



- World War III narrowly Avoided -

Israel attack on Iran failed as Russian Air Force Shoot down Israeli F-35 Carrying EMP Weapon



MOSCOW (Agencies): An undisclosed high-ranking intelligence source in Asia has revealed a hitherto unknown sequence of events following an Iranian missile and drone strike, which could have potentially escalated into a global conflict. In retaliation to the Iranian offensive, Israel launched an F-35 fighter jet equipped with a nuclear weapon. The objective was to detonate this weapon at a high altitude above Iran, causing a surge in high-capacity power lines and thereby incapacitating Iran's electrical grid and all electronic devices - a tactic known as an Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) attack.

However, the Israeli F-35 was intercepted and neutralized by the Russian Air Force as it was leaving Jordanian airspace, using assets stationed in Syria. This incident significantly deviated from the publicly reported narrative of the Israeli counter-response. Ultimately, all parties involved chose to keep the actual events under wraps, in an attempt to defuse a situation that could have potentially escalated into World War III. The alleged Israeli plan for an EMP attack on Iran has sparked concerns about the devastating effects it could have on Iran's electronic infrastructure. An EMP, or Electromagnetic

Pulse, is a burst of electromagnetic radiation that can cause extensive damage to electronic devices and systems. The impact of an EMP can be long-lasting and could disrupt all electronic devices and communications such as telephones, cell phones, refrigerators, generators, inverters, TVs, radios, cars, etc. Experts warn that an Israeli EMP strike on Iran could effectively "return it to the Stone Age." While some argue that the "Stone Age" scenario is an overstatement, the secondary effects resulting from the loss of power, communications, and other critical infrastructures could be severe.

Secret Alliances and Hidden Operations: The Middle East on the Brink of War

BAGHDAD (Agencies): The Middle East finds itself on the precipice of a wider war, with the public largely left in the dark about the full extent of operations and alliances in the region. Despite their direct participation in the defense of Israel, intercepting Iranian missiles and drones, none of the Arab countries involved, including Iraq, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, are willing to publicly admit their involvement. The operation, which saw Iranian-made missiles and drones heading towards Israel last Saturday, was coordinated by U.S. military officers stationed throughout the region. These officers coached the secret partners, which included Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Bahrain. These countries

were tied into the American-led air and missile defense network, but have also remained silent about their involvement. The full extent of "partner" air operations responding to Iran has now been added to the web of secret bases, hidden military alliances, and undisclosed weapons pockmarking the region. However, these secret partners are now going out of their way to deny their roles, while simultaneously delivering a subtle message to Israel and the United States that their cooperation may not be as forthcoming should Israel further escalate the situation. Washington, for its part, is going along with the deception, leaving the public in the dark about the true extent of the operations and alliances in the region.

US Air Force stages dogfights with AI-flown fighter jet

WASHINGTON (Agencies): An experimental fighter jet has squared off against an F-16 in the first-ever artificial intelligence-fueled dogfights, the Air Force and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency said. And the successful effort to have the X-62A VISTA engage in practice aerial combat could help the Air Force further refine its plans for autonomous drone wingmen known as collaborative combat aircraft, officials told reporters Friday. VISTA, which stands for Variable In-flight Simulator Aircraft, is a heavily modified F-16 operated by the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base in California. The service has used it to test cutting-edge aerospace technology for more than three decades, and in recent years it's been

used to test autonomous flight capabilities. DARPA's Air Combat Evolution, or ACE, program has been working for the last four years to refine how the military can use AI for air warfare and build airmen's trust that autonomous technology can perform safely and reliably in combat. Until now, the military has used autonomy for aspects of flight that are predictable and based on a set of known rules, such as the Auto Ground Collision Avoidance System that keeps jets such as the F-35 from crashing. But within-visual range dogfighting — perhaps the most dangerous, unpredictable form of flight a pilot can engage in — represented an entirely different set of skills for AI to learn, said Col. James Valpiani, commandant of the Air Force Test Pilot School.

Mysterious Iranian 'Spy' Ship Returns Home As Israel-Iran Conflict Worsens



TEHRAN (Agencies): A suspected Iranian spy ship that its own government calls an "intelligence and logistics" vessel returned home this week after a three-year mis, as well as more recently lingering near Yemen for months. The Iranian 'spy ship' BEHSHAD (9167289), which had a hand in the Red Sea Crisis by assisting Houthis in launching attacks against commercial and naval vessels over the past several months, has now returned to Iran after a 3-year deployment. The MV Behshad entered the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday and moored off Bandar Abbas, a port city located on the southern coast of Iran, on Thursday. Several reports, including one from The Wall Street Journal in December, suggest the vessel was directly assisting Yemen's Houthi forces with targeting commercial ships in the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait and the southern Red Sea. "Iran's paramilitary forces are providing real-time intelligence to Yemen's Houthis that the rebels are using to direct drones and missiles to target ships passing through the Red Sea, Western and regional security officials said," WSJ wrote in the report, citing Western intelligence sources. In March, we pointed out that Behshad moored near the area where undersea data cables linking several continents were severed. Behshad's return to Iran comes as the Israel-Iran conflict deteriorated, with both countries volleying missiles and drones at each other in recent days.

PLA sets up information support force, to advance Chinese military's competitiveness in modern warfare

BEIJING (Agencies): The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has set up an information support force and Chinese President Xi Jinping presented a flag to the force at its establishment ceremony on Friday in Beijing. Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), stressed solid efforts to build a strong and modernized information support force. Xi said that the establishment of the information support force is a major decision that the CPC Central Committee and the CMC have made in light of the overall need for building a strong military. Xi stressed that the information support force is a new, strategic branch of the military and a key pillar in coordinating the construction and application of the network information system. It will play a crucial role in advancing the Chinese military's high-quality development and competitiveness in modern warfare. Es-



tablishing the information support force is of profound and far-reaching significance for the modernization of national defense and the armed forces as well as effective fulfillment of the missions and tasks of the military in the new era, Wu Qian, a spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defense, told a press conference on Friday. It is a brand-new strategic arm of the PLA and a key underpinning of coordinated development and application of the network information system, which plays an important role and bears great responsibility in promoting high-quality development and the ability to fight and win in modern warfare, Wu said.

Blinken says US not involved in 'any offensive operations' when asked about Iran

WASHINGTON (Agencies): US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, repeatedly declined to confirm a reported Israeli attack on Iran on Friday, saying Washington has not been involved in any offensive operations and it was committed to de-escalating tensions in the region, Reuters reports. "I'm not going to speak to that except to say that the United States has not been involved in any offensive operations," Blinken said at a news conference capping a gathering of G7 foreign ministers on the southern Italian island of Capri. "What we're focused on, what the G7 is focused on, and again, it's reflected in our statement, and in our conversation, is our work to de-escalate tensions, to de-escalate from any potential conflicts," Blinken said. The top US diplomat kept repeating the same response, almost verbatim, when he was asked



about the issue several times at the news conference. At a separate news conference moments before Blinken, Italy's Foreign Minister, Antonio Tajani, said the United States was "informed at the last minute" but did not elaborate. Explosions echoed over the Iranian city of Isfahan in the early hours of Friday in what sources described as an Israeli attack, but Tehran played down the incident and indicated it had no plans for retaliation - a response that appeared gauged towards averting region-wide war.

Haniyeh heads Hamas leadership delegation in Turkiye

ANKARA (Agencies): Head of the Hamas political bureau Ismail Haniyeh arrived in Turkiye on Friday leading a delegation of members of the movement's leadership. The delegation is scheduled to meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss developments in the Israeli occupation aggression, the ongoing genocidal war against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and developments concerning the Palestinian issue. Since 7 October, the Israeli occupation army has continued its attack against the Gaza Strip, killing 34,012 and injuring



76,833, in addition to the displacement of about 1.7 million Gaza residents, according to United Nations data.

International airlines stop flights to Israel for security reasons

TEL AVIV (Agencies): Many international airlines announced the cancellation of their flights to the occupation state after the attack that is believed to be Israeli was carried out on targets inside Iran. Israel Hayom newspaper reported that Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM) announced the cancellation of flights to Israel, as did German airline group Lufthansa. On Tuesday, British budget airline EasyJet announced the suspension of all flights to and from Tel Aviv for six months. The company, which operates its main hub from the UK's Luton Airport, disclosed in a statement: "As a result of the continued evolving situation in Israel, easyJet has now taken the decision to suspend its flights to Tel Aviv for the remainder of the summer season until 27 October." Iranian media announced at dawn on Friday that Iranian air defences shot down three small drones in the airspace of the city of Isfahan. Iran's space agency spokesperson Hossein Dalirian posted on X: "Several drones have been



successfully shot down by the country's air defence, there are no reports of a missile attack for now." On Sunday night, Iran launched hundreds of missiles and drones at the Israeli occupation state in response to the missile attack on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus earlier this month, resulting in the martyrdom of seven members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, including prominent leader General Mohammad Reza Zahedi. Following this, several international airlines announced the suspension of their flights to Tel Aviv for varying periods due to the risk of unexpected developments as a result of Israel's threat to respond to the Iranian strike.

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.

Youth Robotec event Kicks off at UET Peshawar with fresh energy and innovation in youth

PESHAWAR (Khyber Mail): The Youth RoboTec'24, organized by the National Center of Robotics and Automation UET Peshawar kicked off here the other day, gathering over 500 participants from education institutions across Pakistan including COMSATS, Air University, GIKI, UET Taxila, HITECH University, Hazara University, and many others. The event will have various competitions and recreation activities and a two-day STEM workshop with free of cost registration for the students in the newly emerged districts. The YRT 2024 is being held in joint collaboration with the Directorate of Science and Technology (DOST) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Directorate of Youth Affairs, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Bank of Khyber, UBL and Storm Fiber Ltd. Mr. Abdul Karim Tordher, Special Assistant to C.M Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Industries & Commerce & Technical Education was the Chief Guest of the Opening Ceremony. He appreciated the efforts of UET Peshawar for organising the event for the last three years. He assured full support to the youth in financing their innovative ideas, briefed



them about loans and grants for startups being offered by the government. He urged the students to develop entrepreneurial skills and assured them that the government will also offer trained and certifications in joint collaboration with the universities. The Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali said, the YRT24 is aimed to empower young minds and pave the way for a brighter future in robotic by offering a platform for young people to get closer to science, make breakthroughs and exercise their minds. He said, the participants' creativity will be enhanced in the event, bringing in new momentum and perspective to the development of robotics. Prof Dr.

Tahir Khan Chairman Department of Mechatronics Engineering said the three day event also includes a myriad of engaging activities and competitions, from the adrenaline-fueled Robowar and Mini Robo War to the strategic Sumo Wrestle and the thrilling Off-road RC racing. Participants will also test their skills in LFRs, Robo Futsal, and more, ensuring a challenging and inspiring experience for all. Dr Taza Gul Director General DOST, Prof. Dr. Ifitikhar Hussain, Ex Vice Chancellor UET, Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Misbah Ullah, Treasurer, UET, Peshawar, large numbers of Faculty members and Government officials were also present on the occasion.

