



## SC terms Imran Khan's arrest from IHC premises unlawful

The Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday termed PTI Chairman Imran Khan's arrest in the Al-Qadir Trust case "unlawful" and directed him to appear before the Islamabad High Court (IHC) tomorrow (Friday). "The manner of execution of the arrest warrant issued by the Chairman, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) dated 01.05.2023 in the Al-Qadir Trust case within the premises of the Islamabad High Court against the petitioner is invalid and unlawful," the ruling said. Imran was whisked away from the IHC premises by paramilitary forces on Tuesday, leading to violent protests across the country. The PTI chief had immediately approached the high court for release but it had declared his arrest legal. The former premier's lawyer, Barrister Ali Zafar, then petitioned the SC on his behalf for Imran's release. Earlier today, a three-judge bench comprising the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Athar Minallah took up Imran's petition and had directed NAB to present him before court. Subsequently, the PTI chief was presented in court amid



tight security a little after 5:45pm. In the written verdict, the top court said that the execution of NAB's arrest warrant violated the petitioner's right of access to justice and "the sanctity and safety of the court as he had already surrendered to the court for seeking judicial relief against the action taken by NAB in the Al-Qadir Trust case". In this regard, it highlighted that the fundamental rights of the petitioner under Articles 4, 9, 10-A and 14 of the Constitution had been infringed. "The petitioner is directed to be produced before the Islamabad High Court tomorrow i.e. 12.05.2023 at 11am for hearing of his Writ Petition filed to challenge the NAB action against him in the Al-Qadir Trust case. "The

NAB authorities and the ICT Police shall ensure foolproof security to the petitioner until his production in the Islamabad High Court in this regard," the court order stated. The apex court also directed the registrar of the IHC to place the matter before IHC CJ Justice Aamer Farooq for the constitution of a bench to hear the case. It went on to say that to secure Imran's security until his appearance at the IHC tomorrow, he "shall remain in the premises where he is presently retained in police custody, namely, the Police Lines Guest House, H-11, Islamabad (Police Guest House)". "Whilst the petitioner is in the Police Guest House, he shall be entitled to meet up to 10 guests, whose particulars shall be provided by him to the concerned Police Officer, subject to security check by the police. These persons shall be allowed to stay with the petitioner as long as desired by him." The order further said that these directives will "remain valid until the production of the petitioner before the high court" tomorrow and "shall be subject to any order that is passed by the high court".

## China, New Zealand hold military dialogue

ISTANBUL (AA/APP): China and New Zealand on Wednesday held a military dialogue, Beijing said. It was the 11th strategic dialogue between the two militaries, held in Xi'an city, capital of Shaanxi province in central China, the country's Defense Ministry said. "The two sides candidly exchanged views on international and regional issues of common concern, and expressed their willingness to jointly promote military exchanges and cooperation," said the statement released from Beijing. It said the meeting "enhanced mutual understanding and trust" between the two sides. Meanwhile, media reports claim Chi-

nese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Rocket Force and the Shandong carrier group held military drills nearly for 30 days last month in the Pacific. The drills were held some 400 nautical miles (741km) from Guam, which houses a US naval base. The Shandong led-flotilla held exercise in the western Pacific region that "included unprecedented systematic joint operations with the rocket force and other fighting wings, daily South China Morning Post reported. Shandong aircraft carrier, a Type 055 destroyer, two Type 052D destroyers, two Type 054A frigates and a Type 901 replenishment ship participated in the drills.

## Google answers ChatGPT challenge with Bard expansion

Mountain View (AFP/APP): Google on Wednesday said it is opening Bard, a rival to Microsoft-backed ChatGPT, to 180 countries as it expands its use of artificial intelligence across its platform. Executives at an annual Google developers conference in Silicon Valley said that generative AI will also be used to supercharge the tech giant's leading search engine. "We have been applying AI for a while, with generative AI we are taking the next step," Google chief executive Sundar Pichai told thousands of developers gathered for the event. "We are reimagining all our core products, including search," he said. Google is racing to catch up with rival Microsoft, which has rushed to integrate ChatGPT-like powers in a wide array of its products, including the Bing search engine. Microsoft's dash into AI came despite fears about the technology's potential threat to society, including its impact on the spread of disinformation and whether it could make whole categories of jobs obsolete. Cathy Edwards of Google Search said the new experience would be akin to a search that is "supercharged" by a conversational bot. Other Google executives laid out how generative AI is being woven into Gmail, photo editing, online work tools and more. The company's AI efforts would be carried out in a "bold and responsible" way, senior product director Jack Krawczyk said during a briefing.



Google's expansion meant it removed a waitlist for Bard, letting users around the world engage with it in English after months of testing it out in the US and Britain. Bard will be modified to support 40 languages in coming months, according to Krawczyk. "We're excited to get Bard into more people's hands," Krawczyk said. "We're pretty fired up about where Bard is going." Google also announced browser "extensions" that will imbue apps and services such as Gmail and Maps with AI features. Bard technology will enable features such as filling in text to help draft emails and suggesting ideas for artwork by scrutinizing a picture of available supplies. Google is also letting partners build such extensions, including one from Adobe that will let users generate images, Krawczyk said. The tech titan also unveiled new Pixel devices including a \$1,799 foldable smartphone with a bendable screen that is the size of a tablet computer when opened.

## Israel kills senior Gaza commanders

GAZA CITY: Israeli military aircraft on Thursday bombed an apartment building in a residential complex in the southern Gaza Strip city of Khan Yunis, killing three Palestinians and wounding seven. Islamic Jihad announced the killing of Ali Hassan Ghali, the commander of the rockets program of Saraya Al-Quds, the body's military wing, during the attack, along with his brother Mahmoud and his nephew. Ghali is the fourth prominent military commander killed by Israel during the current round of fighting that started before dawn on Tuesday. He is a member of the military council and leads the military wing of Islamic Jihad. The Israeli warplanes also completely destroyed three homes in Khan Yunis in the south, and Beit Lahiyah in the northern Gaza Strip.

## Ukraine's counter-offensive has begun

Ukrainian forces have breached Russian defenses north-west of the city of Artyomovsk in the Donbass, Russian war correspondent, Evgeny Poddubny reported on Thursday evening. He believes it's the start of Kiev's much-touted spring offensive. Attackers appear to have launched a series of simultaneous strikes north and south of Artyomovsk, also known as Bakhmut, several other Russian war reporters added. The city has been the scene of intense fighting between Russian and Ukrainian troops for months. In addition, Kiev's troops have reportedly used tanks to strike the city of Soledar. Located northeast of Artyomovsk, it was captured by Russian troops after heavy fighting in January. Meanwhile to the West, in the the Zaporozhye region, Kiev's troops have reportedly attacked Russian positions near the city



of Guliyay-Pole. They are seeking to break through the Russian forces' first defensive line, Poddubny explained. A large column of heavy military equipment was also allegedly spotted moving towards the Ukrainian side of the border with Russia's Belgorod Region in the northeast. Kiev has so far not commented on Thursday's movements. Earlier in the day, Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky claimed his military still needed more time to prepare before the attack.

## Israel arms company purchases Greece defence company

TEL AVIV (Agencies): A major state-run Israeli defence company has purchased a Greek defence company, expanding Israel's arms sector reach further into Europe. According to Greece's AMNA news agency, the Greek company, Intracom Defence (IDE) signed a deal with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) for 90.91 per cent of its shares for around €60 million (\$65.75 million). Operating in Greece and other NATO countries, IDE specialises in producing missile launchers, missile subsystems and land and sea tactical communications, while IAI is among the world's biggest defence and aerospace enterprises. The deal, expected to be completed by the second quarter of 2023, essentially integrates IDE into IAI's business activities within Greece and Europe, and is expected to position Athens to play a greater role in upcoming defence-related procurement programs worldwide. It comes amid increased defence cooperation and deals between Israel and Greece over the past few years, with the two countries having signed a \$1.65 billion defence deal in 2021, Greece having secretly set up a defence system using Israeli technology against Turkish drones last year, and Tel Aviv, just last month, selling Athens guided anti-tank missiles worth \$400 million. Yesterday's acquisition, however, enables the state-run Israeli defence company - and subsequently Tel Aviv's defence industry - to expand further into Greece.

## Brazil inaugurates F-39E Gripen fighter assembly line

BRASILIA (Agencies): Brazil's Embraer inaugurated its Saab F-39E Gripen final assembly line on 9 May in Gavião Peixoto, State of São Paulo, where it will assemble 15 of the multi-mission fighters for the Brazilian Air Force (FAB). The first Gripen fully assembled in Brazil will be delivered to the FAB in 2025. The new production line will be capable of carrying out future upgrades and integrating new weapons, said Micael Johansson, president and CEO of Saab. It may also be tasked to assemble Gripens for other customers should they emerge. Gavião



Peixoto also hosts a Gripen design centre and flight test facility. Embraer was initially due to carry out the final assembly of eight single-seat F-39Es and seven twin-seat F-39Fs; however, the full production of the two-seats fully takes place in Sweden, with delivery scheduled from 2025 to 2027

## Biden to host India's Modi for state visit in June

Washington (AFP/APP): US President Joe Biden will host India's Narendra Modi for a state visit in June, it was announced Wednesday, as Washington courts New Delhi as a bulwark against China. The state visit, the highest level of diplomatic reception, will boost the United States and India's "shared commitment to a free, open, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific," the White House said. The invitation comes despite rising concerns about human



rights and democratic backsliding under Modi's Hindu nationalist leadership in India, the world's most populous nation.

## Human pangenome ushers in 'new age of genetic diagnosis'

Paris (AFP/APP): Scientists on Wednesday unveiled the first draft of a human "pangenome", a more diverse and accurate DNA blueprint for our species that they hope will help shed light on a range of diseases. The announcement was hailed by researchers as a major scientific milestone that "heralds a new age of genetic diagnosis". The first human genome was sequenced in 2003, providing a reference point for all other human sequences to be compared to. The breakthrough allowed scientists to identify genes that cause specific diseases, paved the way for the still growing field of personalised medicine, and shed new light on human evolution. However 70 per cent of the genetic data for this original genome reference came from a single person - a man who answered a newspaper advert in



Buffalo, New York in 1997 - with snippets from 20 others. This meant it had many gaps and did not work as well as a reference for people from other ethnicities and races, prompting concerns about bias and inequality. In a series of papers published in the journal Nature, a large team of international researchers described the first draft of a more inclusive "pangenome" reference that they say more accurately reflects humanity.

## First 'three-parent' baby born in the UK

LONDON (Agencies): A baby has been born with the DNA of three people for the first time in the UK, following the use of a pioneering form of in vitro fertilization (IVF) - sometimes referred to as a 'test tube babies' technique. The news has been confirmed by Britain's fertility regulator, The Guardian newspaper reported on Tuesday. The publication, which says it sourced the news through a freedom-of-information request, could not publish more specific data, such as when the child was born and its current health status, for reasons of medical confidentiality. The procedure, known as mitochondrial donation treatment (MDT), combines tissues from the eggs of a female donor to create IVF embryos free from hereditary illnesses that



could potentially be passed on to a child during a conventional pregnancy. These embryos are combined with sperm and eggs from the biological parents, with the resulting baby containing the DNA signatures of three people - its parents and the female donor. Biological parents contribute more than 99.8% of the baby's DNA, which controls key characteristics such as personality, as well as eye and hair color. Around 37 genes can be directly traced to the donor.

