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Serena Williams' career at crossroads

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Briefs

US Assistant Secretary in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: United States Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Todd D. Robinson will travel to Pakistan from June 29 - July 2 to discuss international law enforcement and counternarcotics initiatives. During his stay in Pakistan, Assistant Secretary Robinson will meet with senior government officials to discuss U.S.-Pakistan cooperation on various topics, including counternarcotics, gender issues, transnational crime, and border security, said a press release issued here by U.S Embassy in Pakistan. - APP

Assembly no longer independent

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former information minister Fawad Chaudhry on Wednesday claimed there were reports that the National Assembly was being run on "phone calls" which he described as an "anomaly" in the country. Fawad was referring to comments made by Aslam Bhootani, an independent MNA from Gwadar, during the budget debate in the NA earlier this week. Fawad claimed that the assembly was no longer independent as its "biased" speaker was running a "biased" session.

PTI behind my defeat in 2018 election

DNA

MULTAN: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice Chairman and former Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Wednesday while lashing out at PTI said he was defeated in the 2018 election because his party hatched a conspiracy against him. Addressing the by-poll campaign meeting in PP-217 Multan, Qureshi said that he categorically told PTI chairman Imran Khan that the reason behind his defeat in the 2018 election was his party. "If I had won the 2018 election then the situation in Punjab would not be the same as it is today."

NA approves budget for FY 2022-23

Miftah says govt has no intention of imposing Rs50 per litre PDL

SHUJAAT HAMZA /DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Wednesday passed the Finance Bill, 2022, in the absence of typical shouts of protest from the Opposition, bringing the government closer to fulfilling the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) requirement for the revival of the much-needed loan programme. The government presented the budget for the fiscal year 2022-23 on June 10 with a fiscal adjustment of Rs1.25 trillion, but the money lender did not accept it, leaving Pakistan with no other choice but to make further amendments. Then on June 24, Finance Minister Miftah Ismail announced additional taxes that are expected to generate Rs466 billion, which helped the government reach an understanding with the IMF for the bailout package. The measures included bringing down the income tax slab for people earning from Rs50,000 to Rs100,000. They will be taxed at 2.5% and the rate moves up for the ones earning higher. The government also agreed to the Fund's demand of imposing a 1% poverty tax on companies earning Rs150 million,

Continued on Page 06

New visa regime to benefit Central Asia: PM

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said the easy visa regime for Afghan nationals would bring the two countries closer and attract business from Central Asia. "This facilitation in the visa regime is aimed at bringing both countries closer, helping Afghan people, and attracting business and investment from wider Central Asian region," he said in a tweet. The prime minister mentioned that he had directed the Interior Ministry to work on a more liberal visa policy. He said the federal cabinet had approved changes in the visa regime for Afghan nationals. "Now our embassies will process their visa applications on the basis of their current nationality," he said. PM Sharif said the Afghan drivers and transporters would get multiple visas within 48 hours for a period of up to one year.

Punjab CM election: Court verdict today

Court wonders if SC's 63-A ruling could apply in 'present circumstances'

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday said it would look at the Punjab chief minister election and see if the Supreme Court's interpretation on Article 63-A could apply in the present circumstances as it resumed hearing the pleas of PTI, PML-Q and Punjab Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Parvez Elahi against Hamza Shehbaz's elevation to the role. A five-member

Continued on Page 06

Maryam to lead by-polls campaign

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) vice president Maryam Nawaz will lead the party's elections campaign ahead of the July 17 by-elections in Punjab's 20

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE Hamad Obaid Al-Zaabi presenting a souvenir to Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman. - DNA



RAWALPINDI: Bernhard Stephan Schlagheck, German Ambassador to Pakistan paid a farewell call to General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ. - DNA

Zil Hajj moon not sighted

Eid ul Adha will be celebrated on July 10

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Zilhajj moon has not been sighted and Eidul Adha will fall on July 10 (Sunday), Central Ruet-i-Hilal Committee Chairman Maulana Abdul Khabeer Azad announced on Wednesday evening. Addressing a press conference in Karachi, he said: "No testimony of the moon being sighted was received from any part of Pakistan." Therefore, Maulana Azad said, it was decided with a unanimous consensus that Eidul Adha would be celebrated on July 10. "May God grant the blessings of the upcoming days to the entire Islamic world and this beloved country of mine," he said. Azad stressed that a message of unity should be taken forward. The chairman then held prayers for peace and stability in the country.

UAE envoy calls on Climate Minister

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday called for activating the bilateral memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Pakistan and United Arab Emirates (UAE) on environment to promote unified climate change mitigation efforts. The minister was expressing her views during a call on paid by the UAE Ambassador here at the Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC), said a news release. The minister discussed the issues of mutual interest between the two countries. She also congratulated the

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan values relations with Germany: COAS

German envoy Bernhard Schlagheck pays farewell visit to Army Chief

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: German Ambassador Bernhard Stephan Schlagheck on Wednesday paid a farewell call to Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa here at General Headquarters (GHQ). During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, overall regional situation, bilateral cooperation in various fields were discussed, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) media release. The COAS said Pakistan attached great importance to its relations with Germany. He thanked the visiting dignitary for his services and appreciated his contributions for fostering strong ties between the two countries and support towards defence and security cooperation. The visiting dignitary acknowledged Pakistan's continuous efforts for peace and stability in the region and pledged to play his role to further enhance co-

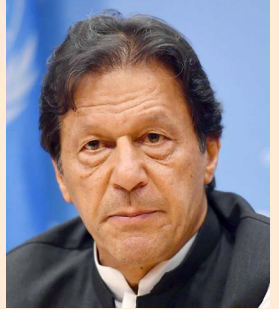
operation between both countries. Earlier this month, the German Ambassador said that the German government wants Indian authorities to keep in mind that human rights of the Kashmiri people must not be violated. Former German chancellor Angela Merkel had told Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the situation in Kashmir was not sustainable and human rights must be respected without discrimination, he added. Regarding the generalised scheme of preferences (GSP+) status for Pakistan, the validity of which will expire in the last quarter of 2023, Mr Schlagheck said a European Union (EU) delegation would arrive in Pakistan next week to review the situation. "This is a new mission from Brussels. The outcome will be positive but there are certain practical steps that Pakistan has to take. While the country signed all the relevant conventions but the implementation process should be visible," he said.

Imran announces 'biggest Jalsa' in Capital's history

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said on Wednesday that his party will hold the biggest public gathering in the history of Islamabad on July 2, media reported. Addressing the workers' convention in Islamabad, the PTI chairman reiterated that he was removed from office as a result of a "foreign conspiracy." "Corrupt people have been imposed on us. The imposed government has been stealing from the public for 30 years," he said. Criticising the PML-N leadership, Imran Khan added that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his son Chief Minister Hamza Shehbaz are involved in corruption cases worth Rs24 billion. The PTI chief lambasted the government for skyrocketing inflation, saying that they had only come into power to shut down their cases. "With amendments in the NAB laws, they have eliminated corruption cases worth Rs1,100 billion," he noted. Imran Khan said that his government never shifted

the burden of global inflation to the people despite the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s tough conditions and a weak economy. "Those who held inflation march against the PTI government have induced historic inflation as they stepped into power," he said. Earlier, former federal minister and PTI Central Secretary General Asad Umar said that the incumbent government is showing reluctance in allowing the PTI to hold jalsa at Parade Ground, Islamabad, on July 2. In a statement, Asad Umar said that the 'imported' coalition government was afraid of former prime minister Imran Khan's popularity among the people of Pakistan. Asad Umar further said that the 'imported' rulers are afraid of elections and protest rallies.



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Hindu tailor murdered in India over blasphemy

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: Two Muslim men have been arrested in India's Udaipur city in the western state of Rajasthan for allegedly beheading a Hindu tailor over his support online for a former ruling party official whose remarks about Prophet Muhammad sparked global protests. Mobile internet services and large gatherings remained restricted in Udaipur on Wednesday, a day after the murder of Kanhaiya Lal. Lal was stabbed multiple times inside his tailoring shop on Tuesday by the two cleaver-wielding men who also filmed the attack. The duo accused Lal of blasphemy in the video. The two men later claimed responsibility for the killing in another video and allegedly threatened to kill Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the same manner. TV reports aired video of Lal lying on the ground with his throat slit. The accused were arrested within hours of the incident as they were trying to flee

Indian attempts to malign Pak rejected

ALI FURQAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday rejected the Indian attempts to malign it by linking the Indian nationals accused of a murder in Udaipur city to a Pakistani organization. "We have seen reports in a segment of the Indian media referring to investigations into the murder case in Udaipur, mischievously seeking to link the accused individuals, Indian nationals, to an organization in Pakistan," the

city on motorcycles, reports said. "Both the accused in the killing have been arrested and we will ensure strict punishment and speedy justice," Ashok

Foreign Office spokesperson said in a statement. He said Pakistan categorically rejected any such insinuations, which were typical of the BJP-RSS (Bharatiya Janata Party - Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) 'Hindutva' driven Indian regime's attempts at maligning Pakistan, including by externalizing their internal issues through pointing of fingers towards Pakistan. Such malicious attempts would not succeed in misleading the people, either in India or abroad, the spokesperson added.

Gehlot, chief minister of Rajasthan, said on Twitter. Gehlot appealed to people to stay calm and not share the video as it would "serve the attackers' motive of

creating discord in society". Authorities rushed additional police into Udaipur on Tuesday to counter any religious unrest. "We are under strict orders to prevent any form of protests or demonstrations scheduled to condemn the murder," Hawa Singh Ghumaria, a senior police officer told media, adding that the crime had sent "shockwaves through the country". Asaduddin Owaisi, a member of parliament, condemned the murder. "One cannot take law in their own hands. It is a horrible thing to do. It's inhuman," he told media. Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, a Muslim religious organisation, said the Udaipur incident is "barbaric, uncivilized and there is no room for justification of violence in Islam". "We strongly condemn it. No citizen should take law in his own hands. Let the law prevail," the organisation posted on Twitter. Critics accuse Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of marginalising the Muslim community and sewing divisions with the Hindus since he came to power in 2014. Rajasthan, a state governed by the opposition Congress party, saw tensions last

month as well when Hindus and Muslims in Jodhpur city clashed during religious festivals of both the communities. In 2017, a Hindu man in Rajasthan brutally killed a Muslim labourer in a religious attack and shared a video of the victim being hacked to death and then set on fire. According to local media, Lal had shared a social media post 10 days ago supporting Nupur Sharma, the suspended spokeswoman for the BJP who made controversial remarks on the Prophet Muhammad and his wife on a TV show in May. Another BJP official, Naveen Kumar Jindal, supported Sharma's statements and made more anti-Islam remarks in his tweets, sparking a furor in India and many Muslim nations. The BJP, in a damage control mode, suspended Sharma, expelled Jindal and issued a rare statement, saying it "respects all religions". The controversy led to nationwide protests in India which turned violent in some places. At least two people were killed in police firing and many houses of Muslims were bulldozed by the authorities.

Transformation of digital technology, MOU signed

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: As an important development towards digital transformation in the province, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government through Science & Technology and Information Technology department, has signed agreements with the various institutions/ organizations for five important Information Technology initiatives based projects including Establishment of Citizen Facilitation Centres, Nano Degree Program for imparting digital skills to the youth, Paperless Government Program, Establishment of Digital City Haripur and Science & Technology Museum Mardan. These projects would be completed at a total estimated cost of Rs.6 billion.

The contract signing ceremony was held here on Wednesday with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan as chief guest whereas provincial cabinet members Muhammad Atif Khan, Shahram Khan Tarakai, Taimur Saleem Jhagra, Anwar Zeb, Akbar Ayub, Mohibullah, Chief Secretary Dr. Shehzad Bangash, Additional Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, representatives from concerned partner organizations and officials of concerned departments attended the ceremony.

In order to establish Citizen Facilitation Centres in the province, an agreement was signed with NADRA through which Citizen Facilitation Centres would be established at seven divisional headquarters of the province in the

first phase and extended to other districts in the next phase. This project would be completed at an estimated cost of Rs. 2.1 billion aimed at providing various civic facilities to citizens under one roof. The citizens would also get those services through web portal and mobile app as well.

The second agreement was signed with Udacity a renowned organization to launch Nano degree program to impart digital skills to the youth. This would be the first ever and unique program of its kind in Pakistan under which Nano Degrees would be provided to 400 youth of the province. A digital economy and skills centre would be established at Mardan for the purpose.

In the ceremony, an agreement has also been signed with NETSOL to implement Paperless Government Program of the provincial government. The Paperless Government Program is a major step towards Digital Governance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and a first of its kind in Pakistan. Under the project, extensive business process review has already been carried out and 170 processes of all 32 administrative departments have been identified for digitization. A Document Workflow Management System will be developed to make the communication and the file system exchanged with the government departments and among departments paperless. The implementation of this project will certainly ensure transparency, improve efficiency and accountability in the provincial departments.

Similarly, an agreement was signed with NLC for establishing Pakistan Digital City as the first special technology zone of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the first purpose built STZs of Pakistan. The digital city would be established in Haripur spanning an area of 87 Kanal which would create more than 20,000 direct, indirect and induced high-tech jobs in the province. The aim of establishing the Digital City is to facilitate IT industries, promote business of ICTs and software companies, encourage innovations and entrepreneurship and to capitalize on the immense job creations potential of ICTs. The important technologies to be transferred immediately and introduced under the program, include high-tech manufacturing, artificial intelligence, Quantum Computing, Cyber Physical System and Cyber Security.