IMSciences Honors UCP Taakra 24 Winners with Grand Cash Prize Ceremony

PESHAWAR (Khyber Mail): A grand ceremony was held at IMSciences to honor the winners of various competitions at the UCP Taakra 24 event. The Director of IMSciences, Prof. Dr. Usman Ghani, took the honor of presenting the cash prizes to the triumphant students. The event was a tribute to the students' commitment, perseverance, and accomplishments. Prof. Dr. Usman Ghani praised the students for their hard work and extended his heartfelt wishes for their future pursuits. He urged the students to keep up their momentum and continue their quest for excellence in upcoming events. UCP Taakra 24 has served as a stage for students to display their abilities and talents. The cash prize ceremony not only



acknowledged the victors but also aimed to inspire all participants to continue challenging their limits.

The event concluded on a positive note, with the anticipation of more such events in the future.

Met Predicts Cloudy Weather, Heavy Rains In Upper Districts

PESHAWAR (APP): The weather will remain cloudy in most districts of the province including Peshawar and in Upper districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Dir, Swat, Kohstal, Mansehra, Kashmir are at risk of flooding, an official of the Meteorological Department said here Saturday. Landslides are also feared due to heavy rains in a few districts as well including Chitral, Dir, Swat, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner,

Malakand, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Peshawar, Nowshera, Swabi, Mardan, Kurram and Waziristan with strong winds and thunder-showers, said the official. The minimum temperature has been recorded as low as 17 degrees Celsius and it is likely to rise to a maximum of 23 degrees Celsius and the humidity ratio in the air has been recorded up to 82%, the official added. During the last 24 hours, there was rain with wind and

thunder in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The highest rainfall recorded in Charat 70mm, Peshawar (Airport 68mm, City 44mm), Malam Jabba 58mm, Dir (Upper 49mm, Lower 34mm), Kakul 43mm, Bacha Khan (Airport 41mm), Takht Bai 35mm, Darosh, Saidu Sharif 28mm, Dera Ismail Khan (Airport 24, City 24), Mirkhani 20, Patan, Mardan 15, Parachinar, Kalam 13, Bannu 12, Balakot 08, Chitral recorded 05 mm of rain, the official said.

One Nation, One Destination – Drug Free Pakistan: A Seminar by ANF and IMSciences



PESHAWAR (Khyber Mail): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan, in collaboration with the Career Development Center (CDC) at IMSciences, organized a seminar titled "One Nation, One Destination – Drug Free Pakistan". The event was aimed at raising awareness about the usage of drugs and their side effects, in line with the HEC Policy of maintaining drug-free campuses. Mr. Wajid from ANF delivered a comprehensive presentation on the anti-drug policy and the harmful effects of various types of drugs. The seminar saw active participation from students who offered valuable advice to ANF on controlling drug



usage in the city. The session concluded with Dr. Muhammad Nawaz and Dr. Bashir Hayat presenting Mr. Wajid with a token of appreciation for his insightful presentation. The event underscored the commitment of both ANF and IMSciences to create a drug-free environment for the youth of Pakistan.

University of Malakand Celebrates World Quantum Day with Enthusiasm and Reverence



MALAKAND (Khyber Mail): The University of Malakand joined the global community in celebrating World Quantum Day, an annual event that recognizes the remarkable advancements and profound impact of quantum science and technology. The Department of Physics at the university organized a walk and seminar to educate students about the importance of quantum physics. Quantum physics, a branch of physics that studies the behavior of matter and energy on the smallest scales, differs from classical physics as it takes into account the wave-like properties of matter and energy, and introduces uncertainty into the measurement process. World Quantum Day serves as a platform to recognize the groundbreaking discoveries and innovations in the field of quantum mechanics, which have revolutionized various sectors including computing, communication, and cryptography. In Pakistan, like other countries, the day is commemorated with enthusiasm and reverence by scientists, researchers, educators, and enthusiasts alike. Events such as seminars, workshops, and public lectures are organized across the nation



to raise awareness about the significance of quantum theory and its practical applications in modern society. Educational institutions, research centers, and governmental organizations collaborate to showcase Pakistan's contributions to quantum research and development. This includes highlighting the work of Pakistani scientists and their contributions to the global quantum community. Furthermore, World Quantum Day serves as a catalyst for inspiring the next generation of quantum scientists and engineers in Pakistan. Through outreach programs and educational initiatives, young minds are encouraged to explore the fascinating world of quantum mechanics, fostering a culture of scientific curiosity and innovation.

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Iran-Israel Tensions: A Powder Keg in the Middle East

The recent escalation of tensions between Iran and Israel has once again brought the Middle East to the brink of a major conflict. The unprecedented wave of strikes launched from Iran towards Israel, and the subsequent Israeli missile attack against a site in Iran, have plunged the already volatile region into uncharted territory. The Iranian attack, retaliation for a deadly Israeli strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, was largely unsuccessful. However, the fact that Iran managed to launch such a massive attack signals a worrying shift in the region's dynamics. The Israeli response, a missile attack on a site in Iran, further escalates the situation as it risks provoking further retaliation from Iran, potentially sparking a full-blown war. The role of the United States in this conflict is crucial. The Biden administration has made it clear that while it supports Israel, it will not participate in any offensive operations against Iran. This stance, while prudent, leaves Israel largely on its own in dealing with Iran.

The involvement of other regional players further complicates the situation. The recent attacks saw an informal coalition of Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, sharing intelligence with the U.S. to safeguard their airspace. This cooperation, while beneficial in the short term, could have far-reaching implications for the region's geopolitics. The Iran-Israel tension is more than just a bilateral conflict. It's a powder keg that threatens to ignite the entire Middle East. The international community must act swiftly and decisively to defuse the situation and prevent a catastrophic war. The stakes are high, and the margin for error is slim. The world watches with bated breath as the Iran-Israel tension continues to unfold. The hope is that diplomacy will prevail over warfare, that dialogue will replace hostility, and that peace will finally return to this troubled region. But until then, the specter of war looms large over the Middle East.

Shadows of Conflict and Diplomatic Shifts in the Middle East — By Ali Inan

In the complex terrain of Middle Eastern geopolitics, the enduring conflict between Israel and Iran casts a shadow that spans across land, sea, air, and cyberspace. Over the course of decades, these regional powers have engaged in a covert struggle, characterized by proxy attacks, targeted assassinations, and intermittent direct confrontations. Recent escalations, exemplified by Iran's aerial assault on Israel and the subsequent retaliatory strike on an Iranian air base, have underscored the region's volatility and stoked concerns of wider conflagration. Amidst these simmering tensions, the signing of the Abraham Accords in September 2020 marked a pivotal moment in Middle Eastern diplomacy. This historic agreement saw Israel establish normalized relations with several Arab states, including the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco, signalling a notable shift in regional dynamics. Beyond diplomatic formalities, the Accords opened avenues for enhanced cooperation in trade, technology, tourism, and security, challenging entrenched alliances and divisions in the region. However, the diplomatic breakthrough presented Sunni Arab states with a multifaceted dilemma. While contending with Iran's expanding influence and support for proxy groups as a threat to regional stability, they also confronted the paradox of normalizing relations with Israel while remaining committed to the Palestinian cause. This juxtaposition underscored the nuanced balancing required to navigate the complex geopolitical landscape of the Middle East.

- The Covert Conflict Between Israel and Iran

For decades, the Middle East has been a theatre for a covert conflict between Israel and Iran, where both nations have engaged in clandestine operations across various domains, including land, sea, air, and cyberspace. This shadowy confrontation, characterized by proxy attacks, targeted assassinations, and sporadic direct confrontations, has perpetuated regional instability and heightened tensions. The conflict reached a recent crescendo with Iran's audacious aerial assault against Israel, followed by Israel's calculated retaliatory strike on an Iranian air base. These events have thrust the conflict into the spotlight, raising concerns of wider regional destabilization and the potential for a broader, more overt conflict. The historical context of the Israel-Iran conflict is rife with significant events, including Israel's targeted airstrikes on Iranian-trained militants in Syria and Iraq and the assassination of Iranian General Qasim Suleimani. These actions have escalated tensions and increased the risk of a wider regional conflict, particularly amidst ongoing tensions in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria. Over the past decade, Israel has contemplated various scenarios involving airstrikes targeting Iran's nuclear infrastruc-

ture, particularly centred around Isfahan and the Natanz complex. However, the recent decision by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's war cabinet to refrain from such action speaks volumes about the evolving dynamics in the region. The subdued response from Israel, coupled with a deliberate silence regarding the limited strike's outcomes, has prompted speculation and analysis from experts and observers alike. While the strike may have caused minimal damage in Iran, the subsequent downplaying of the incident by Iranian authorities suggests a concerted effort to prevent further escalation.

- The Significance of the Abraham Accords
Against this backdrop of conflict, the signing of the Abraham Accords in September 2020 represented a watershed moment in Middle Eastern diplomacy. These ground-breaking agreements normalized relations between Israel and several Arab states, including the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. Beyond establishing formal diplomatic ties, the accords paved the way for enhanced cooperation in economic, technological, and security spheres. The Abraham Accords heralded a departure from traditional alliances and divisions in the Middle East, offering the promise of greater stability and prosperity in the region. By fostering cooperation and normalization between Israel and Arab states, the accords presented a united front against common threats, including Iran's destabilizing activities and extremist ideologies. However, the accords also posed a dilemma for Sunni Arab states, who grappled with the challenge of normalizing relations with Israel while balancing their longstanding support for the Palestinian cause. This internal debate highlighted divisions within the Arab world, with some countries embracing diplomatic normalization to advance their own interests, while others remained hesitant due to domestic and regional political considerations.

- Sunni Arab States' Foreign Policy Dilemma

Sunni Arab states find themselves at a crossroads, facing a complex foreign policy dilemma shaped by the regional rivalry between Iran and Israel. On one hand, many Sunni Arab states view Iran's expanding influence and support for proxy groups as a direct threat to their security and stability. Iran's involvement in conflicts across Syria, Yemen, and Iraq exacerbates tensions and undermines efforts towards regional cooperation. On the other hand, Sunni Arab states must navigate the challenge of normalizing relations with Israel while maintaining support for the Palestinian cause.