**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.

## Caretaker CM visits Services Hospital, inquires health of cops injured in violent protests

PESHAWAR (APP): The Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammed Azam Khan on Thursday visited Police and Services Hospital Peshawar where he enquired about the health of police officials who were injured due to violent protests during the last two days. The chief minister met the injured policemen one by one and presented them with a floral bouquet. Inspector General Police Akhtar Hayat Khan, CCPO Peshawar Ijaz Khan and other police officials were also present on this occasion. Talking to media men on the occasion, the chief minister said that during the last two days, there had been violent protests at different spots of

the province during which private and public properties have been damaged. He said that damaging and vandalizing private and public properties during protest is regrettable adding that protest and freedom of expression is a democratic and constitutional right of everyone, but this right should be exercised in a peaceful manner. "Vandalism under the guise of protest is illegal and unconstitutional" he said and added that public assets are built with the public's own tax money, and damaging them is tantamount to damage one's own property. Responding to a question, the chief minister said that police were taking action against those who are involved in damaging

properties during these protests; a number of arrests have been made so far whereas identification of those who damaged properties were being underway and legal action would be taken against them. In response to another question, the Chief Minister made it clear that in the wake of the current situation, the army has been called in to assist the civil administration and it would be deployed when and where needed. Lauding the role of the KP police during these protests, the Chief Minister said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police has performed very well and the provincial cabinet in its meeting also appreciated their performance during the protest.

## Delegations of merged areas contractors call on Governor, highlights issues

PESHAWAR (Agencies): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali Thursday said that provincial and federal governments are striving to ensure clarity in the tender awarding process in merged districts aiming facilitation of contractors and transparency in the execution of uplift projects. He was talking to a 24-member delegation of the All Tribal Contractors Association led by its President, Zahir Jan in Governor House Peshawar. The delegation comprised contractors of merged districts including Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram and Waziristan. The delegation informed governor about their concerns and urged him to contact concerned authorities to resolve them. Speaking on the occasion, KP Governor assured cooperation to delegation and also highlighted sacri-

fices of tribal people for establishment of peace. He said that appropriate allocation would be made for uplift of tribal areas in coming budget and added that it would change the destiny of tribal areas and help addressing long-standing sense of deprivation of tribal people. He also urged tribal contractors to ensure quality and transparency in completing uplift and development schemes in merged districts. Later a delegation of tribal districts tehsil chairmen and elders called on KP Governor and inform him about their concerns relating to uplift work and pending payments to owners of houses and shops destroyed in operations. A delegation of Swabi farmers also called on governor and highlighted their issues regarding the acquisition of cultivable land in their respective areas.

## PTI leadership goes 'underground' in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (Agencies): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa leadership has gone underground amid a crackdown on party workers and leaders over violent protests, it was reported on Thursday. All PTI office-holders' mobile phones appeared switched off, and they were also non-responsive on social media platforms. It may be noted that PTI K-P chapter in-charge Pervez Khattak had called for "peaceful protests" on a daily basis earlier in the day. The news comes two days after violent protests followed former PM Imran Khan's arrest by the Rangers paramilitary force from the Islamabad High Court (IHC), over corruption allegations. A day earlier, an accountability court granted the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) his eight-day physical remand. He

was accused of looting Rs50 billion of the national treasury, along with a property tycoon, and getting the Al-Qadir University Trust registered on 450-kanal. Hours after Imran's arrest, the IHC declared that his arrest from the court's premises was carried out legally, while the PTI alleges political persecution. Notably, the PTI chief's arrest also came a day after the military warned him against making "baseless allegations" after he again accused a senior intelligence officer of plotting to kill him. Since Imran's arrest, in the two provinces, Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), at least six people have died of the violence that ensued. Authorities have arrested nearly 1,500 PTI workers and leaders in Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar and other parts of the country. Government buildings and assets were

attacked and set ablaze by protesters in many cities in the two days. The authorities said that scores of policemen were severely injured in clashes with the protesters. In view of the unrest, the federal cabinet approved the deployment of Pakistan Army under Article 245 of the Constitution in Punjab, K-P, and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) on the recommendation of the interior ministry. Earlier this morning, the ICT said that PTI leaders, including its vice president Shah Mehmood Qureshi, were arrested for "inciting arson and violent protests under a plan for threatening peace". Qureshi was arrested in the wee hours of Thursday. As of now, party leaders Asad Umar, Fawad Chaudhry, Omar Sarfraz Cheema, Falknaz Chitrali, Mussarat Jamsheed Cheema and Malika Bukhari have been arrested

## Govt takes action against PTI protesters

PESHAWAR (APP): The government has taken rapid action against violent protesters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the institutions, and police were mobilized to identify the workers participating in such violent protests. According to a police spokesman, "Violation of vandalism, arson, road closures and looting of those

delivering government and non-government property has started. The data of all miscreants are also being collected." "Actions will also be taken against those who call for protest." "Action will also be taken against those calling for protests and supporting the protests on social media as well," the spokesman added.

## Hazara Police arrest 46 PTI workers under 3 MPO

ABBOTTABAD (APP): The Hazara Police Thursday arrested 46 workers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf in various districts of the division under Section 3 of the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO). Some 20 PTI workers along with former provincial minister Qalandar Khan Lodhi were arrested by the Abbottabad Police while 18 protesters were held in Haripur and eight in Manserha for rioting and violence. According to Hazara Police Spokesperson Wajid Mahmood, cases were registered at different police stations of Mansehra against 30 nominated local leaders and 200 workers for their involvement in violent protests. He said the arrested workers were presented in different courts while the process of

identifying and arresting other PTI workers and nominated leaders was in progress. The teams from different police stations were conducting raids to arrest other workers. Former National Assembly member Ahmad Shah Ghani, and former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly members Ali Khan Jadoon and Qalandar Khan Lodhi staged a protest at the Fawara Chowk in Abbottabad in violation of Section 144 and closed the Karakoram Highway. Due to the road blockage, even ambulances with patients aboard were trapped in the traffic jam, besides severe difficulties faced by commuters. A protest was also held in Mansehra, which resulted in the blocking of the road, causing problems for travellers.

## ANP leader slams PTI for protesting and damaging public property

PESHAWAR (Agencies): Awami National Party (ANP) senior central leader Haji Ghulam Ahmed Bailor Thursday criticized the negative politics of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), describing it as a matter of great embarrassment and regret for the country. He accused PTI of behaving like a terrorist group and losing support due to its arrogant decisions and incompetent leadership under its party chief Imran Khan. He lambast-



ed on the PTI for protesting and damaging public property following the arrest of Imran Khan, saying that no other political party had behaved in such a manner. He cited the example of his own party leaders, Bacha Khan and Wali Khan, who spent years in jail, but never attacked institutions or resorted to violence. He pointed out that Imran Khan instead of creating chaos should face legal trial like any other politician.

## PTI violent protesters damaged scores of public, private properties: Khaizer Hayat

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz senior leader on Thursday said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) violent protesters have damaged scores of public and private properties which is a condemnable act. In a statement issued here, Arbab Khaizer Hayat said those who damage the country's property are not in the best interest of the country. Radio Station, the Associated Press of Pakistan Office in Peshawar, Election

Commission Offices, BRT buses and ambulances were set ablaze by protesters, which was not a justified act, Arbab Khaizer Hayat said. This country belongs to us, only the enemies of the country can spoil it but damaging public and private priorities is not a justified act at any level, Arbab Khaizer Hayat said. Imran Khan's arrest is according to the law, it is our duty to face the courts, he said. Workers of Tehreek-e-Insaf should show patri-

tism and wait for court decisions, he said, adding, "No one will be allowed to take the law into their hands, the state will uphold its writ." Terrorists who damage national property will not be forgiven, Arbab Khaizer Hayat demanded. All those should be treated according to the law and should make them exemplary for those who are intending to sabotage the peace of Pakistan, Arbab Khaizer Hayat concluded.

## DC for early resolution of public complaints

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (Agencies): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Dera Ismail Khan Mansoor Arshad Thursday directed the officials concerned to take concrete measures for addressing public complaints posted on Pakistan Citizens Portal at the earliest. The DC was presiding over a meeting to review the performance

of the district administration relating to educational institutions, health centers, Patwar Khanas, development schemes, hoarding of commodities, price control, and cleanliness drive. Arshad directed the officers to inspect shops, markets, wedding halls, and hotels to comply with the provincial government's directions

to ensure the energy conservation plan in the province. He instructed that the fertilizer shops, flour mills, and dealers' shops should be visited regularly to facilitate the masses. The encroachments, speed breakers, billboards, chlorination of water tanks, and other activities were also reviewed during the meeting.

## Meeting held to review police stations' performance in Tank, Jandola

DERA ISMAIL KHAN, (APP): District Police Officer (DPO) Tank Waqar Ahmed on Thursday chaired a meeting to review the performance of police stations regarding curbing crimes in their respective areas. The meeting was attended by Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Headquarters Asghar Ali Shah, DSP Rural Sagheer Gilani and DSP Sub-Division Jandola Syed Marjan Khan, Station House Officers (SHOs) and investigation in-charges of Tank district and sub-division Jandola. The meeting reviewed the performance of all the police stations and minutely observed the cases under investigation at each police station. The DPO directed to utilize all available resources for the prosecution of the criminals besides arresting suspects involved in heinous crimes such as murder and attempted murder. He said that concrete efforts

should be made to recover the weapon used at the crime scene of murder and attempt to murder by collecting evidence so that cases could be pursued in a successful manner. He also briefed about the prevalent policy in letter and spirit for taking legal action against the mafia, smugglers, and drug peddlers and directed to ensure its implementation. He issued strict instructions that the fundamental rights of all citizens should be taken care of and added that disputes between the parties in murder and other crime cases should be resolved according to the law. Similarly, he also issued instructions to all relevant officers to work hard day and night to arrest the accused involved in theft and other cases of crime. He further urged them to take effective measures for the protection of the life and property of the people. He

warned that strict action would be taken against the officials involved in corruption and no compromise would be made in that regard. He said that the police department was a disciplinary institution and no officer or official would be allowed to violate the discipline. The DPO Tank was directed to intensify search and strike operations against anti-social elements and ensure the arrest of the culprits. He also directed for conducting of a large-scale operation against drug dealing and gambling by eliminating its root cause. Apart from this, he issued instructions to all the relevant officers to keep a record of the tenants, ensure their registration in the police station and ensure the security of all sensitive and important installations across the district and in case of violation, take action as per the law, the DPO added.

## Special police teams formed to arrest saboteurs

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar police have arrested 42 miscreants for torching and damaging government properties and installations and formed special teams to arrest others involved in ransacking, looting and destruction of vehicles in the city. A police spokesman told media that CCTV footage from the areas including Balahisr Fort, Radio Pakistan and the provincial assembly had been collected for identification of the miscreants entering government properties, offices and sensitive installations. Special teams of police, he said, had been formed to arrest those people. He said raids were also being conducted to arrest the local leaders, MNAs and MPAs from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf for their involvement in inciting the people to attack government properties. He said cases against the MPAs and MNAs would be registered once their in-

volvement in anti-state activities was proven. The spokesman further said that protesters damaged government properties and installations at Motorway Interchange, Dalazak Road, Kabootar Chowk and General Bus Stand; however, the major losses were incurred to properties at Suray Pull near the provincial assembly and Radio Pakistan. In the Hashtnagri area, he said the protesters broke the locks of various shops and escaped with looted goods while window panes of some plazas were stoned and broken on the GT Road. At Bacha Khan Chowk, the signboards of the Directorate of Capital Metropolitan and Mayor's office were uprooted and taken away by the protesters, the spokesman added. He said so far 42 protesters involved in damage to government properties had been arrested and teams had been formed to arrest other accused.



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## Afghanistan and CPEC

Trilateral cooperation has taken a positive turn as the foreign ministers of Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan have reaffirmed their commitment to the Belt and Road Initiative. This commitment aims to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan and ensure connectivity in the region. These discussions are a result of the recent 5th Trilateral Foreign Ministers Dialogue which was attended by the FMs of the three states. While this news is promising, mere promises are not enough. Concrete steps and details are needed to advance both hard and soft connectivity and improve norms and standards. Additionally, timelines must be drafted to ensure that this commitment does not get lost among a sea of many other ones like this. Transit trade through the Gwadar Port and security protection against terrorist forces are vital points for the overall peacemaking process and these have been highlighted. Likewise, the terms being used must be clarified so that goals can be more tangible and achievable.

