



# Islamabad POST

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**China says war with US to be unbearable disaster: Li Shangfu**

Detailed News On Page-08

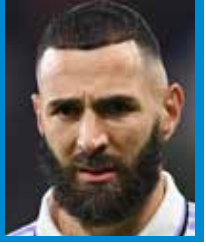
**North Korea vows second attempt to launch satellite**

Detailed News On Page-08



**Benzema announces to leave Madrid**

Detailed News On Page-06



**Briefs**

**Hina to depart for Europe**

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar would undertake official visits to Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Belgium from Monday to 13th of this month. According to Foreign Office spokesperson, she will hold meetings at the ministerial level to discuss political engagement and cooperation in development, trade and climate change. She would also meet lawmakers and local entrepreneurs. In Belgium, the engagements of Hina Rabbani Khar include meetings with Members of the European Parliament and senior officials of the European Commission.

**Sheikh says second raid conducted**

MUHAMMAD UMER

RAWALPINDI: AML chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmad on Sunday accused elite forces of breaking and entering into his residence at midnight before beating up his house help and forcefully extracting statements from them. Last week, Rashid had said that while he was out of the country, troops of the paramilitary force and Islamabad Police had broken into his house in Islamabad Sector F-7 in the wee hours of Wednesday morning. "I was not present in the house," Rashid had tweeted hours later, claiming that a raid party of around 80 to 90 people broke down the door of his house.

**Naqvi for redressal of complaints of expats**

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has issued instructions to the Inspector General Police for immediate redressal of complaints of overseas Pakistanis. Syed Mohsin Naqvi also issued directions to all officials including all Commissioners, RPOs, Deputy Commissioners and DPOs should spare no effort to redress the grievances of Overseas Pakistanis in the respective cities.

## Dar eyes people friendly budget 'Budget will satisfy the stakeholders'

Finance Minister says the govt will provide as much relief to the public as possible

SHUJAAT HAMZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar says the government will announce a pro-investment, people welfare-oriented, and business-friendly budget for the next financial year. Talking to a private news channel on Sunday, he said the government will provide as much relief to the public as possible. The Minister the government was introducing long-term policies aimed at sustainable economic growth in the country and achieving the economic targets. Criticized those who were announcing dates for default, he said there were serious challenges the country had been facing, however, the government had rescued it from default. Meanwhile, a joint delegation of Pakistan Stock Exchange and Mutual Funds Association of Pakistan called on Finance Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar. Talking to them, the Finance Minister said PSX was at one time one of the best performing stock markets. He assured the group that their concerns would be addressed and measures would be taken to encourage investment in Pakistan. He hoped that PSX would reverse the trend and once again become one of the top performing stock markets in the region. Ahead of the federal budget for the fiscal year 2023-24, the rupee is expected to trade range-bound in the interbank market, with most players keeping to sidelines until the new finance bill as well as the monetary policy is unveiled.

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## Govt likely to present Rs13-15tr budget

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Assuming record high mark up cost due to high interest rate, the coalition government is likely to present a Rs13-15 trillion budget for the fiscal year 2023-24, media reported Sunday citing a budget preview report by Topline Securities. The report said that the government is expected to set the target of Rs9-9.2 trillion for the fiscal year 2023-24, up 21% from the target of Rs7.5 trillion set for the current fiscal year. It should be noted that if set, the tax target for the financial year 2023-24 would be 29% higher than the expected tax collection in the outgoing FY23. The brokerage house said it's a challenging time for the government to present a budget for the next year amid stagflation and uncertainties related to upcoming elections and how Pakistan would bridge its external account funding gap. "This uncertainty on financing US dollar funding gap is creating nervousness in currency, bond,

Continued on Page 06

## Arrests continue 'Call data for May 9, March 8 riots similar' IG says attacks were planned and carried out at specific targets

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: The Inspector General Police (IGP) Punjab, Dr Usman Anwar has claimed that the call data from the riots that took place on March 8 and May 9 shows significant similarities, leading to the arrest of perpetrators after successful identification. On March 8, Ali Bilal alias Zillay Shah, allegedly died of police violence and torture after their personnel launched a crackdown on PTI activists and supporters staging a rally near party chief Imran Khan's Zaman Town residence in Lahore to kick off its election campaign. The Punjab police chief had later

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## Police to move LHC against Yasmin release

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Punjab police decided on Sunday to approach the high court against a Lahore anti-terrorism court's order to discharge PTI leader Yasmin Rashid in a case pertaining to vandalism at the Lahore Corps Commander's

Continued on Page 06



ANKARA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif departs from Ankara after completing two day visit to Türkiye. – DNA

## PM meets world leaders in Türkiye

Shehbaz discusses bilateral ties at Erdogan's inauguration

DNA

ANKARA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday, during his recent visit to Türkiye, met with different world leaders and discussed bilateral ties and cooperation between Pakistan and their respective countries. The prime minister arrived in Ankara on Friday on a two-day official visit to attend a ceremony marking the re-election of Recep Tayyip Erdogan as the country's president. He attended the ceremony on Saturday. During the meetings, the prime minister outlined the government's vision to facilitate foreign direct investment and encourage joint ventures. The exchanges spanned around expanding trade and investment ties to maximise mutual gains from available opportunities in Pakistan and enhance cooperation in key sectors of the economy through the direct presence of Turkish enterprises and via joint ventures with Pakistani counterparts. Today, the prime minister met former deputy prime minister of Türkiye and Chairman MHP Devlet Bahçeli and conveyed his felicitations over success in the elections,

Continued on Page 06

## Illegal appointments case

# Parvez Elahi sent on 14-day judicial remand in prison

Will stand with PTI even if 100 cases registered, says Elahi

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: An anti-corruption court in Lahore on Sunday rejected the Punjab Anti-Corruption Establishment's (ACE) plea seeking physical remand of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi in the Punjab Assembly illegal recruitments case. Judicial Magistrate Ghulam Murtaza Virk sent the former Punjab chief minister to jail on a 14-day judicial remand. Earlier today, the former Punjab chief minister – who was

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## NAB summons Khan, spouse on June 7

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has summoned Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, on June 7 for

Continued on Page 06

# 4 soldiers martyred in Neelum mishap

Driver of Pak Army truck loses control, falls into gorge

DNA

NEELUM VALLEY: Four Pakistan Army soldiers were martyred on Sunday when their truck fell into a river in Neelum Valley's Changan area. According to the Neelum police, the driver of the cargo truck of the Pakistan Army, which was travelling from Batrasi to Mandkaro, lost control of the vehicle and plunged into a deep gorge. As soon as the information

about the accident was received, armed forces and civil rescue teams reached the spot and initiated a rescue operation. It was further reported that the bodies of the martyred soldiers were pulled from the river and shifted to a nearby hospital. Last year, nine soldiers of the Pakistan Army were martyred and four injured when their truck plunged into a ravine in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), according to the military's media wing. The truck – part of a military convoy – was heading towards Mang Bajri in Bagh district

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# Are we heading towards general elections?

It is learnt that a tentative date of October 8, 2023 has been agreed upon for holding of the general elections. As most of the PTI stands sorted out, the rest of the leadership, if not sentenced by a court of law, must be allowed to take part in the election drill freely. And that is perhaps the demand of the international community as well

COMMENT

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

PAKISTANI politics is yet again experiencing some interesting and intriguing times. While the formation of the King's Party spearheaded by business tycoon Jehangir Khan Tareen may be in the offing, the PDM on the other hand appears to have been caught in a state of to be or not to be. When the purging process in the PTI kick-started after the May 9 incidents, the PDM and especially the PML N expressed jitters for it believed nobody could stop it from regaining the power after fragmentation of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. But to much of its disappointment and astonishment, the powers-that-be seem to have decided to cobble together a new party obviously with a view to giving tough time to the PDM parties in the elections and make sure that no party gets absolute majority. The PML N leadership needs to be worried over these developments as the power-sharing formula carries fewer seats for N league as compared with the PPP. As regards the PTI it has become almost certain that Imran Khan may not

be allowed to take part in the elections or his party may not be allowed to win majority. The Minus-Imran formula has been put into motion. The meeting of Fawad Chaudhry with Shah Mahmood Qureshi in Adila Jail on May 31, 2022 was in fact part of the plan. The PTI deserters tried their best to convince Qureshi to part ways with Imran and lead the party. However, according to the son of Qureshi, his father outright rejected the proposal and told them that he was the vice chairman of the party and how he could do it. They also tried to bring Qureshi round to join hands with Jehangir Tareen party, nevertheless this option may not work as both Qureshi and Tareen belong to diametrically different mindsets. Additionally, they come from the same belt and thus have deep political rivalry as well. Even when both of them were part of the PTI, their bilateral fights were well-known within and without the party. Imran Khan has announced Qureshi to be his successor in case he was arrested or disqualified despite the fact that the PTI chairman, as confided by his confidants, never trusted Qureshi and always considered him a 'snake in the grass', who wanted to take over the party whenever he got a chance. So, in that backdrop, why would Qureshi leave PTI when he knows that his dream of taking over the party is about to come true.

