337 runs in 48.2 overs for the loss of three wickets against New Zealand in the second ODI of the five-match series at Pindi Cricket Stadium Rawalpindi on Saturday. Fakhar's opening partner Imam-ul-Haq departed in the 10th over after scoring 24 off 26 balls and providing a 66-run first wicket stand. But it was a 135-run second wicket stand with skipper Babar Azam, that laid the foundation of the massive chase. Babar scored 65 off 66 balls with the help of five fours and a six. Abdullah Shafique, who came at the two-down position fell cheaply on 7 off 14 balls. After him, wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan joined Fakhar and swept the game out of New Zealand's reach by launching an aggressive attack. He scored an unbeaten 54 off 41 balls, hitting six boundaries. Fakhar's batting was a treat for every eye as hit 17 fours and six maximums.



Earlier, Daryl Mitchell scored a brilliant 129 off 119, smashing 8 fours and three maximums as New Zealand posted 336 for five. Babar Azam won the toss and opted to bowl in the match. The win helped hosts Pakistan take a 2-0 lead in the series. The home team, who won the first ODI by five wickets on Thursday, made three changes with 20-year-old pacer Ihsanullah making his ODI de-

but. Leg-spinner Usama Mir and batter Abdullah Shafique were the other changes. The trio replaced Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shadab Khan and Shan Masood. The Kiwis also made two changes, with Adam Milne and Blair Tuckner included for James Neesham and Henry Shipley. The remaining matches of the five-game ODI series will be in Karachi on May 3, 5 and 7.

Alcaraz survives Madrid Open scare

MADRID (Agencies): Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz survived a major scare before beating Emil Ruusuvuori in three sets to reach the Madrid Open third round yesterday but admitted he "didn't know what to do" at key parts of the match. World No 2 and US Open champion Alcaraz fought back to see off the 41st-ranked Finn, 2-6, 6-4, 6-2. "It was really tough. I would say I was about to lose," said Alcaraz who famously defeated Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic in Madrid last year. "It was complicated. There were moments that I didn't know what to do." Alcaraz, fresh from defending his Barcelona title last weekend, will face Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov for a place in the last



16. The 19-year-old Alcaraz hit 10 aces in his 36 winners but was forced to save nine of 11 break points in the two hour 16 minute clash. Five of those came when he was 3-2 down in the second set. "It was just one point," added Alcaraz. "One of the break points he had at 2-3 in the second set was like a match point for him.

Ferrari's Leclerc takes 3rd consecutive pole at Azerbaijan GP



BAKU (Agencies): Ferrari's Charles Leclerc grabbed his third consecutive pole for the Azerbaijan Grand Prix in a nerve-jangling red-flag interrupted qualifying at Baku today. Leclerc and Red Bull's world champion Max Verstappen had posted identical times in the top 10 shoot-out before Leclerc produced a magical flying last lap to head the grid for Sunday's race. Verstappen, edged out by less than two tenths of a second, leads his Red Bull

teammate Sergio Perez by 15 points in the world championship going into the fourth race of the season. Perez will start on the second row in Baku with the Ferrari of Carlos Sainz, fourth in qualifying, keeping the Mexican company. Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton came fifth to fill the third row with Fernando Alonso in the Aston Martin. For Leclerc, this was an unexpected moment of sunshine on the banks of the Caspian Sea after what he has described as "the worst start to the season ever". After adding to his 2021 and 2022 poles at this challenging street circuit he said: "We came into the weekend thinking it would be great if we were in front of Aston and Mercedes in qualifying and at the end we are on pole, so it's a really good surprise.

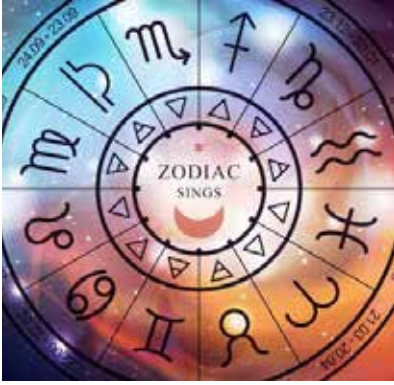
Al-Hilal ready to extend Asian football dominance against arch rivals from Japan

RIYADH (Agencies): It is fitting that, just weeks after giving Real Madrid a real scare — which is more than Liverpool or Chelsea managed recently, Al-Hilal could soon seal their reputation as Asia's equivalent of the European-dominating Spanish titans. On Saturday, the Saudi Arabian giants take on Urawa Reds in the first leg of the AFC Champions League final, with the return match taking place in Japan a week later. The Blues are already the most successful team on the continent with four championships and they are now within 180 minutes of a fifth. It may not match Madrid's 14 crowns, but it would be highly impressive nonetheless. Like Real Madrid, Al-Hilal have the ability to cast aside domestic wobbles to rise to the big international occasions. The defending domestic



champions have — partly because of their crowded fixture schedule — dropped seven points in their last three league games to fall into fourth and almost certainly out of the title race. For a team that has won 18 league titles to be out of the running at the season climax is painful, but it does mean that coach Ramon Diaz and his players can place all their focus on ensuring that the AFC Champions League trophy stays at the King Fahd International Stadium.