Operationalising these commitments will be challenging, but the potential benefits for the economy are significant. Trilateral investment opportunities in Afghanistan could create jobs and foster exchange in areas of mutual interest. The recent visit of the Chinese foreign minister to Pakistan is a positive development in promoting peace and prosperity in the region. Beijing's role in bringing Iran and Saudi Arabia closer highlights the importance of similar discussions being initiated at home.

We must understand what we have to offer in this space. That is why this development can be very positive if invested in it at the correct time and manner. Pakistan holds significant strategic and geographical importance, making them an essential trade offer. Leveraging Pakistan's ability to provide raw materials, manpower, and access to trade routes will be crucial for a trilateral setup. Therefore, it is in our best interest to bring this commitment to life and work towards it.

## Childhood: A phase of exceeding expectations

— By Dr Rajkumar Singh

Childhood is the period of life between infancy and adolescence, typically ranging from birth to 12 years old. It is a critical phase in a person's life that shapes their physical, emotional, and social development. During childhood, children undergo significant cognitive, emotional, and physical changes that impact their overall development. It is a time of rapid growth and development in all areas of a person's life. During childhood, children go through various stages of development, each characterized by unique milestones and challenges. These stages include infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence. Childhood is a critical period for laying the foundation for a person's future growth and development, and it is shaped by a wide range of factors, including genetics, environment, experience, and culture. Overall, childhood is a complex and multifaceted period of life that plays a critical role in shaping a person's identity, values, and abilities. It is a time of exploration, learning, and growth, and it is marked by a wide range of experiences, emotions, and challenges. In addition, it is a critical period for mental development, and is important for parents, caregivers, and educators to provide children with a supportive and stimulating environment that promotes healthy cognitive and emotional development. It is the best time for providing opportunities for learning, exploration, and social interaction, as well as providing emotional support and guidance. Childhood is typically divided into three stages: early childhood, middle childhood, and late childhood. In the first phase, there are the physical developments that occur during each stage: a. Early Childhood (Ages 0-5): During this stage, children experience rapid physical growth and development. They gain weight and height, and their motor skills improve dramatically. In early childhood, children develop the ability to walk, run, jump, and climb. They also develop fine motor skills, such as the ability to hold a pencil, use scissors, and tie their shoes. b. Middle Childhood (Ages 6-11): In this stage, children continue to grow and develop physically, but at a slower rate than in early childhood. They become more coordinated and develop better control over their movements. Their physical abilities become more refined, and they develop better balance, strength,

and endurance. In middle childhood, children also develop their permanent teeth. c. Late Childhood (Ages 12-18): During this stage, children experience the final stages of physical development before reaching adulthood. They experience a growth spurt, which leads to increased height and weight. Their muscles become stronger, and their coordination and endurance improve further. In late childhood, children also experience puberty, which leads to the development of secondary sex characteristics, such as the growth of pubic hair, breast development, and voice changes in males.

Childhood is a complex and dynamic period of life that is characterized by a range of unique features which include:

- RAPID GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT:** Childhood is a time of rapid growth and development in all areas of a person's life, including their physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development.
- EXPLORATION AND LEARNING:** Childhood is a period of exploration and learning, as children begin to develop new skills, knowledge, and understanding of the world around them.
- PLAYFULNESS:** Childhood is marked by a natural curiosity and playfulness, as children engage in a wide range of imaginative and creative activities.
- VULNERABILITY:** Children are vulnerable and dependent on others for their basic needs, such as food, shelter, and safety.
- DEPENDENCE:** Children rely on adults for guidance, support, and protection, as they are still developing their abilities to make decisions and care for themselves.
- INNOCENCE:** Childhood is often characterized by a sense of innocence, as children have not yet been exposed to many of the negative aspects of the world.
- EMOTIONAL INTENSITY:** Childhood is marked by a range of intense emotions, as children experience both positive and negative emotions more intensely than adults. The features of childhood help to shape a person's identity, values, and abilities, and play a critical role in shaping their future growth and development.

Courtesy: Pakistan Today

## Dark history of Fort Detrick & origins of Covid-19

— By Areej Nasir

AS the world grappled with the devastating impact of COVID-19, the origins of the virus are still a hotly contested and widely debated topic. While many countries have raised questions about where the virus truly originated, the United States has been accused of failing to respond to reasonable concerns of the international community. The U.S. has been blamed for a cover-up, evading responsibility and ignoring questions about its biological laboratories, including the infamous Fort Detrick and the University of North Carolina, as well as more than 200 overseas biological labs. These accusations have sparked widespread speculation about the U.S.'s role in the pandemic's origins, causing tension to rise. In fact, the debate over the origins of COVID-19 has led to a war of words between the United States and China. The U.S. has pushed the narrative of the COVID-19 lab-leak theory, that COVID-19 was leaked from a laboratory in Wuhan, China, and also accused China of spreading false information and interfering with investigations into the virus's origins, whereas, the World Health Organization (WHO) did conduct an extensive investigation into Chinese labs and falsified the US claims. The United States is playing political games on the origin of the covid-19 virus with its media being clearly blind to more suspicious American biological research institutions, such as the infamous US Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Fort Detrick, Maryland which has been a source of particular concern due to its suspected involvement in the origins of the COVID-19 virus. The suspicions surrounding Fort Detrick date back decades, with the base being the center of the U.S. biological weapons program during the Cold War. Despite the U.S. renouncing all offensive biological weapons programs in 1969

and ratifying the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in 1975, Fort Detrick continued to develop and store biological warfare agents. The base's secretive and potentially dangerous activities, reminiscent of the Imperial Japanese Army's Unit 731, have been a cause for concern for the international community. The USAMRIID has been recognized as a significant contributor to the global discussion regarding the origins of the COVID-19 virus. It is known to house a plethora of dangerous pathogens, including but not limited to Ebola, anthrax, smallpox, plague, and coronaviruses such as SARS. The American epidemic resistance has caused endless harm, considering that the Monkeypox epidemic also originated in the United States. A research paper published in the Journal of Virology in 2007 highlighted USAMRIID's use of reverse genetics techniques to create and test the Ebola virus on rhesus monkeys. Notably, the virus strains utilized in the experiments had their furin cleavage site removed, which has been identified as a critical component of the highly virulent SARS-CoV-2. In recent years, Fort Detrick has faced renewed scrutiny with many experts and activists raising concerns over the USAMRIID's research into bat coronaviruses, including the infamous "gain-of-function" experiments that involved enhancing the virulence and transmissibility of viruses. These experiments have been criticized for their potential to create highly contagious and deadly viruses that could escape from laboratories and cause a pandemic. With Fort Detrick's dark and troubling history in secretive experiments and biohazard incidents, why did the USAMRIID not receive the same level of scrutiny and attention as Chinese labs? Were some media outlets deliberately ignoring the evidence to push their own agenda? The world searches

still for these answers and demands accountability of the U.S. biological research institutions. Meanwhile, China has requested that the U.S. accept the WHO's origins-tracing investigation, to uncover the truth, the accusations leveled against China regarding the virus's origin have also stoked anti-Chinese sentiments and appear to serve as a smoke screen to deflect criticism away from the United States, which has faced substantial scrutiny for its response to the pandemic. Through a narrow fixation on Chinese laboratories, the United States and its allies have been attempting to deflect attention from the potential involvement of their own biological research facilities in the genesis of the virus. The debate over the origins of COVID-19 has underscored the need for greater transparency, cooperation and accountability in the international community. Rather than resorting to finger-pointing and accusations, it is imperative that all countries work together to uncover the truth behind the origins of the virus and prevent future pandemics. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage the world, it is clear that the implications of the virus go beyond its immediate health impact. The geopolitical fallout from the pandemic has highlighted the importance of international cooperation and the need for a global approach to tackling health crises. Therefore, it is crucial for countries to be transparent and accountable in their scientific research, especially in the realm of biological research. Rather than engaging in a blame game, countries must take responsibility for their actions and work together to prevent future pandemics. Only by embracing a collaborative approach can we hope to overcome the challenges posed by COVID-19 and build a better future for all.

Courtesy: Pakistan Observer

## Arabs bring Syria Assad back into fold but want action on drugs trade

— By Reuters

Having brought President Bashar Al-Assad in from the cold, Arab states want him to rein in Syria's flourishing drugs trade in exchange for even closer ties. But as Damascus makes its own demands, the way ahead appears far from simple. Arab states turned the page on years of confrontation with Assad on Sunday, by letting Syria back into the Arab League, a milestone in his regional rehabilitation, even as the West continues to shun him after years of civil war. But Arab leaders are seeking a price for re-engagement, notably a halt to the production and smuggling of the amphetamine, Captagon, which the West and Arab states say is being exported around the region from Syria. Alongside the return of millions of refugees who fled Syria, the Captagon trade has become a big worry for Arab leaders, on a par with their concern about the foothold established by Shia Islamist Iran in the Arab country. While denying any role in the trade, for which Syrian officials and Assad relatives have faced Western sanctions, Damascus has sought leverage from the issue. Foreign Minister, Faisal Mekdad told his Arab counterparts at a 1 May meeting that progress on curbing Captagon depended on Arab pressure on the United States to ease sanctions, according to three sources briefed on the meeting. He also linked the return of refugees to funds for rebuilding Syria, from which more than 5 million peo-

ple have fled into neighbouring states during the war that has killed hundreds of thousands of people. The sources spoke on condition of anonymity. One of them described the meeting in Jordan as "quite tense", saying Arab ministers were disturbed by Mekdad's tone. — Air strikes  
The meeting attended by ministers from Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Jordan produced a statement in which Syria agreed to help end drug trafficking and to work over the next month to identify who was producing and transporting narcotics. Underlining deep Arab concern over the issue, Jordan carried out air strikes in Syria on Monday, killing a Syrian narcotics smuggler and hitting a factory linked to the Iran-backed Lebanese group, Hezbollah, local and intelligence sources said. Hezbollah, which deployed fighters to Syria to aid Assad's war efforts, has denied any role in the drugs trade. Aided by Iran and Russia, Assad steadily beat back his rebel enemies, some of whom had support from US-allied Arab states that have now restored ties. They include Saudi Arabia, which is also mending ties with Assad's ally, Iran. The war has shattered Syria's once productive economy, demolishing infrastructure, cities and factories. Captagon has long been a lucrative part of Syria's war economy, estimated to be worth billions of dollars a year. Jordan has told Syria it views drugs as a threat to its national security, a senior Jorda-

nian official said. "The pressure on the border is huge and these are not gangs. It's clearly supported by Iran-backed militias entrenched within the state," the official said.

— Compensation  
Saudi Arabia, a big market for Captagon, has proposed compensating Syria for the loss of the trade in the event it stops, according to a regional source close to Damascus and a Syrian source close to the Gulf with knowledge of contacts. The regional source said Saudi Arabia had offered \$4 billion – based on what Riyadh estimates the trade to be worth – and the proposal had been made during a visit to Damascus by Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan. The funds would be defined as agricultural aid, the source said. The Syrian source confirmed Riyadh had proposed a sum that would be paid as humanitarian aid, but could not say how much.

Neither the governments of Syria nor Saudi Arabia responded to requests for comment. A Gulf Arab diplomat in the region said: "They must stop exporting drugs, and they know that the Gulf is ready to invest when there are signs that this is actually happening". Two Western sources with knowledge of Arab contacts with Syria said a pay-off would be necessary to peel state-linked armed units away from the Captagon trade.