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PRIDE OF NATION IS SECOND TO NONE — By Ibn-e-Taha

Veteran claimed he enjoys unique honor, who assisted in first aerial kill of PAF against Bharat on 10 April, 1959 and the last one on 17 Dec, 1971, till 19 Feb. 2019. Sharing his experiences in a non-stop monologue was like he is actually sitting on a radar screen on ground and controlling live actions in air. The tales were enchanting, motivating and full of pride from old warrior. Serene and historic environment of coffee shop of a Defense officers' club made it more impressive. Numerous old colleagues and smart mess attendants serving hot tea were adding ecstasy to the interview of Group Captain Rab Nawaz Choudhry (Retd). Rab Nawaz has also authored three books sharing memories of his time. Born on 01 Aug, 1932, he proudly claims to be from a native Punjabi inheritance Tarlaee a suburb town of Islamabad. The first aerial kill of PAF, he recalled was on Eid day 10 April, 1959 (exactly 65 years ago now). Then Pilot officer Rab Nawaz was duty controller at the Sector Operational Centre (SOC), being posted at PAF Base Sargodha (now Mushaf). Sargodha was not an operational base as yet and he was monitoring the aerial borders on Marconi radars situated at Wagowal (near Sargodha) and Lahore. The radar had a coverage range of 115 miles only. Suddenly the radar deployed at Wagowal picked up a blip on radar depicting a bogey (unidentified aircraft). Initially it appeared a fake blip, but was soon he got convinced it was an intruder aircraft as the route was established entering Pakistani air space from the Amritsar-Lahore border. The intruder was probably thinking PAF is asleep and busy in celebrating Eid ul Fitr. Rab Nawaz immediately picked up the hotline telephone and contacted Air Defense Alert (ADA) pilots on duty in Peshawar. The pilots on ADA were Squadron Leader (Sqn Ldr) MNA Butt and Flight Lieutenant (Flt Lt) Younus. Younus who attended the phone was a course senior to Rab Nawaz used the nick name "Rabboo" (Rab Nawaz) and wanted an authentication before take-off. Rab Nawaz confirmed intruders and asked ADA pilots to immediately get air borne and get after this enemy aircraft. The probable spying (ELINT) mission was flying over Rawalpindi area at an altitude of more than 50,000 feet. This height was beyond the operational ceiling of the Pakistani F-86 aircraft. Pakistani pilots also couldn't figure out the intruder as it was far beyond their eye contact and range. Rab Nawaz, advised both the pilots to follow his communication for a successful kill. Rab Nawaz recalled it was a difficult interception as the chasing pilots had to follow the trail of intruder and both the Pakistani falcons did not have trail of intruder. However Rab Nawaz constantly guided them towards the prey and they soon reached the Bharati Canberra. Now the hurdle was, Pakistani F-86 could reach to 45000 feet whereas intruder was flying at a height of more than 50,000 feet. With added fuel tanks and installed missiles, precision of bullet/missile loss existed affecting F-86 shooting. Pakistani team knew, Canberra aircraft has to return home and would definitely lose height during a turn making it probable to shoot clean. In that case they would find a chance to shoot this intruder within Pakistan aerial territory. Rab Nawaz placed both the chasing aircraft in a position to hunt the Canberra against the sun, where the foe could be put in uncertainty and could not see them clearly. Meanwhile, Bharati pilots got the idea they have been detected and chased by Pakistani Shaheens. Surprised to see PAF awake and alive on Eid day, Bharati pilot and navigator ended up in a panic. Right over Paki-



stan's territory they have no answer like Kulbhushan Yadav, what is their business in Pakistan's territory? They still attempted to dodge this PAF duo by maneuvering two consecutive sharp turns considering F-86 will be outmaneuvered and they will manage to escape. Bharati champions forgot with every smart sharp turn they were losing height, making the Pakistani pilots were trying not to drop their fuel tanks and shoot the enemy from bottom without climbing high. During nerve breaking short time Canberra suddenly lost height while executing a turn and Yunis fired a burst from his F-86 machine guns which struck down the Canberra at an altitude of 47,500 feet. Both crew members of the IAF Canberra Sqn Ldr J.C. Sengupta, and Flt Lt S.N. Rampal ejected over Rawat area and were captured by local villagers at Gorukh pur at the Adiala road Rawalpindi. Debris of the aircraft fell near Basali village Bangial, near Rawat. The people of Basali village still call the place as "Jahaz wali Lurri". The natives used a metallic part of the debris of aircraft as a school bell in a local school. Each time it rings it announces mourning of Bharati Air Force. PAF may also erect a monument in memory of this first aerial victory at this place. The post shooting down actions included informing concerned people. With a glare in eyes retired Group Captain shared these actions. The first thing I did was calling Base Commander Chaklala (now Noor Khan). Wing Commander (Wg Cdr) Rollo an Englishman who also happened to be Rab Nawaz's base commander at Sargodha was relaxing at his place. Begum Rollo knew Rab Nawaz personally and was surprised to receive a call on Eid day. She asked Rab Nawaz to share the emergency, but he politely declined. Wg Cdr Rollo was obviously perturbed on being called on a holiday and inquired "Rab Nawaz what is your problem?" On hearing the news of shooting down an intruder he as-

retired officer continued that he was later called by Wg Cdr Rollo and was appreciated again. "I have kept one of the parachutes of the bailed out Bharati intruders as a souvenir for you. You may collect it whenever you visit Chaklala next time. Recalling his duty in destroying the last Bharati aircraft by Flt Lt Maqsood Aamir, he narrated he was the duty controller at Sargodha on 17 Dec, 1971. Flt Lt Maqsood Amir and Flt Lt Taloot Mirza were in air for a routine patrol mission. Rab Nawaz monitored two Mig-21s scrambled from Amritsar base. Both of them headed towards Pasrur presumably in support of Bharati Sina engaged with Pak Army. PAF radar did not have coverage for these intruders, but Rab Nawaz managed to detect them with their VHF communication using their call sign "Rats". He guided Maqsood and Taloot towards the intruders. Soon Pakistani and Bharati pilots came against each other in a one-on-one encounter for a dogfight. Leader of Mig 21 formation immediately fired on Maqsood Amir, who managed to escape and in return fired at the Mig-21 in range. Flt Lt Tejwant Singh had no option but to eject and was taken POW by Pak Army troops deployed in Pasrur area. Though not Eid day, but story was repeated on 27 Feb, 2019 when Pakistan Air Forces shot down a SU-30 pilot, Wing Commander Abhi Nandin Vardaman. Bhartis in line with Chanakya's preachings propagated Abhi Nandu had shot down a Pakistani F-16 before being shot. Indian media claimed, according to an agreement between the US and Pakistan, Pakistan is only allowed to use the F-16 against terrorists. Independent sources' counting confirmed total No of F-16s were in-



sured the local coordination for which Chaklala base had to do the needful. The next call he made to Group Captain Raheem Khan, who was the Senior Air Staff Officer (SASO) group No 1 at AHQ. Group No 1 was then responsible for the operations of PAF. The news was greeted by the Group Captain by stating "Well done boys, keep it up". A series of telephone calls started pouring in to Rab Nawaz from all over Pakistan Air Force. Majority of the callers cheered the news, one odd individual felt apprehended by figuring an all-out war between Bharat and Pakistan. Pilot officer Rab Nawaz Choudhry did not deter and replied "That is not my problem sir; I have done what I was supposed to do". The

tact and none was lost. Finding no escape for being an aggressor, Abhi Nandin was decorated with gallantry award of Vir Chakkar by India. Some questions remain un-answered like if Abhi Nandin was a war hero and recipient of a war medal, why couldn't he rise till higher ranks and retired as a Group Captain (equivalent to Colonel rank in army)? Why did IAF grounded all the Mig-21 fleet after this humiliating destruction by PAF? one may proudly say

"SINCE INCEPTION THE PAF LEGACY CONTINUES IN LINE WITH JINNAH'S VISION OF SECOND TO NONE"

Letters to the Editor

Urgent Action Needed: Flood Protection Project for Koti Sadat and Surrani Area

The Irrigation Department has already requested intervention from the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and District Police Officer (DPO) of Bannu to resolve this matter. However, their response has been insufficient.

It's crucial to address this issue promptly. There's a real risk that the Asian Bank might reallocate the project funds to other areas within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), leaving Bannu permanently vulnerable to floods. Therefore, I urge all local leaders in Surrani and the district government to work collaboratively to ensure the

project's successful completion. This project is vital for safeguarding the lives and property of our communities in Koti Sadat and the surrounding areas. Let's work together to prevent this critical flood protection initiative from being lost.

Chairman e-Hujra
Asif Qureshi

Bridging Nations: Malaysian High Commissioner Emphasizes Bilateral Ties at Eid Gathering

Islamabad (Staff Report): The High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Ambassador Mohammad Azhar Mazlan and spouse, Madam Amelia Amani Azhar hosted an Eid-Ul-Fitr Open House at the Malaysian High Commission. The invited guests represented a cross section of the society from the diplomatic corps, senior government officials, Pakistani captains of industry, friends of the media as well as the Malaysian diaspora were among those present to celebrate the joyous occasion of Eid-Ul-Fitr. Donning their national costumes, the host-hostess with his team and families at the High Commission welcomed the guests with renowned



Malaysian Hospitality. The guests were served with a delightful array of traditional Malaysian and Pakistani cuisines such as mee goreng, mutton curry, nasi goreng, satay with peanut sauce and traditional Eid cookies. Such a gathering reflects the true spirit of friendship and peaceful co-existence amongst

nations especially with the host nation, Pakistan. Addressing the gathering, High Commissioner Azhar underscored the importance of cultural understanding and mutual respect in strengthening bilateral ties, emphasizing the commonalities and traditions that bind the people of Malaysia and Pakistan.

Bangladesh's 53rd National and Independence Day Celebrated in Pakistan with Grandeur

Islamabad (Staff Report): A grand reception was hosted by the High Commissioner of Bangladesh, Ruhul Alam Siddique, and his spouse, Shamahad Ara Siddique, at a local hotel in Islamabad. The event marked the 53rd Anniversary of the National and Independence Day of Bangladesh and was attended by esteemed dignitaries and guests, reflecting the enduring bonds between Bangladesh and Pakistan. The distinguished gathering was graced by the presence of Chief Guest Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Chief Justice for Federal Shariah Court, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jail Abbas Jilani, Senator Mushahid Hussein Syed, diplomatic corps, heads of missions, Pakistani friends, and members of the Bangladesh diaspora. The evening began with the stirring rendition of the national anthems of both Bangladesh and Pakistan, setting a tone of unity and camaraderie. The venue was beautifully decorated with elements of



vibrant Bangali culture and photographs commemorating the leaders of Bangladesh. High Commissioner Ruhul Alam Siddique, in his welcoming remarks, articulated the vision and progress of Bangladesh under the leadership of Prime Minister Ms. Sheikh Hasina. He underscored the enduring strength of the bilateral ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh, reflecting on the shared history and aspirations of the two nations. Expressing gratitude for the warm hospitality extended during their tenure in Pakistan, High Commissioner Siddique announced that this reception marked the culmination of their diplomatic service in

the country. He fondly reminisced about the cherished memories and respect received during their tenure. Chief Guest Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh extended felicitations to Bangladesh on behalf of the Government of Pakistan, reaffirming the commitment to further strengthen the bilateral relationship between the two nations in the future. A symbolic moment ensued as the Bangladesh High Commissioner, accompanied by the Chief Guest and Dean of Diplomatic Missions, Ambassador of Nepal alongwith Pakistani Govt Officials cut a special cake, symbolizing the enduring friendship and cooperation between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Kazakhstan and Pakistan Forge Path for Urban Cooperation

Islamabad (Adnan Hameed): The Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, Yerzhan Kistafin, recently met with Chairman (Akim) Anwar ul-Haq of the Capital Development Authority to discuss bolstering collaboration between Astana and Islamabad across various sectors, as reported by official sources. During the meeting, Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin and Chairman Anwar ul-Haq deliberated on establishing cooperative frameworks encompassing economic collaboration, urban development, infrastructure enhancement, landscaping, cultural exchanges, and tourism initiatives. Ambassador Kistafin highlighted the current Kazakh-Pakistani agenda, emphasizing the importance of expanding ties between regional and local authorities, particularly focusing on Astana and Islamabad. Chairman Anwar ul-Haq expressed keen interest in advancing coop-



eration with Astana, identifying trade, economics, culture, and humanitarian efforts as priority areas for collaboration. As an initial step towards fostering partnership, he proposed organizing online negotiations to explore potential joint projects that could mutually benefit both capitals. Furthermore, Chairman Anwar ul-Haq conveyed his interest in Kazakhstan's social development model, particularly its achievements in promoting interethnic and interfaith dialogue. This discussion underscores the shared commitment to deepening bilateral relations and leveraging each country's strengths for comprehensive development.