In order to promote Science, Technology and Innovation in the province, an agreement was signed with GSK to establish Science & Technology Museum in Mardan which will serve as catalyst to promote Science & Technology and provide further exposure and knowledge to the society through diverse channels. The Museum would be established at an estimated cost of Rs. 3 billion which will function to promote interest in Scientific learning and be engaged in the creative process to nurture the next generation of scientists in the province. This would also prove to be a milestone towards knowledge based economy in the province.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan and others witnessing contract signing of various IT initiatives under Digital Transformation Program. – DNA

Buzdar's alleged frontman arrested

DNA

MUZAFFARGARH: Anti-corruption police in Muzaaffargarh Wednesday arrested an alleged frontman of former Punjab chief minister Usman Buzdar.

The government seems to continue closing in on former Punjab CM over corruption as it has started making arrests in connection to the different corruption charges being levelled against Buzdar. According to details, Anti-corruption police arrested SE South Punjab Local Government Khurram Abbass, who is alleged to be a frontman of the former Punjab CM in the region.

According to the sources, SE South Punjab Local Government Khurram Abbass was involved in corruption on a larger scale during his posting in Dera Ghazi Khan. He remained posted in Dera Ghazi Khan during the Buzdar government and later was appointed as SE South Punjab Local Government.

NBP moves toward energy conservation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Bank of Pakistan (NBP), the largest public sector commercial bank, has taken measures to reduce power and energy consumption across its network in the country. The initiative will support Government of Pakistan's drive towards energy and fuel conservation.

NBP staff (other than the branches & critical staff) have been advised to observe 'Work From Home (WFH)' and operate remotely on Wednesday and Friday (for Head Office staff) and Tuesday and Thursday (for Regional Office staff).

All the premises will be closed by 7pm or earlier. However, call centers, Alternative Delivery Channels (ATMs and digital application, etc) will remain available for customers. NBP will also switch-off all its electrically illuminated sign-boards (except ATMs) of branches to decrease energy load. It is pertinent to mention that NBP has more than 1500 branches across the country and recent measures of energy conservation are expected to effectively contribute towards the national energy conservation effort.

Systematic, proactive disaster risk management crucial, says Sherry

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday said systematic and proactive disaster risk management was crucial to managing the ongoing climate calamities. The minister was addressing as the chief guest at the concluding session of two-day multi-hazard based National Simulation Exercise (SIMEX) organised by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) with support of Welt Hunger Hilfe (WHH) and UN in Pakistan here, said a news release. During SIMEX, the syndicates were subjected to simulated disaster situations entailing to a medium scale earthquake; and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods

(GLOF), riverine/rain induced flooding/ Cloud burst leading to urban flooding. Subsequently, the syndicates were assessed/ evaluated on contingency and emergency response plans and humanitarian/relief actions. In her keynote address, the minister appreciated the efforts of NDMA and the UN in Pakistan for spearheading such an exercise to evaluate preparedness level, disaster management and the way forward. She said that Pakistan was on the frontlines of climate change with floods, landslides, torrential rains, GLOF events, and earthquakes. The minister urged the stakeholders to enhance the capacities of local communities to deal with

crises at the grass root level and replicate simulation exercises at provincial level. In his concluding remarks, the Chairman NDMA lauded the level of participation and performance of relevant federal and provincial authorities & departments in simulation exercises. While underlining the importance of the exercise, he said that SIMEX had provided an opportunity to improve our national response mechanism and these kinds of exercises would be continued in the future. He assured NDMA's support and cooperation to all stakeholders to reduce the risk and impacts of disaster. At the end, the minister distributed certificates among the participants of SIMEX.

No. 35 Air War Course graduation ceremony Held

KARACHI: The Convocation & Graduation Ceremony of No 35 Air War Course was held at Air War College Institute, Karachi. Dr Arif Alvi, President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was the Chief Guest at the occasion. Addressing the graduating officers, the Chief Guest congratulated the participants on the successful completion of their course and achieving a great milestone in their career. He said that the requirements for acquisition of knowledge are changing rapidly in the present era, so acquisition of technology is the only way to gain modern education. He further added that in this Hyper-competitive

world, research and work on artificial intelligence is of vital importance. He further said "We must continue to support the oppressed, regardless of their race or colour," and condemned the biasness shown by India against the Indian Muslims along with the human rights situation in IIOJK. He added that in modern warfare whether conventional or unconventional, no service could achieve success single-handedly and a joint strategic planning is required. Later on, the Chief Guest awarded certificates to the graduating officers. Top graduate trophy was awarded to Commander Waleed Arif from Pakistan Navy.

PAF Air War College Institute is a premier institution of Pakistan Air Force, where senior and mid-level officers of Pakistan Armed Forces and friendly countries are prepared in domains of Air Power doctrine, strategy and employment for higher Command and Staff appointments. The officers from tri-services of Pakistan, along with the officers from allied countries including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Jordan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Nigeria and Iraq were amongst the graduates. The Ceremony was also attended by various high ranking Civil & Military Officers and diplomats from allied countries.



ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman Asif Zardari and PML-N's Minister Ayaz Sadiq exchanging views during National Assembly session. – DNA

Capital police to shift offices on solar energy

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory Police (ICTP) has decided to shift all its offices on solar energy in line with the prime minister's 'Turnaround' initiative. All police stations, lines, safe city project, offices and other buildings and equipments of Islamabad police would be shifted to efficient energy. It was decided in a meeting between Inspector General Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan and National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA) Managing Director, Dr Sardar Moazzam here on Wednesday. The capital police was taking revolutionary steps following Minister for interior Rana Sanaullah Khan's directions to introduce an environment friendly major energy saving projects. A survey on this project has been commenced headed by Director General Planning Policy Innovation Program, Mumir Ahmad and the teams started visiting various places. – APP

Four die in bus-rickshaw collision in Sargodha

SARGODHA: Three people died and two others were injured in a collision between a bus and a rickshaw near Aziz Bhatti Town in Sargodha on Wednesday. According to police, the accident took place due to overspeeding and the bus overturned after hitting the rickshaw. Four of the five people, who were riding the rickshaw, were killed in the accident, whereas, the remaining two were injured seriously. In total, eight people were injured in the accident. The injured and the bodies of the deceased were shifted to Sargodha District Headquarters (DHQ) Teaching Hospital. – DNA

NADRA to develop CDA's Biometric Verification System

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) and Capital Development Authority (CDA) inked an agreement with regard to the development of comprehensive Biometric Verification System (BvS) here on Wednesday at NADRA Headquarters. The agreement was signed between Chairman NADRA Mr. Tariq Malik and CDA Chairman Mr. Amir Ali Ahmed. Federal Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan was also present on the occasion. NADRA will develop and deploy a biometric verification solution for the process of sale, purchase and transfer of properties. The System will help reduce forgery and eliminate the deceptive attempts by illegitimate means or persons regard-

ing transfer of properties in Islamabad capital city (ICT). Approximately, twenty thousand transactions of sale, purchase and transfer of properties take place annually in CDA.

While speaking on the occasion Chairman NADRA Tariq Malik said, "With the rollout of NADRA digital ecosystem anchored in digital ID, citizens are becoming better equipped to exercise their rights and to prove with unprecedented certainty who they are, in both physical and virtual realms." Mr. Malik highlighted the importance of Biometric Verification System for property transfer- a digitized solution that is meant to transform public service delivery by scaling down the risk of forgery and obviating proscribed transactions in property transfer. He said the deployment of digital bi-

ometric system foreshadows the attempts of unlawful act by ensuring identity of buyer and seller. The deployment of BvS will not only bring transparency to CDA system but also fulfill the compliance of know-your-customer (KYC) in property transactions, he added. He said, "Biometric authentication is unique identity brings transparency in property transfers. NADRA has the capacity to verify the citizens and their family members biometrically to address the challenges faced by the any organization. NADRA's Biometric Identification system will provide an accurate identification and minimizing the risk of unwanted breaches within Capital Development Authority. With this type of security system, transactions take place not just by affidavit but by biometrics."

SBP launches farmers' financial literacy, awareness through digital media

DNA

KARACHI: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has launched a series of videos in national and regional languages about agriculture financing products and procedures to create awareness among the farming communities across the country, especially in the underserved areas. These videos will be disseminated through social media and digital platforms of SBP and all agriculture lending banks, says a press statement issued on Wednesday. Lack of awareness among farmers about agriculture financing products and services remains one of the challenges for banks to access rural markets and extend outreach of formal financial services to the

farming communities. Capacity building & awareness creation is, therefore, an important area of focus amongst SBP's various initiatives for promotion and development of agriculture financing in the country. SBP has been organizing various awareness and capacity building programs for farmers; however, farming communities still lack awareness at the grass-roots level to avail and optimally utilize formal financial services.

In order to address this lack of awareness and to broaden the scope of SBP's campaigns, the potential of digital media is being explored. Rapid penetration of internet and increased usage of smartphones across the country has presented an opportunity to harness digital platforms

for disseminating information instead of relying on conventional awareness sessions, which have limited outreach. The use of digital medium is not only helpful in spreading the message to a wider audience in a timely and cost effective way, but also enables such messages to have higher rate of comprehension and retention. The first video in this series covers the overall agriculture financing landscape of the country, SBP's initiatives and GoP's schemes, all from a farmer's perspective. Keeping in view the need for enhancing accessibility of credit in the diverse underserved areas, this video has also been translated into three regional languages apart from Urdu, i.e. Sindhi, Balochi and Pashto.

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National Days and
Armed Forces Days

JUNE

June 02 / Italy	National Day/ Independence Day
June 04 / Finland	Armed Forces Day
June 07 / Sweden	National Day
June 10 / Portugal	Portugal Day (National Day)
June 10 / Jordan	Arab Revolution & Army Day
June 11 / United Kingdom	Birthday of Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth
June 12 / Philippines	Independence Day
June 12 / Russian Federation	Day of Sovereignty of the Russian Federation (National Day)
June 13 / Zambia	Armed Forces Day
June 17 / Iceland	National Day
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June 25 / Croatia	National Day
June 25 / Mozambique	National Day
June 26 / Azerbaijan	Army Day

Hotels &
Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....	111 133 133
Marriott.....	051-2826121
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Water Tank

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ICCI delegation visits
HITEC University Taxila

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) leading a delegation visited HITEC University Taxila Cantt as a part of efforts to promote academia-industry linkages. Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI, Ch. Muhammad Ali, Hamayun Kabir, Engr. Azhar ur Islam, Akhtar Hussain, Sheikh Muhammad Ijaz, Muhammad Saeed Khan, Rana Qaisar Shehzad, Muhammad Naveed Malik, Adnan Mukhtar, Ashfaq Chatha, Rashid Minhas, Umer Ismail and Khalid Chaudhry were in the delegation. The delegation visited various departments and the display centre of the university.

The delegation discussed areas of collaboration with HITEC University to achieve beneficial results for the industry and academia. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry appreciated the efforts of HITEC University, Taxila for providing quality education and excellent learning environment to its students. He also shared the key issues of industry and hoped that the students of HITEC University Taxila would try to find out their innovative solutions. He said that the developed countries have achieved better economic growth by developing strong academia-industry linkages and we should follow the same approach to make Pakistan a progressive and prosperous country. He said that uni-

versities are doing a lot of good research work and emphasized that they should focus on applied research & commercialization of research projects that would be more beneficial to the industry and economy. ICCI President stressed that at least 50% content of the research works should be based on local content as currently majority of content in research works is based on foreign content. He said that ICCI has already signed MoUs with various universities to promote academia-industry linkages, which are very important to produce demand-driven students and meet the needs of industry.

He said that ICCI would like to develop strong liaison with HITEC University to further strengthen linkages between industry and academia that would produce

win-win outcomes for them. Prof. Dr. S. Kamran Afaq, Acting Vice Chancellor, HITEC University, Taxila Cantt gave a presentation to the ICCI delegation about his university.

He said that advanced labs, innovative & interactive teaching methodologies, foreign qualified & experienced faculty, conducive research opportunities, and academia-industry linkages have all been merged to place HITEC University among top emerging universities of Pakistan. He said that HITEC University gives a lot of emphasis on industry-academia linkages and would work closely with ICCI to take these initiatives forward. Both sides discussed a future roadmap for joint collaboration that would produce beneficial outcomes for academia and industry.