Actually the PTI deserters, after leaving the party feel themselves isolated and abandoned. No party is ready to accept them and they cannot win elections on their own therefore they made an attempt to remain a part of the PTI minus Imran Khan. This idea, from the face of it, seems to have failed, though they are likely to make another attempt. Second option for these deserters is to join the Tareen's King's Party, but since they all happen to be the 'seasoned' politicians therefore they have a clear understanding that King's parties are only made to damage the vote bank of the mainstream parties. They cannot form governments independently. The only option in this scenario appears to be the PPP, which may accept some of the deserters who happen to be the electables. The PML N and PPP perhaps were of the view that once the PTI is cut to size, there won't be any problem for them to form the next government but the creation of a new party plus reinforcement of the PML Q has certainly rung alarm bells in their ranks. It clearly shows that these parties will not get a definite majority either at the federal or provincial levels. As reports suggest, PPP turns out to be the frontrunner when it comes to formation of government at the Federal level. The PML N may be considered for Punjab while Sindh may go to PPP again. While PPP

would be more than happy with this arrangement, the PML N for sure would not accept it come what may, so we can anticipate another round of political haggling and fight this time among the PDM parties. It is widely perceived that these parties shall be at daggers drawn with one another once the election schedule is announced. PML N has a history of estranged relations with the Establishment. It never completed its tenures simply because it developed difficult relations with the Establishment soon after coming to power. Taking a lead from the past we can say that there exists a huge trust-deficit between PML N and the Establishment. PPP on the other hand has somehow succeeded in mending fences with Rawalpindi. The PPP, as its past suggests, turns out to be a flexible party. It can mould itself in order to be able to flow with the current. As regards the future of the PTI, it looks bleak at the moment. But as we know nothing is certain or uncertain in politics, especially in Pakistani politics. If Imran Khan manages to stay out of jail and can avoid disqualification as well then for sure he has the guts to put up a formidable resistance. Even otherwise, Imran Khan's PTI is not going anywhere. It will still be around albeit with a limited role. No time can be more opportune for Imran Khan than this to

openly admit that the fragmentation of the PML N in 2018 was a wrongful act and that he came to power with the help of the Establishment. He may gain a lot politically by making these assertions. What we can conclude from the prevailing situation and the situation which we may face in the coming days is that no immediate respite is insight for the common people, particularly after the elections. If a hung parliament emerges then our woes are likely to be multiplied further. The fluid political scene may serve as a stumbling block in the way of foreign investments and financial assistance from donors and international financial institutions. Brotherly countries such as Saudi Arabia and UAE have made it clear that they can give something to Pakistan only when the IMF deal is materialized. Therefore a strong and stable government is need of the hour with a view to effectively matching the existing and future challenges. It is learnt that a tentative date of October 8, 2023 has been agreed upon for holding of the general after expiry of assemblies' term in August. As most of the PTI stands sorted out, the rest of the leadership, if not sentenced by a court of law, must be allowed to take part in the election drill freely in order to ensure fair elections. And that is perhaps the demand of the international community as well.

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# Malik urges West to engage with Taliban leaders for peace

He said this change in leadership can be seen as a positive development and an indication of willingness on the part of the Taliban to open up. He said that the recent decision by the authorities in Herat to allow several middle and high schools for girls to reopen was one such step

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former SAARC President Itikhar Ali Malik on Sunday urged the West to engage with the new top leadership of the Taliban in order to achieve durable peace and stability in the region. Talking to a delegation of industrialists led by Taimur Ali Malik here, he said that a new golden opportunity had arisen in the war-torn country and the West must take advantage of it, said a press release. Itikhar said the appointment of Maulvi Abdul Kabir as Prime Minister Afghanistan reflects a significant shift from the traditional rigid Taliban decision-making to a more contemporary, that is more open to dialogue. He said it is very much in the global interest to have Afghanistan remain

stable and at peace with its neighbours. Thus, the international community should not waste this opportunity, debating whether a change in the premiership is a sufficient indicator that the Taliban is willing to shift its domestic and foreign policy. It is, indeed, a clear signal that there is space for engagement, he added. Itikhar said the West should reach out to the Taliban and demonstrate readiness to negotiate the lifting of sanctions and the gradual reintroduction of development aid. Such engagement is crucial to prevent one of the worst humanitarian crises of the past decades and a new conflict destabilizing the region, he added. He said this change in leadership can be seen as a positive development and an indication of willingness on the part of the Taliban

to open up. He said that the recent decision by the authorities in Herat to allow several middle and high schools for girls to reopen was one such step. The new Afghan premier may soon lift the ban on women working in the humanitarian field, as there is already exemptions for the health sector and certain key NGOs. Leader of the delegation Taimur Ali Malik said that as a response to this strategic move by the Taliban, the international community should cash this opportunity. He said feeling more confident on the domestic front and in their ability to govern without serious opposition, the Taliban appears ready for a greater degree of openness and dialogue with the outside world. Kabir's appointment is a reflection of this openness, he concluded.



FAISALABAD: US Deputy Chief of Mission Andrew Schofer along with US Consul General William K. Makaneole visits Center for Advanced Studies at University of Agriculture Faisalabad. —APP

## Punjab govt committed to promoting industry

LAHORE: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce SM Tanveer said on Sunday that the government was committed to promoting industrial sector through proactive policies. He also emphasised that seamless continuation of industrial production activities by addressing industry-related issues was a priority. He expressed these views while addressing the New MJI Lines Club event. A large number of industrialists and businessmen attended the club's event and also elected SM Tanveer as president of the New MJI Lions Club, according to Industries Department spokesman here. The caretaker minister said the government was extending full cooperation to industrialists and traders, recognising the collective responsibility of every individual in uplifting the country from its challenging economic circumstances. He noted that the Lions Club had made significant strides in philanthropic endeavours, exemplified by the commendable allocation of 248 houses to those affected by the last year floods. Highlighting the significant youth population of the country, SM Tanveer underscored the government's multi-faceted initiatives aimed at empowering the youth and securing a better future for them. —APP

**Ombudsman orders Rs 17.2m in financial relief**

LAHORE: The Office of the Ombudsman Punjab swiftly responded to public relief requests, effectively resolving the issues faced by 60 individuals across various districts. These proactive efforts have resulted in a cumulative financial relief worth Rs. 17,238,187 [Rs 17.238 million] being extended to those in need. According to a statement issued by a spokesman on Sunday, the University of Mianwali, on the direction of the provincial ombudsman, has disbursed Rs.92,82,843 to 52 students, including plaintiff Muhammad Hanzala Zubair, as outstanding amounts of their need-based scholarships. Additionally, the District Education Authority Chakwal has granted 2.2 million rupees as financial aid to complainant Haji Mehr Muhammad. —APP

## KP all set to welcome tourists with enhanced facilities

KAGHAN: With snow and clouds-covered mountain peaks, erratic rainfall, gushing rivers water and zig-zagging tracks, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is once again all set to welcome a volley of local and international tourists. With Malka Parbat mountain on the northeastern side of Kaghan Valley, Mohudand Lake in Kalam, Kumrat Valley in Dir and much more across the province would be presenting enchanting views to live in memories of visitors for long. Adventure sports enthusiasts and eco-tourists will definitely be baffling over the moon when witnessing the breathtaking natural beauty of Saiful Malook, Lulusir, Ansoo lakes and Babusar Top as flocks of people from across the country have started arriving in the areas.

Saiful Malook - a famous 1.06 diameter, 113 feet deep and 3,224 meters above sea level lake, named after Persian Prince Saiful Malook and fairy princess Badri Jamal - is famous for popping up visitors' thoughts with peace and serenity. "Its natural beauty is beyond one's imagination. I have visited many lakes abroad but no one can match the mesmerizing effect of this oval-shaped lake," remarked Manzorul Haq, a former ambassador. "It is really blessed with bounties of nature as manifested by its crystal greenish-blue water emanating from Malka Parbat glaciers." Recalling the past when people had to travel on rough roads to reach this beautiful place, Manzor said, the enhanced road connectivity through Hazara Motorway,

establishment of camping pods, construction of jeep tracks and improved road links had made it easier to visit Kaghan Valley and suburbs. With enhanced connectivity and awareness through social media, more and more tourists through these areas every year, the KP government also had to go the extra mile for ensuring better mobility and security facilities for the tourists. "As tourists influx increases every year becoming a source of earning for the province, we are ensuring numerous measures to facilitate them," said Saad Khan, KP Tourism and Culture Authority spokesman. For this purpose, he said, under Ecotourism Project, camping pods were established at Sharan near Saiful Malook Lake to save tourists from high-charging hotels. —APP

## PPP announces to hold rally in Lahore

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has decided to hold a public rally in Lahore on June 21. According to details, the PPP has decided to hold a rally in Punjab's provincial capital on the birth anniversary of the PPP's slain former prime minister Benazir Bhutto on June 21. In this connection, former president Asif Ali Zardari has directed PPP Lahore President Aslam Gul to finalise preparations for a public gathering in Lahore. It is pertinent to mention here that former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members from South Punjab, who have recently parted ways with the party, joined Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in past few days. Earlier today, Pakistan People's Party leader and former Punjab chief minister Dost Muhammad Khosa claimed that a part of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) current and former assembly members, leaders from Jahangir Tareen group are also in contact with the PPP. —APP

## Pakistani young students can be inheritors of China-Pakistan friendship

The final is divided into four parts: self-introduction, knowledge contest, talent show and keynote speech, which is held via a combination of online and offline

KARACHI: "It is hoped that Pakistani young students can be the inheritors of China-Pakistan friendship, the enhancers of the development of China and Pakistan, to convey the friendship of 'higher than the mountain, deeper than the sea and sweeter than honey' in Chinese language," said Yang Yundong, Chinese Consul General in Karachi. During the Karachi Division Final of the 22nd Chinese Bridge-Chinese Proficiency Competition for International University Students jointly launched by the Chinese Consulate General in Karachi and Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi (CIUK), the Consul General spoke highly of the contribution made by CIUK in conducting Chinese education in Pakistan over the years and promoting China-Pakistan friendship.