Courtesy: Middle East Monitor

## Letters to the Editor

**Suicide cases in Pakistan**  
One of greatest modern era problem is suicide. Suicide is a type of murder where not single or two involve but whole community or society involve. Suicide is a serious issue with youth of today world. Through worldwide around 800,000 people taking their own life according to WHO. The situation is not different in Pakistan. According to Pakistan Bureau Of Statistics 2020 Report there were

6138 suicide with majority of men age of 20 to 40 include students. Recently a 12 years old girl who was studying in six grade in Hyderabad suicide by jumping from school building third floor. Another mysterious case reported in Tharparker where in 2020, 113 suicide cases happened. The predictive reason behind cases were mental health , depression , domestic violence and other factor. To break down the basic suicide contribu-

tion factor Government and Non Government Organizations should organize awareness seminar regularly. Since Family members can help to reduce number of suicides cases by helping them by listening them and taking them to psychiatrist for counselling. We need to make family institution, parents strong to curb such like problems in the Pakistani society.

— Fahad Ahmad  
— Peshawar



## President writes to PM urging to ensure Imran Khan's constitutional rights

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi in a letter written to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday urged him to ensure the constitutional rights and life security of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan. In his letter, the president drew the attention of the prime minister towards the manner in which Imran Khan was arrested from the premises of Islamabad High Court and the consequences thereof.

According to the media wing of the President's House, Dr Alvi mentioned that the personnel of law enforcement agencies forcibly entered the office of the Islamabad High Court where the biometric procedure of Imran Khan was under process. The president said the manner in which Khan's arrest took place



should not happen to anyone. President Alvi said he was distressed over the damages to public assets and the unlawful actions of miscreants. "As the upholder of the Constitution and Law, I condemn such incidents. My country is passing through a

difficult phase. Let us take a deep breath and salvage our destiny," he said. He urged PM Sharif to keep him informed about the current state of affairs in line with his obligation under the Constitution and Rules of Business, 1973.

## Govt determined for social welfare, poverty alleviation: Dar

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar here on Thursday said that the government was determined for promoting social welfare, poverty alleviation and implement targeted social safety net programs to support vulnerable segments of the society.

Addressing the 'Islamabad Security Dialogue-2023,' organized by the National Security Division and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he said the government had also initiated cash transfer program for health and education sectors to strengthen the social safety net. The minister said that all these measures aimed at to develop and creating more inclusive and equitable society where everyone had an opportunity to thrive, adding that in this regard the allocation for Benazir Income Support Program was enhanced to Rs 400 billion with 25 percent increase in stipends. Besides, the government had also initiated youth skill development program in order to encourage the entrepreneurship skills among the youth to get the maximum dividend of large bulge of youth as well as to enhance employment opportunities, he added. He said that government had also started short, medium and long term programs for all the sectors of national economy in order to enhance the competitiveness of national economy to strengthen local footprints in regional

and global economies. The minister said that incumbent government had inherited a bleak economy, which was the result of incompetence and bad governance of last government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf that also declined the international commitments and pushed the country into a serious economic positions. Due to poor economic policies of the last government, he said that trade deficit swelled to \$ 39.7 billion in fiscal year 2022, adding that current account deficit was recorded at \$17.4 billion, whereas foreign direct investment plunged to \$1.9 billion.

On fiscal side, the minister informed that the deficit was recorded at 17.9 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), whereas during the period 2018-22 huge amount was borrowed and the circular debt grew to Rs 2,446 billion and public sector debt ballooned from Rs 25 trillion to Rs 44.5 trillion. Besides, the minister said that the unprecedented floods of 2022 affected all sectors of the national economy and inflicted losses to the tune of over \$31 billion, adding that the United Nations Agencies and other development partners including Asian Development Bank and European Union estimated that Pakistan would require about \$16.3 billion for reconstruction and rehabilitation. Under such circumstances when the challenges like high inflation, increasing trend of commodity in global markets and shrinking fiscal space,

the government has devised future road map to protect the masses from tough economic challenges. Besides, he said that government had banned import of luxury items and tightened the monetary policy to control rising inflation, adding that it was also striving to attract investment in the country with economic diplomacy to develop national economy and strengthen relation with the other countries.

He said that in order to sustain the local economy, the government had taken tough decision and sacrificed its political capital on the supreme national interest, adding that these measures were yielding positive results as revenue collection witnessed significant growth and current account deficit narrowed, whereas fiscal deficit came down as well. Besides, the government initiated Kissan program worth of Rs1,700 billion in order to revive agriculture sector, enhance productivity with modernization of agri-sector and ensuring availability of high-yielding quality seeds of all major and minor crops. As a result of these measures, the country harvested bumper wheat crop during current season, he said, adding that it would enhance farm income. Ishaq Dar said that economic security remained key for Pakistan's ability to strengthen its national security and continuity of economic growth and ensuring lowering of input cost and success of its internal reforms.

## No one will be safe 'if criminals like Imran given relief': Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb Thursday said during the tenure of Imran Khan as prime minister, his several political adversaries were arrested from the premises of courts but no notice was taken. He was the first accused in the history of the National Accountability Bureau whose appeal against his physical remand was taken up by the court for hearing within 48 hours of his arrest, she told a press conference. Marriyum said those who had encouraged terrorists, armed groups and anti-nationalism, would also be called criminals, and "if the fastest relief were given to the criminals like Imran then nobody will be safe from their evil". Providing relief to a "terrorist and anti-state person" would encourage and incite others to terrorism, she added. "Whether anyone who breaks into the house of a judge will be given relief in the same way as that of Imran Khan?" she questioned. The minister further asked who would provide justice to the patients, police personnel, martyrs and armed forces veterans who were attacked by the "PTI goons" and who would pay for the damage caused to mosques, schools and hospitals. She said for the last three days, a few hundred armed groups and terrorists had been attacking sensitive institutions and ransacking state properties, mosques, hospitals and schools. Marriyum said Imran Khan had misappropriated Rs 60 billion of the national exchequer in the name of Al-Qadir Trust case and he was arrested by NAB for interrogation in that regard.

"After his arrest, terrorists and armed groups, who had been persistently incited by the PTI leadership for violence, attacked state and public property across the country," she maintained. The minister opined that NAB arrested Imran Khan in a legal way and produced him in the accountability court to get his remand for interrogation. She said Imran Khan was not the first political leader arrested by NAB as he himself had used the Bureau for the witch hunt of political adversaries. He even did not spare the sisters and daughters of his opponents, including Nawaz Sharif, Asif Ali Zardari, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Rana

Sanaulah, Salman Shehbaz, Hamza Shehbaz, Miftah Ismail and others, who were thrown in jails. All his opponents were arrested in fake and concocted cases but no court had taken notice of the "avenging practice", she added. Marriyum said the "Ladla" had been continuously given special treatment since 2014 and no action was ever taken against him by any court. She said the police went to Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence for the execution of his arrest warrants, they were greeted with petrol bombs which was a clear manifestation of contempt of court. In the ensuing violence, she added, many policemen suffered serious injuries, with their official vehicles set on fire. There was chaos in the whole Lahore city because of the vandalism, she said.

Had the courts not ignored impeding the execution of their arrest warrants at that time, the chaotic situation created by the "PTI goons" for the last two days would have been averted, she remarked. Similarly, she said, disrespect shown to the pictures of the Chief Justice of Pakistan should not have been ignored. Likewise, the courts should have taken notice of Imran's threats to a respectable female judge, she added. "Who will provide justice to those (law enforcement agencies' personnel), who were either martyred and became Ghazis while defending the country's borders, but they were disrespected and dishonoured by making fun of their sacrifices?" she posed a question. The minister said on the day of Imran's arrest, the Lahore Corps Commander's House was burnt, ambulances were torched after taking out patients and metro-bus stations were set ablaze. Even mosques were not spared. Had "this terrorist" been taken to task on May 25 last year, the country would not have been burning today, she added. The minister recalled that the three times elected prime minister Nawaz Sharif was booked in the false case of Panama Papers and he had appeared over 100 times in the courts and presented documents to prove his innocence. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leaders were arrested and kept in death cells but its workers never resorted to damaging public or private property, she added.

## Ethiopian embassy inaugurated in Islamabad



ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar along with her Ethiopian counterpart Misganu Arega inaugurated the opening of the Embassy of Ethiopia in Islamabad on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Hina Rabbani Khar said the opening of the embassy would open doors for trade and investment between Pakistan and Ethiopia. She said Pakistan wishes to engage with Africa and be a partner in its journey of growth and prosperity. Hina Rabbani Khar said the economic and developmental challenges of both countries are similar, and there is also a commonality in the resilience of our people to achieve these goals. She said Pakistan has always supported Africa throughout history and expressed the hope that this embassy will be instrumental in materializing that potential for the mutual benefit of our country. Highlighting significance of direct flight operations by Ethiopian Airlines to Karachi, the Minister of State said the start of direct flights between the two countries will provide a fresh impetus to our bilateral

trade and people-to-people connection. In his remarks, Ethiopian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Misganu Arega extended his gratitude to the government and people of Pakistan for the warm welcome in Islamabad. He said Ethiopia and Pakistan enjoy cordial relations since 1958. He said it was Ethiopia's firm conviction that the opening of its embassy in Islamabad marks a new history of diplomatic, political, economic, and social cooperation between the two countries. The Ethiopian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs said the opening of the embassy is an example of the importance that the Ethiopian government gives to its relations with Pakistan. He said the bilateral trade agreement signed on February 14th this year would open a new window of opportunity for investment in trade and tourism. He expressed gratitude to Pakistan and its people for standing by Ethiopia in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Later, both Ministers also cut a cake to commemorate the opening of the Ethiopian Embassy in Pakistan

## China Southern Airline to resume Lahore-Urumqi flights

ISLAMABAD (Staff Report): China Southern Airlines is poised to resume flight operations from Lahore to Urumqi on June 13th, 2023. Flight operations were suspended when the pandemic erupted, causing a significant downturn in the aviation industry. Gwadar Pro quoting an official from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on Tuesday stated the flight service will connect Lahore with Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The flights will be scheduled on a weekly basis, specifically on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. In terms of preparedness to smoothen the resumption of flights, he said that all mandatory SOPs from administration level to technical procedures are being put into force at Lahore Airport. Mr. Yan Yang, Commercial Counsellor at the Chinese Consulate in Lahore, hailed the resumption of flights as a positive sign, stating that it would bring a wave of convenience to travelers on both sides. The resumption of flights from Lahore to Urumqi on June 13th, following the reopening of the Khunjerab Pass after a three-year hiatus, is expected to strengthen Pakistan-China economic and trade ties while also promoting people-to-people exchanges between the two nations. Various organizations, including the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, traders' bodies, and associations, warmly welcomed the resumption of flights.

## Police arrests over 200 people involved in violent acts: CCPO

LAHORE (Agencies): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana has said that the police have arrested over 200 individuals allegedly involved in violent acts of damaging properties and attacking state institutions. More than 65 officers and policemen sustained injuries due to the violent actions of the miscreants, he said. The miscreants vandalized 22 police vehicles and set several others on fire. The police have

registered 11 FIRs against the miscreants including two in PS Sarwar Road, one in PS North Cantonment, three in PS Race Course, one in PS Shadman, and two each in Gulberg and Model Town police stations, he said. CCPO Lahore emphasized that strict legal action was being taken against such elements as the police were following a zero-tolerance policy against those who attack public and private properties, state institutions, and the police.

## Naveed Qamar, Emphasizes the significance of the barter trade system for enhancing trade volume

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Federal Minister for Commerce, Syed Naveed Qamar, emphasized the significance of barter trade systems to enhance bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Ethiopia. He was addressed at the Pakistan Ethiopian Business Forum organized by the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries. Minister Commerce, alongside Misganu Arega, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, graced the event as chief guest. Fauzia Amin, the Minister of State for Innovation & Technology, and other distinguished dignitaries were also present. During his address, the Federal Minister commended the initiative of establishing a direct flight from Addis Ababa to Karachi, as it would greatly contribute to enhancing connectivity and fostering stronger relations between the two nations. Additionally, he praised the operations of Ethiopian Airlines, which currently serves around 117 destinations. He acknowledged the dynamic role played by the Ethiopian Ambassador in bridging the business communities of both countries. The Federal Minister highlighted Pakistan's potential as a market for foreign sectors and encouraged the Ethiopian business delegation to explore joint ventures and investments in Pakistan. He emphasized Pakistan's Look Africa



policy aimed to strengthen business relations with the entire African continent. Minister Qamar announced that Pakistan is set to launch a B2B Barter Trade Policy and encouraged Ethiopian entrepreneurs to take advantage of this opportunity to enhance trade ties with Pakistan. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry, expressed his concern over the bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Ethiopia, which currently stands at less than \$100 million. He stated that this amount is negligible considering the true potential of both countries. Bakhtawari identified various products, including mangoes, textiles, rice, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, surgical and medical equipment, sports goods, and construction materials, that Pakistan could export to Ethiopia. Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula of Ethiopia and Ambassador Shozab Abbas, Pakistan's Ambassador to Ethiopia, reiterated their commitment to enhancing business relations and continuing their roles in further strengthening ties between the two countries.

