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May 9 perpetrators will not go unpunished as it's a case of entire Pakistan, says ISPR

Maj Gen Ahmad Sharif Chaudhry says establishment of peace in Pakistan foremost priority



Soon Times Correspondent RAWALPINDI Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Maj Gen Ahmad Sharif Chaudhry said on Tuesday the perpetrators and facilitators of May 9 violence would have to face punishment in line with law and Constitution. Addressing a press conference, Maj Gen Ahmad Sharif Chaudhry said the May 9 episode was an open secret and people of Pakistan as well as armed forces had all the proofs and evidence. AN ATTEMPT TO DRIVE THE WEDGE BETWEEN PEOPLE AND ARMY He said May 9 was not Pakistan armed forces' case but it was a case of all Pakistan. An attempt was made to create hatred between the people of the country and armed forces. It was essential to punish the perpetrators of May 9 to keep faith in the judicial system of the country intact, he added. He said the military installations were attacked throughout the country. There would be no talks

with the miscreants, he said and added the miscreant group had no option but to tender an apology in public and express its resolve not to repeat the mistakes. People were brainwashed through propaganda against the armed forces, agencies and institutions of the country. The ISPR spokesperson said establishment of peace in the country was the foremost priority of security forces and they would go to any limit in their efforts to eliminate terrorists from Pakistan. He said they had no objection to the formation of a judicial commission to investigate the May 9 incidents. He, however, said this commission should also probe the objectives of the 2014 sit-in and the attacks on the PTV building and Parliament House. He stressed it should also be seen as to how the resources of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were utilised for another onslaught on the federal capital. He also mentioned the attempts made by a particular party "to sabotage Pakistan's deal with the IMF".

Interior minister orders crackdown against overbilling, electricity theft

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi called for accelerating efforts to curb overbilling and electricity theft across the country on Tuesday.



Stressing a zero-tolerance approach towards these issues, the minister underscored the need for relentless action against officers and DISCOs (distribution companies) responsible for burdening citizens with inflated bills.

"It is absolutely unacceptable to punish citizens for the incompetence and negligence of DISCOs," stated Naqvi at the FIA Lahore zonal office. He reiterated the government's commitment to tackle overbilling and ensure utmost priority and relief was given to electricity consumers.

He stressed that the priority remains to provide relief to consumers affected by overbilling, reaffirming that punitive measures will be taken against government personnel who are found complicit in electricity theft.

PTI demands judicial commission on May 9 incidents



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Tuesday demanded the establishment of a judicial commission to investigate the events of May 9. Talking to media, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, along with the party's central leaders including Shoaib Shaheen, said peaceful protest is fundamental right of any party. They also raised questions about the whereabouts of CCTV footage of the May 9 incidents. Barrister Gohar underscored the party's stance on the matter

of the Public Accounts Committee chairman, stating that it is an internal issue to be resolved upon issuance of the notification. Regarding a recent press conference by the DG ISPR, Barrister Gohar said, "I will read the DG ISPR's statement and then comment." Shoaib Shaheen highlighted the alleged incidents of state terrorism, including the abduction of PTI's founder, as well as cases like Zilke Shah. He also raised concern over malfunctions of CCTV cameras in critical moments.

IHC judges' letter: CJP Isa wants judges to be bold in face of meddling in judicial affairs

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD As the Supreme Court on Tuesday resumed the hearing on a suo motu case related to a letter written by six judges of the Islamabad High Court alleging interference in judicial affairs by the country's intelligence agencies, Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa remarked that a judge who puts up with interference without taking any action should stay home.



The hearing was presided over by a six-member larger bench led by CJP Isa, and comprising Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Musarrat Hilal, Justice Atiar Minalh, Justice Jamal Mandokhail and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan. During the proceedings, the Supreme Court Bar Association submitted its proposals on the subject, emphasising that the SCBA would never compromise on the independence of judiciary. It suggested that investigation be conducted against those meddling in judicial affairs, underscoring the

need for a comprehensive code of conduct outlining the responsibilities and protection of judges. The SCBA proposals noted that the Islamabad High Court had the power of contempt of court and should take action against any interference, observing that the failure to act by the high court was perplexing. The SCBA also noted that the judges of the Islamabad High Court had

referenced events from the past year in their letter. The SCBA noted with concern the leaking of the judges' letter to the media, stating that any judge with a complaint should inform their chief justice, and if the chief justice of the relevant court did not take action, then the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) should be notified.