DAILY HOROSCOPE: APRIL 30, 2023



– It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.
– **ARIES**: You need to really pay attention when it comes to your friends and family today. They expect more from you than a nod and a smile. Show that you get where they're coming from.
– **TAURUS**: You've been thinking about it for a while, but today is perfect for starting on that new, healthy activity. It's most likely positive and something you can do with a friend.
– **GEMINI**: You've got more energy than you know what to do with, but it's all positive! Now is a great time to start new social activities or make new friends, though you've got limitless options.
– **CANCER**: Watch out for disagreements at work or at home. They're pretty much certain to happen, and the only question is how you'll deal with them. Try your best to avoid laying down the law!
– **LEO**: You should do something big today. It could be almost anything as long as it's active and keeps people on their toes! Your social energy is just

about perfect for reorganizing people's jobs.
– **VIRGO**: You're ready for that big purchase, though you might need to borrow money or split the cost with someone you trust. Now is a good time to make joint financial arrangements, so have no fear!
– **LIBRA**: You're at your best with lots of stuff going on, but it's sometimes hard to keep it all in balance! That's not the case right now, though, because your amazing energy keeps the flow going easily.
– **SCORPIO**: You are unusually quiet and reflective today, so much so that you may let others get their way be default. You can make up for it later, but you need to take care of your own business right now.
– **SAGITTARIUS**: Your laugh makes life a little better for everyone around you today, and they should show you just what it means to them. It's a good time to cement new friendships and take on new clients.
– **CAPRICORN**: Exercise your authority wherever you can at work, at home, or even with friends. Most folks are craving rules right now, and though they might play at grumbling, they're secretly thanking you.
– **ACQUARIUS**: It's vital that you really connect with people today at work, at home or wherever you find yourself. It's one of those days when you could easily fall back on aloofness, but try to resist.
– **PISCES**: Debt could be a problem for you right now, but it's not insurmountable! Today is a great day to make a plan that you can stick to. Consult a pro or a knowledgeable friend if need be.

Poland seizes Russian high school building in Warsaw

WARSAW (Agencies): Poland on Saturday said it had seized a high school building near Moscow's embassy in Warsaw meant for the children of diplomats, a move the Russian envoy called "illegal". The spat over the 1970s multi-storey building has been going on for a year. "This building belongs to the Warsaw City Hall," Polish foreign ministry spokesman Lukasz Jasina told AFP, adding that the move followed a bailiff's order. The spokesman for the municipality was unavailable for comment. Poland



says there is a huge disparity in the number of diplomatic buildings each had in the other country. "We regard this as yet another hostile act by the Polish authorities and a blatant violation of the Vienna Convention of 1961," Russia's foreign

ministry said. The ministry promised a "harsh reaction and consequences for Polish authorities and Poland's interests in Russia". Moscow's envoy, Sergei Andreyev, also denounced Poland's intervention as an "illegal" intrusion on a diplomatic facility, saying teachers and staff lived on the building's grounds. The school will continue to operate in a different part of the Russian embassy's premises, he added. "Our priority is ensuring the safety and the interests of our employees and their families."

Sharjah Police arrest 500 traffickers for WhatsApp 'drugs delivery service'

SHARJAH (Agencies): More than 500 traffickers who targeted the public through a WhatsApp "drug delivery service" have been arrested by Sharjah Police during a major crime-fighting campaign. Brigadier General Ibrahim Al Ajel, Deputy Director-General of Police Operations, told Gulf News the anti-narcotics department recorded 912 cases of drug peddling on WhatsApp, which led to 500 arrests. Sharjah Police have also blocked 124 social media accounts and websites promoting drugs, fake goods, and other banned items. Brig Al Ajel said the main challenge police face is the promotion of drugs over the internet, and in particular on social networking sites. Recently, traffickers have sent voice messages or texts to random phone numbers in the UAE to promote different types of drugs including restricted painkillers, hashish and crystal meth, heroin and others.

- How it worked

He added that the said the police is tracking and blocking such numbers,

websites and social networks. Many users buy drugs via the internet and send money online to dealers, Brig Al Ajel said. Some people also deposit money in bank accounts and are then informed about the location of drugs via WhatsApp, he added. Sharjah Police's online patrols are operating round-the-clock to monitor cybercrime and suspicious activities and arrest people who misuse social media and blackmail victims. These patrols have identified 800 criminal methods so far.