## Secretary SH&ME for completion Nishtar-II on war footings

MULTAN (APP): Secretary of Specialized Healthcare & Medical Education (SH&ME) Department South Punjab, Muhammad Afzal Nasir Khan ordered officials concerned to make Nishtar-II operational on war footings and no excuse would be accepted for its accomplishment

within the stipulated time. He directed officials concerned during the visit of the under construction site here on Thursday. NMU VC, Dr Rana Altaf, MS Nishtar Hospital, Dr Amjad Rao, Deputy Secretary, Ali Sajjad and IDAP officials were present. The Infrastructure

Development Authority of Punjab (IDAP) apprised the secretary that the machinery would be installation after the completion of specific departments by May 30 which is the deadline. Mr Khan said that they would not tolerate any excuse in this regard.

## AJK PM for citizens' due role in rapid development of State

MIRPUR (AJK) May 11 (APP): The Azad Jammu & Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwaar ul Haque on Thursday said it was the responsibility of every citizen to play his due role for the rapid development and uplift of the state. Talking to a delegation at Jammu and Kashmir House in the federal metropolis, the prime minister said "We all have to take the state on the path of development". He said, "All the departments are service providers to the public. Their duty is to serve the people." He said that financial stability is key

to running the affairs of any state, with the release of development funds by the federal government, the wheel of development in the state, which was stopped, has started running again. He said that provision of relief to the people is the first priority of his government for which all resources will be utilized. Development funds should be spent on time. Directives have been issued to all the departments to attend to the complaints of the public, to facilitate the people and not confuse them.

## Int'l Nurses Day to be observed on Friday

ISLAMABAD (APP): Like other parts of the globe, International Nurses Day will be observed in Pakistan on May 12 in recognition of their tireless and invaluable contribution to health care and health security. According to World Health Organization's (WHO) report, nurses and midwives make up more than half of the health workforce in WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region. However, the Region accounts for 17% of the global shortage of 5.9 million nurses, according to the report "State of the World's Nursing 2020: Investing in Education, Jobs and Leadership". The Region has the second lowest density of nurses among WHO regions, at 15.6 nurses per 10,000 population, ranging from less than one to 81 per 10,000

population. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of ensuring a sufficient number of the health workforce in building resilient health systems. We must address the shortage in the health workforce, especially in nurses and midwives in our Region to raise up to the challenges. "As we progress towards universal health coverage (UHC) and other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets, including those related to education, gender, and economic growth, within the rapidly changing global health context, it is timely and imperative to invest in the nursing workforce," reiterated Dr Ahmed Al-Mandahri, WHO's Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

## Maiden Flight of Ethiopian Airlines accorded warm welcome at Jinnah Int'l Airport



ISLAMABAD (Agencies): High-powered officials and government delegations arrived in Karachi on a maiden flight of Ethiopian Airlines, which landed at Jinnah International Airport and was given a warm welcome by Pakistani authorities and government officials. Jemal Beker Abdula, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, received the delegations here at the airport along with Chief Minister of Sindh H.E. Syed Murad Ali Shah and other provincial ministers and businessmen. A reception and inauguration

ceremony was also held at the Airport which was followed by a cake-cutting ceremony. Speaking on the occasion, the ambassador said Ethiopian Airlines would operate four flights a week from Addis Ababa to Karachi and vice versa. This will transform the whole landscape of bilateral relations between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan by giving a major boost to people-to-people and business-to-business contacts. He extended gratitude to all those who supported the Embassy of Ethiopia in Pakistan in starting the flight operations of Ethiopian Airlines from Karachi.

## Commissioning ceremony of advanced Frigates for Pakistan Navy held in China



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi during commissioning ceremony of two newly built Type 054 A/P Frigates (PNS TIPPU SULTAN & PNS SHAHJAHAN) handing over the traditional command scrolls to the Commanding Officers at Hudong Zhonghua Shipyards Shanghai, China

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): In an impressive ceremony held at Hudong Zhonghua Shipyards Shanghai, China; two newly built Type 054 A/P Frigates namely PNS TIPPU SULTAN and PNS SHAHJAHAN were commissioned in Pakistan Navy. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi graced the ceremony as Chief Guest and handed over the traditional Command Scrolls to the Commanding Officers of PN Ships. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief of the Naval Staff highlighted that the commissioning of PNS TIPPU SULTAN and PNS SHAHJAHAN ushers a new chapter in Pak - China friendship that has matured and rests firmly on the pillars of trust, respect, and mutual support. The same is manifested in our defence collabora-

tions. Naval Chief added that with the active support of the People's Republic of China, Pakistan's Navy has undertaken substantial measures to strengthen its force structure and progressive capability enhancement. The Chief Guest underscored that completion of the Type 054 A/P Project is a major leap towards strengthening capabilities to respond to maritime threats and contribution to peace and stability in the region.

Towards the end, the Admiral thanked and praised the concerted efforts made by all major stakeholders involved in the development of the ships including BOMETEC, SASTIND, PLA (N), HZ Shipyards, and CSTC for the timely completion of the project despite the pandemic challenges.

## One-day free medical camp organized in Larkana

LARKANA (Agencies): A one-day free medical camp was organized by Working Social Welfare Association Larkana in collaboration with the Shafiq Ahmed Chandio, Chairman of Union Committee No. 3 Hyderi Town of Larkana city and District Health Department Larkana

here on Thursday. The camp was held at Eid Gah Sheikh Zayed Colony Larkana, where more than 400 patients including women, children and men suffering from different diseases were provided medical facilities including medicines free of cost and tests.

## Global Parliamentary Convention concludes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Global Parliamentary Convention held to mark the Golden Jubilee of Pakistan's Constitution has come to a close with the participation of delegates from over 17 countries. Among them were representatives from Belgium, Iran, Kenya, Syria, Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Britain, the United States of America, Scotland, and other countries. The convention was attended by a diverse group of individuals, including members of parliament, political

leaders, members of the soul society, women, academia, and non-Muslim leaders from within the country. Notably, Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh, Chairman of Saudi Arabia's Shura Council, also participated in the event. On the first day of the convention, various speeches were delivered by notable figures such as Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the head of the Pakistan Democratic Movement, Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer

Tarar, Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rahman, former Chairman of the Senate Farooq H. Naik, and Advisor to Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira. The second day of the convention marked the concluding ceremony, which was addressed by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. An official statement was also issued at the event. Dr. Nafeesa Shah presented the statement in the concluding session of the convention.

## 12 fresh Corona cases reported in last 24 hours

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health officials on Thursday said that 12 new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours across the country. As per the data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH), the case positivity ratio was 0.55 percent while 10 patients were in critical condition. One death was reported from the Coronavirus in the last 24 hours from Karachi while 2,196 Covid-19 tests were conducted. Meanwhile, Minister for National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel said the government has strengthened the role of Border and Health Services in Pakistan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19. The minister said there was a surveillance system at all entry points of the country including airports. There will be rapid tests and screening of passengers at all airports, he added. He added 90 percent of the country's population already got the Covid-19 vaccine.

## PUC to observe 'Pakistan Stability Day' nationwide

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Ulama and Mashaykh of all schools of thought on Thursday announced their full participation in the nationwide observance of 'Pakistan Stability Day' on Friday organized by the Pakistan Ulama Council (PUC). In their Friday sermons, they would emphasize the importance of solidarity with the national security forces and strongly condemned the recent acts of violence and attacks on government, military, and public property perpetrated by nefarious elements. A joint statement was issued by prominent figures including PUC Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Maulana Asad Zakaria Qasmi, Allama Abdul Haq Mujahid, Maulana Muhammad Shafi Qasmi, Maulana Nauman Hashir, Maulana Asadullah Farooq, Allama Zubair Abid, Maulana Muhammad Ashfaq Pitafi, Maulana Tahir Aqeel Awan, Maulana Abu Bakr Hameed Sabri, Maulana Aziz Akbar Qasmi, Maulana Muhammad Aslam Siddiqui, and Allama Tahirul Hasan. Expressing deep regret over the recent surge in violence following the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, the religious leaders labelled these incidents as condemnable acts of terrorism. They highlighted that such levels of organized terrorism had never been witnessed in the 75-year history of Pakistan.

## Dr Irshad Memon posted as DG health Sindh

HYDERABAD (Agencies): Senior Medical Officer (BS-19) presently posted as Additional Director General (EPI) Dr Irshad Memon was transferred and posted as Director General Health Sindh, Hyderabad against an existing vacancy. According to notification, Dr Memon is posted as DG Health Sindh with immediate effect and until further orders. Dr Pir Ghulam Hussain, senior medical officer (BS-19) is posted as Additional DG Health Sindh, Hyderabad.

## Pakistan's total foreign reserves reach at \$ 9.99 bil

KARACHI (Agencies): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 9,990.4 million while reserves held by the central bank reached US\$ 4,383.4 million. The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that foreign reserves of the central bank decreased by US\$ 74 million to US\$ 4,383.4 million due to external debt repayment during the week ended on May 05, 2023. Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at US\$ 5,607 million, it added.

## IGP for foolproof security on 34th National Games in Quetta

QUETTA (Agencies): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh on Thursday chaired a meeting regarding the regulation, security and other arrangements of the 34th National Games in Quetta. Additional IG Police Jawad Ahmed Dogar, Additional IG and Commandant BC Salman Chaudhry, DIG Headquarters Shahab Azim Lahri, DIG Quetta Ghulam Azhar Mesar, DIG ATF Munir Ahmed and other police officers also participated in the meeting. Addressing the meeting, IGP said that after 19 years, a big event was going to be held in Balochistan on the occasion of National Games, which was a matter of honor for the province. Therefore, strict and foolproof arrangements will be made for the security of the players and venues in this regard, he said adding that a joint security plan would be arranged with the management in which the players and fans could face minimum inconvenience. He said that all pos-

sible resources would be utilized for the peaceful and successful conduct of the National Games, more than 2500 police personnel would be deployed for the security and safety of the grounds and players.

The IG said that officials in civil clothes would also perform their duties throughout the city, police and FC personnel to be assigned for the security of the grounds and players, while the army would be kept on standby in case of any emergency. He said three control rooms are being set up for the security of the National Games, while surveillance will also be done with the help of CCTV cameras across the city. He said that 24-hour monitoring would continue during the National Games, and special cards and vehicle passes would be issued for media and guests. It was informed in the meeting that seven thousand official and national and international players from all over the country are participating in the National Games.

## Court issues written order regarding indictment of Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A local court of Islamabad on Thursday issued written order regarding the indictment of PTI's chairman Imran Khan in the Toshakhana gifts case. Additional Sessions Judge Hamayun Dilawar issued the written order regarding the last day hearing. The court said that Imran Khan's lawyers had raised objections against the indictment of the accused but it was rejected by it. The order said that charges had been

framed against the accused, adding that Imran Khan had not answered the questions of the court during the hearing. The accused had also refused to sign the charge sheet, he said. The court said that it was issuing notices to the prosecution witnesses for May 13, to record their statements. The order said that Imran's lawyer Khwaja Haris had raised an objection against the judge and requested to transfer the case to any other court.