Ministry Withdraws notification removing Shaukat Siddiqui as IHC judge



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD The Law Ministry has withdrawn its notification of Oct 11, 2018 regarding the removal of Shaukat Azz Siddiqui, a former judge of the Islamabad High Court, in view of the Supreme Court judgement of March 22. In a notification issued on Tuesday, the ministry stated that the president was pleased to retire Shaukat Azz Siddiqui on attaining the age of superannuation with effect from June 30, 2021. A five-member bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa completed hearing on the constitutional petitions filed by Shaukat Siddiqui on Jan 23.

Another IHC judge seeks contempt proceedings over smear campaign



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD Following Justice Babar Sattar's request, Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani has also written a letter to the Islamabad High Court chief justice requesting initiation of contempt proceedings over a malicious smear campaign being run against him on social media. According to sources, Justice

Kayani has forwarded his request to IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq. Sources say a bench is likely to be constituted based on the requests made by Justice Babar Sattar and Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani in response to the slur campaigns launched against them on social media platforms. On Monday, Justice Babar Sattar wrote a letter to the IHC chief justice to launch contempt proceedings against those who breached his and his family's privacy by sharing details, including their US residence permits, online.

Govt proposes increasing retirement age to 'lessen financial burden'

Finance minister hints at increasing tax rate to at least 14% to increase tax-to-GDP ratio



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb proposed on Tuesday raising the retirement age and restructuring pension payments to alleviate the financial strain on the economy. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad alongside Information Minister Attaullah Tarar and

Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar following a cabinet meeting, the minister stated that the country's economy was gradually stabilizing. Among the positive economic indicators outlined by the finance minister were foreign exchange reserves surpassing \$9 billion, currency stabilizing, and inflation decreasing to 17%

from 38%. He mentioned discussions with investors from the UK and Europe, upcoming IMF consultations, and plans for structural reforms including increasing the tax-to-GDP ratio by hiking the tax rate from 9% to 13% to 14%. The finance czar also mentioned addressing deficits in state-owned enterprises through privatization.

Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar following a cabinet meeting, the minister stated that the country's economy was gradually stabilizing. Among the positive economic indicators outlined by the finance minister were foreign exchange reserves surpassing \$9 billion, currency stabilizing, and inflation decreasing to 17%

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Nawaz Sharif files plea for acquittal in Toshakhana reference



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday filed a petition with an accountability court seeking acquittal in a reference regarding the acquisition of a vehicle from Toshakhana. Accountability court judge Nasir Javed Rana presided over the hearing on the Toshakhana vehicle reference against President Asif Ali Zardari and former prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Yousaf Raza Gilani. Advocate Arshad Traibraza appeared before the court on behalf of President Zardari, while PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif was represented by Advocate Rana Muhammad

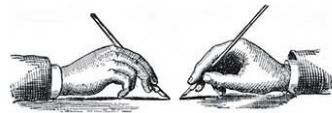
Irfan, who filed an acquittal plea in the reference on behalf of his client. During the hearing, judge Nasir Rana remarked that notices were issued to the parties on the plea of acquittal. Upon this, the NAB prosecutor said he would send the petition for requesting to the NAB headquarters, awaiting a short notice. The court has called arguments on Nawaz Sharif's acquittal plea on May 23. During the hearing, a request for exemption from attendance was filed by former prime minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, and the court accepted the request. Lawyer Arshad Traibraza told the court that President Zardari enjoyed presidential immunity, arguing that the case could not be proceeded. The accountability court adjourned the hearing on the reference related to Toshakhana vehicles.

Not going to impose governor's rule in KP: Faisal Karim Kundi



Soon Times Correspondent KARACHI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said on Tuesday governor's rule was not being imposed in the province. Speaking to media after visiting Mazar-e-Quaid in Karachi, Kundi said he would try to become voice of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "I will fight the case of people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Islamabad," he said. "If the chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa marches on Islamabad, he will go somewhere else. Such a stand should not be adopted to hide one's

incompetence and negligence," said Kundi. He said the KP chief minister had a clear majority, so why he was afraid of convening the assembly session. "You cannot take your right by taking to the streets. I will strengthen the case of provincial finance. I am ready to go to every political figure in the province for that purpose," Kundi added. He said serious people should come forward and hold negotiations. Kundi said he would not give a tough time to provincial government.