Ambassador Jauhar Saleem Hosts Media Fraternity at Institute of Regional Studies

ISLAMABAD (Staff Report): A distinguished gathering of journalists was recently hosted by Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President of the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS). The event, held at the IRS premises, brought together a diverse group of media representatives based in Islamabad for a Meet and Greet Session, highlighting the crucial connection between academia and the journalistic fraternity. In his address to the gathering, Ambassador Saleem praised the media's steadfast commitment to providing comprehensive coverage in the face of current challenges and the ubiquity of social media. He stressed the utmost importance of nurturing strong academia-industry relationships and shared his vision for transforming the Institute into a center of



excellence, comparable to leading international policy think tanks. The event served as a testament to the IRS's unwavering commitment to fostering meaningful dialogues and collaborations aimed at shaping a future characterized by innovation and progress. With a collective resolve, the Institute is well-positioned to navigate the constantly changing landscape of regional studies, producing high-quality research and providing valuable insights to policymakers.

WAPDA Secures Contract for Supply of GSU Transformers for Mangla Power Project

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) has secured a contract, Package III C, worth US\$ 6.28729 million for the design and supply of two 220 KV, 168.75 MVA Generator Step-up (GSU) Transformers. These transformers are for Unit No. 9 and 10 of the Mangla Refurbishment Project, and the task is set to be completed by a Chinese Contractor in 400 days. The contract signing ceremony took place at WAPDA House. General Manager (Hydel) Development WAPDA, Mr. Ihsan Ullah, and Chief Representative of the Chinese firm CHINT, Mr. Zephyr Zhao, signed the contract on behalf of their respective organizations. The signing of the contract was witnessed by Member (Finance) WAPDA, Naveed Asghar Chaudhry, and Member (Power) WAPDA, Mr. Jamil Akhtar. Other attendees included officers concerned with the PD Mangla Refurbishment Project, representatives of the Consultants, and the Contractor. WAPDA is implementing the Mangla Refur-

bishment Project with an approved PC-I cost of Rs.52.224 billion. The project is being executed in various phases, with the generating units being refurbished one tunnel (two generating units) at a time. The refurbishment of the first two units was completed in 2022, and the refurbishment of all 10 generating units is expected to be accomplished by the year 2027-28 in a phased manner. Upon completion, the Mangla Refurbishment Project will increase the generation capacity of the existing Mangla Hydel Power Station from 1000 MW to 1310 MW, registering an increase of 310 MW. The average annual generation of the Mangla Hydel Power Station will also increase from 5 billion units to 6.6 billion units. Funding for the Mangla Refurbishment Project is being provided by USAID, which is contributing US\$150 million as a grant, and AFD France, which is providing a Euro 90 million loan. The remaining amount is being arranged by WAPDA through loans and its own resources.

Iranian Ambassador discusses details of President's visit with Mohsin Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Iranian Ambassador Dr Reza Amiri Moghaddam on Saturday met with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in his office to discuss arrangements for the Iranian president's upcoming official visit to Pakistan. The meeting discussed the details of the visit of the President of Iran along with the details of proposed agreements which would be discussed during the visit. The Iranian Ambassador congratulated Mohsin Naqvi on assuming the post of interior minister and appreciated his performance as caretaker chief minister of Punjab. "You completed public projects at

an extraordinary speed during your tenure as Chief Minister," said the Iranian ambassador. The minister termed the Iranian President's visit very important, in the context of the regional situation and said that the visit would be a milestone in the development of bilateral relations. "We have to work together to solve the menace of terrorism and other challenges" said Mohsin Naqvi adding that Pakistan-Iran relations span over decades and Pakistan values brotherly relations with Iran. He said that there is a need to promote cooperation for lasting peace and stability in the region.

Railways unveils new fuel management system

LAHORE (Agencies): The Pakistan Railways has unveiled a state-of-the-art fuel management system, designed to tackle the current challenges. As per the announcement made on Friday, Railways Chief Executive Officer Amir Ali Baloch has confirmed a new partnership with Pakistan State Oil (PSO), which will now be responsible for ensuring a consistent fuel supply within the railway's oil supply facilities. The collaboration with PSO brings the introduction of the latest fuel management technology, promising substantial benefits for the railway's operations. In line with the standards set by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), the railway's fuel supply centres are set to undergo comprehensive upgrades to meet international benchmarks. Under the newly forged agreement, the railway's fuel supply centers will not only be insured according to global standards but will also see the installation of the world's premier firefighting systems. This initiative is currently being rolled out in Karachi and Lahore, with plans to extend the system to six additional cities shortly. The CEO emphasised the system's potential to conserve railway resources and minimise fuel wastage. He also highlighted the system's capability to significantly reduce the likelihood of fuel theft, ensuring a more secure and efficient fuel supply chain. This modernisation effort by Pakistan Railways marks a pivotal step in enhancing the reliability and sustainability of its services, aligning with international standards and practices.

Hashim Kakar takes oath as CJ Balochistan High Court

QUETTA (APP): Justice Hashim Khan Kakar took oath as the Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court. Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar administered the oath to the chief justice in a ceremony held at Governor House on Saturday. The oath taking ceremony was attended by CM Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti, Judges of High Court, Provincial Ministers, Parliamentarians, Provincial Secretaries and Senior Lawyers.

Torrential rain paralyzes life in upper Swat, Shangla

MINGORA (APP): The torrential rains in upper Swat and nearby Shangla district have paralyzed routine life, forcing tourists and local residents to remain in their hotels and homes. Besides Kalam and Malam Jabba, the torrential rains also affected routine life at Bahrain, Madain, Gabin Jabba, Miandam, Matiltan, Utror, Gabral, Matiltan, Mahodand, Loye Sar where tourists preferred to stay at hotels after the heavy downpour that lashed the entire Swat and

Shangla districts since last two days. Flash floods in water streams and canals inundated low lying areas, forcing people to pump out water in self help basis. The heavy torrential rains also affected standing wheat crop and orchards gardens in upper Swat where farmers demanded of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for compensation. Reports of landslides at links roads connecting Kalam-Mingora Road were also reported which disrupted traffic flow.

NHA restores most roads across the country after heavy rains

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways Authority (NHA) has managed to reopen most of its road network for traffic across the country after recent heavy rains and floods. Under the guidance of Chairman Arshad Majeed Mohmand, the NHA worked hard to repair and clear the roads affected by the severe weather, NHA public relations officer said while talking to APP on Saturday. He said that the teams have been working around the clock to restore access to key routes. This included clearing debris from landslides on the Karakoram Highway with the help of the Pakistan Army. The NHA authorities planned to reopen the highway soon. In Gilgit-Baltistan, snow removal was underway on the Geeti Das to Zero Point road in Chilas, while oth-

er roads in the region have already been open for traffic, he added. He further said that most highways in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are operational again, although the road from Kaghan to Gaitidas remained closed due to heavy snowfall. The NHA will begin snow clearance on that route when the weather will improve. In Balochistan, roads are open to traffic in both the northern and southern parts of the region. The NHA has set up control rooms in its regional offices to monitor local weather and road conditions. The staff at these control rooms provide regular updates and ensure the safety and maintenance of the highway system, he added. Meanwhile, senior officials are giving instructions according to real-time data and conditions.

PCP Chairman, deputy Chairman Senate discuss matters pertaining to media codes of ethics

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Chairman of the Press Council of Pakistan (PCP), Arshad Khan Jadoon, and Deputy Chairman of the Senate, Syedal Khan Nasir Saturday pertaining matters about media codes of ethics and press freedom. During the meeting, the CPC chairman congratulated the Senate's Deputy Chairman on assuming office, said a news release. Arshad Jadoon briefed the Deputy Chairman regarding the

functioning and role of the Press Council of Pakistan. He said that the PCP is dedicated to ensuring press freedom in the country while also being resolute in its efforts to combat false and fabricated news. The Deputy Chairman of the Senate pledged his full support to the PCP in its efforts to curb false and fabricated news. He emphasized collaboration between the two entities to advance the nation's media landscape.

FO says listing of commercial entities on allegations takes place without sharing evidences

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Foreign Office Spokesperson on Saturday, commenting upon reports of United States' decision to impose sanctions against commercial entities on allegations of links with Pakistan's ballistic missile programme, said that such listings had taken place in the past without sharing any evidence whatsoever. Responding to media queries, the spokesperson, in a press statement, said while they were not aware of the specifics of the

latest measures by the US. In the past, they had come across many instances where listings had been made on mere suspicion or even when the involved items were not on any control lists but were deemed sensitive under catch-all provisions, it was added. "We have pointed out many times that such items have legitimate civil commercial uses. It is, therefore, important to avoid arbitrary application of export controls," the spokesperson said.

Pakistan committed to ensure safety of foreign nationals: FO

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The government on Friday strongly condemned the heinous terrorist attack in Karachi's Landhi area, saying it was fully committed to ensure the safety of foreign nationals. "All necessary measures will be taken to bring the perpetrators to justice," a Foreign Office news release said. It added that such dastardly acts

only strengthened the resolve of the Government and the people of Pakistan to eliminate the scourge of terrorism. "Pakistan remains committed to ensuring the safety of foreign nationals residing in the country. We will continue to work with our international partners to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations."

Oil tanker catches fire in Islamabad's Blue Area

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): An oil tanker caught fire parked outside a petrol pump in Islamabad's Blue Area on Friday. In a statement, Islamabad Police no casualty was reported in the incident. An alternative route has been provided for traffic on Jinnah Avenue, police added. A heavy con-

tingent of police was also present at the scene. The inferno site was PSO petrol pump, next to Beverly Center. Soon after the incident, the fire brigade teams and Islamabad Police rushed to the site and cordoned off the area. The fire was extinguished by the fire fighters after sometime.

Bilawal Bhutto demands govt to hold tripartite dialogue to curb terrorism

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Chairman, Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Friday demanded the government to initiate tripartite dialogue with the neighbouring countries to curb the menace of re-surgency terrorism. While talking to media outside the Parliament House, the Chairman Bilawal appreciated Sindh police for thwarting a terror attack in Landhi, Karachi yesterday morning. Bilawal said, "This is also a reminder that the menace of terrorism is once again rising in Pakistan. The federal and provincial governments will have to take action against the terrorists and ensure to engage the neighboring country to take action against them." The Chairman PPP said that as a foreign minister he had held a tripartite dialogue at the foreign ministry among the foreign ministers of China, Afghanistan and Pakistan, adding, "We should have similar

efforts to eliminate terrorists." The Chairman PPP said Imran Khan's government policy regarding the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, terrorism and about the neighboring country, the way that government let free the terrorists from prisons and invited the terrorists who were in Afghan prisons before the fall of Kabul to enter Pakistan were all wrong. The parliament was not taken on board and the President of the time was giving the terrorists clemency, he added. "That was the policy of Imran Khan's government. We had criticized that policy then and now we should have a clear stance to see the issue as political but as an issue of national security. You cannot have the policy of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. This dual policy will not work and the Army, police, common people rendered great sacrifices to eliminate these terrorists in the past," he said.