## Sindh, KP victorious in Blind T20 Super League

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa earned victories in the ongoing 6th PBCC Blind Cricket T-20 Super League 2023 at Cricket Stadium, Abbottabad on Thursday. In the first match, Sindh beat Balochistan by 8 runs. Balochistan won the toss and invited Sindh to take guard. Sindh was bowled out on 225 runs in the allotted 20 overs. The veteran Muhammad Akram played efficiently and made 52 runs off 36 balls while Muhammad Tahsin made 50 runs off 29 balls. Matiullah, Salman and Ameer Hamza shared a wicket apiece. In reply, the Balochistan team managed to score 217 runs by losing 7 wickets in the stipulated 20 overs. Kam-

ran was their top scorer with 98 runs off 47 balls and M Rashid made 41 runs off 34 balls. Badar and Irfan took 2 wickets each.

In the other match, KP beats Punjab by 49 runs. KP won the toss and opted to bat first. KP set the huge total of 243 runs on the board for the loss of 5 wickets in the allotted 20 overs. Nisar Ali once again played an extraordinary innings of 141 runs off 75 balls while Niamat Ullah made 36 runs off 24 balls. Sajid Nawaz and Akmal Hayat took 1 wicket each for Punjab. In reply, the Punjab team was able to score 194 runs for the loss of 4 wickets in the stipulated 20 overs.

## PM, Maulana Fazlur Rehman discuss prevailing political situation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a meeting with Pakistan Democratic Movement Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman here on Thursday and held a detailed discussion on the current political situation in the country. During the

meeting, they strongly condemned the attacks of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's workers on state institutions and damage to government properties. The two leaders consulted on the recent decision of the Supreme Court and discussed the future strategy.

## ShipSigma partners with British Pakistani racer Enaam Ahmed

INDIANAPOLIS (Agencies): ShipSigma, an Indianapolis-based shipping intelligence platform that helps high-volume shippers optimize their parcel spend, has partnered with Enaam Ahmed, a British racing driver of Pakistani origin, to support him in his racing career. Enaam Ahmed has won several championships and awards in his career, including the 2017 BRDC British Formula 3 Championship, and is considered a rising star in the world of motorsports. This upcoming season will mark Enaam Ahmed's first in the INDYCAR development series after finishing third in the 2022 USF Pro 2000 Championship standings. Chase Flashman, ShipSigma's CEO, stated: "I've been a fan of Indy car racing for a long time, but I'm a bigger fan of an entrepreneurial mindset. It is exciting to

have the opportunity to team up with Enaam, a younger driver, who is so passionate about developing his skills both on and off the track." He said, "It's a natural fit for ShipSigma to invest in a young athlete taking risks to achieve his dreams. It's exactly what I did when I started ShipSigma." Beginning his career in British karting, Ahmed won numerous national and international titles before moving to cars, capturing the MSA Formula Championship Rookie of the Year title in 2015. Finishing fifth in BRDC British F3 in 2016, he won the series title in 2017 with 13 wins and 18 total podiums. He turned his attention to the U.S. in 2021 and made history in 2022 as he became the first driver from Pakistan to stand on the podium of a race in the very competitive "Road to Indy" ladder.

## Disney aims for more profits at Disney+ with more ads, less content, higher fees

NEW YORK (CNN): Disney laid out the profit plan for Disney+ streaming service on its investor call after reporting its most recent quarterly results, and it's likely not going to make its customers very happy. It entails cutting back on the content offered, selling more ads and charging higher subscription fees. For investors, the news out of streaming was good news. Disney+ and its other two services, ESPN+ and Hulu, together trimmed losses by \$228 million, or 13%, from a year earlier to \$659 million. The im-



provement from the previous quarter was even greater, as it trimmed losses by nearly \$400 million from \$1.1 billion. Disney did it with a 2% drop

in subscribers for Disney+ to 157.8 million, and a 1% drop in subscribers overall, when including ESPN+ and Hulu in subscription totals. It was able to trim losses with fewer subscribers through higher subscription revenue and a decrease in marketing costs, partially offset by higher programming and production costs. The company's ongoing efforts to trim losses and begin to make profits on its streaming business could disappoint some of the people who have enjoyed Disney+, however.

## Saudi Arabia launches business incubator, accelerator programs to support SMEs

RIYADH (Agencies): Entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia are set to receive a boost from the new Industrial Business Accelerator and Incubator Initiative launched by the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources. The new drive aims to meet the specific needs of small and medium enterprises and industrial project owners in the Kingdom, according to a statement. Incubators primarily concentrate on entrepreneurs in the early stages, according to the official spokesman of the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources Jarrar bin Muhammad Al-Jarrah. They tend to sponsor businesses, from those at the stage of generating ideas to emerging companies, while helping them to establish and further accel-



erate in terms of future growth and success, the spokesman added. On the other hand, accelerators mainly focus on late-stage startups which have high growth potential. They pose as short-term programs that offer business consulting, training, mentorship, as well as optional financial support while aiming at further expanding their scope.

## Saudi railway passenger traffic more than doubles to 2.2m in Q1

RIYADH (Agencies): Railway passenger traffic more than doubled in the first three months of the year, as Saudi Arabia Railways recorded 104 percent growth in the total number of passengers to 2.22 million, compared to the same period of last year, affirming massive growth in the Kingdom's transport sector. The number of journeys on the North, East, and Haramain High-Speed Rail networks reached 8,036 during the first three months of 2023, representing a yearly increase of 54 percent, Saudi Press Agency reported, citing SAR's latest operational results. According to the



report, the volume of goods transported on the Kingdom's railway network reached 5.83 million tons during the first quarter of 2023, up 7 percent from the same quarter of the previous year. This comes as the Saudi railway network's preparedness

reached nearly 100 percent during the first three months of 2023. Earlier in April, SAR revealed that the Kingdom's Haramain High-Speed Railway carried more than 818,000 passengers over 2,540 journeys during Ramadan, a 265 percent increase over the same period last year. SAR added that the number of daily trips operated during the holy month exceeded 115, with a commitment rate of more than 97 percent. In the same month, SAR also signed a memorandum of understanding with Italy's Arsenale Group to host the Middle East's first luxury train.

## Global companies warn of slower-than-expected recovery in China

HONG KONG (CNN): China's first few months of reopening to the world hasn't gone as planned for global businesses. In recent weeks, a slew of blue-chip firms have pointed to a patchy recovery in the world's second largest economy, forcing some executives to warn of slower-than-expected growth. Last week, Estée Lauder (EL) suffered its biggest daily stock drop on record after slashing its sales outlook, citing pressures in China and elsewhere in Asia. Starbucks (SBUX) and Qualcomm (QCOM) have also flagged uncertain-



ties related to the country, which is a top market for both. Beijing abandoned its zero-Covid policy in December and scrapped longstanding quarantine requirements for international arrivals

in January, ending restrictions that had isolated its economy. The welcomed, if abrupt, policy U-turn led to hopes that China could help propel global growth as it had before the pandemic. Its latest headline GDP growth offered some encouragement, but there are also fresh concerns, such as the job market for younger people and the possibility of deflation. Shehzad Qazi, chief operating officer of data and advisory firm China Beige Book, said many analysts on Wall Street had overestimated the pace of the country's recovery.

## Magrabi Retail Group to double Doctor M stores across the Middle East

RIYADH (Agencies): Eyewear enthusiasts in the Middle East will soon find more outlets of the optical store Doctor M as Magrabi Retail Group, one of the region's leading optical retail chains and owner of the lifestyle brand, is planning a major expansion drive. Launched in Saudi Arabia in 2021, Doctor M has a strong presence in the Kingdom with 27 stores spread across Riyadh, Jeddah and other cities, as well as 150 employees. The eyewear retailer plans to increase Doctor



M stores in the Middle East to over 50 by launching branches in Egypt, Qatar and the UAE. "We are undertaking Magrabi Retail Group's largest-ever

investment into Doctor M to expand its presence and meet growing consumer demand in the Middle East. With a doubling of store count, we aim to broaden our offering and cater to diverse lifestyles across the region," Yasser Taher, the group's CEO, told Arab News. He added: "This strategic move reflects our vision which is re-envisioning the world of eyewear to empower the lifestyles of millions while championing inclusivity and positive social impact."

## Central Bank of Oman issues treasury bills worth \$36.m

RIYADH (Agencies): The Central Bank of Oman allotted government treasury bills worth 14 million Omani rials (\$36.41 million) on Tuesday. According to a statement, the amount was raised through two tranches of 10 million Omani rials and 4 million Omani rials. The tranche worth 10 million Omani rials had a maturity of 28 days, and its average expected price — the price at which the central bank accepts the bid — reached 99.645 Omani rials per 100 Omani



rials. This tranche's average discount rate and the yield reached 4.62768 percent and 4.64417 percent, respectively. The statement said that the sec-

ond tranche, worth 4 million Omani rials, had a maturity of 91 days, and its average expected price reached 89.755 Omani rials per 100 Omani rials. This tranche's average discount rate and the yield reached 4.99368 percent and 5.05664 percent, respectively. Treasury bills are a guaranteed short-term financial instrument issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

## Egypt's headline inflation eases for first time in 9 months to 30.6%

RIYADH (Agencies): Softer rises in food prices helped Egypt's headline inflation rate see a year-on-year dip in April for the first time in nine months, reported the country's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics. Inflation dropped from 32.7 percent in March to register 30.6 percent. The country's food inflation increased 54.7 percent in April, showing a 8.2 percent drop from the 62.9 percent increase the month before. As for the country's month-on-month urban inflation, it



fell to 1.7 percent from 2.7 percent in March and 6.5 percent in February, reported CAPMAS. Currency devaluations, an ongoing foreign currency

shortage, and import delivery delays — all contributed to the rise in inflation over the previous year. On Tuesday, Egypt's B3 issuer rating for both local and foreign currencies was placed under review for a downgrade by rating agency Moody's. This was due to the slower-than-expected progress with its state-owned asset sale, reported the agency. Despite the Egyptian pound's steep depreciation over the past few months, the country continues to experience a foreign currency shortage.

## The most popular search engine in the world is about to look different

NEW YORK (CNN): Google is moving forward with plans to bring AI chat features to its core search engine as it works to keep pace with a wave of new artificial intelligence tools that could threaten the company's dominance online for the first time in decades. The company on Wednesday said it is introducing the next evolution of Google Search, which will use an AI-powered chatbot to answer questions "you never thought Search could answer" and to help get users the information they want quicker than ever. With the up-



date, the look and feel of Google Search results will be noticeably different. When users type a query into the main search bar, they will automatically see a pop-up with an AI-generated response in addition to displaying traditional results. Users can now sign up for a waitlist for the new Google Search, which will first launch in the United States, via the Google app or Chrome's desktop

browser. A limited amount of users will have access to it in the coming weeks, according to the company. The updates were unveiled at I/O, the company's annual developer event, which focused on a mix of AI and hardware products. At the event, Google also announced PaLM 2, its latest AI language model to rival ChatGPT-creator OpenAI's GPT-4. The move marks a big step forward for the technology that powers the company's AI products and promises to be better at logic, common sense reasoning and mathematics.

## A foldable phone, new tablet and lots of AI: What Google unveiled at its big developer event



NEW YORK (CNN): Google on Wednesday unveiled its latest lineup of hardware products, including its first foldable phone and a new tablet, as well as plans to roll out new AI features to its search engine and productivity tools. The updates, announced at its annual Google I/O developer conference, come as the company is simultaneous-

ly trying to push beyond its core advertising business with new devices while also racing to defend its search engine from the threat posed by a wave of new AI-powered tools. In a sign of where Google's focus currently lies, the company spent more than 90 minutes teasing a long list of new AI features before mentioning hardware updates. Here's what Google announced at the event.

– The Pixel Fold  
Google became the latest tech company to unveil a foldable smartphone. Like other foldables, the \$1799 Pixel Fold features a vertical hinge that can be opened to reveal a tablet-like display. But Google calls the Fold the thinnest foldable on the market.

