

News in brief

◆ **Prince Harry and his wife** Meghan Markle have been invited to King Charles III's landmark coronation in May but are yet to decide whether to attend, reports said yesterday. The California-based couple, who quit the British monarchy in 2020 amid growing internal tensions, "recently received email correspondence from His Majesty's office regarding the coronation", a spokesperson for them told Britain's Sunday Times. "An immediate decision on whether the Duke and Duchess [of Sussex] will attend will not be disclosed by us at this time," their representative added, using their formal titles. Buckingham Palace declined to comment.



Harry and Meghan invited to Charles' coronation

◆ **An exchange** of fire along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region in the Caucasus left at least three dead on Sunday, officials said. The countries have fought two wars that claimed thousands of lives for the control of Azerbaijan's Armenian-populated enclave of Karabakh. "A sabotage group of the Azerbaijani armed forces opened fire on the car of a Passport and Visa Department of the police... three police officers were killed," pro-Armenian separatist authorities said Sunday. Azerbaijan's defence ministry denied that version and said its forces were trying to stop vehicles carrying weapons when "Azerbaijani servicemen were fired at, as a result of the exchange of fire on both sides there are dead and wounded."

Azerbaijan-Armenia border clash kills three

◆ **Estonians were** voting yesterday for a new parliament in an election that could strengthen far-right nationalists, who have campaigned against further arms deliveries to Ukraine. Prime Minister Kaja Kallas's centre-right Reform Party is predicted to win by the opinion polls, but will likely have to form a coalition to hang on to power. The party is expected to garner 24% to 30% of votes, according to final polls during the week. The far-right EKRE was predicted to take second place with 14-25%. The Centre Party was on 16-19% and Estonia 200 between nine and 15%.



Estonians go to the polls with parties split over Ukraine aid

◆ **China said yesterday** its military spending would rise at the fastest pace in four years, warning of "escalating" threats from abroad at a meeting of its rubber-stamp parliament that is set to hand Xi Jinping a third term as president. The increase in the world's second-largest defence budget came as Beijing announced an economic growth goal of around five percent for this year -- one of its lowest in decades. The country's planned budgets for the year put defence spending at 1.55 trillion yuan (\$225 billion), a 7.2 percent rise and the quickest rate of increase since 2019. It officially rose 7.1 percent last year.

China increases military spending

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

500-year-old spices found on Baltic shipwreck



A jar containing saffron preserved in water. Courtesy of Reuters

TDT | agencies

A unique collection of well-preserved spices, ranging from saffron and peppercorns to ginger, has been discovered on the wreckage of a royal ship that sank off Sweden's Baltic coast over 500 years ago, Reuters reported. The spices were found buried in the silt of the Gribshunden, a ship owned by King Hans of Denmark and Norway that caught fire and sank in 1495 while the monarch attended a political meeting ashore in Sweden. The discovery was made during an excavation led by Brendan Foley, an archaeological scientist at Lund University, after sporadic dives had recovered other items such as figureheads and timber from the wreckage.

"The Baltic is strange - it's low oxygen, low temperature, low salinity, so many organic things are well preserved in the Baltic where they wouldn't be well preserved elsewhere in the world ocean system," said Foley. "But to find spices like this is quite extraordinary." The spices would have been considered a symbol of high status, as they were expensive and imported from outside Europe, making them a luxury that only the wealthy could afford. The spices would have been on board the ship as King Hans made his way to Sweden for the meeting, and their discovery sheds light on the ship's historical significance. Lund University researcher Mikael Larsson described the find as "very unique and very special" since this is the only archaeological context where saffron has been found.

Pakistan police attempt to arrest former Imran Khan

AFP | Lahore, Pakistan

Police in Pakistan said officers attempted yesterday to arrest former prime minister Imran Khan, who is battling several legal cases as he pressures the government for early elections.

Officers from the capital, Islamabad, arrived at Khan's home in the eastern city of Lahore, which was surrounded by hundreds of his supporters, but were unable to carry out the arrest.