Pakistan Navy rescue, relief operation continue in rain hit Gwadar, Ormara areas

QUETTA (APP): Pakistan Navy conducted Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) operations in rain affected areas of Gwadar and Ormara, said a handout issued on Friday. In the recent heavy rain spell, Pakistan Navy had provided its full support to Civil Administration of Gwadar and Ormara utilising all available resources to mitigate the sufferings of rain hit people. Pakistan

Navy troops reached the rain stricken people with heavy machinery to assist local population in order to drain out rain water from their homes and localities. Pakistan Navy teams also assisted large number of people confined at their homes due to heavy rain water. Relief operation in Gwadar and Ormara showed strong commitment of Pak Navy to extend all out support to the masses in the hour of need.

Pakistan Railways Revives Iconic "Safari Tourist Train" to Boost Tourism

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan Railways, in collaboration with a private company, is set to reinvigorate its tourism sector with the revival of its iconic "Safari Tourist Train". The operations are set to commence from today, with an inaugural ceremony being held at the Golra Railway Sta-

tion. Passengers and guests will be treated to a breakfast before they embark on a journey filled with cultural exploration. The journey promises to be an enriching experience, with travelers enjoying music and gaining insights into the historical significance of the Pothohar region. The route of

the Safari Tourist Train will take passengers to Attock Khurd Station via Hassan Abdaal. This revival marks a significant step in promoting tourism and offering both domestic and international tourists a unique way to explore the rich cultural heritage of Pakistan.

President condemns terrorist attack on Customs officials in DIKhan



ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Saturday condemned a terrorist attack on Customs officials in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The president expressed his condolences with the bereaved families and paid tribute to the sacrifices of Customs officials who laid down their lives while performing their duties, President Sec-

retariat Press Wing said in a press release. He also prayed for the high ranks of Shuhada and for the bereaved families to bear the losses with equanimity. The president also commended services of the Customs personnel and for their efforts to curb smuggling and reiterated the resolve to efface terrorism and smuggling.

Islamabad High Court to monitor Hajj 2024 operations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday instructed the Ministry of Religious Affairs to ensure facilitation of pilgrimage to Makkah Mukarram during Hajj season this year. The court directed to utilize digital communication services like message alert system for better coordination and management. It remarked that the court was keeping all these cases pending and take up again in the first week of August after hajj. Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard the case filed by private companies regarding Hajj quota. The court said that it would also monitor Hajj affairs this year and wouldn't allow anyone make pilgrims complain. Justice Arbab said the court would sought details from the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and would also summoned the pilgrims and inquire about the Hajj 2024 operations. The court adjourned further hearing of the case till next August.

PEI organizes briefing for donors

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Emergency Operations Center for Polio Eradication on Friday apprised the donors on the progress of polio eradication efforts in the country. In this regard a briefing was organized for the donors and partner organizations supporting the Pakistan Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI). Coordinator to the Prime Minister on National Health Services Regulations and Coordination Dr Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath was the chief guest, while Federal Health Secretary Nadeem Mahboob, country representatives of WHO and UNICEF, Trustee Rotary Foundation and Pakistan National Polio Plus Committee Chairman Aziz Memon, and representatives from donor agencies attended the briefing.

ISSI hosting International Conference next week on "Pakistan in the Emerging Geopolitical Landscape"

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Pakistan Office will be co-hosting a one-day International Conference, titled "Pakistan in the Emerging Geopolitical Landscape," at ISSI on 24 April 2024. Building on the success of last year's International Conference - "Pakistan's Strategic Frontiers", this year's event will delve into the relationship between Pakistan's strategic position and the rapidly shifting dynamics of West and Central Asia. The Conference agenda focuses on three key themes. The first working session, titled "Unraveling Afghanistan's Shifting Landscape," will examine the evolving situation in Afghanistan, particularly its impact on Pakistan's security and foreign policy considerations. The second session, titled "From Dependency to Diversity: The Evolution of the Middle East," will analyze the changing environment within the Middle East and its influence on Pakistan's regional partnerships and economic interests. The third and final ses-

sion, titled "Rising Non-Conventional Security Threats in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Middle East," will seek to address the growing challenges posed by non-traditional threats like cyberwarfare, pandemics, and climate change, emphasizing the necessity of regional collaboration to mitigate these threats. Through in-depth discussions and expert insights, the Conference aims to achieve a broad set of objectives. It will analyze the impact of the evolving regional landscape on Pakistan's foreign policy, security concerns, and economic opportunities. The Conference will also explore the changing nature of security threats and their implications for regional stability. Furthermore, the discussions will emphasize the importance of fostering regional connectivity and economic cooperation for sustainable development. Ultimately, the Conference seeks to generate valuable knowledge on how Pakistan can effectively navigate its changing regional environment, enhance its diplomatic space, and promote economic development.

By-elections on 21 vacant seats of National, Provincial Assemblies to be held on Sunday

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): By-elections on 21 vacant seats of National and Provincial Assemblies will be held today According to Election Commission of Pakistan, polling will be held on five National Assembly

seats, twelve Punjab Assembly seats, two seats of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and two seats of Balochistan Assembly. Polling will start at 8:00 in the morning and it will continue till 5:00 pm without any break.

Delegation of World Food Program calls on CM Gandapur



PESHAWAR (Agencies): A delegation of World Food Program, led by its Country Director, Coco Ushiyama, called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur in Peshawar today. Matters related to expanding the scope of cooperation in multiple fields especially in the merged districts were discussed

during the meeting. Apprising the delegation about the challenges faced by the terrorism-hit merged districts, the Chief Minister said the infrastructure in these districts has been badly affected. He said large scale development work is needed to bring these districts at par with the settled districts.

Pak-Afghan border road blocked again due to floods



CHITRAL (Agencies): The Arando road which connects Pak-Afghan border area has been blocked once again due to floods just a day after reopening, leaving passengers stranded and vehicles stuck on the road. According to APP Correspondent, The road was closed for 10 days due to heavy stones and mountains on the road but was reopened after continuous hard work by the Communications and Works Department (C&W). However, a series of rains on Thursday night caused floods in different nullahs and streams, blocking the road again. Passengers including women and children were left stranded for hours and vehicles were stuck on the

road. The C&W department has mobilized machinery to clear the road but work is on hold until the floodwaters recede. The department has also started desilting and cleaning work in the Drosh Goal drainage nullah and channelization in the middle of Drosh goal nullah to prevent further damage. Locals are demanding that the government take immediate action to restore the road and compensate those who have suffered losses due to the floods. They are also seeking regular development work in the area to reduce their hardships. The area has been affected by natural disasters and lacks basic facilities like electricity, mobile phones, and internet.



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Saudi chair of IMFC acknowledges impact of global crises, says they should be discussed in other forums

RIYADH (Agencies): The International Monetary and Financial Committee on Friday held its biannual meeting in Washington DC to discuss the global macroeconomic and financial impact of current conflicts. The IMFC members focused on the war in Ukraine, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and shipping disruptions in the Red Sea, said Mohammed Al-Jadaan, the Saudi minister of finance and the body's chair. Al-Jadaan said IMFC members acknowledged that the crises had significant impacts on the global economy, but added that the body



was not the forum to resolve geopolitical and security issues, and that they should be discussed in other forums. He said: "The IMFC's role is to advise and report on the supervision and management of the international monetary and financial system. This includes responses to

events that may disrupt the system. "Of course, the world and the IMF (International Monetary Fund) itself have faced multiple global disruptions over the last few years. Prospects are improving, which is very positive, but numerous challenges remain, and we need to be vigilant and ready to address them. Today's era must not be of war and conflict." The Saudi minister chairs the IMFC, the policy advisory body to the IMF's board of governors, and was speaking during the committee's gathering at the Spring Meetings of the IMF and World Bank.

Campari's new CEO says wants to focus on Aperol's growth in Asia

SESTO SAN GIOVANNI (Agencies): Davide Campari-Milano NV's new CEO Matteo Fantacchiotti says he wants to tap the "enormous" potential of the distiller's popular Aperol beverage, focusing on growth in Asia while also continuing to hunt for development opportunities in the region as well as in the US. "I believe over the next five to ten years Asia will account for 15% to 20% of our global sales," Fantacchiotti told Bloomberg during his first public appearance as chief of the Milan-based company. Fantacchiotti was appointed to the top job follow-



ing the retirement of long-time CEO Bob Kunze-Concewitz, who oversaw more than 20 acquisitions during his tenure. "Asia has become a strategic priority for the group in 2020," the CEO said. "First we gave priority to Europe, then to the US, which is our No 1 market, and now it's time for

Asia." The plan in China is to initially focus on "cities close to Hong Kong and with favourable weather," he said. Last year, the Aperol brand accounted for 24% of the group's sales and grew by triple digits in China and India, according to an investor presentation. Overall, the Asia-Pacific region accounted for 8% of Campari group sales. Fantacchiotti, who spearheaded Campari's expansion in Asia as managing director before taking the top job, said mergers and acquisitions opportunities will also be key to expanding in the area as well as in the US.

UAW clinches watershed union victory at Volkswagen's Tennessee factory

CHATTANOOGA (Agencies): Workers at Volkswagen's Tennessee plant have voted to join the United Auto Workers, the union said on Friday, calling victory after an unofficial tally showed a majority of eligible workers had cast ballots in favour of the union. The seismic win, if confirmed, will make the Chattanooga factory the first auto plant in the South to unionise via election since the 1940s and the first foreign-owned auto plant in the South to do so. The union made the call after some 2,200 ballots were counted in favour of unionising. The plant has about 4,300 eligible voters. The victo-



ry is a huge shot in the arm for UAW president Shawn Fain's campaign to unionise plants owned by more than a dozen automakers across the US, including Tesla. Fain and his team have committed to spending US\$40 million through 2026 on the effort. Although the UAW narrowly lost votes at

the same plant in 2014 and 2019, this year's vote was preceded by surging public support for unions and successful contract negotiations last year with the Big Three automakers. VW took a neutral position on the vote at its only non-union factory globally. The UAW has previously represented VW workers at a Pennsylvania plant that built Rabbit cars before it closed in 1988. For decades, the union has struck out at southern auto plants. In addition to the two narrow losses at VW previously, it sustained three more significant misses at southern factories owned by Nissan, the last in 2017 in Mississippi.

Google scraps minimum wage, benefits rules for suppliers, staffing firms

MOUNTAIN VIEW (Agencies): Alphabet Inc's Google said on Friday that it will roll back requirements that US suppliers and staffing firms pay their employees at least US\$15 an hour and provide health insurance and other benefits, a move that could allow the tech giant to avoid bargaining with unions. The elimination of the 2019 policy, along with other steps such as limiting access by temporary workers and vendors to internal systems, are designed to comply with shifting US and global labour regulations related to contingent workers, a spokesman for Mountain View, California-based Google told



Reuters. "These updates bring us in line with other large companies and simply clarify that Google is not, and has never been, the employer of our suppliers' employees," the spokesman said. The announcement comes after the US National Labor Relations Board in January ruled that Google was a so-called "joint employer" of

workers provided by staffing firm Cognizant Technology Solutions and must bargain with their union. Google is appealing that decision. The board relied in part on the 2019 policy, saying it allowed Google to exert control over the workers even though it does not employ them directly. The labour board has moved to make it more difficult for companies to avoid bargaining with temporary and contract workers, including adopting a rule last year that said companies with indirect control over working conditions can be considered the employers of contract workers. A federal judge blocked the rule from taking effect in March.