## 42 percent of workforce in UAE aviation sector are women, conference told

DUBAI (Agencies): About 27,000 women now work in the UAE's aviation sector, a figure that represents 42 percent of the workforce, the Emirates News Agency reported on Wednesday Mervat Sultan, president of the Middle East Chapter of Women in Aviation, said the number of women working in the industry is increasing because of active and constructive engagement with women interested in a career in the field. Speaking at Women in Aviation's 10th Anniversary Conference in Dubai, Sultan said: "If you want to build your nation, you need to build a generation first. The empowerment of women is essential for betterment of the society. "For this, women's education and training are important. We need to educate parents and children as well about employment opportunities in aviation." Sultan noted that already, "women are in all areas of aviation, not only as pilots; there are more engineers,



air traffic controllers, medical, technical and legal staff." Sheikha Mozah bint Marwan Al-Maktoum, a 1st Lt and pilot with Dubai Police Air Wing, told delegates that the gender gap in aviation remains significant and that an effective strategy is required to address the issue. Delivering the keynote speech, she said that in 2019 she founded Shehana, an association to empower and support women in the aviation industry, and advance gender balance through local, regional and international partnerships and collaborations.

## Inter beat Milan 2-0 in Champions League semifinal 'Euroderby'

MILAN (Agencies): Inter Milan overpowered AC Milan early and held on to win the first leg of their Champions League semifinal derby 2-0 on Wednesday, leaving the Nerazzurri on the brink of a return to European soccer's showpiece event for the first time since 2010. Edin Dzeko and Henrikh Mkhitaryan scored two goals in three minutes to put Inter firmly in command and the visitors could have added more in a dominant first-half performance. The second leg is on Tuesday. The winner will face



either Real Madrid or Manchester City, who drew their first leg 1-1. Milan were missing key forward Rafael Leao, who

hadn't fully recovered from a thigh injury sustained over the weekend. There was an electric atmosphere at San Siro for the semifinal that had been dubbed the "Euroderby" in Italy. The two clubs met in the Champions League last four 20 years ago — with Milan winning on away goals and going on to beat Juventus in the final for their sixth of seven titles. Several members of those teams from 2003 were in the stands, along with tennis great Novak Djokovic, who is a Milan fan.

## Banned runner Amos selling 'famous' Olympic silver medal

GABORONE (Agencies): Nijel Amos said he is selling Botswana's first Olympic medal, his 800m silver from the 2012 London Games, to help support his family after he received a three-year doping ban last week. The Athletics Integrity Unit said it banned Amos for three years on May 3 after an out-of-competition test detected a banned metabolite in his urine sample. The ban was reduced from four years after Amos signed an admission, it added. Amos said he signed the ad-



mission on the advice of his legal team. "Given the circumstances surrounding the case, my legal team and I saw it

fit to take that direction so that I get a reduction on my ban," he added. The drug found in the 29-year-old's system, GW1516, modifies how the body metabolises fat, and the World Anti-Doping Agency has said it poses a health risk to athletes. "At this time, my only investment or pension is the famous 2012 Olympic silver medal," Amos told reporters in Botswana on Tuesday. "I am in touch with different stakeholders, including financial advisors, on how that can sustain me and my family.

## Italian Open must offer women equal pay before 2025, says Jabeur

ROME (Agencies): World No 7 Ons Jabeur said women players should not have to wait to receive the same prize money as their male counterparts at the Italian Open after tournament organisers announced plans to achieve pay parity by 2025. Tennis has sought to be a leader in the battle for equality in the last couple of decades with equal prize money offered to men and women at the four Grand Slams. WTA Tour events, however, still often offer less



prize money than those on the separate men's circuit. In the Rome tournament,

the total "financial commitment" for the men is US\$9.51 million while for the women it is US\$3.5 million. Italian tennis federation chief Angelo Binaghi said last month the event had started a process that would lead to equal prize money over three years, but Tunisian Jabeur called for immediate change. "I don't see why we have to wait," Jabeur told the New York Times. "It's really frustrating. It's time for change. It's time for the tournament to do better."

## Enrique completes Malaysia's clean sweep in diving

PHNOM PENH (Agencies): After taking home all eight golds at stake in the 2021 SEA Games diving competition in Hanoi, Vietnam, 18-year-old debutant Enrique Maccartney Harold ensured Malaysia's domination as he wrapped up a clean sweep of all the diving events at the current Games here today. In the men's 10m platform event held at



the Morodok Techo Aquatics Centre

here, Enrique was in a class of his own as he amassed 442.95 points after six rounds to deliver Malaysia's fourth gold in diving. Even sweeter, Malaysia enjoyed a one-two podium finish as another national diver, Bertrand Rhodict Lises, won silver with 384.00 points. The bronze went to Singapore's Max Lee, who scored 362.80 points.

## Brazil prosecutors charge 16 in alleged football match fixing scheme

SAO PAULO (Agencies): Brazilian state prosecutors charged 16 people, including seven professional soccer players, with alleged match fixing, in what threatens to be one of the largest such scandals since Brazil legalised sports gambling in 2018. Prosecutors from Goias state said that the alleged offenses took place in 13 soccer matches, including eight that were played



in the 2022 Brazilian league. Players from clubs such as Santos, Juventude

and Cuiaba were among the accused. In the charging documents, the prosecutors alleged that a criminal gang paid players to commit infractions. The gang would then bet on such outcomes and win payouts when the offenses occurred. The group would offer up to 500,000 reais (US\$100,000) as an upfront payment to the players, the prosecutors alleged.

## Groves wins wet Giro stage, Leknessund retains lead as Evenepoel falls twice

SALERNO (Agencies): Australian Kaden Groves won a ferocious sprint at the end of a rain-soaked and crash-filled fifth stage of the Giro d'Italia on Wednesday as Andreas Leknessund retained the overall lead and favorite Remco Evenepoel fell twice. World champion and Vuelta a Espana winner Evenepoel now faces a nery wait to discover the seriousness of his injuries. "After the second fall, he felt a lot of pain on his right side. He has a muscle hematoma and was hurt in



his sacrum (at the base of the spine)," said Toon Cruyt, the doctor for the Soudal Quick-Step team. "We hope that after a good massage and a good night's sleep he will be better. We will

know more Thursday but what is certain is that the sixth stage will be difficult for him." Leknessund, who also had a scare, remained 28 seconds ahead of 23-year-old Evenepoel after a largely flat 171km run from Atripalda to Salerno on the coast. The Norwegian said he is enjoying leading a major tour. "Rainy and cold but still a nice day," he said, adding that he was happy the team had prepared rain jackets in the pink of the Giro leader's jersey.

## Dubai-based Baseball United to announce 1st franchise

DUBAI (Agencies): Baseball United, the first-ever professional baseball league focused on the Middle East and Indian subcontinent will reveal its first-ever franchise on May 15. The franchise will be the first professional baseball team in the history of the region. Kash Shaikh, president, chief executive officer, and co-owner of Baseball United, said: "We are very excited to share the city and team that will be the first to carry the Base-



ball United banner. "This announcement is a huge milestone for our league, our players, our coaches, and most importantly - our fans. "A lot

of work and a great deal of planning has gone into this selection. It's a big deal. This is history, and I can't wait to share the news." Baseball United will announce its first four franchises this year, with all four competing in its Dubai Showcase in November. Baseball United franchises will all be located within Gulf Cooperation Council member nations and South Asia, which collectively has a population of 2 billion people.

## Pedersen takes sprint as Leknessund keeps Giro lead

Naples, Italy (AFP/APP): Mads Pedersen won the group sprint to take stage six of the Giro d'Italia in Naples on Thursday as Andreas Leknessund retained the overall lead. Pedersen, a Dane who had finished second and third in sprints earlier in the Giro, was fastest after the peloton caught a two-man breakaway in the last 300m. He also completed the set of individ-

ual stage wins in the major tours. After a 162km stage, that started and ended in Naples and took in Mount Vesuvius and the Amalfi coast, two 36-year-old veterans, Australian Simon Clarke and Italian Alessandro De Marchi seemed to have the stage in their grasp as they led by 16 seconds entering the last kilometre. But the former teammates stopped co-operating a little

too soon. Fernando Gaviria of Team UAE launched a long-range sprint just before the two men were caught with 300m to go. Pedersen, of Trek Segafredo, rode the Colombian's slipstream and then went past like a sling shot. He was chased across the line by Italian Jonathan Milan of Bahrain Victorious and Germany's Pascal Ackermann of Team UAE.

## NBA playoffs: Warriors, Knicks stave off elimination to force Game 6s

SAN FRANCISCO (Agencies): Stephen Curry had 27 points and eight assists, Andrew Wiggins added 25 points, seven rebounds and five assist, and the defending champion Golden State Warriors staved off elimination by beating the Los Angeles Lakers 121-106 in Game 5 of the Western Conference semifinals Wednesday night. LeBron James had 25 points and nine rebounds for Los Angeles. Anthony Davis added 23 points and nine rebounds but went to the locker room late after appearing to take a hit in the head from Kevon Looney. Austin Reaves made a 3-pointer with 5:25 to play that cut the Warriors' lead to single digits at 104-95 only



for Curry to answer with five straight points, then he hit another big shot after D'Angelo Russell connected from deep. Draymond Green contributed 20 points and 10 rebounds as Golden State played tough defense that led to better chances on the offensive end — just as coach Steve Kerr has challenged his team to do.

## French gastronomy facing huge logistical challenge for Olympics



PARIS (Agencies): France's vaunted gastronomy will be put to the ultimate test when organizers of the 2024 Paris Olympics have to feed 15,000 athletes. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) inscribed the "gastronomic meal of the French" on its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010. "The gastronomic meal emphasises togetherness, the pleasure of taste, and the balance between human

beings and the products of nature," UNESCO said. "The gastronomic meal should respect a fixed structure, commencing with an aperitif (drinks before the meal) and ending with liqueurs, containing in between at least four successive courses, namely a starter, fish and/or meat with vegetables, cheese and dessert." Realistically, the restaurants run by French catering giants Sodexo might not be offering up such a complete experience — and doubtless few athletes in the prime of their lives would take on such a culinary bonanza given they will be in Paris on tight schedules focused more on competing than indulging themselves. Around 40,000 meals a day will be served during the Paris Olympics, using produce largely sourced in France.

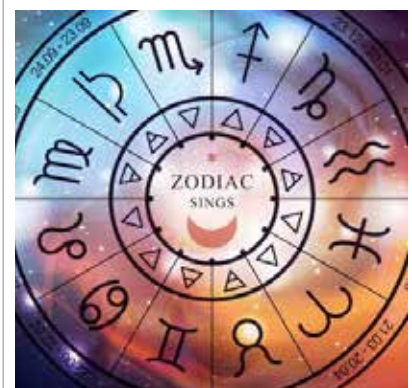
## Veterans shine at Italian Open as Fognini beats Murray; Wawrinka advances

ROME (Agencies): Fabio Fognini edged fellow 35-year-old Andy Murray in a nearly three-hour battle in the opening round of the Italian Open on Wednesday. Given a wild card entry after a month out with an injured foot, Fognini hit more than twice as many winners as Murray (49-24) in a 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 win on Campo Centrale. Murray was coming off his first title in three years after he won an ATP Challenger event in southern France over the weekend for his first tournament victory since 2019 — and first on clay since 2016. But Fognini's crafty shot-making proved the difference as the Italian produced a series of drop-shot winners that were so effective Murray didn't even attempt to run them down. Murray was also



left fuming after protesting a linesman's call late in the first set, which gave Fognini a 5-3 advantage. Murray pointed to the mark on the red clay and told the chair umpire that it was clearly out. "How can you see that ball from there being in? How is it possible?" Murray said. "You know you got that wrong." After the match was over, Murray had more words for the chair umpire, while Fognini wrote on a camera lens, "It's not over."