RCCI lauds
abolition
of the 17%
sales tax on
pharma

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The abolition of the 17% sales tax on pharmaceuticals will not only make medicines cheaper but will also alleviate the shortage of capital for pharma-related companies to manufacture medicines. Nadeem Rauf, president of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), said in a statement that due to the imposition of 17pc sales tax on pharmaceuticals the production of medicines decreased and shortage of life-saving drugs was feared. RCCI president maintained that RCCI had also presented his recommendations to the government on the removal of 17% sales tax from the chamber's platform at the All Pakistan Chambers Conference held in January earlier this year. He said that the sales tax imposed on raw materials had multiplied the prices of medicines. He hoped that the reduction in sales tax would make medicines cheaper and more available. Nadeem Rauf said that Usman Shaukat, Chairman, Standing Committee on Medicine of the Chamber, while playing an active role, had successful negotiations with the government with his team and achieved success. He said that the chamber has always demanded that tax rates be reduced and incentives be given to pharma like other sectors.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addresses the Parliament session. – DNA

RWMC takes cleanliness
responsibility for Murree

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) has taken over the cleanliness responsibility of Municipal Corporation, Murree. According to the RWMC spokesman, the company had placed 48 waste containers in the areas from Jhika Gali to Bhurban and Darya Gali to Barian to make the hill station environmentally-friendly for the visitors. He said the RWMC had devised a comprehensive plan for making the mountain station more attractive for the tourists during the summer season and on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha. "We will use our experience and resources to make the Murree a global tourist destination, according to international standards," he added. Meanwhile, RWMC Managing Director Awais Manzoor Tarar, on the instructions of Commissioner Rawalpindi, inspected ongoing cleanliness operation on the banks of Nullah Lai at various places because of the expected monsoon rains from Thursday. The MD visited Gawalmandi, Pir Wadhai, Katarian and inspected the General Bus Stand in Pir Wadhai. Later, he also visited the various city union councils and directed the sanitary workers to ensure rainwater drainage as the Meteorological Department had forecast more rains in the following days. He said the provision of a hygienic environment to the residents was the top priority of the RWMC and urged the people not to throw garbage and plastic bags in nullahs and drains, which cause obstruction, adding that RWMC would utilize all its resources to keep the city clean. – APP

Balighur appreciates
mountaineers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Governor Punjab Mr. Balighur Rehman, appreciated the achievements of mountaineers from Punjab. In a meeting held in the office of Governor's Secretariat, Lahore Mr. Abu Zafar Sadiq, President Alpine Club of Pakistan, National Climbing Federation briefed about the challenges being faced by mountaineers from Punjab. He requested the Governor for his support to Shehroze Kashif, the young mountaineer who has two world records in



mountaineering at his credit. Shehroze has climbed 7 peaks above 8000-M and his goal is to become youngest mountaineer of world by climbing all 14 peaks above 8000-M. The Governor appreciated the achievements of Mr. Shehroze Kashif and other mountaineers from Punjab. The possibility of launching an awareness campaign about mountaineering, hiking, trekking and other outdoor pursuits for youth of universities in Punjab to save them from drugs, extremism, distraction due to excessive use of gadgets. The Governor assured moral support for Shehroze Kashif and other mountaineers from Punjab. He also indicated possibility for resource mobilization to achieve the target of Shehroze Kashif. The Governor awarded certificates to Shehroze Kashif and Alaizer Wise as a token of appreciation. At this occasion, Shehroze Kashif, his father Mr. Salman Kashif, Mr. Elaizer Wise, the youngest mountaineer who climbed Gondogro Peak and his father Mr. Muahmmad Ashir Ch.; and Mr. Zubair Zafar Farooqui, Secretary, Punjab Alpine Association, were also present at this occasion.

OICCI, ICBC Pakistan
holds webinar on RMB

ISLAMABAD: Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) and ICBC Pakistan (Industrial and Commercial Bank of China) Wednesday jointly held webinar on the subject RMB: Development, Infrastructure and Products. The webinar aimed at facilitating local markets understanding and utilization of RMB, and further in the light of some interest in a new circular by China, effective from March 1, 2022, to allow Chinese Commercial banks in China directly lend RMB to overseas entities, Senior management from OICCI members attended this important event. Secretary General OICCI, M Abdul Ajeem appreciated the ICBC engagement with leading investors on this important matter which is going to be useful for investors understanding about the RMB development and prospective, opportunity for infrastructure building and new RMB products in Pakistan, according to a press release issued here. ICBC, the largest commercial bank in the world, is providing financial services in Pakistan for over 10 years.

In the light of new developments, the webinar provided OICCI members an opportunity to learn about new opportunity in financing. Yuncheng, the CEO of ICBC Karachi Branch, speaking on the event, highlighted the efforts made by ICBC Pakistan to create awareness and understanding of RMB among business community in Pakistan and emphasized the necessity of cross-border RMB business promotion and benefits to use RMB as one of the currencies for trade and investment. The speakers for the session from ICBC Pakistan specifically talked about RMB development and perspective, RMB infrastructure building in Pakistan, and RMB business and products in Pakistan. The participants appreciated that increasing use of RMB products will facilitate trade and investment with Chinese counter parties as it is relatively stable in value, convenient in clearing and low in cost. RMB usage can also decrease the exchange rate risk among investment and trade activities. – APP

Beware but don't panic
from Covid-19, says Qadir Patel

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Abdul Qadir Patel on Wednesday stressed adhering to standard operating procedures (SOPs) including wearing masks at public places to prevent infection by virus without being afraid from Covid-19. Addressing a

news conference flanked by Executive Director National Institute of Health Dr Aamer Ikram, the minister said the positivity ratio of corona had reached to 3.5 percent in some cities but there was no need to be scary as the government was closely monitoring the situation and taking measures to prevent the spread. "However we have to be careful as minor increase in positivity

ratio can become a big tragedy," he said adding that the intensity of Covid had decreased but the menace had not yet eliminated completely. The chances of Covid spread were bright as religious gatherings would be galore in country during next few months including starting of cattle markets during Eid-ul-Azha, political gatherings and gathering of Moharram ul Haram.

House maid arrested,
stolen currency recovered

ISLAMABAD: Capital Territory Police have arrested a house maid for her alleged involvement in a theft case and recovered foreign currency from her possession. Raja Mushahid, a resident of Islamabad had submitted an application with the Women Police Station that two weeks ago, he had hired an employee named Sawaira who had stolen cash and foreign currency and a ring from his house on June 27. The police took prompt action, registered the case and started investigation, a news release on Wednesday said. Police team traced and arrested the accused in a short span of time and recovered foreign currency 800 euros, 800 Egyptian pounds, 250 British pounds and 2,000 Pakistani rupees from her possession while further investigation was underway. – APP

Pak making efforts
for smooth border
management

After all these years Afghans need and deserve peace, progress and prosperity, and international community must help them walk firmly on that path

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini called on Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif here at his office in Islamabad. The Defence Minister expressed his appreciation for cordial and fraternal ties nourished by centuries old religious and cultural affinities. He stated the Pakistan is grateful for Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei's strong and unwavering support for the just struggle of the people of Jammu & Kashmir. While expressing the importance of Joint Border Commission (JBC) the Federal Minister said that Pakistan has taken all necessary measures in domain of border management and joint efforts in this re-

gard. Moreover, the Minister for Defence highlighted the importance of regional cooperation in achieving allusive peace in Afghanistan after Taliban takeover of Kabul. Thus, it's the need of hour to stand by Afghan people in full support and solidarity. After all these years Afghans need and deserve peace, progress and prosperity, and international community must help them walk firmly on that path. Ambassador of Iran, H.E. Mr. Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini, appreciated Pakistan's defence capabilities and opined that two countries have potential for extensive collaboration in the field of defence and for energy cooperation. Both sides showed satisfaction and intended for collaboration in various areas of common interest, enhancing security, counter terrorism and ensuring regional economic connectivity.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini presenting a souvenir to Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif. – DNA

Briefs

IT exports increased by 25.45pc in 11 months: Amin

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin-Ul-Haque here on Wednesday said that the Information Technology (IT) exports have surged at the growth rate of 25.45 percent in eleven months of the current financial year.

The minister in a statement said, "ICT export remittances, including telecommunication, computer and information services for the period July 2021 to May 2022 during Financial Year 2021-22 have surged to US \$2.381 billion at a growth rate of 25.45 % in comparison to US \$1.898 billion during the same period in FY 2020-21."

The net exports for the period July 2021 to May 2022 during FY 2021-22 are US\$ 1.809 billion which is 75.98% of US\$ 2.381 billion in ICT exports. Last year, for the same period the net exports were US\$ 1.425 billion which was 75.08% of US\$ 1.898 billion in ICT exports, he added.

On the direction of the Prime Minister, the minister said, steps are being taken to take ICT exports to record levels, with the implementation of the tax relief announced by Finance Minister in federal budget for the IT industry.

However, Syed Amin Ul Haque was of the view that it is essential to provide relief to the Telecom sector for significant results from the IT sector. "If the imposition of taxes on the Telecom sector is not reduced, the IT sector will also be badly affected" he added. - APP

Minister urges varsities to focus on research

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain on Wednesday emphasized that universities should focus on research with outstanding impact on society and the economy.

The minister was speaking at a ceremony held at Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) to celebrate the academic excellence of the university as it recently secured a place among the best universities of the world in three international prestigious rankings.

The QAU ranked 41st in research productivity and 363rd globally by QS World University Rankings 2023. Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2022 placed QAU as the No.1 institution of higher education in Pakistan and 116th in Asia. The US News and World Report ranked QAU as the No.1 university in Pakistan and 461 globally. Flanked by Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb, Tanveer urged the faculty to engage the industry and provide cost-effective solutions. The minister assured that all issues including the financial matters of the university would be solved on priority. He congratulated the faculty, staff and students of the university for achieving global rankings and growth in research excellence. Prof. Dr Muhammad Ali, Vice Chancellor Quaid-e-Azam University, briefed the audience regarding the achievements of the University.

IRSA releases 199937 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Wednesday released 199937 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 202295 cases.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1097.95 feet, which was 47.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded a 48032 and 46474 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 89988 ,97709 and 70410 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River, a total of 26500 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 38963 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France hosted reception for the outgoing Head of the Economic Section Dominique Simon. From left to right, Editor Daily Islamabad POST, Ambassador of Indonesia, Ambassador of France, wife of Mr. Simon and Dominique Simon and Walid Mushtaq. (More coverage on the Back Page). - DNA

Paymob, NIFT sign agreement to secure digital payments

Paymob plans to extend its Tap-on-Phone payment acceptance service to Pakistan market. The company will also launch cards to enable B2B transactions for its merchants and build tools for merchants to better manage and grow their business

ISLAMABAD: Paymob, leading omni-channel financial services platform in the MENAP region, signed an agreement with National Institutional Facilitation Technologies (NIFT) to facilitate digital transfer and payments in the country.

Under the agreement, Paymob will enable digital payments for their merchants using the NIFT ePay platform which supports account, wallet and card-based payments. Paymob's payment infrastructure enables SMEs to accept digital payments online and in-store whilst providing them better access to financial services. As an API integrator, Paymob's gateway sits on merchants' web-

sites to facilitate payment capture. In addition to conventional bank cards, Paymob merchants will have access to mobile wallets, QR payments, bank card installment plans, and Buy-Now Pay-Later (BNPL) options all of which serve to drive an increased volume of transactions and revenue.

Paymob plans to extend its Tap-on-Phone payment acceptance service to the Pakistan market. The company will also launch cards to enable B2B transactions for its merchants and build tools for merchants to better manage and grow their business.

NIFT was established in 1995 as a joint venture between six major Pakistani banks and

entrepreneurs from the private sector. It is the leading Payment System Operator (PSO) in Pakistan for cheque clearing and is the country's foremost Digital Payment Gateway, providing an electronic platform for clearing, processing, and switching electronic transactions in Pakistan under the brand name NIFT ePay.

Haidar Wahab, CEO of NIFT commented, "NIFT continues to play an important and proactive role in streamlining Pakistan's payment system. As promoters of financial technology, NIFT is committed to delivering an efficient, secured, and convenient digital payment system in which our eco-

economic growth can further thrive. This new partnership with Paymob opens a range of exciting new possibilities for Pakistan's payment infrastructure and puts it at the cutting edge of innovation in this space."

Fawad Abdul Kader, Country Manager of Paymob in Pakistan mentioned, "We are proud to partner with NIFT ePay which will serve to drive e-commerce by making a variety of payment options available to merchants all across Pakistan. SMEs are the engines of growth in any economy and this partnership with NIFT ePay will serve to fuel that growth and drive revenue in today's digital economy." - APP

Marriyum attends QAU ranking celebration ceremony

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday said that Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) has combined different cultures and values reflecting all traditional colors of the country.

Addressing Quaid-e-Azam University ranking celebration ceremony here, the minister said that, however, there was need to prepare curriculum with futuristic approach for skill and human resource development to meet future requirements at the global level.

The real strength of Quaid-e-Azam University was its students body that represented every culture and region of the country, she said. She stressed the need for focusing on teaching digital media and the performing arts in the educational institutions.

The minister called for teaching constitution in educational institutions to acquaint the students about constitutional matters and democratic norms. "We can promote our culture and heritage through performing arts at the educational institutions", she said. - APP

Two car, bike lifter gangs busted; eight arrested

RAWALPINDI: In operations against criminal elements, Rawalpindi Police have busted two car and bike-lifter gangs and arrested their eight members.

Police also recovered seven stolen cars, 21 motorcycles, weapons, and other items from their possession.

According to the police spokesman, Sadiqabad Police rounded up eight members of two gangs namely Hamza, Tanveer, Amir, Hassan, Ibrahim, Sharjeel, Babar and Naqash who were wanted in various snatching and car and bike lifting cases. Police recovered seven stolen cars, 21 motorcycles and other items from their possession.