He added that the "Chinese Bridge" has played a positive role in promoting mutual learning among civilizations and people-to-people exchanges between China and other countries. Addressing the occasion, Wang Jie, CEO of Bank of China Limited-Pakistan Operations, noted that as cooperation between China and Pakistan deepens in various fields, there is an urgent need for a group of cross-cultural talents fluent in Chinese to join various exchanges and construction. He stressed that "in the future, BoC will continue to deepen cooperation and exploration with CIUK in personnel exchange and cultural development, so as to jointly serve the cultural exchanges and local economic development of the two countries."

Zhang Xiaoping, the Chinese director of CIUK and Muhammad Nasiruddin Khan, the Pakistani director of CIUK hoped the students would use the "Chinese Bridge" to jointly paint a beautiful vision of "one world, one family" and write a new chapter of China-Pakistan friendship. The final is divided into four parts: self-introduction, knowledge contest, talent show and keynote speech, which is held via a combination of online and offline. Muskan Najam, an undergraduate student from the split 2+2 BS Co-training Program of the Chinese Language Major at the University of Karachi, won the first place in the final of the Karachi competition and will represent Pakistan in the final of the Chinese Bridge in China. —APP

## Business community thanks CDA for Construction work

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari chaired a meeting of the presidents of different markets of Islamabad, on this occasion the issue of construction works by CDA in the markets was discussed. The presidents of all the markets of Islamabad participated, various markets were selected for the construction and repair works in the first phase, including G 9, Abpara Market, G 11, F10, F11, F6 and Melody Market. In the meeting, 5 focal persons were also selected for coordination regarding construction works with CDA, including President



Islamabad Chamber Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, Chairman Founder Group Khalid Iqbal Malik, Former President Ijaz Abbasi, President Anjum Tajran Ajmal Baloch and Khalid Chaudhry. Speaking on the occasion, President Islamabad Cham-

ber Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the entire business community of Islamabad is grateful to the Chairman CDA Captain Noor Ul Amin Mengal, who paid attention to our long-standing problem regarding the construction works in the mar-

kets. We will work in this regard in a phased manner, he said that the presidents and other officials of all the markets should cooperate with the Chamber and CDA to end this problem. The work has not been done for a long time.

## Barter Trade to manage balance of payment

DNA

LAHORE: As the barter trade is set to start with Russia, Afghanistan and Iran the SAARC Chamber Vice President and the BMP Chairman has observed that the move will exploit the untapped trade potential with these countries, as the government is desperately trying to manage a balance of payments crisis and bring inflation under control, with foreign exchange reserves of just one month's imports' cover. The FPCCI's Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman and the newly-elected vice president of SAARC CCI Mian Anjum Nisar stated that the barter opportunity is important considering the dollar shortages the country is facing. He pointed out that Pakistan could gain from the barter trade,

particularly from oil and energy imports from Russia and Iran without adding to dollar demand. He appreciated Islamabad as well as other three countries to take serious initiatives to remove hurdles to bilateral trade, asking them to also take benefits of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects. In order to meet the objective of barter trade mechanism all parties must finalize international mechanism to remove difficulties in barter trade. He said that barter trade was in fact a right decision, which could boost Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves through escalation in exports. While it may not solve currency smuggling, particularly at the Afghanistan border, it can discourage smuggling of goods from Iran, such as diesel, and Afghanistan which is hurting the econ-

omy, he added. After Pakistan's first purchase of discounted Russian oil in April, he told that the country would only be buying crude, not refined products, under the deal. The government order, called the business-to-business (B2B) Barter Trade Mechanism 2023 and dated June 1, lists goods that can be bartered. State and privately owned entities would need approval to participate in the trade mechanism. He expressed his profound satisfaction that the BMP and FPCCI's relentless policy advocacy initiatives for the barter trade with Russia, Iran and Afghanistan have borne fruits. We have pitched barter trade, border markets and currency swap mechanisms very diligently in tens of top-level meetings with the concerned ministries and relevant governmental

institutions over the past three-and-a-half years, he added. Mian Anjum Nisar explained that as result of the aforementioned SRO, trade of goods under a Business-to-Business Barter Trade arrangement will be allowed on the principle of import followed by export. Additionally, the export would be allowed to the ceiling of value of imported goods on the basis of the acceptable mechanism provided in the SRO for the concerned exporters. Nonetheless, a Pakistani trader, capitalizing on the SRO, will be responsible to equate or net-off value of goods in every quarter; i.e., within 90 days after authorization is granted. He reiterated his longstanding stance that there should be a currency swap mechanism with Russia to stabilize Pak Rupee and opening-up of new avenues

of import for many crucial commodities in large quantities; including crude oil. Furthermore, the BMP and FPCCI advocate setting up of large, organized, secure and operational border markets with Iran & Afghanistan to boost regional trade. He said that the recently launched Mand-Pishin border marketplace and the Gabd-Polan electricity project would serve as a stepping stone for greater economic cooperation between the two countries, expressing the hope that it would unleash development, trade, business and employment opportunities contributing to the prosperity of the people of Gwadar and Balochistan. The FPCCI former president said that the Mand-Pishin border sustenance market is expected to increase trade with Iran, helping local businesses find new opportunities.

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JUNE

June 02/Italy
<b>National/ Independence Day</b>
June 04/Finland
<b>Armed Forces Day</b>
May 06/UAE
June 06/Sweden
<b>National Day</b>
June 10/Portugal
<b>Portugal Day (National Day)</b>
June 10/Jordan
<b>Arab Revolution &amp; Army Day</b>
June 11/United Kingdom
<b>Birthday of Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth</b>
June 12/Philippines
<b>Independence Day</b>
June 12/Russian Federation
<b>Day of Sovereignty of the Russian</b>
June 13/Zambia
<b>Armed Forces day</b>
June 17/Iceland
<b>National Day</b>
June 18/Seychells
<b>National Day</b>
June 25/Croatia
<b>National Day</b>
June 25/Mozambique
<b>National Day</b>
June 26/Azerbaijan
<b>Army Day</b>

### Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949
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### Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.1122
& Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



### Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



### Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital..9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



### Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
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ISLAMABAD: Italian artists perform on the occasion of the National Day of Italy, at Islamabad Serena Hotel.—DNA

## Pakistani pilgrims embody national pride in Saudi Arabia

The secretary of Religious Affairs urged the pilgrims and their relatives to remain vigilant against negative propaganda

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Religious Affairs Dr Aftab Akbar Durani on Sunday said in an effort to strengthen the reputation of Pakistan, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony had made exemplary arrangements for pilgrims in Saudi Arabia. In an exclusive talk with APP, he said Pakistani pilgrims, showcasing their best behavior in the host country, had also demonstrated resilience in the face of difficult circumstances. The secretary of Religious Affairs urged the pilgrims and their relatives to remain vigilant against negative propaganda.

He, highlighting the significance of this Hajj season, said Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Senator Muhammad Talha Mehmood, acknowledged the challenges associated with accommodating a large number of Muslims around the world. Nevertheless, the minister reiterated his commitment to serving the pilgrims without any political, religious, or regional bias, he added. However, despite the efforts of the Pakistani government, certain elements were engaged in spreading fake news and causing distress and anxiety among the pilgrims and their loved ones

back in Pakistan, he said, adding that investigations had revealed that this propaganda aimed to sabotage the excellent relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, impede the government's Hajj efforts, and even exploit social media to gain unwarranted privileges. Dr Aftab said the Ministry had been proactive in ensuring the well-being of Pakistani pilgrims, adding that Moavineen-e-Hujjaj were present throughout the Hajj journey, providing guidance and assistance to the pilgrims while closely monitoring the situation. He made it clear that instances

of individuals laying mats on the roadside for personal gain had been promptly captured and shared on social media to expose such misconduct. "These individuals not only disrupt the administration's efforts but also bring disrepute to the country," he added. The Secretary of Religious Affairs further urged the public not to be swayed by negative propaganda and assured them of the Ministry's unwavering commitment to providing the best facilities for Pakistani pilgrims despite the challenges. He also emphasized the importance of

following the instructions of Hajj assistants and Saudi authorities to ensure a smooth and trouble-free pilgrimage experience. He said Pakistani pilgrims were recognized as ambassadors of the country in Saudi Arabia, and their exemplary behavior and resilience in the face of difficulties had contributed to the nation's prestige. The Ministry continued to work tirelessly to support the pilgrims, urging them to utilize available facilities responsibly and foster friendly relationships with fellow pilgrims to fully embrace the blessings of Hajj, he maintained.