Netflix weighs on Nasdaq as market reacts to reported strike of Iran

NEW YORK (Agencies): The Nasdaq tumbled on Friday on a poor response to Netflix earnings as markets gyrated following reports Israel had carried out retaliatory strikes against Iran. Netflix reported a profit of US\$2.3 billion, topping earnings expectations on a jump in subscribers. The drop appeared to be tied to commentary about the current quarter which suggested growth was moderating. The results come ahead of reports next week from other key tech names, including Google parent Alphabet and Microsoft. "The way Netflix has responded has created some consterna-



tion about the mega stocks' ability to live up to expectations," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare, who cited downcast comments from Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company earlier in the week as a driver of Friday's poor showing by chip stocks. The tech-focused Nasdaq finished

down more than 2%, Netflix sinking 9.1% and artificial intelligence leader Nvidia losing 10%. Earnings became the focus by the time Wall Street opened as investors concluded the impact of the apparent Israeli strike was limited. Iran's state media reported explosions in the central province of Isfahan. A senior US congressional source told AFP there had been retaliatory Israeli strikes but declined to provide any details, saying they were classified. Crude oil prices surged as much as 4% on worries about supplies from the oil-rich region but finished with only modest gains.

Chery to employ 1,250 people at new Barcelona plant

BARCELONA (Agencies): Chinese carmaker Chery and its Spanish partner Ebro-EV Motors said today that they expect to create 1,250 jobs and produce 150,000 vehicles a year, mostly electric, at their new plant in Barcelona. The cars will be assembled under a joint venture majority owned by the Spanish group at a factory that Japanese carmaker Nissan shut down in December 2021 and that once employed nearly 3,000 people. The joint venture will start recruiting 150 employees "in the coming months", the two companies said in a statement. The agreement, the product of lengthy negotiations between Spanish authorities and the Chinese firm,



was first announced on Tuesday but no details were given. It was officially signed at a ceremony held at the plant attended by Spain's prime minister Pedro Sanchez and Chery's executive vice-president Guibing Zhang. This project "will result in the creation of wealth and, above all, in the creation and maintenance of jobs," Sanchez said, adding it is "a symbol

of the process of reindustrialisation" underway "throughout Spain". Chery and Ebro said they plan to produce 50,000 vehicles per year at the plant in 2027, rising to around 150,000 per year by 2029. Chery is the second Chinese carmaker to set up in Europe after China's top electric carmaker BYD said in December it would build a factory in Hungary as it pushes ahead with plans to expand into Europe despite growing competition concerns. Founded in 1997, Chery is a state-owned company which says it sold 1.9 million cars in 2023. It rose to popularity in China about 15 years ago with its small petrol-fuelled city cars aimed at the local market.

X fights Australian watchdog over church stabbing posts

SYDNEY (Agencies): Elon Musk's X said today it will fight an Australian watchdog's order to take down content related to the brutal stabbing of a priest during a live streamed Sydney church service. Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel was allegedly slashed in the head and chest by a 16-year-old suspect on Monday, sparking a riot by followers of the Assyrian Christian church in western Sydney. The bishop has since issued a message from hospital saying he is recovering from his wounds and has forgiven his assailant. Video of the bloody attack, which spread widely on social media platforms, has been blamed by Australian authorities for feeding tensions in the community. X's government affairs department said it had complied with an initial eSafety directive, "pending a legal



challenge", to remove "certain posts in Australia that commented on the recent attack". But the social media platform said it later received a demand from Australia's eSafety commissioner Julie Inman Grant to "globally withhold the posts". X said it had been warned it faced a daily fine of Aus\$785,000 (US\$500,000) for failure to comply. "The Australian censorship commissar is demanding *global* content bans!" Musk wrote as he reshared the company's response.

HK's regulator to investigate PwC's role in auditing Evergrande

HONG KONG (Agencies): Hong Kong's accounting regulator said it would start an investigation into PwC's role in auditing Chinese real estate giant Evergrande, citing the publication of a "whistleblower report". Heavily indebted Evergrande has become a symbol of the years-long crisis in China's property market, and last month its onshore unit was accused of a US\$78 billion revenue overstatement. PwC was the auditor for Evergrande for more than a decade before resigning last year amid disagreements on the audit of the firm's 2021 accounts. On Friday, Hong Kong's Accounting and Financial Reporting Council said "a whistleblower report" had come to its



attention. "The report expressed significant concerns regarding potential alleged deficiencies in PricewaterhouseCoopers' systems of quality management and the quality of the audits of China Evergrande Group," it said in a statement. "Given the gravity of these allegations and the necessity to safeguard the interests of the investing public...the AFRC is obliged to initiate an investigation."

'Halving' arrives for Bitcoin miners

NEW YORK (Agencies): The Bitcoin market engineered the "halving" of the reward for operating the cryptocurrency on Friday, a much-anticipated step designed to limit production and boost digital money. "The 4th #Bitcoin halving is complete!" announced cryptocurrency exchange Binance on X, the former Twitter. "The countdown has been reset - see you in 2028." Bitcoin is created as a reward when computers solve complex puzzles to decide which miner wins the privilege to validate the block - and receive the reward in bitcoins. However, since the digital currency's launch in 2009, the reward has been halved for every 210,000 blocks. With one block validated



roughly every ten minutes, this critical industry event occurs just under every four years. The reward, which was fixed since May 2020 at 6.25 Bitcoins per new block, has now fallen to 3.125 Bitcoins. Bitcoin was conceived in 2008 by a person or group writing under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto. The halving process slows the rate at which new bitcoins are created, thereby restricting supply.

China's Ant Group in talks to launch Alipay+ in Indonesia

JAKARTA (Agencies): China's Ant Group is in talks with Indonesia to bring its popular cross-border payment service Alipay+ there, the chief of its international business was quoted by media as saying on Friday after meeting with the country's communications minister. Launched in 2020, Alipay+ provides services and technology tools to global merchants and e-wallets that enable them to offer their users the ability to make payments in overseas markets with their local e-wallets. Peng Yang, CEO of Ant Group's international business group, was quoted by newspaper Kompas as saying the company was



seeking guidance from Indonesia's central bank to operate in Indonesia, adding he hoped Alipay+ could be launched this year. Ant Group and Bank Indonesia did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Ant Group is the financial affiliate of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group.

Euro hits historic low in SWIFT transactions

The share of the euro currency in global cross-border settlements via the SWIFT messaging system last month declined to an all-time low, transaction data compiled by the global financial service showed on Thursday. The portion of transactions involving the European single currency amounted to 21.93% in March, marking a month-over-month decline by 1.32 percentage points and dropping well below the 24.4% level logged when SWIFT introduced the new scale. The data has been collected since 2010, but since July the figures reflect a technical adjustment by SWIFT to trade-reporting standards. Over the past year, the euro's share in international payments has nearly halved. In January 2023, settlements with the currency stood at 37.88%, while figures for December 2023 registers a drop to 22.41%. The US dollar ranked first, gaining 0.81 percentage points from



February to reach 47.37% and marking the highest level since December 2023. It was followed by the euro, pound and yuan currencies. The share of the UK national currency in transactions conducted by SWIFT amounted to 6.57%, while the portion of settlements with Chinese yuan saw another increase, reaching 4.69%. The dominance of the euro, a distant second after the US dollar, as a global currency, has been shaken by the rise of China, as well as by the deterioration of ties with Russia and the notable efforts to attain financial independence pursued by emerging economies from India to Brazil.

Saudi Arabia beat Thailand to edge closer to AFC U-23 Asian Cup quarterfinals

DOHA (Agencies): Saudi Arabia on Friday night thrashed Thailand 5-0 to edge closer to the quarterfinals of the 2024 AFC U-23 Asian Cup. The win at Khalifa International Stadium leaves the Green Falcons top of Group C with a maximum of six points from three two matches. Iraq, who defeated Tajikistan 4-2 later on Friday, sit in second with three points, with Thailand third on goal difference. Tajikistan, with two defeats, are bottom of the group with no points. A win or draw for Saudi Arabia against Iraq on Monday will secure top spot in the



group and progress to the last eight. Saudi took the lead against Thailand after four minutes through Ayman Yahoo's third goal of the tournament, before Ahmed Al-Ghamdi and Abdullah Radif scored in first-half stoppage

time to all but end the match as content. Radif went on to complete his hat trick with strikes in the 52nd and 73rd minutes. The U-23 Asian Cup, which runs until May 3, also provides a pathway to the men's football competition at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. The tournament sees 16 nations split into four groups of four teams, with the top two from each progressing to the quarterfinals. The competition also serves as a route to the Olympic Games in Paris this summer, with the winners of the two semifinals both securing automatic qualification.

Verstappen takes Red Bull's 100th F1 pole at Chinese GP

SHANGHAI (Agencies): Triple world champion Max Verstappen followed up his commanding sprint win by taking Red Bull's landmark 100th Formula One pole with a dominant show in qualifying for the Chinese Grand Prix. The pole was the Dutch driver's fifth in five races this season and sixth in a row including last year's Abu Dhabi finale. Mexican teammate Sergio Perez qualified second fastest in a front row lockout for Red Bull, 15 years after the team took their first win at the Shanghai International Circuit with Sebastian Vettel. Verstappen, who earlier won the season's first sprint race by 13 seconds, is the first driver since Mika Hakkinen in 1999 to start



a season with five successive poles. "I think after the sprint race it gave us a few more ideas for the car and I think the car worked even better in qualifying now ... The car was really nice to drive," said the 26-year-old. That final lap felt pretty decent and (I'm) also very happy to drive here in the dry. The conditions were pretty good so it was a lot of fun."

Loughnane tops 2024 PFL featherweight stands after first-round win in Chicago

CHICAGO (Agencies): The Professional Fighters League on Friday returned for its third Global Season event of 2024 at Wintrust Arena in Chicago, with Brendan Loughnane emerging the big winner of the night to top the featherweight standings. The 12-fight card, featuring combatants in the welterweight and featherweight divisions, was the final event of the first half of the 2024 PFL Global Season. Loughnane, the "Pride of Manchester," stepped into the PFL SmartCage on a mission. The 2022 PFL featherweight champion secured a first-round TKO



victory over Pedro Carvalho. The victory gives Loughnane six points in the featherweight standings and the 15th knockout of his career, and he is now one step closer to a return to the PFL Playoffs. The evening's main event featured a strategic bat-

tle between Andrey Koreshkov and Magomed Umalutov in a highly anticipated welterweight bout. Both combatants showed their technical prowess, with Umalutov pulling away and securing a unanimous decision, keeping his perfect record intact. Logan Storley matched up with Shamil Musaev in more welterweight action. Musaev put on an impressive display and dispatched Storley in the second round via KO. The result improved Musaev's record to 17-0-1 with 10 wins by KO, and earned five points in the division.