He informed that the police team constituted under the supervision of SDPO New Town and SHO Sadiqabad Police Station on the directives of SP Rawal Babar Javed Joya conducted raids and managed to net the gang members. As per the preliminary police record, the criminals were also involved in other crimes, he added. - APP

Agha Ali pens letter of gratitude to fans

ISLAMABAD: Esteemed Pakistani star, Agha Ali has penned a heartfelt thank you note for the love and admiration he received for his ongoing drama serial 'Zakhm'.

The Dil-e-Gumshuda star expressed gratitude on the overwhelming audience response despite playing negative role in Zakhm. In the recent episode, there was a scene in which Agha (Sikander) got emotional and soon after the episode was released, fans showered love on Agha and bombarded the superstar's social media handle with comments showing adoration and appreciation.

The starlet turned to Instagram and wrote, "Sikander shedded a tear and the amount of love, messages, dms, comments, and appreciation you all showed has blown me away".

"Thank you so much for loving my efforts and for loving the character Sikander so much. I'm humbled and am super grateful. I love each one of you even more, thanks again", he stated.

Furthermore, Agha gave a special shout-out to veteran actress Rubina Ashraf, playing the role of Affan's (Azfar Rehman) mother in the serial, "Thank you so much Rubina Ashraf aapa for being you. You're such an institution and a living legend for all the true reason, love you aapa". - APP



ISLAMABAD: FS Sohaih Mahmood received German ambassador Bernhard Schlagheck for a farewell call. FS appreciated his valuable contribution to further strengthening Pak-German relations. - DNA

NADRA to develop CDA's biometric verification system

ISLAMABAD, Jun 29 (APP): National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) will develop and deploy a comprehensive Biometric Verification System at the Capital Development Authority (CDA) for sale, purchase and transfer of properties in transparent way. NADRA Chairman Tariq Malik and CDA Chief Amir Ali Ahmed on Wednesday signed an agreement for the purpose. Federal Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan was also present on the occasion.

The biometric System will help reduce forgery and eliminate the deceptive attempts by illegitimate means or persons regarding transfer of properties in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). Approximately, 20,000 transactions of sale, purchase and transfer of properties take place annually in the CDA.

Addressing the signing ceremony, the NADRA chairman highlighted the importance of Biometric Verification System for property transfer- a digitized solution that was meant to transform public service delivery by scaling down the risk of forgery and obviating proscribed transactions in property transfer. He said the deployment of digital biometric system would curb the attempts of unlawful act by ensuring identity of buyer and seller. The deployment of BVS would not only bring transparency to CDA system but also fulfill the compliance of know-your-customer (KYC) in property transactions, he added. "Biometric authentication is a unique identity which brings transparency in property transfers. NADRA has the capacity to verify the citizens and their family members biometrically to address the challenges faced by the any organization," Tariq Malik maintained. NADRA's Biometric Identification system would provide an accurate identification and minimizing the risk of unwanted breaches within the CDA, he said. Chairman CDA Amir Ali Ahmed said that CDA's ongoing digitization venture further cemented the civic agency partnership with NADRA. - APP

Govt notifies transfer, posting of officers

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government on Wednesday notified transfer and posting of high rank officers. According to a notification issued by the Establishment Division, Waqar-ud-Din Syed, a BS-20 Officer of Police Service of Pakistan, presently awaiting posting in Establishment Division is transferred and his services are placed at the disposal of Interior Division for further posting in ICT Police, with immediate effect and until further orders. While, Ali Ahmed has relinquished the charge of the post of Officer on Special Duty (BS-18/OMG) in this Division. - APP

IHC adjourns Naroval Sports City Complex reference till July 5

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday adjourned hearing of a plea seeking acquittal in Naroval Sports City Complex reference till July 5 moved by Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal.

The court observed that there was only one point left, whether Ahsan Iqbal had taken any personal benefit from the project or not. The NAB prosecutor would give arguments on this point in the next date of hearing. A division bench comprising Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Sardar Ijaz Ishaq Khan heard the case challenging the verdict of the trial court.

At the outset of hearing, Ahsan Iqbal arrived at the court rostrum and said his character assassination had been continue for two years and he was even arrested. Whether the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) was asked that what corruption I had done, he questioned. Ahsan Iqbal said that it was his mistake that made efforts to approve a sports project from all forums. The NAB had alleged him for causing a loss worth of two billion rupees to the national exchequer, he said, adding that the bureau have to tell that what assets he had made with this money. - APP

WASA imposes emergency to clean nullahs

Managing Director (MD), WASA Rawalpindi, Muhammad Tanveer visited different city areas and reviewed the ongoing cleanliness work of small and big nullahs

RAWALPINDI: Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) has imposed an emergency to clean all big and small nullahs in the city on a priority basis to avoid flood-like situations during monsoon.

The agency has canceled the holidays of the staff and they have been directed to work round the clock to clean all nullahs before the onset of the rainy season.

Managing Director (MD), WASA Rawalpindi, Muhammad Tanveer visited different city areas and reviewed the ongoing cleanliness work of small and big nullahs.

The MD visited different areas of Dhoke Dalal, Safdarabad, Dhoke Matkal, Khyban-e-Sir Syed, and Akalgarh and reviewed the

progress of the cleanliness work. He also interacted with local public representatives and the citizens while discussing the cleanliness work of the nullahs started to avoid urban flooding, particularly in low-lying areas.

He informed that before the start of the next rain spell, the vulnerable points of the nullahs would be cleared.

The MD said that all-out efforts were being made to finalize all the arrangements before the next spell of rains which are expected to start from Saturday.

WASA on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi, Noor ul Amin Mengal had kicked off the cleanliness work of 15 nullahs

of Rawalpindi, passing through different areas of the city. Muhammad Tanveer said that WASA had completed the dredging and desilting work of Nullah Lai and sewerage lines across the city.

The Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi cleans the nullahs of the city every year, but this year, due to a delay in the cleaning of the drains, there was a danger of urban flooding, he added.

Commissioner Rawalpindi had ordered to immediately start cleaning work of 15 nullahs and Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi (MCR) had deposited Rs35 million to WASA in this regard. He further said that there were 15 small and big nullahs in the city,

most of which fall in Nullah Lai.

The MD said that WASA had started the cleanliness work utilizing heavy machinery. It had also been decided to start the cleanliness work on all the drains at the same time so that the project could be completed within the shortest possible time frame, he added. The cleanliness work in Sadiqabad, Arya Mohalla, Zia Colony, Dhok Matkal, Kohati Bazaar, and other nullahs had been started. The entire process was being overseen by the district administration while a committee comprising representatives of WASA, MCR, and Waste Management Company was also monitoring the cleanliness work. - APP

US controlled by gun lobby

In the widest expansion of gun rights in a decade, the US Supreme Court last week struck down a New York gun law that placed restrictions on carrying a concealed gun outside the home. The court's 6-3 vote in favor of broadening prior interpretations of the Second Amendment right "to keep and bear arms" is at odds with the prevailing public mood and in conflict with predecessor judgments. According to the 108-year-old law, anyone seeking a license to carry a firearm in a concealed way must demonstrate a special need for self-defense. A lower court upheld that the requirement, but now the US Supreme Court has declared that requirement to be "unconstitutional". With the Supreme Court overturning a traditional law that had existed for more than a century, those seeking stricter gun control have lost ground. The decision striking down the New York licensing restriction is certain to open the door to more challenges to gun regulations even as the US introduced new firearms restrictions. On Saturday, two days after the Senate with a 64-34 vote to approve a motion to proceed with the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, US President Joe Biden signed it into law, which clarifies criteria for prohibiting juveniles purchasing firearms if they have been convicted of certain crimes and establishes the first federal criminal offenses and penalties for "straw purchasers", people who purchase guns on behalf of other. But with the Supreme Court's ruling, its efforts might be counter-balanced.

According to US website Gun Violence Archive, the US has already seen nearly 21,000 deaths caused by gun violence so far this year, among which there were 792 children and 1,982 teenagers. The number of mass shootings has reached 279 and is still rising, and if the trend continues the victims might exceed 40,000 by the end of the year. Everybody in the US knows gun violence is a problem in the country, there is much ado after every mass shooting. Yet any attempts to tighten the controls on gun ownership are always stymied with claims they are unconstitutional. Everybody knows who is behind this: those who benefit from the proliferation of lethal weapons in the country. On June 11, protests against gun violence broke out in at least 45 cities nationwide in the US. People marched on the street, holding posters asking "Am I next?"

The answer is: "You might be." The failure of the US to protect its citizens from gun violence is a shameful indictment of its political system, which allows powerful interest groups to determine policy. It also means any claims it make to be a champion of human rights ring hollow. Meanwhile, the US deploys its military around the world in the name of protecting its citizens from threats. But they are much more likely to experience gun violence at home than they are overseas. Perhaps the US should rebalance its military to its own streets and schools if it wants to protect US citizens.

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Cracks in the coalition

If PML-N, which sits atop the 11-party government, thought it would be easy going in a house without any real opposition, it must think again. That's most likely what Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif was thinking when he invited all allies for dinner on Monday night; to iron out differences and find common ground once again. Yet while most issues, like MQM's fuss about lack of funds, can be handled rather quickly, others, like JUI-F's problem with the Federal Shariat Court's (FSC's) decision in the Riba case being taken to the Supreme Court, will not wash away so easily. It was JUI-F's leader Maulana Fazlur Rahman that cobbled together and then spearheaded the PDM (Pakistan Democratic Movement), after all, and the party is extremely unhappy about being left out of discussions on what it considers a very important matter.

It has even threatened to walk out of the coalition government because of it. Now here's a situation where the financial sector, as well as the government, is bound, even duty-bound, to appeal an arbitrary ruling that will stand the entire economy on its head and a crucial government partner won't let it happen.

The government has surprised critics and displayed the ability to take the bull by the horns lately by announcing one difficult and unpopular yet desperately important policy decision after another. Yet now, it is learning that keeping allies happy might be even harder than keeping the people from rebelling. And here lies the real test of not just PML-N but all coalition members. If they got together only to fall apart, in a mere two months, they might not be able to handle the optics in the time left before the next general election, which is, at the most, a year or so down the road, not any later. If the PM cannot put a lid on all these differences very quickly, they will surely snowball and cause far bigger headaches than unpleasant speeches in the house.



The strategic vista of chabahar port

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



China has directly involved itself in the Chabahar port project and has assigned 25-year cooperation program with Iran.

China agreed to invest \$400 billion in the Iranian economy in exchange for discounted oil prices. Although the scope of Sino-Iranian interaction at the Chabahar port is limited at the moment, there is evidence of intensification of Chinese activities with Iran, indicating that it will be a China-India competition for greater influence in the region

The Chabahar port Iran has a potential of world trade center and a field of geopolitical competition. India has acted as a major investor in Chabahar port

cooperation and competition: it could spark a trade revolution in the region, but it could also increase regional rivalries as well. Chabahar port is located in the

as New Delhi sees the port as a gateway to Afghan and Central Asian markets without relying on Pakistan's land routes and to balance the growing cooperation between China and Pakistan. At the same time, China rapidly increased its influence in Iran, seeking access to key natural resources and shipping lanes. Tehran thinks, the port could foster new diplomatic and economic partnerships in the West. The competition between China and India for investment in this port, Iran is trying to improve its international status during this situation. Chabahar port is therefore an important case study in both international cooperation and competition: it could spark a trade revolution in the region, but it could also increase regional rivalries as well. Chabahar port is located in the

southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchistan, Iran. The port has a series of distinctive characteristics that make it attractive both from a national and international point of view. Located on the shores of the Indian Ocean, it is the only deep-water port in Iran with direct access to the sea. Its geographical proximity to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, as well as its status as a major transit hub in the growing North-South International Transport Corridor, has made it one of the world's most important commercial centers. Chabahar is also one of the few places in Iran that is exempt from US sanctions, significantly simplifying trade with other countries. The port also has the potential to transform trade in South and Central Asia. It proposes land trade routes which connect to Afghan and Central Asian markets. Chabahar also has the potential to generate massive economic growth in Afghanistan, as it will facilitate the easy entry of goods from other countries into the country. As far as Central Asian countries think that Chabahar will offer access to maritime trade routes to these landlocked countries and act as a barrier to China and Russia's efforts to dominate trade in the region. Thus, increasing trade with Afghanistan and Central Asian countries has the potential to strengthen Iran's position internationally. In this context, Chabahar Port is a link not only with Afghanistan and Central Asia but also with the global economic institutions of the region. India has a long history of engage-

ment with the Chabahar port, as New Delhi sees the port as an opportunity to strengthen India's position as a regional and global power. However, India has been severely hampered in establishing land trade with the West, as practically all such routes would have to pass through India's traditional rival Pakistan. Establishing a maritime trade route through the port of Chabahar to West and Central Asia would allow India to ignore Pakistan and establish a trade network with the countries of these regions.