Pension reforms

Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Taron on Tuesday said that the government would introduce pension reforms to lessen the burden on economy. The structural reforms in the institutions were part of government's agenda as per the vision of the Prime Minister, he said, adding

that practical steps were need of hour for economic growth. The minister stated this while addressing a press conference here. He said that political and economic stability were interconnected, adding that the Parliament should also adopt the pension reforms unanimously.

The Parliament, he said, had introduced first legislation with regard to tax collection. Now it was an internationally admitted fact that only a country with economic stability would progress, he added. The minister said that a committee had been formed on pension reforms which would

view the different proposals regarding it. He said that the pension reforms would be implemented in every government institution across the board. Nothing was going on under the carpet, he said, adding that the decisions would be shared with the public.

INVENTION AND ROLE OF AI



Attaulah Musakhel

shows how creative the human mind is. A person can use AI to do any work with just one click, without having to think or come up with ideas. This means that people's creativity and efficiency are slowly going down. Deepfake is the worst thing that AI can do. The act of changing real movies and pictures to make fake content is illegal. This type of technology poses a significant risk to human safety. People also use voice clones to create fake sounds, which can damage someone's reputation. This technology targets celebrities and their families.

There are two kinds of AI: broad and specific. The way General AI thinks, cooks, travels, eats, and does all kinds of work is like the way a person does all those things. But a narrow AI can only do one thing. For example, if we download software to find cancer in hospitals, it will only find cancer percentages and not do any other job. At the moment, narrow AI is working on general AI. However, general AI will also change in the future. Banks, shopping malls, colleges, and more are already using AI, indicating its readiness to replace human programming jobs. In many countries, AI creates traffic cameras that kids use for school. Shortly, robots in workplaces will perform mundane tasks that AI will eventually replace. AI could also take over a lot of

white-collar jobs in accounting, healthcare marketing, law, catering, and other fields. While AI can do some of the things that humans do, it may not be able to fully replicate human judgment, creativity, and understanding in some situations. So, AI can help people in some areas, but it probably won't be able to do everything humans can do. AI has many perks, such as making things more efficient, lowering costs, and finding data. It can deal with huge amounts of data, which helps businesses make smarter choices in many areas. People and AI get along well with each other.

Artificial intelligence is like your best friend; it's always there to help you remember things like due dates or the best music to listen to. Siri is a virtual helper that Apple made. If you tell Siri to play a song, she will. Siri is an AI-powered voice-controlled helper that works with Apple products. Siri can also help you find the perfect music for your mood. The main point of this article, though, is that AI can do things that people can do, but it can't do everything because humans made AI, not the other way around. People can think, work, and do anything they want; they can also make new things. AI does specific tasks exactly as programmed, but shortly, it might be able to do some jobs that people used to do.

The Tragedy of the White Farsi Leopard



by Dr. Saba Anwer



In the remote and rugged terrain of Naani Mandar, Baluchistan, a tragic incident has sent shockwaves through the conservation community. The lifeless body of a rare and majestic white Farsi leopard was discovered, its once beautiful fur stripped from its body, a cruel and senseless act of illegal hunting. The white leopard, a creature of breathtaking beauty and rarity, was discovered lifeless in the mountains of Baluchistan. Its once magnificent fur, a source of envy and desire for poachers, had been callously stripped from its body. The sheer brutality of its death speaks volumes about the depths of human depravity and the disregard for the sanctity of life. One of the most tragic consequences of illegal hunting in Pakistan is the decline in the population of endangered and rare species. Take, for example, the case of the Markhor, Pakistan's national animal. Once abundant in the mountains of northern Pakistan, the Markhor is now on the verge of extinction due to overhunting and habitat loss. In 2018, a report by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) estimated that there were only around 5,754 Markhor left in the wild, with numbers continuing to decline. Similarly, the Chinkara, a species of gazelle native to Pakistan, is also facing a steep decline in numbers due to hunting and habitat destruction. In 2019, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) listed the Chinkara as a species of "least concern," indicating that it is at risk of becoming endangered if current trends continue. Despite being protected under the law, cases of peacock hunting continue to be reported across Pakistan. In 2020, for example, a case of peacock hunting was