Tsitsipas saves 2 match points to reach Barcelona semifinals

BARCELONA (Agencies): World No 7 Stefanos Tsitsipas saved two match points to defeat Facundo Diaz Acosta and reach the semifinals of the Barcelona clay-court tournament on Friday. The Greek came through 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (10-8) after his 53rd-ranked Argentine opponent missed a match point in the 12th game of the deciding set. Both men then saved more match points in the tie-breaker before Tsitsipas, a three-time runner-up at the Barcelona tournament, secured a ninth successive win following on from his Monte Carlo Masters title victory at the weekend. "I was coming close to losing at certain moments in the match. It seemed like a mountain," Tsitsipas said. "I reminded myself that I have a headband that I wear here that has a mountain and that I need to climb it, so it kept me going." He added, "I feel like having so many



matches under my belt and faced situations like this helps for sure." The 25-year-old Tsitsipas will face Dusan Lajovic, the world No 59 from Serbia, in the semifinals on Saturday. Lajovic knocked out 36th-ranked Arthur Fils of France 6-4, 3-6, 6-2 in his quarterfinal. Casper Ruud, the world No 6 from Norway who was runner-up to Tsitsipas in Monte Carlo, eased past Italian Matteo Arnaldi 6-4, 6-3. "It is not easy. You are playing for a spot in the semifinals," said Ruud. "I was able to come through in the end after a few crazy rallies."

Indian walks from Dubai to Riyadh hoping to meet hero Ronaldo

JEDDAH (Agencies): A Cristiano Ronaldo superfan has arrived in Riyadh after a grueling walk from Dubai hoping to meet the Al-Nassr star. After 1,200 km and 36 days of travel mostly across the arid landscape separating the cities, Civin KP arrived in the Saudi capital. "Finally, I am here in front of Al-Awal Park where Al-Nassr plays (their) official games and I hope I can meet Ronaldo," he said. He posted images of himself on Instagram at the stadium where he managed to take a seat at the home team's bench and walked pitch-side at the 25,000-capacity venue. "I came all the way



from Dubai on foot and crossed all this distance just to pay respect and show my love to the best player in the world," said Civin, who is originally from the state of Kerala in India. Ronaldo is one of the most recognizable faces of international football and has fans across the

world who enjoy his skills and passion for the game. He signed for the Riyadh club in 2022 after years of playing in Europe's top leagues. Civin feels proud to have completed the journey but still awaits the biggest prize. "The unexpected moment is always sweeter," he wrote, "hopefully waiting for more." A photo with the Portuguese great and an autograph would be a moment of a lifetime, Civin told MBC as he visited the ground. "I pray to God to make this dream come true and meet Ronaldo," he said. "I will cherish this moment, if it happens, for the rest of my life."

KL Rahul shines as Lucknow Super Giants beat Chennai Super Kings in IPL

LUCKNOW (Agencies): KL Rahul's solid 82 runs off 53 balls helped Lucknow Super Giants comfortably beat Chennai Super Kings by eight wickets in the IPL on Friday. Rahul's time at the crease, which saw him smash nine fours and three sixes, played a key role in pushing Lucknow past Chennai's 176-6 with six balls to spare. "I felt that if we bat well, we could chase it down... when your partnership goes on, you can take a few more chances. Glad that it happened," said Rahul. Chennai got off to a slightly jittery start after being invited to bat first, losing Rachin Ravindra (zero) and skipper Ruturaj



Gaikwad (17) in the first five overs. Ajinkya Rahane looked to steady the side, with the help of Ravindra Jadeja, but fell in the ninth over after racking up a respectable 36 runs off 24 balls. Lucknow's clinical bowling restricted Chennai in the middle overs, with Shivam Dube (three) not being able

to pop off. But Jadeja soldiered on for the rest of the game, getting his half-century in the seventeenth over. Reliable warhorse M.S. Dhoni, who smacked 28 runs off 9 balls, helped Chennai turn up the heat in the last three overs and pushed the team to 176-6. Lucknow openers Quinton de Kock and KL Rahul set up the chase with a superb 134-run partnership, before de Kock, who hit five fours in his 43-ball 54, fell in the fifteenth over. Rahul went onto smash an incredible 82 runs off 53 balls before being dismissed in the eighteenth over. A final push by Nicholas Pooran (23) helped seal the victory for Lucknow.

Saudi Arabia's PIF signs sponsorship deal with Mutua Madrid Open tennis tournament

LONDON (Agencies): Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund announced on Friday it had agreed a multi-year deal to sponsor the Mutua Madrid Open tennis tournament. The deal is the latest in PIF's wider tennis partnership with the Association of Tennis Professionals as a Platinum Partner and as the official naming partner of the PIF ATP Rankings. The fund said the agreement marked its continued investment in growing tennis globally, along with a wider focus on its four sponsorship pillars: inclusivity, sustainability, youth, and technology. As part of the partner-



ship, PIF will develop a platform to allow tennis fans new and old to engage and train with legendary players and coaches on the ground in Madrid, and youth-focused fan zones. A statement said: "PIF is committed to providing opportunities for young

players across all levels of the game, inspiring participation, enhancing talent discovery and developing new pathways for future generations of tennis players around the world. "As part of this priority, PIF is engaging local tennis academies in Spain and supporting future players through the PIF tennis bootcamp." PIF has also partnered with ATP Masters 1000 events in Indian Wells, Miami and the Nitto ATP Finals, in addition to the Beijing ATP 500 event, and the Next Gen ATP Finals presented by PIF, to be hosted in Jeddah until 2027.

John Catlin sets himself up for victory going into final round of Saudi Open in Riyadh

RIYADH (Agencies): John Catlin continued his dominance at the 2024 Saudi Open on Friday as he shot a men's course-record 62 to open up an eight-shot lead at the top of the leaderboard at Riyadh Golf Club. The American began the third round one shot ahead of Scott Hend and Haotong Li and signaled his intentions early with two birdies in his first five holes. It was a special back nine that saw him pull away from the field as six birdies, including two in his final two holes — which also earned him the PIF Mo-



ment of the Day — put him in the driving seat for a sixth Asian Tour victory. Thai favorite Kiradech Aphibarnrat made the biggest move of the chasing pack and will head out with Catlin in

the final group on Saturday. His round of 67 moved him into second place with Wade Ormsby, David Puig, Hend and Li one further back. If he is victorious on Saturday it will mark back-to-back wins on the Asian Tour for Catlin after he lifted the International Series Macau trophy in March, but the 33-year-old is taking nothing for granted ahead of the final round. He said: "My game has felt in good shape. Today was just one of those days where the putter just gets hot and it's like you can't miss."

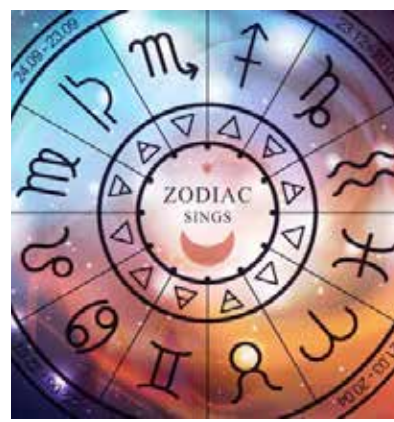
Juventus come from 2 goals down to draw at lowly Cagliari

CAGLIARI (Agencies): A late own goal by defender Alberto Dossena salvaged a 2-2 draw for Juventus at lowly Cagliari in Serie A on Friday after the hosts went two goals up in the first half thanks to penalties. Midfielder Gianluca Gaetano put Cagliari in front in the 30th minute, sending Juve's goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny the wrong way, before Yerry Mina converted from the spot again to double their lead six minutes later. Dusan Vlahovic pulled one back for Juve in the second half, netting a free-kick from just outside the box and Cagliari defender Dossena



levelled for the visitors with an own goal three minutes from the end. Juventus are third on 64 points, five points ahead of fourth-placed Bologna who visit AS Roma, in fifth, on Monday. Juve have five matches left to play. Cagliari are 14th, five points above the relegation zone.

DAILY HOROSCOPE: APRIL 21, 2024



you. Don't hold back. Try not to let anyone off the hook if they say or do anything dumb.

– **VIRGO**: Listen to your friends and family. Communication is big right now, and if you aren't fully engaged with them, things could go off the rails very quickly. Take your time and explain everything.

– **LIBRA**: You need to make a change today, but it's not all that hard, really. In fact, you might be able to get your friends and family to sign on if you pitch it in the right kind of language for them.

– **SCORPIO**: You are a people magnet today, and you should find that your ability to get people to do your bidding is quite strong. It's time for you to open up and get folks to see what's really going on.

– **SAGITTARIUS**: Your mood isn't all that perky today, but you can't be super fun all the time, right? It's a good time to slow down and just let the world pass you by as you work through some old emotions.

– **CAPRICORN**: Your reputation precedes you today, and others are excited by what they think you have to offer. You don't disappoint, and you may add to your momentum as you go through your day's work.

– **ACQUARIUS**: Your emotions are pulling you down, though it may not be to a negative place. You may just need to wallow in romantic feelings or otherwise disengage from the real world for a while.

– **PISCES**: You need to avoid the temptation to get involved with new projects today unless you initiate them yourself. Your great energy ensures a measure of success, but others aren't as reliable.

– It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.

– **ARIES**: Your emotional state is a little messy today, but that's no cause for alarm! Every now and then you need to let yourself break down just a bit so you can rearrange all the pieces in a new way.

– **TAURUS**: The depth of your feeling is really amazing today. It may be positive or negative, but you know for sure where you're at! It's a good day to express yourself, though you may intimidate someone.

– **GEMINI**: You need to deal with a health-related matter today, yours or a loved one's, and you are surprisingly calm about it all even if it's serious. Your mindset is perfect for this sort of thing.

– **CANCER**: You're going through a lot right now, but that doesn't mean you can't get straight with someone close to you. In fact, your state of mind may provoke you to say some things that are quite healthy.

– **LEO**: Your direct manner is both shocking and approachable. People know just what they're getting from

North Korea tests 'super-large warhead'

PYONGYANG (Agencies): North Korea has successfully tested a "super-large warhead" for a cruise missile and a new type of anti-aircraft munition, state-run KCNA news agency has reported. The "test of power" of the warhead for the Hwasal-1Ra-3 strategic cruise missile and launch of the Pyoltsi-1-2 anti-aircraft missile took place on Friday in the Yellow Sea, the agency said on Saturday. "The tests achieved purposes concerned," it noted. KCNA said the "tests are parts of normal works of national defense research institutions... and have nothing to do with [the] situation" on the Korean Peninsula. According to South Korea's Yonhap news agency, it was the first time Pyongyang has



mentioned the 'Pyoltsi' system, which means 'meteor' in Korean. South Korea's military said it detected several cruise missile and anti-aircraft missile launches by the North toward the Yellow Sea at around 3:30pm local time on Friday. Detailed specifications of the weapons are now being analyzed, it added. "Our military has been closely

monitoring signs of North Korea's provocations and military activities, while maintaining the robust combined defense posture," Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. Pyongyang, which remains under international sanctions over its ballistic missile and nuclear programs, has intensified weapons testing since the New Year's declaration of the country's leader, Kim Jong-un, that he is ending the policy of seeking reconciliation with the South. According to Yonhap, Friday marked the sixth cruise missile launch by North Korea in 2024. The Japanese authorities warned last year that ballistic missiles developed by the North "can reach anywhere" on the US mainland.