India is not the only country has been participating in the Chabahar port, as China has also sought to strengthen ties with Iran to secure its mineral and energy resources and gain access to beneficial Eurasian trade routes. China's access to the Chabahar port will greatly benefit these targets, as China will be able to connect the port to its vast maritime trade network. Considering China's investment in Pakistan's Gwadar port, another important impetus for China's interest in the Chabahar port would be to block India's access to Afghanistan and Central Asia. China has directly involved itself in the Chabahar port project and has assigned 25-year cooperation program with Iran. China agreed to invest \$400 billion in the Iranian economy in exchange for discounted oil prices. Although the scope of Sino-Iranian interaction at the Chabahar port is limited at the moment, there is evidence of intensification of Chinese activities with

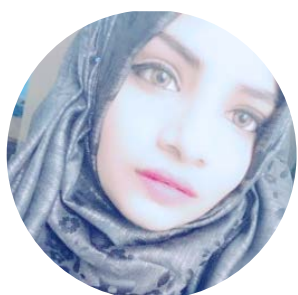
Iran, indicating that it will be a China-India competition for greater influence in the region. The growing involvement of China and India in the Chabahar port has sparked a debate in Iranian political circles over how to maximize this competition while minimizing the threats to Iran. The economic and diplomatic opportunities offered by China and India may help Iran reduce its isolation and as well as the impact of sanctions.

That is why Tehran is trying to find a way to strike a strategic balance between China and India. The Iran's accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) reflects China-Iran desire to form an alliance against Western domination because it is more active in Western affairs. Iran could use its membership in SCO and other multilateral initiatives to decrease China and Indian rivalry.

However, several variables could reduce the current pace of development of Chabahar Port. The Taliban's occupation of Afghanistan has seriously reshaped plans to establish a better trade network with the country and Central Asia is a headache for India. At the same time, the instability of the Iranian government threatens to permanently undermine Iran's long-term ability to pursue its regional and international interests. However, the port of Chabahar serves as a major arena for the aims of the Chinese and Indian leaderships in South and Central Asia, and they can play a significant role in Iran's desire to improve its position internationally.

Behaviourism: Challenges to teachers in the classes

Komal Zulfqar



Today, students not only have to deal with academic pressure but also have to cope with unrealistic parental expectations

Behaviourism focuses on the idea that all the behaviors are learned through interaction and environment. This learning theory states that behaviors are learned from the environment and innate or inherited factors have very little influence on the behavior. Schools can define their own set of behaviors expected in their student engagement policy. Different students have different behaviors because they belong to a variety of societies which cast shadows on their attitudes and process of learning. Teachers have challenges to teach and educate the students due to their behaviors such as:

Withdrawal behaviors such as embarrassment, tremors, stare, anxiety, fear of school, absenteeism, isolation, or clapping hands.

Disruptive behaviors such as getting out of a chair, shouting in class, getting angry, swearing, screaming or refusing to follow instructions.

of communication when a teacher communicates to his or her students. Therefore, due to things like anxiety, negligence, abuse, learning disabilities and conditions such as dementia affect the teacher-student means of communications. To understand the causes of challenging behavior is the first step in finding ways to support people and manage their behavior and then to useful learning of the student. There are many challenging behavioral causes, which often vary from a person to person. Behavior is influenced by different factors, including Social, Biological, Psychologically and Environment. Quality teaching is tough and challenging job. In the current era, with the advent of new teaching methods and the emergence of digital learning into the field of education, the role of teachers has also been changed dramatically over the long term. Today, a teacher is facing the daunting task of keeping up with the latest developments in the fields of medicine,

education, science, arts, and so on. Therefore the development of their skills and knowledge from time to time is necessary. Therefore a teacher faces such types of hurdles.

Get to know their students well of the different learning skills and abilities of the learners

Encouraging and motivating students when they do not do well and they have to deal with parental and peer pressure

Creating an effective communication channel between Management-Parents-Students

Teacher should build a healthy relationship with the students. Every effort should be made by the teacher to keep his students informed.

Communication should extend beyond classes. The teacher should be a friend first and take responsibility for training students with its warm and happy manner. Students should feel free to discuss any subject and express any doubts anywhere and the teacher should be approachable. A broad mind and a friendly attitude on the part of the teacher will make a difference when it comes to get to know students well.

The biggest challenge for any teacher is to understand the capacity learning as well as the attitudes of the students. Students are different in their grasp, memory, concentration, reading and writing ability and demonstrate their interests in a variety of subjects. A student who is brilliant in mathematics may find it difficulties to understand other subjects. A student may also be good at sports and other curricular activities but may not be the same attention and enthusiasm when it comes to Education. Some students are extremely intelligent and hard-working, while others are slow and find it difficult to understand what is being taught in the classroom. A good teacher will always focus on slow-moving students who take them to his or her home and nurture them with care and concentration. The teacher

should talk individually with the students, designing modules according to their needs and assigning tasks based on their interests and assessing their progress is important here and will contribute to the growth of the overall personality of students.

Today, students not only have to deal with academic pressure but also have to cope with unrealistic parental expectations. This leads to unprecedented stress for students. The biggest challenge to a teacher is a motivation, when students do not do well, losing focus and being distracted by various situations. Borrowing applause, voice of comfort and support, instilling confidence and a positive attitude towards students in their difficult times will surely bring about a change in the lives of students.

Parent and teacher have changed their roles and anticipations today. Parents who are actively involved in school and their studies and attend Parent-Teacher meetings frequently cast good impact on teachers and students. It helps to understand the issues of students and their changing behaviors. A major challenge for a teacher is to monitor students' progress and to communicate effectively with their parents. The teacher should recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the learners and be able to communicate effectively with their parents, thus creating an atmosphere of openness for parents. To deal students with cruelty / rudeness manners can be dangerous for the teachers and the school. Teachers are supervisors and have needed to work with changing dynamics of social, economics, rules and regulations due to technology. Therefore a teacher can play a key role to strengthen the healthy and positive relationship among Teacher-Parent-Student.

Although there is a newly trained teacher or a teacher having decades of experience

working with students but there are many challenges when it comes to ethical management especially at the beginning of the school year when a new student harvest comes into your classroom. For teachers, effective behavioral management supports almost all teaching and learning success. Few private school franchises are generally well-organized, well-behaved, even low school disruptions can lead to disastrous consequences for the both students and teachers. This makes it advisable for teachers and assistant teachers to have the tools and strategies to ensure that ethics are maintained whenever possible. Other private and some government schools are facing the lack of cooperation by the society, government as well as parents which directly affect teachers and students behaviors and attitudes.

Research shows that well organized schools use a balance of rewards and penalties for the motivation and the discipline of students. Before using any new prizes or punishment plans, consult with your school management to ensure that the procedures are according to social status, norms and government policy. To prevent expulsion from the classroom special activities can all be used while those who display good behavior can be rewarded with compliments, stickers, small items and opportunities and promotion as a teacher's 'assistant' during the lesson. Students are less likely to misbehave if they know exactly what is acceptable and unacceptable in the classroom. In order to create a well-managed, organized classroom that caters for diverse students and attention, a teacher should make an effort to establish rules, guidelines and expectations. He should not only draw 'home rules' and be clear about the consequences of not following the rules and the rewards for those students who behave well regularly.

Briefs

Punjab CM election: Court...

FROM PAGE 01

bench comprising Justice Sadaqat Ali Khan, Justice Shahid Jamil Khan, Justice Shehram Sarwar Chaudhry, Justice Sajid Mahmood Sethi and Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh is hearing the case. Hamza was elected as the Punjab CM on April 16, during a provincial assembly session that was marred by violence. He received a total of 197 votes – 11 more than the required 186 – including from 25 dissident PTI MPs that were crucial for his victory. On May 20, those lawmakers were de-seated by the ECP for defecting. Since then, a series of petitions have challenged Hamza's election as the chief minister. All of them were, however, clubbed together after the court observed that they were identical. During the proceedings yesterday, the court had hinted at holding fresh elections for the post of Punjab's chief minister under April 16 circumstances. Justice Sadaqat, who heads the larger bench, had observed that the fresh polling would be conducted by the same presiding officer who held the previous poll, who in this case is Punjab Assembly's Deputy Speaker Dost Muhammad Mazari. He also said that the Supreme Court had already declared that the votes of the defectors were not to be counted and "this court can issue an order for implementing the Supreme Court's decision". Earlier, in the light of the top court's interpretation on Article 63-A – related to the disqualification of lawmakers over defection – the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had de-seated 25 Punjab Assembly MPs of the PTI for voting Hamza, stating that they had defected from the party.

Maryam to lead by-polls...

FROM PAGE 01

constituencies. In this regard, Maryam Nawaz will start visiting the constituencies from Saturday (July 02). While on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, Maryam Nawaz will visit Lahore constituencies. The sources disclosed that the schedule of election campaign in the remaining 16 constituencies of Punjab was also being prepared. These seats had fallen vacant after 20 Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) 'defecting' MPs, who had switched their loyalties and voted for Hamza Shehbaz in the election for the Punjab CM on April 16, were de-seated in the light of Supreme Court's interpretation of Article 63 of the constitution.

NA approves budget for...

FROM PAGE 01

2% on those generating an income of Rs200 million, 3% on those earning more than 250 million, and 4% on the ones generating an income of Rs300 million or more than that. These measures were in addition to the 10% super tax imposed on 13 large-scale industries – cement, steel, banking, airlines, textile, automobile assembling, sugar mills, beverages, oil and gas, fertiliser, cigarettes, chemicals, and LNG terminals.

UAE envoy calls on...

FROM PAGE 01

UAE Ambassador on hosting the 28th global conference of parties (COP28). Sherry also underlined that the climate change was causing pollution and public health problems for human beings that demanded concerted efforts to overcome the risk. The Minister told the Ambassador that the Federal Cabinet has approved the National Hazard Waste Management Policy 2022 which would help reduce the risks of toxic waste. On the occasion, the UAE Ambassador underlined that climate change was affecting the entire region. He also appreciated Pakistan's initiatives to address climate change. During the meeting both the dignitaries agreed to work together to promote bilateral relations.

‘Not going anywhere,’ says PCB Chairman

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Ruling out any uncertainty over his future in the office, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Ramiz Raja Wednesday said that he was not going anywhere. Addressing a press conference at the National Stadium in Karachi, Ramiz Raja blamed the media for spreading speculations about his exit. "There is no uncertainty. You people [journalists] are the ones creating this uncertainty. I know the inside issues and nothing is going to happen," he added. The former cricketer said it has been a tradition that when a new government is formed, the board's chief is changed, but it was not a constitutional or legal requirement to change the PCB chairman. "I am not going anywhere; should I write it on a stamp paper and give it to you?" he asked a journalist who asked him about his future. The PCB chairman added: "I know you people want me gone as



it will give you headlines." On his future after the conclusion of his term as the PCB chairman, the former batter said he might not be a commentator as he has "fought with almost everyone". Talking about batter Ahmed Shehzad, the PCB chairman said that he should perform well and engage in introspection during his time out. "My message to Ahmed Shehzad: Let the bat do the talking. Shan Masood made a comeback by performing well," the PCB chairman told journalists in response to a question about Shehzad's demand to make a negative report regarding him public. In his conversation with media personnel a day earlier, Shehzad demanded the PCB make a "negative report" about him public. "The report submitted to the PCB by the past team management about me and on the basis of which I have been harmed by being kept away from the team should be made public." In response to the batter, Raja further said that this wasn't Shehzad speaking, rather it was the "frustration" talking – as this happens when you are not in the team.

Serena's career at crossroads after Wimbledon defeat

AGENCIES

LONDON: With her 41st birthday just months away and without a Grand Slam title since 2017, Serena Williams faces searching questions over her future after a painful first-round Wimbledon exit. The American was back on Centre Court on Tuesday after a year away from singles tennis but it was a miserable return to the scene of some of her greatest triumphs. The 23-time major winner was cheered as she entered the court and supported throughout by a crowd desperate to see her recapture former glories against unseeded Harmony Tan of France. But she looked a pale shadow of her former self, making 54 unforced errors in an uncharacteristically sloppy display that ended with a tame forehand dumped into the net. Despite her lack of form and fitness, Serena, who lost 7-5, 1-6, 7-6 (10/7), looked to have the match in her grasp at various points.

She served for victory when 5-4 up in the decider and even in the tie-break raced into a 4-0 lead before her game fell apart. Putting a brave face on her defeat, the American said it was "definitely better than last year", when an ankle injury forced a tearful exit in her first-round match against Aliaksandra Sasnovich. The 40-year-old only returned to tennis last week, teaming up with Ons Jabeur in the doubles at Eastbourne. Asked if she might have played her final Wimbledon, she said she was unsure. "I don't know," she said. "Who knows? Who knows where I'll pop up?" Questioned as to whether she would be happy if the defeat by 115th-ranked Tan was her final memory of Wimbledon, she said: "Obviously not. You know me. Definitely not. "But today I gave all I could do. Maybe tomorrow I could have given more. Maybe a week ago I could have given more. But today was what I could do." The former world number one, handed a wildcard to compete at the All Eng-

land Club, first won Wimbledon way back in 2002. But despite her bitter disappointment she sounded motivated to play on, even though she is nearly twice as old as world number one Iga Swiatek. "It definitely makes me want to hit the practice courts because, you know, when you're playing not bad and you're so close," she said. The US Open, which starts in August, is firmly in her sights. Williams' win there in 1999 was her first singles Grand Slam triumph, launching her stellar career in the majors – which has featured periods of near-total dominance. "When you're at home, the US Open, that being the first place I've won a Grand Slam, is something that's always super special," said Williams, who has won at Flushing Meadows six times. "Your first time is always special. There's definitely lots of motivation to get better and to play at home." Williams' place in the pantheon of all-time greats is already assured but she remains agonisingly one singles title short of Margaret Court's all-time Grand Slam record of 24. The American, who has also won multiple major doubles titles with her sister Venus, last won a Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in 2017, giving birth later that year to her daughter, Olympia. Since then she has been in four Grand Slam finals, including two at Wimbledon and two at the US Open, but has come up short each time. Williams, who has won 73 singles titles in her career overall, has plummeted to 1,204th in the world after her year out of the game. It must look a long way back to the top for a once-dominant player as she considers her future in the game.