- How to report drugs

Brig Al Ajel has urged the public to block and report any phone number that promotes the selling of any kind of controlled medicine or drug. Lieutenant Colonel Majid Al Asam, director of the Anti-Narcotics Department at Sharjah Police, called on community members to cooperate with security officers to tackle drug promotion and to report any suspicious activities on 8004654, Sharjah Police app, website, or the email address dea@shjpolice.gov.ae.

India to Build Mongolia's First Oil Refinery by 2025

NEW DELHI (Agencies): The project is deemed to have strategic importance and help Mongolia satisfy 70% of its domestic demand. The first oil refinery in Mongolia is due to be constructed with the assistance and financing of India and open by 2025, with its first advances expected to be completed by the end of this year, according to Mongolia's Ambassador to India Dambajav Gandbold. He also said that the agreement to establish the first oil refinery in Mongolia was reached between the governments after a historic visit by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015. The oil refinery project is now in the implementation stage and consists of four packages, with the first package, known as "EPC 1" already over 70% complete and expected to be ready by the end of this year. The other three packages underwent a tender process where the company Megha Engineering and Infrastruc-

tures Limited based in Hyderabad was selected. He clarified that the first package of the Mongolian oil refinery, built with a \$1.2 billion Indian concessional credit, is set to be completed by the end of the year. Gandbold also revealed Mongolia's plan to start exporting coking coal to India by 2024 and expressed his desire to establish joint ventures with India for the extraction of rare earth materials. "We had substantive negotiations on the supply of Mongolian coking coal to India. We are building a coal enrichment facility and as soon as it is completed by 2024, we will begin exporting it to India. Mongolia has vast deposits of rare earth elements. I would like Indian investors to establish joint ventures in Mongolia, as the Indian government has announced that it will manufacture semiconductors within the country, rather than importing them from China," noted the ambassador.

Turkey's Baykar unveils cruise missile for drones

ANKARA (Agencies): Baykar has revealed a new cruise missile for use on the Turkish company's TB2, TB3 and Akinci combat drones. The miniature weapon, known as the Bayraktar Kemankes, was on display April 27 at the Teknofest exhibition in Istanbul. It is powered by a jet engine and has a range of 200 kilometers (124 miles). The company said it features an auto-pilot system supported by artificial intelligence technology. The missile can fly at a speed of Mach 0.7 and carry a 30-kilogram

(66-pound) payload. Baykar reported \$1.4 billion in revenue for 2022. It announced that 99.3% of its revenue that year came from exports. The company has sold its TB2 combat drone to 28 countries, and its Akinci drones to six countries. Baykar did not disclose a per unit price for the Kemankes. But a company engineer, speaking on the condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to talk to the press, told Defense News his team has tried to minimize the cost to "less than \$20,000 per unit."

Meghan, Duchess of Sussex signs with WME for representation

LONDON (Agencies): Meghan, Duchess of Sussex has signed a representation deal with global entertainment agency WME, the agency confirmed Friday. "(WME) will be focusing on building out her business ventures across multiple facets of the agency and its broader ecosystem, including film and television production, brand partnerships and more," the agency shared on social media, adding that it was "honored" to represent her "in all areas." News of the agreement was first reported in an exclusive by Variety on Thursday. The outlet also reported that Meghan's team at WME will include Dwayne Johnson's representative, Brad Slater; Serena Williams' agent, Jill Smoller; and Ari Emanuel, CEO of Endeavor, WME's global entertainment and sports unit. WME will also represent Prince Harry and Meghan's company Archewell, Variety reported.



Through Archewell Productions – which falls under the umbrella of Archewell – the Sussexes have a multi-year production deal with streaming giant Netflix. In December 2022, they released two docuseries: "Harry & Meghan," a six-parter offering their perspective on their life in the British royal family; and "Live to Lead," which interviewed leaders in their fields. Archewell Audio similarly has a partnership with Spotify, and has released "Archetypes," an original podcast series, on the platform.

Canadian government says it gave striking union 'final offer'

OTTAWA (Reuters): Canadian government negotiators have presented striking public workers with a "final offer," the Treasury Board of Canada said on Saturday, aiming to end a dispute that has disrupted services ranging from tax returns to passport renewals. The strike by federal government workers, represented by the Public Service Alliance of Canada, entered its 11th day on Saturday. The head of the union representing some 155,000 striking public workers earlier this week accused the government of stalling and called on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to get involved in negotiations. On Saturday, the Treasury Board, which oversees public administration, said it gave the union its offer on Friday. Government negotiators said details are being kept to the negotiating ta-



ble, but the proposal included "an enhanced wage offer" and addressed issues including "telework, seniority and contracting." "This is a fair, competitive and reasonable final offer," the Treasury Board said in a statement. On Wednesday, the union said it was escalating strike actions in a bid to block several Canadian ports.