reported in the Tharparkar district of Sindh province. According to reports, poachers had killed several peacocks for their feathers and meat, leading to outrage among conservationists and concerned citizens. The killing of peacocks for their feathers is particularly disturbing. Despite these challenges, there are signs of hope for the future of wildlife conservation in Baluchistan. Non-governmental organizations such as the Baluchistan Wildlife Conservation Society are working to raise awareness about the importance of protecting the province's natural heritage. By engaging with local communities, conducting research, and advocating for stronger conservation policies, these organizations are making a difference in the fight to save Baluchistan's wildlife. In Pakistan, weak hunting laws have contributed to the decline of several endangered species. The penalties for illegal hunting are often minimal, failing to serve as an effective deterrent. Poachers caught in the act are sometimes let off with minor fines, encouraging repeat offenses. Despite the existence of wildlife protection laws, enforcement is often lacking. This allows poachers to operate with impunity, contributing to the decline of vulnerable species. Trophy hunting permits are issued without adequate consideration for the long-term viability of the species. This has led to overhunting of species such as the markhor, putting their populations at risk. Weak

regulations create loopholes that facilitate the illegal trade of wildlife products. This includes the trafficking of animal parts such as skins, bones, and horns, further endangering already threatened species. Addressing these weaknesses in hunting legislation is crucial to protecting Pakistan's rich biodiversity and ensuring the survival of its endangered species. Stronger penalties, improved enforcement, and better regulation of trophy hunting are essential steps towards preserving the country's natural heritage. In Pakistan, the practice of hunting animals, both for sport and profit, has reached alarming levels, leading to a significant decline in purebred populations. Many other animals, including the Snow Leopard, Himalayan Brown Bear, and Indus River Dolphin, are also at risk due to hunting and habitat loss. As purebred populations dwindle, the genetic diversity of these species is also reduced, making them more susceptible to disease and environmental changes. This, in turn, has a ripple effect on the entire ecosystem, leading to further declines in biodiversity and ecosystem health. It is time for Pakistan to join the ranks of progressive nations that have banned hunting altogether. Countries like Kenya, Botswana, and India have recognized the importance of protecting their wildlife and have implemented strict bans on hunting. Pakistan must follow suit and take a stand against the senseless slaughter of its precious natural heritage.



Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan H.E. Yerzhan Kistafin called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja in Islamabad on May 7, 2024.



Commissioner orders disconnection of water & sewerage connections of non-paying government offices

Soon Times Correspondent
Sargodha:
Commissioner and Administrator Municipal Corporation Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti has given a one-week warning to the revenue officials making it clear that employees who do not achieve the target will not be tolerated any more and will be sent home. He has also ordered immediate disconnection of water and sewerage connections of non-paying government offices. These orders were issued by him in the conference room of his office on Tuesday in a meeting to review the

recovery of MC dues. Revenue staff including chief officer and municipal officers participated in the meeting. The Commissioner said that the collection of dues should be expedited and 100% collection should be ensured by the end of the current financial year. He directed to send bills every month while taking notice of sending water bills to consumers every three months. He said that the e-payment facility will also be provided soon along with sending the bills to the customers through the post office. He also ordered the building inspectors to survey all residential areas and immediately seal

units carrying out commercial activities without commercialization. He said that free IT and AI training is being conducted for MC employees on 25th and 26th of this month. The employees should master information technology to improve their performance. He said, work is also in progress to start e-parking system on important roads of the city. He congratulated the Head of Planning Branch and the team for achieving more than the target. Data of collection of water, sewerage, encroachment fines and map fee so far were presented in the meeting.

We have asked to form an Election Commission to conduct elections: Kapoor

Soon Times Correspondent
Sargodha:
Those claiming to hold elections by placing boxes in Kachchri Bazar Chowk are running away from the elections. We have asked several times to form an Election Commission to conduct elections in Sargodha Chamber of Commerce, but our opponents are not ready to agree. These views were expressed by Naem Kapoor, the candidate for the President of Central Association of Traders (Markazi Anjuman-e-Tajirun), District Sargodha. He said that elections are the need of the hour. Naem Kapoor said that there is only one question by businessmen to them who went to participate in politics leaving the businessmen helpless for their own interests. They are not entertained by the



political party so they are now dreaming of taking revenge on the businessmen. Traders are now savvy and understand their moves well.