Lukaku 'happy' ahead of Inter return

NEWS DESK

MILAN: Romelu Lukaku said he was "very happy" to be back after the Belgian international striker arrived in Milan on Wednesday ahead of his return to Inter Milan on loan from Chelsea. A beaming Lukaku emerged from Linate airport in the early hours of Wednesday morning and gave his short but delighted response to the handful of reporters awaiting his arrival. The 29-year-old will undergo a medical later in the day before making his long-awaited Inter comeback official. Chelsea agreed to a reported deal in which Inter will pay an initial eight million euros (\$8.42 million) plus a further potential three million euros in bonuses for the loan. Lukaku will again lead Inter's attack as they attempt to regain the Serie A title after taking a pay cut – a reported 8.5 million euros for the coming campaign. Lukaku leaves London after failing to make an impression for a second time at Chelsea, not meeting high expectations following a £97.5 million move from Inter last summer. He had made himself a fan favourite over two years at Inter after scoring 64 times in 95 games and driving them to their first Serie A title in over a decade, the 2021 Scudetto ending both an 11-year drought and Juventus' grip on Italian football. However the financial problems of Inter's owners the Suning Group, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic led to coach Antonio Conte leaving the club almost as soon as the title was won. He claimed the cost cutting required by Inter would have prevented him building the team he wanted to challenge domestically and in Europe. Lukaku followed Conte out the door after then European champions Chelsea offered a whopping sum which eased some of Inter's financial issues, and started well on his return to Stamford Bridge. Coach Thomas Tuchel said "he was the type of guy we were missing" after he netted four times in his first four games, but his next goal didn't come until early December and injury, Covid-19 and poor form kept him out of the team.

LONDON: Defending champion Novak Djokovic recorded a routine win over Australian Thanasi Kokkinakis as the top seed eased into the Wimbledon third round. The 35-year-old Serb is aiming to win a fourth successive title at SW19, where he is a six-time winner. The vastly superior Djokovic, a 20-time major winner, was in fine form in a 6-1 6-4 6-2 win against the world number 79 on Centre Court. He will next play compatriot Miomir Kecmanovic or Chilean Alejandro Tabilo. Kokkinakis made a promising start as he claimed the opening point of the match on title-favourite Djokovic's serve with a delicate touch over the net. But any hint of an upset was quickly dismissed by Djokovic, who initially struggled for rhythm in his first-round match against Kwon Soon-woo before coming through in four sets. Following that match, Djokovic said the possibility of not being allowed to contest another Grand Slam for 11 months because of his vaccination status was serving as "motivation" at Wimbledon this year. In a dominant display, the former world number one consolidated an early break of serve to take a 3-0 lead – and he put the first set beyond

doubt as he struck again before serving out the first set to love. Djokovic clinched another early break in the second to once again put Kokkinakis on the back foot, his versatility around the court – including some spectacular net-play – leaving the improved Austral-

ian with no answer despite his best attempts. There was to be no let-up, as a break of serve at the start of the third set, reinforced with another for a 4-1 lead, helped polish off a commanding win – despite Kokkinakis reaching a first break point in the final game.



SCO celebrates anniversary of charter signing

BEIJING: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on Wednesday celebrated the 20th anniversary of the signing of its charter and the 15th anniversary of the Treaty on Long-term Good-neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation among its member states. A roundtable meeting was jointly organized here by the Chinese Academy of International Studies, the China Shanghai Cooperation Organization Research Center and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Secretariat. "Shanghai Cooperation Organization: History, Current Status and Prospects" was the topic. Foreign ministers of the SCO member states, including Pakistan's Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and directors of the executive committee of the regional anti-terrorist institutions sent video congratulations to the

meeting held online and offline. SCO Secretary-General Zhang Ming, in his speech, pointed out that the Charter embodied the original mission of the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the common aspirations and values of member states. The treaty, he said, had created a new model for the countries in the region to carry out dialogue among civilizations and share the fruits of development. He said the SCO must seize the opportunity, resolutely reform, improve itself, have the courage to exert positive energy on the international stage, actively influence the international order and international pattern towards a more democratic, just and reasonable direction, and live up to the expectations of all parties in its family. Pakistan's Ambassador to China Moin

ul Haque, envoys of other SCO member states, experts and scholars from various countries, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and representatives of the media attended the meeting. President of the China Academy of International Studies and Director of the China Shanghai Cooperation Organization Research Center Xu Bu presided over the meeting. President Xu Bu pointed out that the signing of the SCO Charter and the Treaty on Long-term Good-neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation among its member states was a landmark event in the development process of the SCO. "It embodies the new ideas, new ideas and plans of the SCO, represents the 'original aspiration' of the SCO, not only the above. The OECD has a pilot-oriented

role and exemplary significance for global governance." Delegates at the meeting held in-depth discussions on the significance of the Charter and the Treaty, the historical achievements and development prospects of the SCO, and said they would continue to adhere to and carry forward their purposes and principles, strengthen solidarity and cooperation, deepen cooperation in various fields, promote the reform and innovation of the organization, and jointly create a better tomorrow for it. The delegates visited the "Twenty Years of History of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization" and the "Complete Works of World Heritage Sites of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization". – APP

Senegal opposition calls off demos, election threat

AGENCIES

DAKAR: Senegal's main opposition on Wednesday said it would halt street protests and take part in upcoming elections that it had threatened to scuttle after a row erupted over its candidates. Tensions have been rising in the West African state ahead of the July 31 legislative vote, seen as a key test for President Macky Sall. Three people died in outland demonstrations on June 17, according to opposition figures, and the authorities slapped a ban on a further protest called by the opposition for Wednesday. But hours later, the country's leading opposition figure, Ousmane Sonko, said the protests were being halted "following appeals from the public, which expressed its concern over the (Muslim) festival of Tabaski" on July 10. People were also worried about the risk of disruption for students taking important exams, he said. "We have to shift resolutely towards preparing for the legislative elections of July 31," Sonko told reporters in the capital Dakar. The opposition coalition Yewwi Askani Wi "will join these elections," fielding candidates in all 54 regional districts, he said. The ballot is for the 165-seat National Assembly, where Sall supporters wield a majority. "If Macky Sall loses, he won't be talking about seeking a third term," said Sonko, referring to opposition claims that the twice-elected president is seeking to extend his time in office. Sall has remained vague on the subject. Sonko came in third in the 2019 presidential elections and has already declared he will run in the 2024 ballot.

US Open champion Raducanu crashes out of Wimbledon

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: US Open champion Emma Raducanu crashed out of Wimbledon on Wednesday, losing her second-round match against Caroline Garcia 6-3, 6-3 to the disappointment of the British home crowd. The 10th seed, who was troubled by a side strain in the run-up to the Grand Slam, was broken five times in the match on Centre Court by her French opponent, ranked 55 in the world. Raducanu, 19, was on the back foot early in the contest after being broken in her first service game and won just 45 percent of points on her first serve. Garcia, fresh from winning on grass at Bad Homburg, hit 25 winners in an impressive display. "Emma is a huge player and in her home tournament and she proved she can do very well on the big stage," said Garcia. "I really enjoyed playing on Centre Court, it was my first time and very special." Raducanu has struggled with a string of minor injuries since her sensational win at Flushing Meadows last year. She has also come under scrutiny over her failure to settle on a long-term coach.

Kyiv says 144 Ukrainian soldiers freed in prisoner swap

WEB DESK

KYIV: Ukrainian intelligence said Wednesday that 144 Ukrainian soldiers, including scores of defenders of the Azovstal steelworks in the southern port city of Mariupol, had been freed in a prisoner swap with Moscow. "This is the largest exchange since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion. Of the 144 freed, 95 are Azovstal defenders," the main intelligence directorate of Ukraine's defence ministry said on Telegram. It did not specify when and where the swap took place or how many Russian prisoners were released as part of the exchange. It added that 43 of the freed servicemen belonged to the Azov regiment, a former paramilitary unit that is now integrated into the Ukrainian army. Russia considers the unit a neo-Nazi organisation and has previously said its soldiers should stand trial.

Briefs

Erdoğan
meets with
Johnson
and Macron

FOREIGN DESK

MADRID: Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Wednesday held separate meetings with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron and European Council President Charles Michel on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Madrid. The closed-door meeting with Macron, which lasted for nearly an hour, marked the beginning of Turkish president's bilateral contacts at the high-level, three-day summit in the Spanish capital.

Erdoğan's meeting with Michel, held at the IFEMA Convention Center, was also not open to the press. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, Communications Director Fahrettin Altun and intelligence service head Hakan Fidan were also present in the meeting.

Earlier Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also met British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Madrid. The closed-door meeting was the third bilateral contact of the Turkish president at the high-level summit in the Spanish capital. Earlier, Erdoğan held separate meetings with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron and European Council President Charles Michel at the IFEMA Convention Center.

Colombia's
'Truth
Commission'
unveils
final report

DNA

BOGOTA: The "Truth Commission" building in Bogota is covered by 540 meters of cloth, woven by men and women belonging to the Seamstresses of Memory. (File photo) Colombia's "Truth Commission" has released an overdue report on the Latin American country's over 50 years of unrest in an emotional ceremony in the capital, Bogota.

The commission's final report, released on Tuesday, was the culmination of hours of interviews with victims, armed actors and public servants involved in the armed struggle against the US-sponsored Colombian government by destitute farmers and workers and led by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The commission was established in 2016 as part of a historic peace agreement between the Colombian government and FARC.

The 800-page report mainly sheds light on widespread human rights abuses and criminal practices that took place across Colombia during the 52-year armed struggle against the violence perpetrated by the country's notorious, US-trained police and military forces that killed more than 260,000 civilians and displaced up to 5 million people, according to the National Center for Historical Memory.

Ecuador
president
survives
impeachment
attempt

DNA

LONDON: Ecuador's opposition-led congress has failed to gather enough votes to impeach President Guillermo Lasso, as protests by Indigenous Ecuadorians over the high cost of living have persisted.

The motion garnered 80 of the 92 votes needed to remove Lasso from office, according to the results read aloud by the parliament's secretary, Alvaro Salazar, in a virtual session broadcast on social media on Tuesday. President Guillermo Lasso, in a brief address to the nation earlier on Tuesday, accused Indigenous leader Leonidas Iza of self-serving politics, and said, "We will not negotiate with those who hold Ecuador hostage." Iza's powerful Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), in turn, accused the government of "authoritarianism" and said Lasso would bear the consequences for "his hawkish policy."

Azerbaijan, Pakistan eye
multifaceted military co-op

The commander of the Pakistani Air Force expressed thanks for the warm greeting and noted that the peoples of the two nations have always been friendly. It was highlighted that the Azerbaijani-Pakistani ties have greatly increased and reinforced and that there is a big potential for bilateral military cooperation

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijani Defense Minister Col-Gen Zakir Hasanov and Pakistani Air Force Commander Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu have discussed military, military-technical, and military-educational cooperation. Welcoming the Pakistani delegation in Baku on June 29, Hasanov recalled the traditionally friendly ties between the two countries and stressed the developing Azerbaijani-Pakistani relations and strategic partnerships.

The commander of the Pakistani Air Force expressed thanks for the warm greeting and noted that the peoples of the two nations have always been friendly. It was highlighted that the Azerbaijani-Pakistani ties have greatly increased and reinforced and that there is a big potential for bilateral military cooperation.



The parties talked about expanding Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations in the military, military-technical, and military-educational domains. During the 44-day war with Armenia in 2020, Pakistan was among the first countries to voice political support for Azerbaijan. Pakistan also supports Azerbaijan in the restoration of the country's liberated territories.

In September 2021, the Azerbaijani, Turkish and Pakistani special forces conducted joint international drills in Baku, codenamed "Three Brothers - 2021". Under the drills plan, the special forces units carried out practical shootings using small arms and grenade launchers, the report added. Furthermore, the parliaments of Azerbaijan, Turkey and Pakistan signed the Baku Declaration on cooperation. The document was signed following the trilateral meeting held by speakers of the three countries' parliaments on July 27, 2021.

Iran rejects G7 statement
as 'baseless, unjust'

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran has rejected as "baseless, one-sided and unjust" a statement issued by the Group of Seven (G7) following their summit in Germany. Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said the G7 statement was in line with "erroneous habits of the countries that issued it" and shows "their insistence on failed policies that have obstructed the implementation of the nuclear deal and the lifting of sanctions on Iran."

The spokesman also blamed the G7 countries for "fomenting insecurity" in the Persian Gulf region. In their joint statement on Tuesday, the G7 leaders said Iran must "never develop a nuclear weapon," while asserting that the country has "not seized the opportunity to conclude the (nuclear) deal" despite what

it called "intense diplomatic efforts."

"The G7 commits to working together, and with other international partners, to address the threat posed to international security by Iran's nuclear escalation," read the statement.