Send more Patriots to Ukraine - Germany



BERLIN (Agencies): NATO members must provide Ukraine with more US-made Patriot air defense systems, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Thursday in Brussels. Berlin has promised to deliver one Patriot system in the near future, in addition to the two it has already sent to Kiev. Scholz said he was aiming to promote the idea during "many discussions" at the EU summit held on Wednesday and Thursday. "We heard that there should now be seven more, one of them is ours and then we hope that six more will be found" by other NATO members, the German chancellor stated. Berlin has so far made the "greatest contribution" when it comes to providing Ukraine with Patriot systems, Scholz claimed. He called on others to "make the same decisions." The US, Germany, and the Netherlands have sent several Patriot launchers to support Ukraine in the conflict with Russia. The exact number of Patriots in Ukraine's possession remains unclear. According to Business Insider, Kiev could have between three and five of the systems. The Russian Defense Ministry has provided evidence that several of the launchers and radars have already been destroyed. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte took on a harsher tone toward nations reluctant to scour their stockpiles for missiles to give Kiev. "We know that many countries are sitting on large piles of Patriot systems, maybe not wanting to deliver it directly," he said on Thursday, without naming any names. He offered to buy the systems from any third country and send them to Ukraine.

Taiwan's defense ministry detects 21 Chinese military aircraft



TAIPEI (Agencies): Taipei's defense ministry said it had detected 21 Chinese military aircraft around the self-ruled island since 8:15 am (0015 GMT) on Saturday, a month before Taiwan's May 20 inauguration of incoming president Lai Ching-te. "17 aircraft (of the 21) crossed the median line and its extension, entered our northern, central, and southwestern (air defense identification zone), and joined PLA vessels for joint combat patrol," it said in a statement posted on X around 11:30 am. Taiwan's armed forces "are monitoring the activities with our joint surveillance systems, and have dispatched appropriate assets to respond accordingly." The median line bisects the Taiwan Strait, a narrow 180-kilometer waterway separating the island from mainland China. Beijing does not recognize the line as its territory. It has also never renounced the use of force to bring the island under its control. China sends warplanes and naval vessels around Taiwan on a near daily basis — a move experts say is a form of "grey-zone harassment," stopping short of an outright act of war but enough to exhaust Taipei's armed forces.

Israeli strike targeted Iranian airbase - NYT

NEW YORK (Agencies): Explosions near the Iranian city of Isfahan on Friday morning were Israeli strikes on a military airfield, the New York Times claimed on Friday, citing anonymous sources. Neither Israel nor Iran has officially commented on the incident. Israel vowed to "respond" to last Saturday's drone and missile strike by Iran, itself reprisal for the April 1 bombing of the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria that killed several senior officers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force. Residents of the Iranian cities of Isfahan and Tabriz reported a series of blasts early on Friday. According to the NYT, three Iranian officials said the military airbase near Isfahan was hit. The Fars News agency reported that the explosions were heard near the city's civilian airport. "The sound



was related to Isfahan's air defense systems firing at suspicious objects," Brigadier Siavash Mihandoust, senior army commander in Isfahan province, said on Friday. "We have not had any damage," he added. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi gave a speech later in the day praising last Saturday's strike on Israel but did not mention the explosions in Isfahan or Tabriz. According to Bloomberg, Israel had warned the US in advance that it would strike Iran in the next 24-48 hours.

US Has 'Microwave' Weapons Able to Fry Electronics of Iran's Nuclear Facilities - Report

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The Pentagon is exploring futuristic electronic warfare options such as microwave emitters and directed-energy (DE) lasers, the US Defense Department's top officer for counter-UAS issues, Army Major General Sean Gainey, said in 2023, adding that investments were being made in high-powered microwave capabilities. The US Air Force has operational missiles that could take out the electronics of Iran's nuclear facilities using high-power microwaves, the Daily Mail reported. The microwave weapons equipped with an electromagnetic pulse cannon are fitted into cruise missiles and can be delivered from B-52 bombers. Boasting

a range of 700 miles (around 1,126 km), the weapons can ostensibly infiltrate enemy airspace at low altitude and target electronic devices with pulses of high power microwave (HPM) energy. Specifically, the microwave weapon is said to generate a concentrated beam of energy aimed at generating a voltage surge in electronic equipment, thus disabling it. These missiles are allegedly designed to leave civilians unharmed. According to the report, the top secret Counter-Electronics High Power Microwave Advanced Missile Project (CHAMP) was the brainchild of Boeing's Phantom Works, and was commissioned by the US Air Force Research Laboratory.

Japan Launches 5th Round of Fukushima Treated Water Discharge - Reports



TOKYO (Agencies): The operator of Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant, Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), has launched the fifth round of treated water release from the facility that is scheduled to run until May 7, Japanese news agency reported on Friday. As part of the fifth round of water discharge, TEPCO plans to release 7,800 tonnes of treated water into the sea, while in

the new fiscal year, a total of over 54,000 tonnes of water would be released, the report said. The water's radioactivity levels meet the standards set by the Japanese government and international organizations, media reported. The fourth round of water discharge ended on March 16. Japan started releasing part of the estimated 1.34 million tonnes of Fukushima NPP treated water into the ocean in August 2023 despite an outcry from neighboring countries and local fishermen. In total, more than 31,000 tonnes of mildly radioactive water was released during the 2023 fiscal year, which ended on March 31, 2024. The entire process is expected to take at least 30 years.

Dubai carrier Emirates suspends check-in for onward connections, flydubai cancels Iran flights



DUBAI (Agencies): Dubai's flagship airline Emirates is suspending check-in for all customers with onward connections through the city until 2359 GMT on Friday, three days after a record storm swept the United Arab Emirates. Emirates, one of the world's biggest international airlines, said customers traveling to Dubai as their final destination may check-in and travel as usual. The suspension shows the airline and its hub, Dubai International Airport, are still struggling to clear a backlog of flights after the

UAE saw its heaviest rains in the 75 years records have been kept, bringing much of the country to a standstill for two days and causing significant damage. Dubai International airport, one of the world's busiest, later said it was temporarily limiting the number of arriving flights for 48 hours from 12 p.m. on Friday to speed up recovery operations from rain and flooding. Thousands of passengers have been affected by flight cancellations this week, Dubai Airports Chief Executive Paul Griffiths told local radio station Dubai Eye on Friday, after the storm flooded taxiways. The storm, which hit neighboring Oman on Sunday, pounded the UAE on Tuesday, with 20 reported dead in Oman and one in the UAE. Dubai's budget carrier flydubai meanwhile canceled flights to Iran on Friday after receiving an official alert, a statement said.

US House speaker announces 'new axis of evil'

WASHINGTON (Agencies): In a dramatic break from his party's hardline conservative base, US House Speaker Mike Johnson this week praised the country's deep state, called Russia, China, and Iran an "axis of evil," and vowed to put his job on the line to funnel more than \$60 billion to Kiev. For months, Johnson has resisted bringing a \$95 billion foreign aid bill to a vote, arguing that neither he nor his fellow Republicans could support the bill — which would give \$14 billion in military aid to Israel and \$60 billion to Ukraine — without it being tied to an overhaul of US border security. However, after a series of recent meetings with US intelligence chiefs, Johnson has changed his tune. "This is a critical



time right now, a critical time on the world stage," Johnson told reporters on Wednesday. "I think providing lethal aid to Ukraine right now is critically important. I really do. I really do believe the intel and the briefings that we've gotten." "I believe [Chinese President] Xi [Jinping] and [Russian President] Vladimir Putin and Iran really are an axis of evil," he continued.

India delivers BrahMos missiles to Philippines



NEW DELHI (Agencies): India delivered the first batch of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines on Friday, the ANI news agency has reported. A \$375 million deal to supply the systems, which were co-developed by New Delhi and Moscow, was signed in 2022. The Indian Air Force used C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft to deliver the consignment to the Philippines, the report noted, citing defense sources. Samir Kamat, chief of the country's Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO),

told ANI last week that the missiles are "getting a lot of interest" from potential buyers. Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia are reportedly among those to be keen on acquiring the missiles. Speaking at the World Defense Show in Saudi Arabia in February, BrahMos director of exports Praveen Pathak said the Indian-Russian joint venture is also in talks with Saudi Arabia, while its order portfolio has already reached \$7 billion, encompassing domestic and international deals. The Indian government has increased its annual target for defense and aerospace production to \$36 billion, while raising the export target to \$6 billion. Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh stated earlier this year that the country aims to increase its production of jet engines and gas turbines to reach the new goal.

Explosion Occurred at Military Base in Iraq



BAGHDAD (Agencies): An explosion occurred at the Kalsu military base south of Baghdad in the Iraqi province of Babil, an Iraqi security service source told Sputnik. "An explosion, the nature and causes of which are still unclear, occurred at the Kalsu military base in the north of Babil province," the source said. According to Al Arabiya broadcaster, one person was killed and two others injured in the blast. The US-led Coalition said in a statement that it did not participate in a strike on locations in Jurf Al Sakhar, Iraq, but is continuing to monitor reports of the attack.

US to Allocate \$40Mn in Defense Aid to Argentina Wishing to Be NATO's Partner - Embassy

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The United States will allocate \$40 million to support defense modernization of Argentina, which has declared its intention to become NATO's global partner, the US Embassy in Buenos Aires said. On Thursday, Argentine Defense Minister Luis Alfonso Petri said that Buenos Aires wanted to become NATO's global partner and had already submitted a corresponding request. NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana welcomed the request, saying that closer political and practical cooperation could benefit both parties. The diplomatic mission noted that such support is provided only to the US's important partners. Argentina will be able to purchase defense products, training services, and improve interaction thanks to US military aid. The funds will also contribute to Argentina's purchase of F-16 fighter jets, the statement read. In November 2023, Javier Milei won the runoff presidential election in Argentina. During the presidential campaign, Milei spoke against joining BRICS and cooperating with China, Brazil and Russia, and advocated a foreign policy oriented toward Israel and the United States. "The United States is proud to announce that it is providing \$40 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to support Argentina's defense modernization," the embassy said in a statement released on Thursday.

CIA Director Says Ukraine Could Lose on Battlefield by End of 2024



WASHINGTON (Agencies): Ukraine could lose to Russia on the battlefield by the end of 2024 if the US Congress does not provide more aid to the regime in Kiev, CIA Director William Burns said on Thursday. "There is a very real risk that the Ukrainians could lose on the battlefield by the end of 2024, or at least put [Russian President Vladimir Putin] in a position where he could essentially dictate the terms of a political settlement," Burns said during an event at the George W. Bush Presidential Center. However, further military assistance from the US Congress could enable Ukraine to hold out through 2024, Burns said. The US House of Representatives is considering a bill this week with \$60.84 billion in Ukraine-related funding, as part of a broader set of legislation to aid Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan. Earlier on Thursday, US House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul said that Ukraine has between two weeks and one month before Russia "takes over" the country.

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