## Authorities directed to complete nullahs' cleanliness

RAWALPINDI: The authorities concerned have been directed to complete dredging and desilting work of all city nullahs including nullah Lai before the start of Monsoon rains. The spokesman of Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) told on Sunday that Caretaker Minister for Housing and Urban Development, Punjab, Syed Azfar Ali Nasir during a visit here the other day reviewed the preparations of WASA for Monsoon and also inspected the dredging and desilting work of Nullah Lai at Gwalmandi Bridge. The spokesman informed that the Agency, on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatha and Managing Director WASA, Muhammad Tanveer, had completed all the preparations for Monsoon. The Punjab government had released funds for cleaning of Nullah Lai and 11 other nullahs of the city, he said adding, the dredging and desilting work of Nullah Lai from Katarian Bridge to Murree Road would be completed by June 30. The tender process to award the contract to clean other Nullahs of the town was under process and dredging and desilting work of big nullahs would be started soon which would be completed before start of Monsoon rains, he said. The cleaning work of sewerage lines using which machines is also under completion, he said adding, during Monsoon rains emergency is enforced under which leaves of all the field staff are canceled and the staff remains present in the field round the clock. Five flood response units would be set up in the city at Liaquat Bagh, Moti Mahal, Commercial Market, Bagh Sardaran and Khayabane-Sir Syed where heavy machinery and field staff would remain present to give quick response.—APP

## Railways wants it outstanding dues paid

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Railways has expedited the efforts and approached the federal and provincial departments to recover outstanding billion of rupees dues on account of using its land and other services. "Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique has asked the official concerned to approach the federal and provincial departments for recovering the outstanding amount as soon as possible," an official in the Ministry told APP here Sunday. About the amount payable against the different departments, the official said that an amount of over Rs 8375 million (over 8 billion) was payable by different departments on account of using its land and various services. The federal departments have to pay an amount of Rs 709.084 million, provincial departments Rs1980.217 million and autonomous and private bodies Rs 5685.736 million, he expressed. Pakistan Railways, he said has upgraded as many as 167 vulnerable un-manned level crossings to manned level crossings, out of which 550 are identified by the department over the entire railway network last year. The relevant provincial government provided the finances to Pakistan Railways for the upgradation of un-manned level crossings in the country, he added. He said that the present government was taking several steps including the up-gradation of un-manned.—APP

## Inflation has pushed millions below poverty line

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt said on Sunday that merciless inflation has broken the backs of the people and pushed millions of people below the poverty line. People in rural areas are more affected by the inflation than people in urban areas, which is unfortunate, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that now that inflation is fully embedded in the system, it will continue to damage the masses with full force in the next financial year to increase public anxiety. In a statement issued here today, he said that according to the data released by the government, inflation has reached 38 per cent in the month of May, which is the highest level in the history of the country and in South Asia.—DNA

## Trend of online summer camp registration rising

ISLAMABAD: With the start of summer vacation, many vocational centres and private schools through social media platforms have started online summer camp registration facilities to attract parents and keep students engaged in healthy activities during months-long holidays. "Social media platforms give an excellent opportunity to parents to enroll their kids for summer camp which is a safe, hassle-free, easy method for citizens," said a report aired by a private news channel on Sunday. The trend of online summer camp registration was getting momentum in the twin cities.—APP

## Call to address issue of extreme temperatures

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Meher Kashif Younis Sunday said that painful decisions must be made as extreme heat threat grows and underdeveloped countries and poor nations would be even more vulnerable as they had lack of resources to mitigate against extreme temperatures. Speaking at a seminar on "How to counter growing threat of climate change", held under the aegis of Gold Ring Economic Forum, a strategic think tank, he said extreme heat is very much one of the major extreme weather events that threaten to alter the planet permanently, said a press release. He said the past eight years were collectively the hottest on record and Southeast Asia is currently setting heat records. Scientists have reported that drought in the Horn of Africa has made 100 times more likely by climate change. Extreme heat caused by climate change threatens the way of life of millions of people, he expressed. He said that 419 million people in 57 countries were vulnerable to 1.5 C of global warming over the next few years. He said extreme heat will affect so many aspects of life and heat-related deaths will jump up and up. Working outdoors will become even more dangerous, not least in agriculture and the construction industry. Air quality will continue to deteriorate. Crop yields are expected to decrease as growing seasons shorten and food insecurity threat will be on the rise, he added.—DNA

### Invitation of Bids

#### HIRING SERVICES OF AUDITORS FOR SCRUTINY AND VERIFICATION OF CLAIMS REGARDING GRANT OF SUBSIDY ON LAB TESTING CLAIMS OF PAKISTAN LEATHER GARMENTS MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION (PLGMEA) FOR THE PERIOD 2015-16 ONWARDS

Ministry of Commerce, Government of Pakistan has decided to Grant 75% subsidy on Lab Testing of Pakistan Leather Garments Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PLGMEA) for the period starting from year 2015-16, as per the laid down policy.

- TDAP intends to hire services of Audit Firms of 'Category A', as listed on the State Bank of Pakistan's Panel of Auditors, which would be required to pre-audit / scrutinize the claims received by TDAP from All Pakistan Leather Garments Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PLGMEA), as per the policy.
- Bidding documents and other related information for the purpose can be obtained, on written request along with Pay Order of Rs. 5,000/- (non-refundable) in favor of TDAP, Karachi, during working hours from Textile and Leather Division of TDAP at the address given below. The firm will submit their sealed Proposals containing Technical & Financial proposals in separate envelopes.
- Financial proposals should accompany a bid security equivalent to two per cent (2%) of the bid amount in the form specified in the Bidding documents.
- Single Stage Two Envelope Procedure would be used for Open Competitive Bidding.
- Sealed tender documents shall be submitted latest by 2:30 p.m. on 22nd June, 2023 with the Textile and Leather Division of TDAP at the address given below and shall be opened on the same day at 3 p.m. in the presence of representatives of the participating firms.
- Trade Development Authority of Pakistan reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to annul the bidding process at any time as per rules.

PID K 3472



### Deputy Manager (T&L) Division

Trade Development Authority of Pakistan  
Ministry of Commerce, Government of Pakistan  
3rd Floor, Block-A, FTC Building, Shahr-e-Faisal, Karachi  
Tel: 021-99207200, Fax: 021-99201520



## Gymkhana Club to be completed in record period

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatha has said that the Potohar enclosure at Gymkhana Club Rawalpindi would be completed in a record period. Potohar enclosure and 38 guest rooms were being built with the support of the citizens and business community of Rawalpindi, he said, adding the total cost of the project would be Rs 550 million. A library, food halls, coffee shop, grand cinema, table tennis lounge, snooker room and children's fun zone would be constructed in the enclosure, the commissioner informed.

It would also have a conference room, salons, an admin wing and laundry, he added. Chatha informed that a four-storey Potohar enclosure with modern entertainment and sports facilities would be constructed at a cost of Rs 256.64 million while under the Gymkhana Club project, 38 guest rooms and other facilities would be provided at a cost of Rs 250 million. Potohar enclosure which was started on March 25 this year would be completed by November 2023, he stressed.—APP

## Rawalpindi admin bans hides collection without NOC

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Administration would not allow anyone to collect hides of sacrificial animals without permission and a No-Objection Certificate (NOC) from the authorities concerned as per the directives of the Punjab government. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Office Rawalpindi had announced that the applications for collecting hides of sacrificial animals would be received till June 20 and after the deadline, no application would be entertained. The spokesman of district administration told on Sunday that the administration would not allow anyone to collect hides without prior permission of the authorities concerned as the Punjab government has imposed a ban on the collection of hides without NOC on Eid ul Azha. The charity organizations intending to collect the hides of the sacrificial animals have been directed to submit applications to the office of DC Rawalpindi for getting permission letter by June 20. The Home Department of the Punjab Government has banned the collection of the hides without the approval of the competent authority. The DC office Rawalpindi would not receive any application for the permission letter after the expiry of the above mentioned date.—APP

## Briefs

## DAP fertilizer sent to Afghanistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A private sector consignment of 20,000 tons of DAP fertilizer has been sent from Gwadar port to Afghanistan.

This batch of DAP fertilizer was imported from Australia under the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement by KB Fertilizer and Agven Pvt Ltd, enterprises operating in Gwadar Free Zone (South). An official from COPHC told Gwadar Pro that the DAP fertilizer has been executed by Shipping service provider (Makran Trader) and Ship clearing agent. "Both of them are local companies. This means Gwadar port is providing business opportunities to the locals on a large scale," he added. DAP is used in various industrial processes, such as metal finishing. It also improves crop yield besides the development and growth of flowering plants or leafy plants. In 2022, Gwadar port processed a private sector consignment of 8,000 tons of DAP fertilizers and transported it via road to Afghanistan, marking the first Afghanistan-bound fertilizer shipment.—APP

## Sherry expresses solidarity with families of martyrs

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman Sunday strongly condemned the violent incidents of 9th May terming it as 'a black stain on Pakistan's history and expressed full solidarity with families of martyrs.

The whole nation stands with armed forces and those who insulted the martyrs deserve the worst punishment", she said while talking to PTV news channel.

The vandalism of the civil properties and defence installations on May 9 has exposed the wicked face of Imran Niazi and the government would have zero tolerance by taking strict action against attackers, she added.

The minister said that it was our priority to look after the families of those Shuhada who sacrificed their lives for Pakistan, adding that all rioters and culprits involved in any state and anti-army activities would be dealt with the iron hand.

The entire nation is proud of its valiant martyrs who displayed the spirit of patriotism in testing times throughout the history, she added.

The martyrs of Pakistan are our real heroes and a great asset, whose sacrifices should be remembered and appreciated by the nation, she mentioned.

Replying to a question, she said there is a dire need that all the political parties should sit together to find out the ways to end this political instability and take the country towards growth and development. First Pakistani consignment left for Kazakhstan.—DNA

## Students' hostel facility seized for orphan charity

The affected students, hailing from financially disadvantaged families in far-flung and remote areas of the country like Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Balochistan, and Sindh have been facing immense difficulties due to the unavailability of hostel accommodation within the college campus

ISLAMABAD: The students of Islamabad Model College for Boys (IMCB) H-9 have been deprived of their much-needed hostel facility for over a decade since it was taken over by Pakistan Sweet Home (PSH) in 2012.

The affected students, hailing from financially disadvantaged families in far-flung and remote areas of the country like Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Balochistan, and Sindh have been facing immense difficulties due to the unavailability of hostel accommodation within the college campus.

As a result, they are forced to reside in unhygienic and expensive private hostels located at far-off

locations in Islamabad like Chatha Bakhtawar and Bhara Kahu.

This predicament not only compromises the students' well-being but also imposes heavy rent and transportation costs on them, as they have to commute daily from these distant private hostels to the college.