A diplomatic solution, it added, remains the "best way to restrict Iran's nuclear program," urging Tehran to "cooperate substantively with the IAEA" and to "fulfill its legal obligations by providing technically credible information" to the UN watchdog. The statement further condemned what it called "Iran's continued destabilizing activity in the region," calling upon Tehran to "stop all ballistic missile activities and proliferation inconsistent with UNSCR 2231 and other UNSC resolutions."

It said regional stability was "impaired" by Iran's "threats to maritime secu-

riety" and also expressed concern over what it called "continued human rights violations" in Iran.

Taking strong exception to the statement, Iran said the G7 statement "deliberately ignores the gross violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and UN Security Council Resolution 2231 by the United States through imposition of maximum illegal sanctions" on Iran. "They deliberately ignore the Islamic Republic of Iran's insistence on nuclear weapons embargo, and by having the largest arsenal of nuclear weapons, they make false accusations against Iran," Kanani said.

The G7 statement came on the day Iran and the US resumed indirect talks mediated by the European Union in Doha, ending a three-month deadlock in reviving the 2015 nuclear deal. The Iranian spokesman decried the G7 leaders for

their "irresponsible and provocative positions and behavior," saying it poses "greatest threat to the international security."

"They are the ones who, in order to compensate for wrong policies of the past, should use significant opportunities provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran for negotiations, and bring about calmness to the result of negotiations by resorting to diplomacy, with complete lifting of sanctions," Kanani added. On G7 leaders' criticism of Iran's ballistic missile program, the spokesman called the program "legitimate" and "non-negotiable." He also castigated the G7 leaders for the "selective use of human rights" and "turning a blind eye to gross violation of the rights of more than 80 million Iranians by imposing illegal sanctions and killing the defenseless people of Palestine and Yemen."

Kosovo cafe bans
Europeans over
visa 'humiliation'

PRISTINA: Europeans have been banned from a restaurant in Pristina in retaliation for the EU keeping its door shut to Kosovo passport holders. The symbolic gesture is "a sign of revolt and despair" said Shpejtim Pefqeli, the owner of Mama's Restaurant, which is just across the road from the European Rule of Law Mission in the Kosovo capital. Pefqeli once served up Italian fare to lots of Europeans, but not anymore. His ban came after last week's EU-Western Balkans summit, where Kosovo had hoped to be accepted into a scheme that would allow its citizens to visa free travel in Europe's Schengen Area. But by the summit's end, the measure was not adopted even as Pristina argued that it fulfilled all the conditions.

It was a devastating blow to many and came four years after the European Commission first said Kosovo was eligible for entry into the arrangement. Since Kosovo declared independence in 2008, the territory has been recognised by over 100 countries. But its passport still opens few doors. Indeed in languishes alongside Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and North Korea in the bottom 11 of the Henley index, which ranks countries according to the number of destinations their passport holders can visit. With few visa-free destinations available, Kosovars are forced to wait weeks, if not months, while completing mountains of paperwork to secure the necessary documents to travel abroad. We got angry. We saw that we were humiliated," Pefqeli told AFP, saying he felt compelled to protest after the summit. Plastered at the entrance of his restaurant is a sign that now reads: "No entry for EU citizens without visa." "There were two Bulgarian women in the restaurant" when Pefqeli put up the sign. "They laughed when I told them not to hurry, but to finish their meal and drinks before they leave," he said. - APP

Climate
change
may spark
conflict
in Africa

DNA

LONDON: Scientists have found interesting details about how climate change plays a role in likelihood and duration of conflict on the African continent. The likelihood and duration of armed conflict in Africa can be impacted by climate change, a new study suggests. Conducted by a team of international researchers, the study was published in the latest issue of the journal *Economia Politica*.

The team of researchers used a data set from the African continent spanning 26 years, from 1990 to 2016. Relying on a negative binomial regression model, they analysed whether certain climatic phenomena, in combination with the socio-economic characteristics of the areas studied, had any effect on the likelihood of triggering a conflict, and if it did, how long it lasted.

"In the context of developing countries, agriculture is unquestionably the sector most exposed to climate variability," the researchers write. "Together with agriculture, the joint increase in temperature and changes in precipitation patterns often leads to more severe drought conditions, also influencing the livestock sector by inducing changes in prices or pastoralism displacement with a consequent increase in competition on land-use."

Moscow
slams Russian
diplomats'
expulsion

DNA

MOSCOW: Russia on Wednesday slammed the expulsion of 70 Russian diplomats from Bulgaria, saying it was done at the behest of external forces. "These external forces under false claims try to pit European states with Russia, cynically manipulate dependent governments and politicians, destroy everything that has been created on the European continent for decades," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told a news conference in Moscow.

The decision, she said, was an attempt by the parliament and Bulgarian Cabinet "to strike a devastating blow to relations with Russia and the remaining mechanisms of bilateral dialogue." Bulgaria on Tuesday said it will expel 70 Russian diplomatic staff for "working against Bulgaria's interests."

Turning to Ukraine, the spokeswoman reiterated that the Russian military hit an arms depot and not a shopping mall in Ukraine's city of Kremenchuk, and that the trade center caught fire after the ammunition began to detonate.

She questioned the Ukrainian authorities' decision to build an ammunition depot near a shopping mall. "This is what we call hiding behind the back of civilians, using them as a shield, ... hostages to geopolitical interests," Zakharova said. She added that Western arms deliveries to Ukraine have created threats for the global community as weapons could end up on black markets.

Levy upto
Rs16,000
on import
of Cellphone

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Wednesday slapped a levy on the import of cellphones through Finance Bill 2022-23.

The house passed the finance bill 2022-23 presented by Minister of State for Finance Ayisha Ghous Pasha in its session. All budget proposals from the opposition members were rejected with a majority vote.

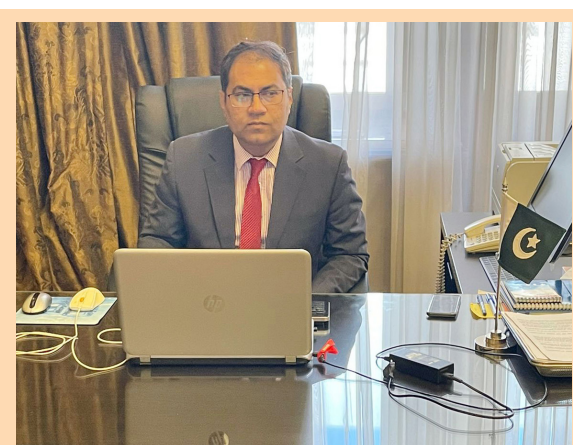
According to the Finance Bill, there shall be a mobile handset levy at the rates specified on smartphones of different price categories. As per the bill, there will be a levy of Rs100 per set on a cellphone with cost and freight (C&F) value of up to \$30. The rate of levy per set on mobile phones having a C&F value between \$30 and \$100 will be Rs 200. The rate of levy per set on mobile phones having a C&F value between \$101 and \$200 will be Rs600.

Kiev must stop
intimidating Russian
journalists: Kremlin

MOSCOW: The Kiev regime and Ukraine's special services should stop trying to intimidate Russian journalists through assassination attempts and provocations, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said at a briefing on Wednesday. The Ukrainian security services have been working very closely in the journalistic environment for a long time, coming up with terrible provocative actions, preparing to assassinate Russian journalists," she said. "By trying to intimidate our journalists with their 'punishments', the Kiev regime is demonstrating a new facet of lawlessness and misanthropy. Stop intimidating people who work in the media, stop threatening them." The Foreign Ministry spokeswoman recalled in this regard the threats made by Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky in his Tuesday night video address, in which he promised to "punish" Russian journalists for being dedicated to performing their professional duties. "It is indicative that Zelensky's address with mentioned threats was made public right after the Ukrainian president tried to accuse our country from the UN of terrorism tribunal," the diplomat said. "I see an analogue with the terrorist act of Nazis, foiled the aim to several prominent representatives of dia. - DNA

Pakistan embassy
Moscow holds
Khuli Kachehri

MOSCOW: The Embassy of Pakistan in Moscow has held a Khuli Kachehri, on 29 June 2022, in an online format. The meeting was conducted by Deputy Head of Mission Mr. Rana Summar Javed. The members of the Pakistani community in Russia had an opportunity to receive the first-hand information from the Embassy's officials regarding a wide range of issues, including passport deliveries, which have been interrupted due to suspension of courier services in the Russian Federation. Mr. Rana Summar Javed informed the participants that the Embassy is working with the immigration authorities of Pakistan to speed up the process. He further added that in order to resolve the situation as soon as possible, some alternative solutions are being discussed. The Deputy Head of Mission also highlighted the importance of utilisation of legal channels for



sending remittances to Pakistan, which will significantly contribute to the development of the country. In his closing remarks, Mr. Rana Summar Javed reiterated the resolve of the Embassy's staff to provide maximum facilitation to the Pakistani citizens in Russia and reminded about the need to abide by laws and rules of host country. - DNA

Saudi Arabia launches "Holodoctor"
service for Hajj pilgrims

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia's Minister of Health Fahd Al-Jalal launched the "Holodoctor" service for medical consultations in cooperation with STC, through which modern medical services will be offered to pilgrims during this year's Hajj season through videoconference. These services include "inspection, diagnosis, and dispensing medicines" through direct contact with Seha Virtual Hospital in

Riyadh, Saudi Press Agency reported on Wednesday. The minister extended his appreciation to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and the Crown Prince, for their care and interest in providing all necessary means to all pilgrims and facilitating procedures for them to perform rituals in comfortable and safe atmospheres, noting that the Ministry of Health

has prepared early to the 1443 Hijri year Hajj through a comprehensive system of health facilities in the Holy Places, which included a set of hospitals, health centers and ambulances under the supervision of medical, technical and administrative personnel that are trained to work in Hajj. He also said that several medical services were connected within this service that the hospital

offers with hospitals of the Holy Places to offer medical support and assistance necessary to pilgrims, where comprehensive medical personnel at the Seha Virtual Hospital were trained under the supervision of specialists in several accurate specializations who work round the clock in three main departments, virtual X-ray, virtual strokes, and virtual ICU. - APP

Nordic accession to be 'unprecedentedly quick,'

DNA

MADRID: The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO is expected to be "unprecedentedly quick, within few weeks," the military alliance's chief said on Wednesday in his doorstep remarks at the ongoing Madrid summit. Asked by Anadolu Agency whether Türkiye, Finland and Sweden have determined a calendar after signing Tuesday's memorandum, Jens Stoltenberg said: "Well, Finland and Sweden have already taken steps to tighten their legislation on terrorism. So, this is something which has already started to be implemented."

"And I think this agreement is extremely important because it reflects the commitment we have to stand together as allies to address all our security concerns, of course also including the fight against terrorism," he added. The memorandum allows the two Nordic countries to become NATO members but conditions them to take steps on Türkiye's terrorism concerns and lifts an arms embargo on Ankara. It also states that Finland and Sweden will work closely with Türkiye on issues related to exchange information, extradition and in general the fight against terrorism. Noting that they will make a decision during the day to invite the Nordic countries to become members, he said the accession process will be "unprecedentedly quick." Although there will be a ratification process in 30 parliaments of the members, Stoltenberg said that he cannot promise but he expects the process to be completed

"quickly" and added: "I think we can hardly find any other accession process with so few weeks between the application that happened mid-May, and the invitation that will happen now." Underlining that the Madrid summit will be "a transformative summit" because "historic decisions" will be made by the member states, Stoltenberg said that allies will agree on a new Strategic Concept and a "fundamental shift to our deterrence and defense." "And then the leaders will also make a historic decision to invite Finland and Sweden to become members of NATO," he added. Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Russian President Vladimir Putin would be "getting more NATO" on his country's western border. Johnson said that having two new members in NATO is "a big step for our alliance," referring to Sweden and Finland.

NATO officially invites
Finland, Sweden

MADRID: NATO on Wednesday officially invited Finland and Sweden to become members of the alliance. The announcement came as part of the Madrid summit declaration following the meeting of NATO heads of state and government. "Today, we have decided to invite Finland and Sweden to become members of NATO, and agreed to sign the Accession Protocols," the NATO members said. "In any accession to the Alliance, it is of vital importance that the legitimate security concerns of all Allies are properly addressed." It also "welcomed the conclusion of the trilateral memorandum" between Türkiye, Finland, and Sweden. "The accession of Finland and Sweden will make them safer, NATO stronger, and the Euro-Atlantic area more secure," the declaration said. "The alliance endorsed a new Strategic Concept that reaffirms the responsibility of ensuring its collective defense. - Russia has been described as the "most significant and direct threat" to allies' security, peace, and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. - Jointly with Ukraine, NATO decided on a strengthened package of support, accelerating the delivery of non-lethal defense equipment and modernizing Kyiv's defense sector. - DNA

Briefs

Pakistan mulls oil import from Russia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Energy has asked industrial experts to provide analysis for importing oil from Russia, as the country seeks to procure the commodity at a cheaper rate amid a financial crunch. Pakistan's monthly fuel oil imports are set to hit a four-year high in June, Refinitiv data showed. The country's fuel oil imports could climb to about 700,000 tonnes this month, after hitting 630,000 tonnes in May, according to Refinitiv estimates. Imports last peaked at 680,000 tonnes in May 2018 and 741,000 tonnes in June 2017. Speaking a day ago, Minister of the State for Petroleum Musadik Malik had said that Pakistan was "open to the idea of importing cheap oil from Russia". He said that as against the PTI-led government's claim in this regard, there were no official agreements between the two states regarding the import of cheap oil, however, a letter was sent to Russia by the previous government. "Since coming to power, the coalition government has tried following up on the letter but has so far received no response from Russia," he said. The state minister added that if Russia was willing to sell oil to Pakistan at cheaper rates, the government would definitely consider the option but would "ensure striking deals which would not result in any types of international sanctions on Pakistan."