Saudi trade delegation's visit significant headway in bilateral ties: PM

■ KSA dignitaries hailed preparedness and confidence exhibited by federal ministers and officials, Shehbaz tells cabinet



Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD:
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday hailed the recent visit of a Saudi investment delegation to Islamabad as a significant milestone in strengthening the ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Chairing a federal cabinet meeting, the prime minister commended the dedication of federal ministers, government officials, and staff for ensuring the success of the Saudi delegation's visit, according to a press release issued by the PM office. During the meeting, Prime Minister Shehbaz highlighted the positive

feedback received from the Saudi business delegation regarding the preparedness and confidence exhibited by the federal ministers and government team members. He added such commendation bodes well for the future of the country. Reflecting on his interactions with the Saudi delegation during a dinner reception, the prime minister expressed immense pleasure at the unprecedented appreciation conveyed by the head of the Saudi delegation. He pledged to convene a separate meeting to personally acknowledge the efforts of cabinet members and government officials who contributed to the success of the visit. The prime minister shared that the head of the Saudi delegation, acknowledging the

intelligence and education of the Pakistani officials, lauded their presence, guidance, presentations, and follow-ups during the meetings. The Saudi delegation expressed satisfaction with their visit, noting a promising new chapter in Pakistan's development. In recognition of the collective efforts, Prime Minister Shehbaz congratulated the cabinet members and federal secretaries, noting that the positive feedback from the Saudi delegation brought joy not only to him but to the entire nation. During the meeting, the federal cabinet, following the Ministry of Aviation's recommendation, approved Air Sial's flight operations to destinations including China, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, the UK, and Kuwait, in line with the National Aviation Policy 2023 and Air Services Agreement. Furthermore, the cabinet endorsed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Joint Trade Committee between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Colombia. Additionally, it approved the transfer of the Directorate General of Special Education from the Ministry of Human Rights to the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. The cabinet also ratified decisions regarding Chinese investment projects made in the Cabinet committee meeting held on April 30, 2024.

We fully support the press briefing of DG ISRP: Chishti

Soon Times Correspondent
Nowshera Soon Sakasr:
Religious, spiritual and political personality Abul Hamid Pir Muhammad Ameer Sultan Chishti has said that we fully support the press briefing of DG ISRP General Ahmed Sharif and stand with Pakistan Army. We strongly condemn all forms of terrorism. Individuals and groups who speak, write and agitate against the Pakistan Army are enemies of the ideology of Pakistan and Islam. He said that our forefathers made Pakistan so we are ready to make every sacrifice to save it. Whether they are suicide bombers or are doing terrorism in Pakistan in any other way, they are the tools of anti-Islam forces. On this occasion, he directed the attention of the officers and senior officials of the state institutions to



the Afghans and said that they should be confined to the camps.

Regional passport offices in Lahore, Karachi begin round-the-clock operations



Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE
In compliance with directives from the Ministry of Interior, one passport office in both Lahore and Karachi will operate round the clock. As per a notification issued by the ministry, the regional passport office in Garden Town, Lahore, will remain open to the public 24/7, while in Karachi, the regional passport office at Avami Markaz will be operational 24 hours a day. Services will be provided to the public in three shifts at these regional offices. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday announced via a social media post on X that this initiative would make access to passport office facilities easier and more convenient for citizens at any time.

PTI founder declines to meet Sher Afzal Marwat

Soon Times Correspondent
RAWALPINDI
The PTI founder declined to meet Sher Afzal Marwat, as his name was not included in the list of scheduled meetings provided by the founder himself. Tuesday's list of meetings was provided by the PTI founder, who is currently incarcerated in Adiala Jail. It's worth mentioning that a prearranged list is provided in advance for meetings with the PTI founder in jail.



Minister for intensifying crackdown on overbilling, power pilferage



Investigation Agency's (FIA) Lahore office to review progress on action against overbilling and electricity theft, the minister stated that zero-tolerance policy would be adopted regarding overbilling. Naqvi underscored the need for impartial action against officers who burden citizens through overbilling. He said it was preferable to provide relief to electricity consumers in cases of overbilling. The minister ordered to continue the crackdown on electricity thieves, directing officials to take indiscriminate action against government officials involved in electricity theft.

Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE
Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday issued orders for expediting crackdown on overbilling and electricity theft. Chairing a meeting at the Federal

Thunderstorms, duststorms likely to hit 'upper parts of country this weekend'

Soon Times Correspondent
Islamabad
As many areas are experiencing extremely hot weather conditions, upper parts of the country are likely to receive rain-dust storms and thunderstorms this weekend under the influence of a westerly system which is entering western parts on May 10 and expected to bring wet spells on May 11 (Saturday). However, day temperatures would rise due to high pressure in the upper atmosphere in most parts of the country, particularly in the southern half of the country, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said on Tuesday. According to the weatherman, continental air is prevailing over most parts of the country while mainly hot and dry weather is expected which would increase mercury gradually in plain areas. The highest maximum temperature was recorded in Jacobabad 46°C and 25°C in Mohenjodaro and Dadu, yesterday.

A weather analyst also predicted the prevalence of heatwave in the port city for the entire week and temperature will vary between 35°C and 37°C which could further rise this weekend by 40°C. In the latest development, the PMD released a province-wise weather forecast today, predicting dust storms and thunderstorms in upper parts following a westerly wave likely to enter the country on May 10 evening. Balochistan Day temperatures are likely to remain 3-5°C above normal from 8th to 10th May. Rain-dust storms and thunderstorms are expected in Quetta, Zhob, Ziarat, Barkhan, Kalat, Khuzdar, Qilla Saifullah, Kohlu and Mastung on 10th (evening/night) and 11th of this month. The same weather conditions are also expected in Kharan, Chagai and Panjgur during the period. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Day temperatures are likely to remain 2-3°C above normal from 8th to 10th.

Rain-dust storms and thunderstorms are expected in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Matakand, Waziristan, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Bajaur, Mohmand, Karak, Khyber, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi, Mardan and Kurram from 10th (night) to 12th (morning). Hailstorm is also expected at isolated places during the period. Gilgit Baltistan/Kashmir Day temperatures are likely to remain 3-5°C above normal from 8th to 10th May. Rain-wind and thunderstorm are expected in Gilgit Baltistan's Diamir, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche, Shigar. Subsequently, in Kashmir, the same weather conditions are predicted in Neelum Valley, Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot, Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bhimber, Mirpur on May 11 and 12.

Hapless farmers still await govt nod for wheat purchase

Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE
The government has failed to provide gunny bags to farmers and purchase their wheat even after more than two-week standoff. The government had announced that it would provide bardana (gunny bags) and purchase wheat from 119,000 registered farmers but the announcement could not be materialised. Sources said the farmers were forced to sell off their produce at throwaway price between Rs2,800 and Rs3,300 per maund. They said the flour millers were buying and storing the wheat. According to the government announcement, the bardana distribution was to start on April 20 but the farmers are still awaiting it.



Meanwhile, Pakistan Kissan Ittehad president Khalid Hussain said the government had not honored its promises with the farmers. Food Minister Bilal Yasin said there was a stock of 2.3 million metric tons of wheat in Punjab which was enough for the whole year. He said wheat was unnecessarily imported in the interim set-up, creating a crisis for the farmers.



Israeli forces seize Rafah border crossing in Gaza, putting cease-fire talks on knife's edge



CAIRO
Israeli tanks seized control of Gaza's vital Rafah border crossing on Tuesday as Israel brushed off urgent warnings from close allies and moved into the southern city even as cease-fire negotiations with Hamas remained on a knife's edge.

The foray came after hours of whiplash in the Israeli-Hamas war, with the militant group on Monday saying it accepted an Egyptian-Qatari mediated cease-fire proposal. Israel, however, insisted the deal did not meet its core demands.

The high-stakes diplomatic moves and military brinkmanship left a glimmer of hope alive — if only barely — for an accord that could bring at least a pause in the 7-month-old war that has devastated the Gaza Strip.

India votes in third phase of elections as Modi escalates rhetoric against Muslims



NEW DELHI
Millions of Indian voters across 93 constituencies were casting ballots on Tuesday as Prime Minister Narendra Modi mounted an increasingly shrill election campaign, ramping up polarizing rhetoric in incendiary speeches that have targeted the Muslim minority.

In recent campaign rallies, Modi has called Muslims "infiltrators" and said they "have too many children," referring to a Hindu nationalist trope that Muslims produce more children with the aim of outnumbering Hindus in India. He has also accused the rival Indian National Congress party of scheming to "loot" wealth from the country's Hindus and redistribute it among Muslims.