An Assistant Professor of H-9 college on the condition of anonymity said, "The injustice lies in the fact that the college possesses a hostel building on its campus, but it has been occupied by PSH, a charity organization that reportedly earns billions of rupees annually in the name of aiding orphans." "The students, who are

in desperate need of hostel facilities, are being neglected while the charity organization continues to benefit from the donated funds without making any effort to find alternative arrangements for the H-9 college students."

"It is imperative that PSH, considering the vast amount of financial support it receives, takes immediate steps to construct its own dedicated hostel building. By doing so, it would not only alleviate the suffering of college students who require hostel facilities but also uphold its commitment to serving the orphaned community." A concerned professor from the IMCB revealed that the decision of hand-

ing over the hostel to PSH was made in connivance with some officers of the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) without consulting the college principal at that time, who could have provided valuable insights into the importance of the hostel for the students and the institution as a whole, disregarding the needs of the students who now face the consequences of this unjust act. "As the management of PSH holds substantial influence and maintains close connections with politicians from various political parties, this, in turn, has led politicians to turn a blind eye to the student's plight in favor of

supporting PSH. The plight of students must be highlighted to ensure that their educational pursuits are not compromised due to bureaucratic negligence and the disregard of their basic needs," he added. Ali, a student of the college said, "It's absolutely devastating to see how the education authorities have completely disregarded our needs as students. The hostel was not just a place to stay; it is our home away from home. Now we are forced to live in unhygienic and distant private hostels, which is not only affecting our health but also adding a significant financial burden. It feels like we have been abandoned and forgotten."—APP

## 3,000 Moavineen planned to guide pilgrims

ISLAMABAD: A well-coordinated team of 3,000 Moavineen including Arabic and Urdu-speaking locals, Pakistani Moavineen, and medical personnel, will be strategically stationed at various locations, including the entry and exit points of Mina, the train station, Jamarat, and others, to guide and assist the Hajj pilgrims during the five-day duration of the Hajj journey. Sajjad Haider Yaldrum, the Director of Moavineen, Joint Secretary Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony told APP that the contingent of Moavineen e Hujjaj was currently undergoing daily training at their assigned duty points in Mina, Jamarat, and other locations. "This training is being conducted in phases to ensure their thorough familiarity.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Wives of diplomats posing for a picture on the occasion of the National Day of Italy.— DNA

## Country's political temperature is cooling

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Hanif Mughal, Senior Vice President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), said on Sunday that the political temperature is decreasing in the country, which is a good sign for the struggling economy.

Masses are getting satisfied as inflation is receding, economic indicators are slowly improving, and things are coming back to normal, he said. Dr. Hanif Mughal said in a statement issued here today that economic development will accelerate if appropriate measures are taken in the budget which will give relief to the people. He said that the previous government not only took record loans in the history of the country, but also set new records of mismanagement. Pakistan's economy which was 22nd in the world was pushed down to 47th number and now their frustrated leaders are claiming that the country will be bankrupted any time soon. The former government destroyed the economy, leading to closure of thousands of businesses and millions losing their jobs. The international institutions that provided record loans to the former cabal without question are not ready to provide a billion dollars to Pakistan, which indicate their ill intentions, he observed. He said that if the government was not changed, it would have put the integrity of the country in jeopardy to please their foreign masters. Mr. Mughal said that the process of difficult reforms has been completed, due to which the people and the business community had to bear a lot of trouble, but now the situation is improving, and the people have started getting some relief. The government is committed to implementing long-term reforms aimed at improving the country's economic situation and Pakistan will never default like Sri Lanka, he said. While the IMF's rejection of Pakistan's request poses a hurdle, the government remains resolute in its efforts to revive the deal and secure the financing to support the economic recovery.

## Ice cream tunes an attractive pleasure for kids in summer

ISLAMABAD: With the demand for ice cream gaining momentum in the summer season, hundreds of traditional street vendors with multicolored tricycles and ice-cream tunes have become an attractive pleasure for children to buy the frozen treats where parents alongside with children witnessing rush around these carts. "Three-wheeled carts with ice cream fridge on the back and piping ice cream tunes are gripping children's attention in every city of the country," said a report aired by a private news channel. "I still want to run out the door whenever I hear the tinkling of ice cream tune in my street," said a 40-year-old customer. A vendor said that pedestrians and motorists

alike stopped by his cart to beat the heat by eating 'Ice cream'.

Every year, with the arrival of summer, dozens of ice cream parlors and vendors in the streets could be found offering a wide range of flavours from the basic such as pistachio, caramel, chocolate, and mango to more exotic ones like strawberry cheese, chocolate mint, said a street vendor selling ice cream.

A vendor in Islamabad, who has been selling company ice cream for eight to nine years, said, "Our ice cream tunes are an attractive moment for kids and they always want to stop our carts in streets to buy ice cream," adding "summer is the best time to sell our products and earn more". "Summer is the best season for sales because with

the rise in mercury, a large number of customers, especially youngsters are seen enjoying ice cream treats on roads and shops," said a citizen. A man buying ice cream from a vendor in F-10 said that his family, specifically children cannot restrain themselves from eating ice cream in summer due to its attractive flavors.

"Ice cream is an international dessert, which is always available in various forms for those with a sweet tooth," said a kid while enjoying his ice cream on the road. "My children always used to wait impatiently for the ice cream seller on a hot summer evening," said a mother, adding that no doubt ice cream pushcarts always bring a smile to her kids' faces.—APP

## A loss for Pakistan's politics

SIBGHA RAUF

As news of Shireen Mazari's departure from politics reverberates across Pakistan, one cannot help but question the implications of losing a prominent figure known for her unwavering commitment to social justice and progressive values. Has Pakistan truly lost a trailblazer whose remarkable contributions have left an indelible mark on the nation? In this column, we explore the transformative work accomplished by Shireen Mazari and reflect upon the potential void her absence may leave in the realms of human rights, gender equality, and progressive policymaking. Shireen Mazari's departure from politics raises concerns about the future of human rights in Pakistan. Throughout her tenure as the chairperson of the Human Rights Committee in the National Assembly, Mazari tirelessly advocated for justice and fundamental rights. Her work in highlighting issues of gender-based violence, discrim-

ination, and social justice has been commendable. Mazari's departure leaves a void in the fight for a more equitable society, where all citizens can enjoy their fundamental rights without fear or prejudice.


Shireen Mazari's unwavering dedication to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment has been exemplary. As the Federal Minister for Human Rights and Education, she spearheaded policy reforms to enhance educational opportunities for girls and women, ensuring they have an equal chance to thrive and succeed. Mazari's departure raises concerns about the continuity of these vital initiatives. Will her successors maintain the same level of commitment to dismantling patriarchal norms and empowering women, or will her absence impede the progress made in this crucial area? Throughout her career, Shireen Mazari has been a strong advocate for progressive policymaking, with a focus on social justice and human rights. Her contributions have been instrumental in pushing

for legislative reforms and challenging regressive practices that hinder the growth and development of the nation. Mazari's departure may result in a setback for progressive policymaking, as her vision and expertise may be difficult to replace. Will her absence lead to a decline in the momentum for positive change, or will her legacy inspire others to carry the torch forward and continue the pursuit of a more inclusive and just Pakistan?


Shireen Mazari's influence extended beyond the borders of Pakistan. As a prominent figure in international affairs, she played a crucial role in shaping Pakistan's foreign policy and representing the nation on the global stage. Her diplomatic finesse and principled approach garnered respect and admiration from various quarters. With her departure, questions arise about the sustainability of her strategic vision and the impact it may have on Pakistan's standing in the international community. Will her successors possess the same level of expertise and commitment to maintaining

Pakistan's global influence, or will her absence be felt as a loss in diplomatic circles?

The departure of Shireen Mazari from the political arena leaves Pakistan grappling with the potential loss of a transformative leader. The incidents that forced Mazari to leave politics highlight the challenges faced by opposition voices and raise questions about the state of democracy and civil liberties in Pakistan. As we bid farewell to a champion of social justice, it is imperative for Pakistan to reflect upon the valuable contributions made by Mazari and address the issues that forced her to make this difficult decision. The nation must ensure that her departure does not result in a regression of the progress achieved but instead serves as a catalyst for renewed commitment to the principles she fought tirelessly for. Shireen Mazari's absence from politics is undeniably a loss, but her legacy should inspire future leaders to carry the torch and continue the pursuit of a more inclusive and prosperous Pakistan.



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## Unnecessarily aggressive acts

Whatever excuse the US side might offer, it cannot deny the fact that an RC-135 surveillance plane entered the zone in which the People's Liberation Army Navy was conducting routine training in the South China Sea on May 26. Neither can it alter the fact that the flight route brought the plane to within about 50 kilometers of China's coast at the nearest point. The PLA Southern Theater Command organized the air force to track and monitor the entire process, and handle the situation in accordance with laws and regulations. It is absurd for the US to claim that a PLA Navy plane carried out an "unnecessarily aggressive maneuver" during its intercept. The whole world will be aware of the hypocrisy of the US in making such a ballyhoo after it transformed and sensationalized an errant meteorological research blimp into a "spy balloon" that it blasted out of the sky with a missile. US politicians have on more than one occasion expressed their unease at alleged surveillance that steals US secrets, yet the US military has been clinging to the bad habit of installing cameras on China's doorstep 10,000 kilometers away across the Pacific. The Pentagon's "concern" is a typical US misdirection. From April 2020 to April 2021, a CL-604 surveillance plane was even reported to have spied on China 250 times within one year, almost once every working day. The security of the US should not be based on the insecurity of other nations. But that is what the US has always been doing. In its statement regarding the issue, the PLA solemnly urged the US to restrain its military and observe international law and agreements so as to prevent any accidents or miscalculations. The Pentagon's claims of unnecessary aggression by China are probably intended to provide ammunition for US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who will speak at this year's Shangri-la Dialogue, which begins on Friday. Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu is also attending the meeting. However, the two are not expected to talk on the sidelines of the event given the US' aggressive actions, because Beijing sees no point in doing so as the Joe Biden administration constantly belies its friendly words with its deeds. Among its actions, the US frequently sends aircraft and vessels to conduct close-in reconnaissance on China. The US military has significantly increased the intensity and frequency of its military activities in the South China Sea. It has also persuaded its allies to conduct similar provocations. It is these moves that are unnecessary, irresponsibly aggressive and the root cause for concern.