UNODC releases World Drug Report 2022

DNA

VIENNA: Cannabis legalization in parts of the world appears to have accelerated daily use and related health impacts, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'s World Drug Report 2022. Released today, the report also details record rises in the manufacturing of cocaine, the expansion of synthetic drugs to new markets, and continued gaps in the availability of drug treatments, especially for women. According to the report, around 284 million people aged 15-64 used drugs worldwide in 2020, a 26 per cent increase over the previous decade. Young people are using more drugs, with use levels today in many countries higher than with the previous generation. In Africa and Latin America, people under 35 represent the majority of people being treated for drug use disorders. Globally, the report estimates that 11.2 million people worldwide were injecting drugs. Around half of this number was living with hepatitis C, 1.4 million were living with HIV, and 1.2 million were living with both.

Zelensky says will attend G20 depending on 'participants'

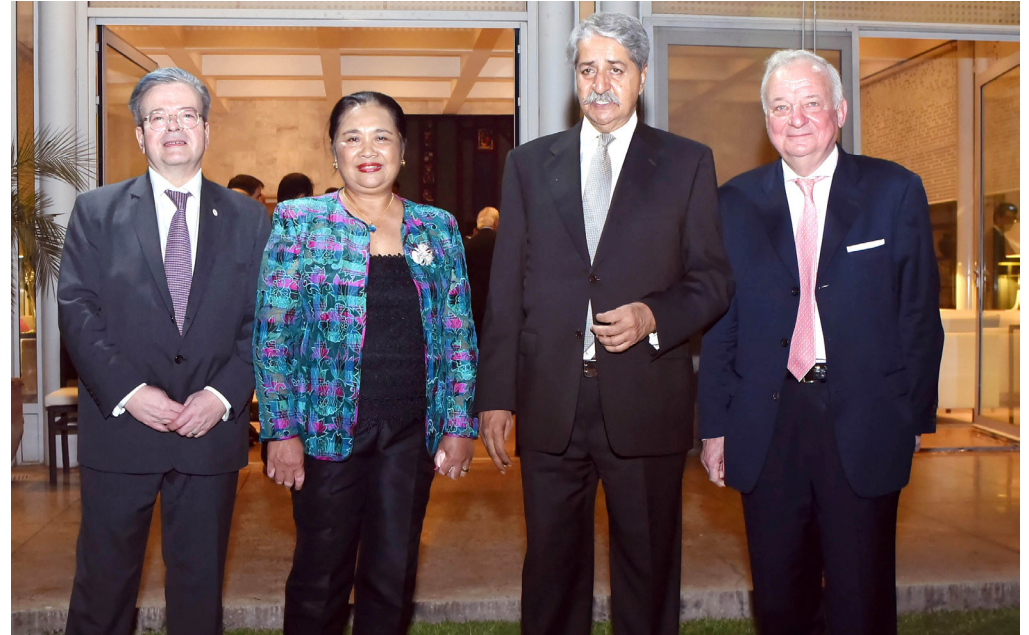
KYIV: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky on Wednesday told Indonesia's visiting President Joko Widodo that he will attend the upcoming G20 summit in Bali depending on who else is attending. "Certainly I accept the invitation. Ukraine's participation will depend on the security situation in the country and on the composition of the summit's participants," Zelensky said following their talks in Kyiv, in an apparent reference to Russian President Vladimir Putin's attendance. Widodo was in Kyiv Wednesday before heading to Moscow to meet Putin, who on February 24 sent troops into pro-Western Ukraine. Indonesia, like most major emerging economies, has tried to maintain a neutral position and has called for a peaceful resolution to Russia's months-long offensive in Ukraine. - APP

French envoy lauds services of outgoing economic section head

Dominique Simon is leaving Pakistan after completing his tenure; wishes to come back again



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France Nicolas Galey speaks during a reception he hosted to bid farewell to Dominique Simon. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Naveed Qamar, Ambassador of France Nicolas Galey and the outgoing Head of Economic Section Dominique Simon and his wife. - DNA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France Nicolas Galey hosted a reception to bid farewell to the Head of the Economic Section Dominique Simon who is leaving Pakistan after completing his term for the second time. Mr. Dominique had already served on the same

position. Ambassador of France in his brief remarks praised Dominique for his outstanding services. He said Dominique Simon has been to over 82 countries as part of his professional assignments. The ambassador mentioned some of the countries where Mr. Dominique had served including his posting in Pakistan. Ambassador Galey said it was a privilege for him to know Mr. Dominique when he arrived in Pakistan

five months ago. "I, indeed benefited a lot from the experience of Dominique Simon besides getting to know Pakistani friends through him". Dominique Simon in his speech thanked the ambassador for hosting a reception for him and his spouse and providing him with a chance of meeting with close friends and bidding them a farewell. He, on the occasion, shared with the audience fond memories of his tenures in

Pakistan. He said he is leaving Pakistan but his heart would always throb with the people of Pakistan adding he would wish to come back again to this beautiful country. He said during his tenures in Pakistan he tried his best to contribute to cementing of trade and economic relations between the two countries. He especially thanked his Pakistani partners for being a great source of support and inspiration.



RAWALPINDI: Yang Jiechi, member of the Political Bureau of Central Committee of Communist Party of China (CPC) and Director of Central Committee on Foreign Affairs, China calls on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ. - DNA

Chinese CPC member Yang Jiechi calls on COAS

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The member of the Political Bureau of Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Director of Central Committee on Foreign Affairs, China Yang Jiechi called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa at GHQ, ARY News quoted ISPR on Wednesday. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, defence collaboration, progress on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and regional security were discussed in detail, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. COAS Bajwa said that Pakistan values China's role in global and regional affairs and we look forward to enhancing our strategic partnership. The army chief reiterated that Pakistan remains committed to cooperating with its international partners for peace and stability in the region. The visiting dignitary thanked General Qamar Javed Bajwa for special measures taken for the provision of a safe and secure environment for Chinese personnel employed on various projects in Pakistan and efforts towards regional stability. He also assured to play his role for further improvement in diplomatic cooperation with Pakistan at all levels.

Some big names under scrutiny in Iran

MONITORING DESK

TEHRAN: Before he was removed from his post last week, Hossein Taeb presided over a vast and feared intelligence apparatus in Iran. For more than a decade, he was a feared presence in Iran, presiding over a vast intelligence apparatus. He crushed domestic dissent and political rivals, and expanded covert operations beyond Iran's borders to target dissidents and enemies abroad. Hossein Taeb, a 59-year-old cleric and chief of intelligence for the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps,

seemed untouchable. That was until he was abruptly removed from his position last week, a casualty of a relentless campaign by Israel to undermine Iran's security by targeting its officials and military sites, according to officials and analysts in both countries. A botched Iranian effort to target Israeli citizens in Turkey, which caused an embarrassing diplomatic crisis with Ankara, a regional ally of Tehran, eventually tipped the balance, according to Israeli intelligence officials briefed on the Iranian plot who requested anonymity to discuss sensitive operations and intelligence topics. The removal of Mr.

Taeb was an acknowledgment by Tehran that confronting the threat from Israel required new leadership and a reset of strategies and protocols, according to Mohammad Ali Abtahi, a reformist former vice president of Iran and cleric who was ousted by conservatives in 2009 but has maintained close ties to top officials. "The security breaches inside Iran and the vast scope of operations by Israel have really undermined our most powerful intelligence organization," Mr. Abtahi said by telephone from Tehran. "The strength of our security has always been the bedrock of the Islamic Republic and it has been damaged in the past year."

Officials with Iran's mission to the United Nations said they had no immediate comment about the claims. General Nasiri's detention came two months after several dozen employees of the Ministry of Defense's missile development program were arrested on suspicion of leaking classified military information, including design blueprints of missiles, to Israel, according to an Iranian official familiar with the raid. During the past year, Israel has intensified the scope and frequency of its attacks inside Iran, including on the nuclear and military sites that Mr. Taeb's organization was responsible for protecting.

Govt decides to 'fully activate' NCOC as Covid cases surge

ISLAMABAD: The federal government Wednesday decided to "fully activate" the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) in light of the rising coronavirus cases across the country. A statement from PM Office said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired an NCOC meeting, where he expressed concerns over the rising COVID-19 cases and issued directives to revive Pakistan's coronavirus response forum. The premier ordered district and provincial authorities to strictly implement protective measures and take other steps to keep the deadly virus at bay. The NCOC stopped functioning at the end of March after running operations for two years and leading Pakistan's response to COVID-19, while all its roles were handed over to the National Institute of Health (NIH). In a press conference after the decision, Health Minister Abdul Qadir Patel said that

the public will have to follow standard operating procedures (SOPs) till the coronavirus is prevalent. "We are mulling over strategies for religious gatherings as the threat of coronavirus cases rising still persists," he said. The health minister added that the government has also decided to increase COVID testing as till now only those who had symptoms were being tested. He said that the government will begin vaccinating children aged 5 to 12 in the next month or two while the campaign for booster shots will be initiated again. As many as 6.8 million Pfizer doses are being arranged for administering to children up to 12 years, the health minister said. "We will also have to ensure SOPs' implementation at mandis (cattle market)." The decision to revive NCOC comes as Pakistan's daily COVID-19 case count crossed the 500-mark for the first time in three months amid a constant rise in the recent countrywide spread of the disease, the NIH's data showed Wednesday morning. The country reported 541 new COVID-19 infections overnight, pushing Pakistan's positivity ratio above 3% again. The new infections were detected after countrywide diagnostic testing on 15,462 samples, as per the data. The COVID-19 positivity dropped to 2.4% as per the statistics issued on Tuesday. However, after the recent rise in cases, the country's COVID-19 positivity rate swelled to 3.5% in a single day. - DNA

Germany plans return to debt-limit rules in 2023

BERLIN: Germany will reinstate its so-called debt brake in 2023 after suspending it for three years to cope with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, sources in the finance ministry said Wednesday. The government will borrow 17.2 billion euros (\$18.1 million) next year, adhering to the rule enshrined in the constitution that normally limits Germany's public deficit to 0.35 percent of overall annual economic output, despite new spending as a result of Russia-Ukraine conflict, the sources said. The new borrowing set out in a draft budget to be presented to the cabinet on Friday is almost 10 billion euros higher than a previous figure for 2023 announced in April. However, "despite a considerable increase in costs, the debt brake will be respected," one of the sources said. Although Germany is traditionally a frugal nation, the government broke its own debt rules at the start of the coronavirus pandemic and unleashed vast financial aid to steer the economy through the crisis. The government has this year unveiled a multi-billion-euro support package to help companies in Europe's biggest economy weather the fallout from the ongoing conflict in Europe and sanctions against Russia. - APP

Chinese Minister conferred upon with Hilal-e-Pakistan

Ambassador Moin ul Haque paid a rich tribute to Minister Li Xiaopeng for his endeavours for strengthening Pakistan-China friendship and his role for completion of important road connectivity projects in Pakistan

DNA

BEIJING: On behalf of the President of Pakistan, Ambassador Moin ul Haque conferred Pakistan's civil award 'Hilal-e-Pakistan' upon Mr. Li Xiaopeng, the Minister of Transport of China, in a special investiture ceremony held at the Embassy of Pakistan, Beijing. The event was attended by the senior officials of Chinese Ministry of Transport, representatives of media organizations and officers of Pakistan Embassy. Mr. Li Xiaopeng is the member of 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. He is the son of Mr. Li Peng, the former Premier of China and Chairman of Standing Committee of National People's Congress. Minister Li Xiaopeng is an ardent advocate of China-Pakistan friendship and spearheaded implementation of several



transport infrastructure projects in Pakistan under the framework of CPEC. Speaking at the occasion, Ambassador Moin ul Haque paid a rich tribute to Minister Li Xiaopeng for his endeavours for strengthening Pakistan-China friendship and his role for completion of important road connectivity projects in Pakistan. Ambassador highlighted that CPEC was a central pillar of Pakistan's socio-economic development vision and that the two countries would ensure its smooth and steady implementation as envisaged by

their leadership. Appreciating the role of former Premier Li Peng for the consolidation of bilateral relationship, Ambassador underscored that ironclad friendship between Pakistan-China was the fruition of untiring efforts of successive generations of the leaders of the two countries and drew its strength from the unanimous public and institutional support in both Pakistan and China. In his remarks, Mr. Li Xiaopeng expressed his gratitude to the government and people's of Pakistan for the conferment of civil award. He underlined that as All-weather Strategic Cooperative Partner and Iron Brother, China would continue to support key transport projects under CPEC in Pakistan contributing to overall progress and development of the country. He also underscored the support of his ministry to meet Pakistan's essential needs for the up-gradation of its transport infrastructure network.