Israelis protest against judicial reforms before new parliament



TEL AVIV (Agencies): Thousands of Israelis have gathered in central Tel Aviv for the latest weekly protest against the government's judicial reform plans just days before legislators return for a new parliament session. Opponents of the judicial reform bill have kept up demonstrations in the commercial hub and across the country since January, despite Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu putting the controversial reform programme on ice a month ago. "History has its eyes on you," read a placard held aloft on Saturday at the rally in Tel Aviv, where demonstrators lit flares and waved national flags in the latest show of political discontent. Al Jazeera's Mohammed Jamjoon, reporting from the site of the protest, said it appeared that the protests had maintained momentum since Netanyahu paused the plans. "This is the fourth month of weekly protests. Everyone we've spoken to in Tel Aviv says they are going to continue to come out because they are so opposed to this judicial overhaul plan," he said. Israeli society has been deeply split over the proposed legislation, which seeks to weaken the Supreme Court and hand politicians greater influence over the selection of judges. Netanyahu's right-wing administration has argued the proposals are necessary to rebalance power between the judiciary and elected officials, while opponents said the changes represent a threat to democracy. The weekly rallies have repeatedly drawn tens of thousands onto the streets of Tel Aviv. A turnout figure for Saturday was not immediately available. The protesters gathered against the backdrop of cross-party talks hosted by President Isaac Herzog this month, which have sought to reach a compromise on the reform package. The negotiations were launched after Netanyahu announced a halt to the legislative process on March 27 "out of a desire to prevent a rift in the nation", in the face of mass protests and a general strike. However, the opposition has remained sceptical of the prime minister's intentions and no compromise has been reached.

Saudi Aramco overtakes Microsoft to become world's second largest company

RIYAD (Agencies): Saudi Aramco is now the world's second largest company in terms of value, overtaking Microsoft and behind Apple. The company has been valued at \$2.11 trillion (7.92 trillion Saudi riyals). According to Al-Arabiya.net website, the company's shares went up to 36 riyals (\$9.60) on Wednesday. The rise followed Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's announcement earlier this month about the transfer of four per cent of Aramco shares to Sanabil Investments, which is wholly owned by the Saudi Public Investment Fund. In 2022, Aramco achieved its highest-ever profits since being listed, up by 46.5 per cent to 604 billion riyals (\$161 billion), compared with 412.4 billion riyals (\$109 billion) in 2021. Aramco is the most profitable company in the world. Its profits for the year 2022 exceeded the profits of Apple, Microsoft and ExxonMobil combined, according to the ranking on the Companies Market Cap website. In a recent report, Fitch Ratings upgraded Saudi Aramco's rating to A+, with a stable outlook.

New York Soon To Become First State To Ban Natural Gas Hookups In New Buildings



NEW YORK (Agencies): The State of New York is set to become the first state to outright ban all new natural gas hookups in new buildings as part of a scheme to go all-electric, media reported on Friday. The Washington Post reported on Friday that a handshake deal between Democratic Governor Kathy Hochul and state lawmakers would result in a new law that will force all new buildings into the all-electric era, with natural gas hookups outlawed. The law would prevent gas stoves and all other fossil fuel-burning appliances from being installed in any new building in the state with an eye to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Earlier this month, an appeals court ruled against the city of Berkeley, California, over its scheme to ban natural gas hookups in new buildings. In the ruling, the court sided against Berkely, saying that its 2019 ban on natural gas hookups effectively banned all appliances operating with natural gas, which it was not allowed to do because of federal legislation that pre-empts such local legislation. "By its plain text and structure, EPCA's preemption provision encompasses building codes that regulate natural gas use by covered products," Judge Patrick Bumatay, one of a three-member panel at the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, wrote earlier this month in response to Berkely's ban. "And by preventing such appliances from using natural gas, the new Berkeley building code does exactly that." The details of New York's ban has yet to be revealed, but environmental advocates have noted that the ban on natural gas would go into effect in 2026 for most new buildings under seven stories, and in 2029 for buildings that are taller, the Washington Post said.

Iran says there was no school poisoning

TEHRAN (Agencies): Iran's Intelligence Ministry, on Friday, accused foreign "enemies" and dissidents of fomenting fears over suspected poisonings of schoolgirls, saying its investigation found no actual poisoning, Reuters reports. The wave of suspected attacks has affected thousands of schoolgirls and provoked public anger, after months of protests against Iran's clerical rulers following the death of a young woman held by police for allegedly flouting strict hijab rules. "The enemies' role in fuelling this crisis is certain and undeniable. Individuals, groups and Western media (especially in Persian language) have focused on this in the past few months, as well as foreign politicians and international bodies," said a Ministry report carried by state media. "In field findings and laboratory investigations no toxic substance able to cause poisoning was observed and there have been no deaths or long-term physical conditions," the report said, blaming mischievousness and mass hysteria among students.

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