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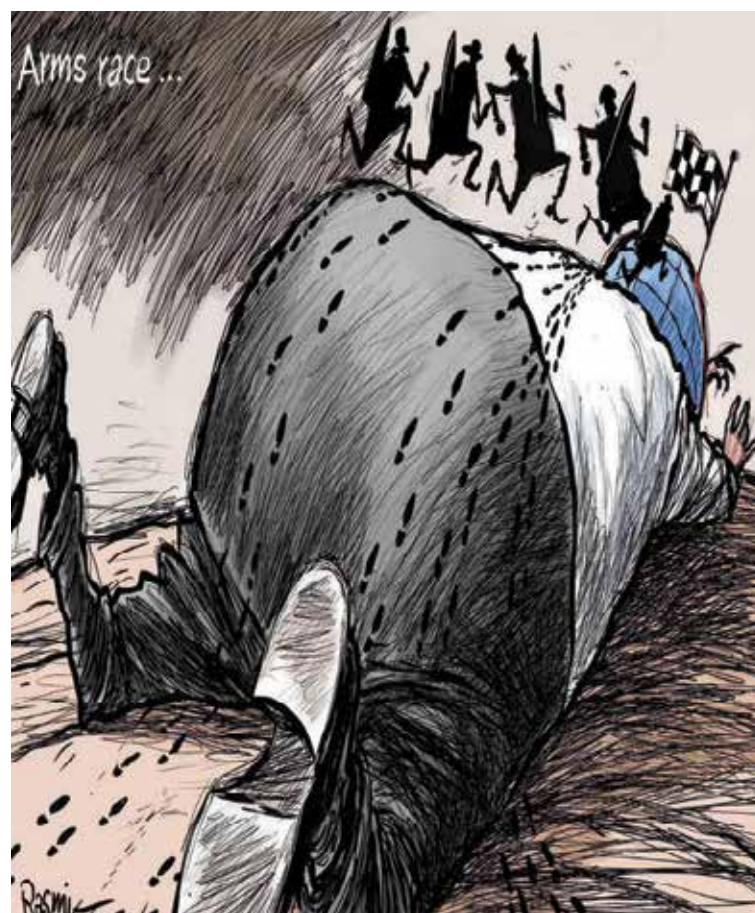
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## Covid inquiry

If one clear lesson is to be taken from our response to the arrival of Covid-19 three years ago, it is an appreciation of the highly effective role played by scientists in fighting the pandemic. Within weeks of the Sars-CoV-2 virus emerging, researchers had sequenced every one of its genes and had pinpointed the cells through which Covid-19 enters the body. By the end of the year, they had used that knowledge to create a safe, tested vaccine that played a crucial role in ending the pandemic. Yet it is also becoming clear that on many occasions scientists were not listened to by national leaders. Economics and short-term political considerations were often given greater priority than scientific concerns. These resulted in failures to limit the spread of Covid-19. It is for this reason that the UK inquiry into the nation's pandemic response, chaired by Heather Hallett, should be followed with rigorous attention. The government had said it would always be guided by the science when it came to dealing with Covid. It is a claim that now looks distinctly hollow. Consider the "eat out to help out" scheme launched by the government, at the Treasury's behest, in summer 2020. Pubs and restaurants had just been allowed to reopen but the public were, unsurprisingly, reluctant to mingle there. So people were bribed to eat out by the government. An outbreak of a new disease on Covid's scale would be devastating. Hence the need to examine the government's response. Crucially, it now appears scientists had not been asked their views about the scheme as it was being set up. Had they been allowed to express their views, their responses would probably have been robust. As one member of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) that was dealing with the pandemic has put it, the scheme was "spectacularly stupid and an obscene way to spend public money". These are harsh words to describe a policy that was the brainchild of the then chancellor of the exchequer, and our current prime minister, Rishi Sunak. His reluctance to cooperate with the inquiry should be judged in this light. Another outbreak of a new disease on this scale would be devastating. Hence the need to examine the government's response to Covid-19 in scrupulous detail and to pinpoint where and when it went wrong. Only then will we have a chance to build effective defences against future emerging pandemics. Claiming the pandemic was due to a one-off laboratory mistake – an assertion often influenced by political considerations – is to fail to face up to the fact that human-induced ecological destruction is the real risk. It is unclear when we will learn this lesson. In the meantime, we need to unravel the failures that blighted our past pandemic responses. Only then will we have a hope of avoiding the worst consequences of the next pandemic and a repeat of the Covid-19 nightmare from which we have only just emerged.

## The cyber highway to prosperity

Qamar Bashir



The IT sector is currently one of the fastest-growing economic sectors in Pakistan. The sector is projected to contribute \$15 billion to the economy by 2025, up from US\$ 2.1 billion in 2022, representing 1% of the GDP, with the number of IT human resources in Pakistan expected to reach 1.5 million by this year (2023). A variety of factors are driving growth in the IT sector, including increased demand for IT services from both domestic and international businesses, which is opening up a variety of opportunities for IT professionals in areas such

The resourceful, enterprising, and technologically savvy young generation of Pakistan has always been capable of devising creative and innovative ways to generate income for themselves, their families, and the country as a whole. They have, through their demonstrated creativity, entrepreneurship, and tenacity, devised a workable solution to circumvent the unemployment in the country, and while living in the comfort of their homes and surrounded by the warmth and love of their mothers and dears ones, they are able to ride on the cyberspace to find for themselves highly lucrative jobs for developed countries and corporations that rarely require a college degree and instead evaluate candidates based on their dexterity.

The IT sector is currently one of the fastest-growing economic sectors in Pakistan. The sector is projected to contribute \$15 billion to the economy by 2025, up from US\$ 2.1 billion in 2022, representing 1% of the GDP, with the number of IT human resources in Pakistan expected to reach 1.5 million by this year (2023). A variety of factors are driving growth in the IT sector, including increased demand for IT services from both domestic and international businesses, which is opening up a variety of opportunities for IT professionals in areas such as software development, web development, mobile development, and data science, as well as in the banking, finance, healthcare, telecommunications, manufacturing, and e-commerce sectors. To capitalize on these new opportunities, the Pakistan government has put in place a number of legislative initiatives to stimulate the IT sector, including the formation of the National IT Board, the introduction of tax exemptions for IT companies, and the allocation of funding for IT education and training. As a result of the establishment of a number of universities and colleges, as well as a number of commercial IT training institutes, IT professionals in a variety of fields have been developed to capitalize on the hungry and ever-growing IT Sector. The technologically savvy young generation has successfully created a cyberspace motorway for themselves by utilizing online platforms where startups and a large and growing pool of skilled IT professionals offer their services to clients all over the world by avoiding cumbersome procedures, protocols, and tedious and never-ending laws and regulations of Pakistan's sluggish system. They are exploiting cyberspace highways with complete freedom, conducting a massive amount of business by selling their skills, expertise, and time to foreign buyers who are clamoring to take advantage of high-quality IT services at reasonable prices without incurring

any overhead costs of maintaining offices or renting office spaces, paying utility charges, transportation costs, and paying regular salaries to regular employees. Depending on the agreement and availability of online fund management businesses in Pakistan, these graduates are paid online, directly into their bank accounts, in foreign money or local currency. They typically have the option of keeping their hard-earned funds in foreign financial institutions or transferring them to Pakistani banks. A new generation of young IT graduates and non-graduates is making a lot of money and lifting their families and the country out of poverty. Among the various online freelancing sites with particular specialties and uses depending on the field of competence and the type of work are Upwork, Freelancer, Fiverr, Guru, PeoplePerHour, Topal, 99designs, SimplyHired, FlexJobs, and LinkedIn Profinder. Each of these platforms has its own set of features, pricing systems, and job categories, as well as a modest referral fee for referring services. Pakistan's global cyberspace trade and commerce superhighway is quickly increasing. Small merchants and entrepreneurs are turning to online platforms to solve some of the challenges that they face in traditional enterprises and to open up new growth potential. The prospectus is not only optimistic, but also revolutionary, due to increased internet and mobile phone usage, as well as the availability of e-commerce platforms and marketplaces. In Pakistan, the e-commerce sector has created job opportunities in logistics, warehousing, and customer service, prompting the government to launch a national e-commerce policy in 2019 to provide a framework for the sector's growth, including measures to address key challenges such as payment systems, logistics, and digital infrastructure. We still have a long way to go before we can be considered an effective and vital player in global IT exports, as we lag behind our immediate neighbor India and many other countries worldwide. India's IT services exports hit a new high of USD 420 billion in FY23, up from USD 255 billion in FY22. In FY23, the country's share in worldwide computer services exports climbed to 11%. India had over 4.5 million IT experts as of March 2023, making it one of the world's major suppliers of IT services. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, Wipro, HCL Technologies, and Tech Mahindra are India's top five IT exporters. These firms employ over 2 million IT specialists and earn more than USD 200 billion in revenue annually. Rising demand for cloud computing and other IT-enabled services, as well as an increasing number of multinational corporations setting up shop in India, are all fueling the expansion of India's IT services sector. India's top