HRW: Israel attack on Lebanon rescuers was 'unlawful'

The Israel-Lebanon border area has witnessed near-daily exchanges since Oct. 7 war in Gaza

BEIRUT
Human Rights Watch said on Tuesday an Israeli strike in Lebanon that killed seven first responders was "an unlawful attack on civilians", and urged Washington to suspend weapons sales to Israel.

The Israel-Lebanon border area has witnessed near-daily exchanges between the Israeli army and Hamas ally Hezbollah since the Palestinian militant group attacked southern Israel on October 7, sparking war in Gaza. "An Israeli strike on an emergency and relief centre" in the southern village of Habariyeh on March 27 "killed seven emergency and relief volunteers" and constituted an "unlawful attack on civilians that failed to take all necessary precautions", HRW said in a statement.

"If an attack on civilians was carried out intentionally or recklessly, it should be investigated as an apparent war crime," it added.

But at the time the military said the target was "a military compound" and that the strike killed a "significant terrorist operative" from Jamaa Islamiya, a Lebanese group close to Hamas, and other "terrorists".

Putin begins his fifth term as president, more in control of Russia than ever

NEW YORK
President Vladimir Putin began his fifth term at a glittering Kremlin inauguration Tuesday, embarking on another six years as leader of Russia after destroying his political opponents, launching a devastating war in Ukraine and concentrating all power in his hands.

At the ceremony inside the gilded Grand Kremlin Palace, Putin placed his hand on the Russian Constitution and vowed to defend it as a crowd of hand-picked dignitaries looked on. "We are a united and great people and together we will overcome all obstacles, realize all our plans, together we will win," Putin said after being sworn in.

Since succeeding President Boris Yeltsin in the waning hours of 1999, Putin has transformed Russia from a country emerging from economic collapse to a pariah state that threatens global security. Following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine that has become Europe's biggest conflict since World War II, Russia has been heavily sanctioned by the West and is turning to other regimes like China, Iran and North Korea for support.

Already in office for nearly a quarter-century



and the longest-serving Kremlin leader since Josef Stalin, Putin's new term doesn't expire until 2030, when he will be constitutionally eligible to run again.

In a heavily choreographed performance, Putin was pictured in his office looking at his papers before walking along the Kremlin's long corridors, pausing at one point to look at a painting on the way to his inauguration.

His guard of honor waited in the sleet and rain for hours, in temperatures hovering just above freezing, while Putin made the brief journey to the Grand Kremlin Palace.

Ukraine foils Russian assassination plot targeting Zelensky



Web Desk
Ukraine on Tuesday announced that it had detained two Ukrainian security officials involved in a plot coordinated by Russia to assassinate senior Ukrainian officials, including President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Two colonels in the State Guard of Ukraine, which protects top officials, were detained on suspicion of enacting the plan drawn up by Russia's Federal Security Service, a statement said. The colonels were recruited before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, according to the statement.

It quoted the head of the State Security Service, Vasyl Maluk, as saying the plot foresaw an attack ahead of Russian President Vladimir Putin's inauguration for a fifth term Tuesday. Maluk said he oversaw the top-secret operation to track the plot.

Zelensky has been targeted by Russia on multiple occasions, including at the beginning of the Russian invasion in February 2022, according to Kyiv.

In the latest assassination plot, Ukrainian security officials said Russia had worked to identify individuals close to Zelensky's security detail who could take the Ukrainian leader hostage and kill him.

The two Ukrainian colonels were arrested on suspicion of treason, which carries a life sentence, the statement said.

Polish and Ukrainian prosecutors announced last month they had detained a man suspected of aiding a Russian assassination plot on Zelensky.

Last August, the SBU said a woman had been arrested over a plot to kill the Ukrainian leader by trying to uncover details of his movements outside Kyiv.

Related Topics

Sports & Showbiz News



Babar Azam on verge of surpassing Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma in T20I cricket



Sports Desk
Pakistan skipper Babar Azam is on the verge of achieving another milestone in T20I cricket, which will help him surpass India's Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma.

Babar currently has 3,823 runs in T20I cricket and is third on the list of most runs in the shortest format of the game. Most runs in T20I cricket: Virat Kohli: 4,037 (109 innings) Rohit Sharma: 3,974 (143) Babar Azam: 3,823 (107)

Pakistan will play a total of seven T20Is against Ireland and England this month, which provides a great opportunity for Babar to overtake the

Indian duo.
Babar needs only 151 runs to equal the runs scored by Sharma, whereas 215 runs will take him past Kohli.