"A team of Islamabad police has arrived in Lahore to arrest Imran Khan to comply with the court orders," Islamabad police said in a tweet.

"Imran Khan is reluctant to surrender -- the Superintendent of Police had gone into the room but Imran Khan was not present there."

The arrest warrant was issued after Khan failed to appear in court in a corruption case on February 28.

Khan is accused of failing to declare gifts received during his time in office or the profit made from selling them.

Government officials must declare all gifts but are allowed to keep those below a certain value.

Khan later spoke to party workers in his Zaman Park house in Lahore, where police remained outside.

"I am being summoned in fake cases and the nation should know about them," he said.



A supporter of former Pakistan's prime minister Imran Khan, stands guard outside his house in Lahore



Supporters of former Pakistan's prime minister Imran Khan chant slogans outside his house in Lahor

"It will be a bad omen for the country if the nation does not stand against the corrupt rulers."

The vice chairman of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, earlier told reporters in Lahore: "We have received the notice from Islamabad police -- the notice does not contain any order for the arrest."

"We will consult our lawyers and follow the legal process."

Pakistan's courts are often used to tie up lawmakers in tedious and long-winded proceedings that rights monitors have criticised for stifling political opposition.

Khan, who was shot in the leg during a rally last year, has attempted to disrupt politics in the South Asian nation since he was forced out of office in a no-confidence vote in April.

He has been pushing for early polls due no later than October by holding protests, pulling out of parliament and dissolving the two provincial assemblies his party controls in a bid to force the government's hand. The nation of more than 220 million is in dire economic straits with runaway inflation, scant foreign exchange reserves and stalling bailout talks with the International Monetary Fund.

To pull the country out of its spiral, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is battling to revive the next tranche of a \$6.5 billion loan deal sketched with the IMF in 2019.

Toll from Azerbaijan-Armenia border clash rises to five

AFP | Yerevan, Armenia

An exchange of fire along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region in the Caucasus left at least five dead on Sunday, officials said.

The countries have fought two wars that claimed thousands of lives for the control of Azerbaijan's Armenian-populated enclave of Karabakh. "A sabotage group of the Azerbaijani armed forces opened fire on the car of a Passport and Visa Department of the



EU monitors visit Gegharkunik region. Courtesy of the Armenian Mirror

police... three police officers were killed," pro-Armenian separatist authorities said Sunday. Azerbaijan's defence ministry denied that version, saying its forces were trying to stop vehicles carrying weapons when "Azerbaijani servicemen were fired at,

as a result of the exchange of fire on both sides there are dead and wounded."

It later said that two of its servicemen "became martyrs".

Armenia's foreign ministry said Azerbaijan's version was "absurd" and resulted from a "provocation planned in advance and instructed by the top leadership".

There has been a fragile truce between the neighbours since a 2020 war that left more than 6,500 dead and forced Armenia to cede territories it had controlled for decades.

Prince Harry says always felt 'different'

London, United Kingdom

Prince Harry reportedly revealed he has long felt "slightly different" to the rest of Britain's royal family in an interview on Saturday with a trauma expert.

In a wide-ranging discussion with Dr Gabor Mate, Harry, 38, described himself as coming from a "broken home" and said he was trying not to pass "trauma" onto his children, according to reports of the live-streamed conversation.

The interview follows the January publication of the prince's controversial memoir, "Spare", in which he admitted his adolescence was marked by drugs and



Meghan, Duchess of Sussex and Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex

alcohol and detailed the breakdown in his relationships with father King Charles III, and brother William.

"I certainly have felt throughout my life, my younger years, I felt slightly different to the rest of my family," Harry told Mate, according to numerous media reports on the interview.

"I felt strange being in this container, and I know that my mum felt the same so it makes sense to me," he added, referring to his late mother Princess Diana.

Harry went on to credit his wife Meghan Markle for having "saved" him.

"I was stuck in this world, and she was from a different world and helped draw me out of that," he said, describing her as "an exceptional human being".

During the conversation, Mate