five export markets for IT services are the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and Canada. However, when compared to many other countries, India ranks worst. In terms of IT exports, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Singapore are rated first, second, and third in the world, respectively, whereas India is ranked 43rd and Pakistan is ranked 104th. (Source: [www.theglobal-economy.com/rankings/information\\_technology\\_exports/](http://www.theglobal-economy.com/rankings/information_technology_exports/)) It is unfortunate that we are overloading our education system with irrelevant subjects at all levels, consuming the majority of students' time and energy, when we need to transform our school system from the ground up by introducing fundamentals of computer science, programming languages, data structures, algorithms, and operating systems. In addition to Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), IT consulting, data entry, web development and design, and mobile app development, it should encompass networking, database management, and software development. In addition, they should be taught mathematics for problem solving and logical reasoning, as well as English as a communication tool. It should also cover topics like cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and big data analytics, which is the process of extracting insights from massive databases. Aside from traditional degree courses, the education system should also provide diploma courses of different duration based on the level of study, to significantly increase the number of IT professionals by establishing new institutions and utilizing online, home education, and hybrid education systems to exponentially increase the number of skilled and qualified IT professionals in relevant areas of IT expertise, as well as establishing a system to assist qualified professionals in finding jobs in areas of their skills and abilities. Having said that, the global IT sector, which is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.9% from 2023 to 2027, offers tremendous opportunities for Pakistan only if we are ready, fully geared, have applied a futuristic approach, improved infrastructure, provided hassle-free access to finance, and rapidly created a state-of-the-art IT education and training system including formal, online, home education, and hybrid systems. With these initiatives, Pakistan's IT sector may become a vital driver of growth, job creation, and a worldwide IT market leader.

—The writer is the Former Press Secretary to the President, Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former MD, SRBC

## Armed Forces: Surety of Security

Waheed Hussain



The relatives of the Shuhadas (martyrs), parents, brothers, sisters, wives, and children were mentally and emotionally broken. Shocked by the videos and pictures depicting throwing away statue of Colonel Sher Khan Shaheed (martyr). The brave son of the soil whose bravery was even acknowledged by

May 9 violence's physical wounds are in the process of healing. The wounds on nation's soul will remain unhealed for rest of life, particularly gruesome scenes of burning military-civilian properties and damaging the monuments of Shuhadas (martyrs). The relatives of the Shuhadas (martyrs), parents, brothers, sisters, wives, and children were mentally and emotionally broken. Shocked by the videos and pictures depicting throwing away statue of Colonel Sher Khan Shaheed (martyr). The brave son of the soil whose bravery was even acknowledged by the enemy army commanders. Scarifying a life, needs a biggest motivation for any individual. Our soldiers and officers had been laying down their lives for the defense and security of Pakistan. Pakistan fought three full-fledged wars with India and even today fighting with the terrorists in various parts of the country, particularly border districts of Afghanistan in KPK and Baluchistan. In this process thousands of our soldiers and officers have embraced Shahadat. Since Afghan War after 9/11 terrorists' attacks in the United States of America, Pakistan has been fighting with Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) and other terrorists' organizations being funded by India and various enemies' states. Pakistan is the only country in the world in the recent history of conflicts that majority of our officers up to the level of three-star generals embraced Shahadat for defending the motherland. Officers and officials including soldiers, Lieutenants, captains, majors, colonels, brigadiers, Major Generals and Lieutenant Generals have

embraced Shahadat (martyrdom) in protecting the country and its people. If a small number of criminals disgrace and insult the Shuhadas, hurt their families, friends and people in uniform, what motivation the security forces will have in fighting the internal and external enemy? It could create a demoralizing effect on the security forces and their families. Shuhadas are the pride of the nation, and the nation will always extend respect and honor to them. Burning and destroying the historic Radio Pakistan Building in Peshawar, Lahore Core Commander Residence (The Jinnah House), Pakistan Air Force aircraft model along with dozens of other military installations were not an accident or a reaction to an arrest, it was a well-planned, well-thought and well executed act of violence. A crime against the state, institutions and its people. It was an attack on the security of Pakistan. We as a nation must understand the sensitivity of this matter, its about the law and order, peace and security and above all the defense of Pakistan. No nation can defend and feel secure without independent, strong and resilient armed forces. History is full of examples that only those nations ultimately survived and defended themselves against enemies whose military was strong and independent. In recent history we have seen number of Muslim states like Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen facing great challenge to their peace and security. Armed forces provide a sense of unity and solidarity to the nation.

If the security forces are weakened the state is weakened. We must remember that Pakistan is the only nuclear power in the Muslim world and its armed forces are guarantee in providing safety to it. Many western countries are not happy with our close relations with China, especially the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project which is considered as a threat to their economic and political interests. Pakistan decision to import Oil from Russia and increasing its engagement with the Russians was also not welcomed by western world. Our enemies want to block these engagements and developments which may help our economy to recover and give up its dependency on the western nations, their financial institutions including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) etc. When Pakistan has so many adversaries there is a possibility of foreign hand in the May 9 violence attacks on our military installations. Some might had tried to create a wedge between the Armed Forces and people of Pakistan. The script was there. The writers of the script were out of country, while the directors and actors were inside Pakistan. Political parties and leadership have the right to launch a peaceful struggle for their legitimate constitutional, social, economic and political rights. At the same time, they also keep the fact in mind that some of their actions may harm the country's vital interests. Weakening Armed Forces will put the country in danger. Fact of the matter is that our armed forces with backing of people are the surety of the Pakistan's security.

## Briefs

## 'Budget will satisfy the stakeholders'

FROM PAGE 01  
Finance Minister Ishaq Dar is scheduled to present the federal budget on June 9 (Friday) while the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) will announce its monetary policy decision on June 12 (Monday). A foreign exchange trader said: "The rupee is likely to trade within the current ranges as the investors won't take long positions. Demand will likely be flat until after the budget because there is some uncertainty about what might be announced in it."

## Govt likely to present Rs13-15tr...

FROM PAGE 01  
and stock markets," the report said. Revenue targets in the past have also varied on an average by 8% in last five years from actual targets. "We expect the same to happen in FY24 amid economic slowdown," it added. Non-tax revenue target for FY24 was estimated at Rs2.5 trillion (2.4% of GDP) as against Rs1.6 trillion (2% of GDP) estimated for FY23. The report predicted some taxation measures by the government, including tax on undistributed reserves, continuation of super tax, shift from final tax regime to minimum tax regime, asset/wealth tax, higher tax on non-filers, tax on rental income, and tax on banks, tobacco, and beverages.

## PM meets world leaders...

FROM PAGE 01  
PM Office Media Wing said in a press release on Sunday. On the occasion, he also met with Kosovo's President Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu. Both leaders reiterated their desire to promote bilateral relations and cooperation in different fields. The prime minister also interacted with Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber. The PM referred to the establishment of a market at the Balochistan-Sistan border and his recent meeting with the Iranian president. Welcoming the commencement of barter trade between the two countries, the premier expressed the confidence that it would mutually benefit the people of both brotherly countries.

## Parvez Elahi sent on 14-day...

FROM PAGE 01  
taken into custody by ACE officials for allegedly making illegal appointments in Punjab Assembly - was presented in the Lahore court amid strict security earlier today. The Punjab ACE arrested the former chief minister for a third time on Saturday, after a local court in Gujranwala granted him relief in two corruption cases. Today, the ACE officials produced Elahi in a district kacheri court in the provincial capital, while Rana Intezar, who is the president of the Lahore Bar Association, represented him in the case.

## NAB summons Khan...

FROM PAGE 01  
the investigations of the £190 million settlement case related to the transfer of funds from Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA) account, media reported Sunday. As per details, NAB Rawalpindi has summoned the former first lady to record her statement as a witness for being the trustee of the Al-Qadir University Trust, while the former prime minister has been called by the combined investigation team (CIT) of the anti-graft watchdog. The sources said that the CIT was not satisfied with the PTI chief's reply which he submitted during his last appearance before NAB, Rawalpindi, on May 23. They said that the former premier had been directed to answer the questionnaire on June 7, given to him on May 23.

## Serena Hotels organize cycling event on World Cycling Day

Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan and Dean of Diplomatic Corps H.E. Mr. Atadjan Movlamov in his speech noted that in 2018, on the initiative of Turkmenistan, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Resolution declaring June 3 the World Bicycle Day

DNA

ISLAMABAD: 3 June is celebrated worldwide as World Bicycle Day to recognize bicycle as a reliable and sustainable means of transportation. The Embassy of Turkmenistan in collaboration with Serena Hotels, and Tabani Group of companies who provided bicycles, organized a cycling event to encourage people from all walks of life to adopt cycling, promoting an active lifestyle and ecofriendly practices. The cycle rally took off at D-chowk and culminated at Serena Business Complex in Islamabad, where attendees were served healthy refreshments. The event was attended by the diplomatic community, corporate and media personnel and Serena Hotel's associates. The Chief Guest for the occasion was Special Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Syrus Sajjad Qazi. Speaking at the event, Special Secretary Mr. Syrus Sajjad Qazi appreciated the Embassy of Turkmenistan and Serena Hotels for organizing the cycling event. He



also lauded the Government of Turkmenistan for initiating the resolution at the United Nations General Assembly for declaring June 3 as World Bicycle Day to promote healthy lifestyle which will ultimately reduce carbon footprint and noise pollution. He

emphasized the need to adapt to climate change by switching to healthier modes of transportation and maintained that such events should be organized more frequently to promote cycling as an efficient mode of transportation. Ambassador of Turkmenistan

to Pakistan and Dean of Diplomatic Corps H.E. Mr. Atadjan Movlamov in his speech noted that in 2018, on the initiative of Turkmenistan, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Resolution declaring June 3 the World Bicycle

Day. Turkmenistan is promoting a healthy lifestyle and environment-friendly means of transport, the popularization of which directly contributes to achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals. It emphasized that the bicycle

is an instrument of sustainable transportation and conveys a positive message to foster sustainable consumption and production and has a positive impact on climate. Turkmenistan is committed to strengthening international cooperation aimed at implementing the principles of development and peace. For its part, Turkmenistan was one of the first countries in the world to take up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the first in the region to nationalize the Sustainable Development Goals in 2016. Mr. Aziz Boolani, CEO Serena Hotels reiterated company's commitment to foster ecofriendly environment and highlighted some of the recent initiatives taken by Serena Hotels including plantation of 600,000 trees across Pakistan, commissioning of sewerage treatment plant and construction of new hotels in line with the guidelines of International Finance Corporation's EDGE Certification. He thanked the participants for their support in making this event successful.