Earlier today, the Pakistan team left for Dublin, Ireland, from Lahore via Dubai.

Pakistan team will play three T20Is in Ireland, followed by four in England. After the England series, Pakistan will leave for the United States to feature in the T20 World Cup. The 18-player squad, which was announced for Ireland and England T20Is, will be reduced to 15 players for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 after the first T20I against England on May 22.



Crisis-hit Bayern banking on Kane and victory to change the narrative

Berlin
Six-time Champions League winners Bayern Munich head into Wednesday's second semi-final at Real Madrid ever more reliant on striker Harry Kane amid swirling off-field crises entirely of their own making.

Bayern still do not have a coach lined up for next season, with reports emerging on Monday that Julien Lopetegui became the latest to knock back the German giants, with the Spaniard choosing West Ham instead.

Bayern drew 2-2 at home against Real in the first leg and need a win to progress to Wembley, the site of their famous victory over rivals Borussia Dortmund in 2013.

With Dortmund 1-0 up heading to their second semi-final at Paris Saint-Germain, a repeat of the all-German final is on the cards.

Even just appearing in a Champions League final, let alone winning a seventh crown, would change the narrative surrounding Bayern's disappointing season.

Kane, famously still without a team trophy despite a decade collecting

individual honours, left Tottenham for the stability of serial winners Bayern last summer.

Bayern's stumbles and Bayer Leverkusen's incredible unbeaten season under Xabi Alonso ended the Bavarians' 11-year Bundesliga title streak in April.

Bayern's elimination in the German Cup at the hands of third-tiered Saarbrücken -- with Kane on the bench throughout -- meant that the Champions League was their only chance of a trophy this season.

While that looked unlikely when Bayern lost 1-0 at Lazio in the last 16th leg -- with coach Thomas Tuchel agreeing to leave the club just days later -- the German behemoths are just one win away from a 12th Champions League final.

But while the club and their hierarchy continue to suffer from self-inflicted wounds on and off the pitch, Kane is reliably carrying them to within touching distance of a Wembley return and a possible seventh crown.

Nadia Afgan, Behroze Sabzwari stress quality showbiz



(Web Desk) Behroze Sabzwari and Nadia Afgan on a show have stressed the need for professionalism and dedication in showbiz.

To a question, Behroze said he did not think young actors meet quality and standards of acting.

"The overall standards in Pakistan are subpar, making it challenging for actors to meet expectations," he said.

He highlighted the significance of education in developing basic ethics, which is lacking in the country.

Nadia Afgan said, "Discipline, dedication, and practice are essential for success."

"Young actors seem unaware of their lines and are reluctant to rehearse. They even ask colleagues for assistance."

MLS must attract best players to grow: Infantino

Los Angeles
FIFA president Gianni Infantino said Monday Major League Soccer needs to sign more top players in order to boost the profile of the sport in the United States.

Infantino, speaking at a conference in Los Angeles, said he told MLS officials recently that bringing in the world's best players would take football to the next level.

"I told them you have to be a bit more bold, a bit more in the game," Infantino said at the Milken Institute Global Conference. "Bringing in the best players," Infantino said Inter Miami's signing of Lionel Messi, and the club's acquisition of other big-name players such as Luis Suarez and Sergio Busquets, had proven the demand for top talent among US fans. The FIFA chief alluded to the record 65,612 crowd who flocked to the New England Revolution's recent home game against Miami at Gillette Stadium, home of the NFL's New England Patriots.

"The Messi effect" if we want to call it that way, you see Messi and Inter Miami filling stadiums, and not MLS stadiums but NFL stadiums," Infantino said. MLS salary and roster restrictions mean that teams are unable to spend freely when it comes to signing top players. However the league has faced growing



calls -- not least from broadcast partner Apple TV -- to relax those rules in order to enable clubs to target more top talent.

Infantino said bringing in top talent would ultimately reap dividends at grass roots level in North America, encouraging young players to believe they could forge a career in soccer.

"We want to see the best so we need to bring them the best players, but also the best game, and the best spectacle," Infantino said.

"For this we need to invest in the players because we want to show to the kids who play soccer when they are at school or when they are very young, that there is a path in soccer to glory to become one of these world stars."