## DAILY HOROSCOPE: MAY 12, 2023



to let you in on a secret but unable to spit it out.

– **VIRGO**: People seem to be deliberately trying to get at you today in seriously passive-aggressive ways. Maybe they forget appointments, maybe they're just late, but you can outlast them all!

– **LIBRA**: It's one of those days when it's best to go along with the program even if you're grumbling inside. You'll have your chance to shine later, but for now you need to let others take the lead.

– **SCORPIO**: A big question pops into your mind today and doesn't leave. It's one of those things that might be unanswerable, but you love it anyway. Roll it around in your mind and look for clues.

– **SAGITTARIUS**: You are losing stuff, even when you're sure you knew right where you left it! You may find it easiest to entrust your valuables to a level-headed partner or friend for the day.

– **CAPRICORN**: Your friends and family aren't responding to your usual signals, so it's time to put that creative energy to good use. You should be able to reach them using some new means.

– **ACQUARIUS**: It's a great time for you to look at the world at large and figure out your place in it, even if you thought that was settled long ago. Everything is flexible as far as you're concerned.

– **PISCES**: Treat yourself to something nice today. You just can't help it! You might find it easy to incorporate your own fun ideas into those of your friends and family, but there's no special need to do so.

## 'Little chance' China would agree to top-level talks with US – Financial Times

BEIJING (Agencies): Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu has been subject to Russia-related sanctions since 2018. China's newly appointed defense minister is highly unlikely to meet his US counterpart in Singapore next month due to sanctions that Washington has placed on him over his alleged involvement in the transfer of Russian advanced weapons, the Financial Times reported on Thursday. According to the British newspaper, US Secretary of



Defense Lloyd Austin is seeking to hold talks with Li Shangfu, who assumed his post in March, at the Shangri-La Dialogue security forum in June. However,

China has reportedly told the US that "there is little chance" of such a meeting taking place. Diplomatic engagement is said to be impeded by sanctions that the US imposed on the minister back in 2018, when he was serving as the director of the Equipment Development Department. The State Department claimed Li was involved in the transfer of Su-35 fighter jets and material related to S-400 air-defense systems from Russia to China.

## No peace talks 'on Russian terms' – Kiev

KYIV (Agencies): Kiev will not negotiate with Moscow unless it is done on "our terms," the secretary of the Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council has pledged. Aleksey Danilov also claimed there was a pressure campaign underway in several other countries to kick-start peace talks. "I want you to realize that they ramp up tensions to make us sit down at the negotiation table on Russia's terms," the top official said in an interview on national television on Thursday. "Nobody will sell out our national interests, regardless of how many representatives of other countries, who are engaged in this situation, want that to happen," he added. Danilov did not name any officials or nations from which the supposed pressure is coming. Kiev has pledged to fight Russia until it regains full control over lands that Ukraine considers to its sovereign territory. President Vladimir



Zelensky has also signed into law a ban on talks, forbidding any engagement with Russia as long as President Vladimir Putin is in power. Moscow noted that Ukraine took its uncompromising position after a draft peace treaty based on Kiev's proposals was penned by the two parties in March 2022. Russian officials said the U-turn was ordered by the US and its allies, who seek to inflict a "strategic defeat" of their country, regardless of how many Ukrainian lives are lost. Russia considers the hostilities to be part of a Western proxy war against itself.

## Iran's trade with BRICS countries booming



TEHRAN (Agencies): Trade in goods other than crude oil between Iran and BRICS nations increased last year, according to the latest data released by the country's customs service. Tehran's trade with Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa totalled nearly 48 million tons, with a value of more than \$38 billion in the fiscal year 2022-2023, which represents a 14% increase in terms of value. The fiscal year in Iran begins on March 21 and ends on March 20 of the following year, coinciding with the Persian calendar year. China remains Iran's main trade partner among the BRICS nations, with trade reaching 35.5 million tons worth over \$30 billion (up 37.41%). India comes second with trade up nearly 47%, and Russia is third (up 3.59%). Trade with Brazil declined in both weight and value. South Africa was Iran's main trading partner on the African continent, with bilateral trade up by more than 23%, according to figures reported by the Tehran-based daily Financial Tribune. The trade increase comes despite the "Maximum pressure" sanctions campaign announced by the US in 2018 over Tehran's nuclear program.

## Australian study links poor sleep to brain health

ISLAMABAD (APP): Poor sleep in middle age can have a negative impact on brain health, according to a recent study by researchers from the Australian National University (ANU). The study examined the sleep habits of 29,000 people aged between 37 and 73. It found that getting fewer than six hours of sleep a day or more than nine hours was associated with lower brain volume and cognitive measures, which are crucial for things like reaction time and memory. Daytime dozing was also found linked to impaired brain health. Tergel Namsrai, leader of the research and a PhD candidate at ANU, said the findings could provide the basis for combating neurodegenerative diseases such as dementia, Xinhua reported



"The mechanisms underlying the link between sleep and brain health are not well understood - there's a lot of work to be done," she said. "But our study shows it could be an important target if we want to improve brain health into old age and delay the onset of dementia." The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that more than 55 million people worldwide currently have dementia.

## Saudi Arabia's King Salman invites Syria president to attend upcoming Arab League summit

RIYADH (Agencies): King Salman has invited Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad to attend an upcoming Arab League meeting that will take place on May 19 in the Kingdom, Saudi Press Agency reported on Wednesday. The invitation to the meeting was handed over by the Kingdom's ambassador to Jordan, Naif bin Bandar Al-Sudairi, during a meeting with the president in Damascus. Al-Sudairi conveyed the greetings of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Al-Assad and their wishes for security and stability for the Syrian government and people. In return, Al-Assad conveyed his greetings and appreciation to the king and crown prince. The Arab



League restored Syria's membership into the organization during a meeting in Cairo on Sunday. Syria's membership was suspended for brutally cracking down on mass protests against Assad in 2011. Since then, the uprising turned into a civil war that killed nearly a half million people and displaced half of the country's pre-war population of 23 million.

## China's cargo craft Tianzhou-6 docks with space station combination

BEIJING (Agencies): The cargo craft Tianzhou-6 completed its status setting and docked with the orbiting Tiangong space station on Thursday, the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) said. At 5:16 a.m. (Beijing Time), Tianzhou-6 docked at the rear docking port of the Tianhe core module, said the CMSA. The Shenzhou-15 taikonauts onboard the space station will enter the car-



go craft and transfer the payloads as scheduled.

## Russian army unit fled combat in Bakhmut, says Wagner boss; Britain to blacklist Russia's Wagners



MOSCOW (Agencies): The boss of Russia's Wagner mercenary group on Tuesday accused a Russian military unit of fleeing positions near Bakhmut in Ukraine and said the state was incapable of defending its country. Yevgeny Prigozhin, whose influence has risen hugely in Moscow's Ukraine offensive, has in recent days released a series of scathing videos attacking Russia's military leadership. "Today one of the units of the defense ministry fled from one of our flanks... exposing the front," Prigozhin said in a video. He has threatened to pull his fighters out of Bakhmut on May 10 if he did not receive badly needed ammunition. The mercenary group has spearheaded Moscow's fight for the eastern Ukrainian city. Prigozhin said soldiers were fleeing because of the "stupidity" of Russian army commanders, who he said were giving "criminal orders." "Soldiers should not die because of the absolute stupidity of their leadership," Prigozhin said. He released the video on Russia's Victory Day, when Moscow celebrates the Soviet victory over the Nazis in World War II. Russia's defense ministry said in a statement later in the day that "assault troops" — normally a reference to Wagner units — were "continuing to fight in the western part" of Bakhmut. The ministry said Russian paratroopers "provided assistance," without mentioning Prigozhin's accusation of soldiers abandoning their posts. In his unprecedented attack on the Russian army, Prigozhin said Tuesday that Moscow's top generals were trying to "deceive" President Vladimir Putin over the Kremlin's Ukraine campaign.

## US Military Now Has Voice-Controlled Bug Drones



TAMPA (Agencies): Tomorrow's missions may take U.S. special operators into places where they'd rather not control drones by hand, so the maker of the popular Black Hornet nano-drone has added a way to steer it by simple voice commands. U.S. operators began using the Black Hornet after seeing British forces flying them in Afghanistan in 2011. Years of experiments with optical and thermal cameras have turned the nano-drone into a key element of the U.S. Army's soldier-borne sensor pro-

gram. Now its manufacturer, Teledyne FLIR, has teamed up with AI startup Primordial Labs to add voice control. At the Global SOF Foundation's SOF Week event here, a drone operator used a book-sized computer and a few quick voice commands to send a drone to a series of locations in a noisy conference hall. The software could be used for just about any kind of drone or system, said Mike Adkins, who runs product and business development for Primordial Labs. He said U.S. Special Operations Command had asked for a demo on seven types of drones, using "a whole inventory of discrete commands," including "manipulating the sensor, looking at things, moving elevation, interacting with waypoints."

## Sanna Marin: Finnish PM to divorce as she prepares to leave office

LONDON (Agencies): Finland's outgoing Prime Minister Sanna Marin and her husband Markus Raikkonen have filed for divorce. "We are grateful for the 19 years together and our beloved daughter," Ms Marin said on Instagram on Wednesday. The couple married in 2020, when Ms Marin was leading the country's pandemic response, and they share a five-year-old daughter. She is due to leave office after her centre-left party lost the general election last month. In a story post on her Instagram account, Ms Marin said she is "still best friends" with Mr Raikkonen, who is a businessman and former professional footballer. "We will continue to spend time together as a family and with each other," she added. Ms Marin,



37, became the world's youngest prime minister when she took office in 2019. But she lost out in a tight race to the National Coalition Party, headed by Petteri Orpo, and the right-wing populist Finns Party, led by Riikka Purra, in April. It was a bitter defeat for Ms Marin. While she increased her party's seats and secured 19.9% of the vote, her coalition partners all lost significant numbers of seats.

## Police and firefighters injured in explosion in Germany

Berlin (AFP/APP): A 57-year-old man on Thursday sparked an explosion at a block of flats in western Germany, wounding 12 police officers and firefighters who had been responding to a call of distress, authorities said. The blast happened inside an apartment in the high-rise building in Ratingen, in North Rhine-Westphalia state, police said on Twitter. Ten firefighters and two police officers were injured, some of them seriously, Herbert Reul, North Rhine-Westphalia's interior minister, told reporters. Emergency services had arrived after receiving a distress call. The door of the flat was open when police got to the site but the blast then ensued. "The man, after he caused this explosion, closed the door again, retreated and started to set the place on fire," said Reul. A lifeless body was also found in the flat, Reul said, adding that it may be that of the suspect's mother. Police on Twitter referred to a "major operation" at the site. The flat had apparently been doused with petrol or another flammable substance, Bild daily said. The arrested man was a suspected Covid denier, according to Der Spiegel magazine. Reul said it was "incomprehensible" to him that police officers and firefighters went on a mission to help and "ended up risking their lives".

## Romania to Decommission MiG-21 LanceR Fighter Jets on May 15



CHISINAU (Sputnik): Romania will officially decommission MiG-21 LanceR military aircraft on May 15 and replace it with US-made F-16s, the Romanian Ministry of National Defense said Tuesday. The ministry has decided to suspend the operation of MiG-21 LanceR aircraft from April 15 due to technical problems and replace them with F-16s. In May of 2022, the ministry expanded the lifespan of fighters for another year in order to perform air policing tasks and maintain pilot training. The press office of the ministry has earlier said that the increase in the country's defense spending to 2.5% of GDP had created opportunities to modernize Romania's army. Last June, Romania approved the purchase of 32 F-16 aircraft from Norway worth 454 million euros (\$477.5 million). At the moment, Romania has 17 F-16 aircraft in the M5.2R configuration, which will be modernized to the M6.6 configurations. In mid-April, the Romanian Supreme Council of National Defense decided it will purchase F-35 aircraft from the United States after 2030 to replace F-16s.

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