## Sabrina starts journey to attempt K2 on bicycle

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Four-time Austrian female Olympic judoka Sabrina Filzmoser started her journey on Sunday to attempt K2, the world's second highest peak, on a bicycle.

"Weeks before it wasn't easy for me to decide but with support from the Austrian embassy I want to start the mission. I intend to ride on a bicycle on Sunday from Islamabad to K2 Base Camp via Skardu before climbing K2," she said in a press briefing before starting her mission along with President Pakistan Judo Federation (PJF) Col Junaid Alam, Counsellor Austrian Embassy Christian Siegl and second secretary Embassy of Republic of Kazakhstan Olzhas Alipbayev here at a local hotel. Sabrina Filzmoser was a 2005 and 2010 World bronze medalist 2008 and 2011 European Champion. 7th at the 2012 Olympic Games. Winner of the Super World Cup Tournoi de Paris 2006 and 2008. Winner of the Grand Slam in Paris twice. Bronze medalist at the Grand Prix in Cancun in 2017. In 2019 she took bronze at the Grand Prix in Budapest as the oldest



medalist ever in the Judo World Tour, and Tokyo 2020 was her fourth Olympics. She did Judo for a peace project in 2022 from sea level in India to the Top of the world Mount Everest Summit widely covered and appreciated by world media. She has also established a world's highest Judo Club named Everest Club in Nepal which was supported by International Judo Federation as well. Sabrina also lauded the Pakistan Judo Federation (PJF) for their support and hospitality. "PJF is also focusing on female players and we have to push it more. There are very strong judo players in Pakistan. I will also support the women players

when I come back from the K2 attempt hopefully," she said. Sabrina was also given a farewell by Judo Clubs at the Rawal Dam. She also cycled to Faisal Masjid. Speaking earlier, President Pakistan Judo Federation (PJF) Col Junaid Alam announced the launching of a unique Judo Club by the newly affiliated unit Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission. "The name of this Judo club named 'Takbeer Judo Club' has been associated with the silver Jubilee celebrations of Youm e Takbeer. Takbeer Judo Club is a club for all. Any talented judoka doing a job in any private or public organisation can be taken care of by the club. Only he has to sign

up with the club. The club administration will scrutinize the credentials and his future prospects would be on the stipend roll of the club," he said. He also welcomed Asim Qureshi Chief Scientist, Convenor of PAEC sports and Member Governing Body of Takbeer Judo Club. "Two times Olympian by Qualification, Two times Commonwealth games medalist, Asian Medalist, South Asian Championship and games champion for a complete decade son of our National Legend Hussain Shah Olympic medalist of 1988 Shah Hussain Shah has consented to be the representative of Takbeer Judo Club," he said. About Sabrina, he said PJF came to know that Sabrina was coming to Pakistan for a peace mission to promote Judo through K2 Expedition. "Pakistan Judo Federation is grateful that Sabrina chose our beautiful country for this peace mission. She has consented to hold talent hunt and training sessions before the expedition, during the expedition as well after the expedition. Takbeer Judo Club has requested her to accept the post of Brand Ambassador of TJC which she has kindly consented," he said.

## Gundogan rallies his team to FA Cup glory

LONDON: Manchester City skipper Ilkay Gundogan on Saturday rallied his team to 2023 Football Association (FA) Cup glory. Ilkay scored twice in the final against Manchester United to lead his team to a 2-1 victory at London's Wembley Stadium. Gundogan drew first blood early on with his screamer in the 12th second of the game. After Bruno Fernandes leveled the score in the 33rd minute with a penalty goal, given by a Video Assistant Referee (VAR) decision, Ilkay took center stage once more. The German-born midfielder with Turkish roots made good use of the assist of Kevin De Bruyne and scored once more with a left-footed long strike in the 51st minute. With this victory, the Citizens stayed on track for a possible "Famous Treble" - winning the domestic title, domestic cup, and European cup in the same season. Next Saturday they will take on Italian Serie A club Inter Milan in the 2023 UEFA Champions League final at Istanbul Ataturk Olympic Stadium to complete the treble. Man City captured the cup for the seventh time as well as achieved FA Cup glory for the first time in four seasons. Prince of Wales, Prince William has congratulated Manchester City on a brilliant FA Cup Final victory. The Prince of Wales took to Twitter and shared a video giving sneak peek into his appearance at the final. - Agencies

## 'Call data for May 9, March...

FROM PAGE 01  
rejected the PTI's claim that the provincial administration was responsible for the alleged murder of its activist Ali Bilal, saying his death was caused by a "road accident" and "unfortunately misinterpreted". Addressing a press conference in Lahore today, the IGP Punjab, flanked by other senior officers, revealed that out of the total calls analysed, 154 calls were found to be identical, while Yasmin Rashid was responsible for 41 calls. Additionally, he said that the identities of 170 individuals involved in the incidents were traced through WhatsApp groups. Further shedding light on the events that transpired on May 9, the IGP Punjab explained that the attacks were meticulously planned and carried out simultaneously at specific targets, including Jinnah House, GHQ, and Radio Pakistan, among others. "We have record of each call made during these incidents and we are presenting them as evidence in court," he added.

## Benzema to leave Real Madrid

PARIS: Real Madrid and our captain Karim Benzema have agreed to put an end to his brilliant and unforgettable era as a player at our club," said Los Blancos in a statement. "Madrid want to show their gratitude and all their love to someone who is one of our greatest legends." The announcement comes after Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti had said Saturday there was "no doubt" about Benzema's future being at Madrid, noting the forward had one more year left on his contract. And Benzema himself had said "not everything you read on the internet is reality" after reports emerged in the week about his potential departure to Saudi Arabia, where The French forward joined Madrid in 2009 from Ligue 1 side Lyon. Benzema established himself as a key player alongside Cristiano Ronaldo and Gareth Bale in the vaunted "BBC" attacking trident, before developing into the team's leader when the Portuguese striker left in 2018. - Agencies

## Messi's final game for PSG ends in defeat

PARIS: Lionel Messi was jeered by a section of Paris Saint-Germain supporters as he played his final game for the club in the Ligue 1 champions' 3-2 home defeat by Clermont on Saturday. Messi's expected departure from the French giants after two seasons was officially confirmed by PSG in a statement shortly before Saturday's game. "His contribution to Paris Saint-Germain and Ligue 1 cannot be underestimated and we wish Leo and his family all the best for the future," said PSG president Nasser al-Khelaifi. Yet Messi's name was jeered by some fans as the teams were announced at the Parc des Princes and the Argentinian World Cup winner was again whistled sporadically during the match. There was little riding on the game itself after PSG wrapped up a record 11th French title last weekend, and Christophe Galtier's side contrived to throw away a two-goal lead. Sergio Ramos, whose own departure from PSG was confirmed on Friday, marked his final appearance by heading in a Vitinha cross for the opener in the 16th minute. Mbappe, looking to end a fifth consecutive season as Ligue 1's

top scorer, then scored a penalty to make it 2-0 with his 29th league goal this season, which he marked by holding up goalkeeper Sergio Rico's number 16 jersey. Spaniard Rico, PSG's backup goalkeeper, is in a serious condition in hospital in Seville after being injured in a horse-riding accident last weekend. "The most important thing was the tribute to Sergio," Mbappe told broadcaster Canal Plus. "There are more important things than football, and on the pitch we were already champions. We could have lost 2-0 and that would not have changed anything for us. "We had to pay tribute to Sergio. I think we have all been affected by what is an extremely serious situation. We have been worried about that all week and so we tried to pay tribute in the best possible way." Mbappe's goals tally left him two ahead of Lyon's Alexandre Lacazette in the final standings. - Agencies



## Police to move LHC against...

FROM PAGE 01  
Residence - also called Jinnah House - on May 9. The PTI chief's arrest at the Islamabad High Court last month by the paramilitary Rangers in a corruption case had sparked countrywide protests, during which several private and public properties, including military installations, were vandalised. Rashid, along with 17 other women PTI workers, was initially detained under the Maintenance of Public Order ordinance and was re-arrested merely hours after the LHC had ordered her release on May 13. She was also charged in three cases registered in Lahore pertaining to her alleged involvement in May 9 riots. However, due to her medical condition, police had decided at the time to keep her at Services Hospital in Lahore, where she was taken from Kot Lakhpat jail.

## 4 soldiers martyred in Neelum mishap

FROM PAGE 01  
when the incident occurred near Shujaabad, some 12km before its destination, at about 4 am on Aug 21. Reuters quoted military officials as saying, Local police said that the truck fell 500 feet down the ravine. A police official said the noise from the crash alerted nearby residents. He added that the residents rushed to the scene with cellular phones and lanterns to carry out rescue work.

## Islamabad Club Junior Polo emerge victorious

This marks the first time a junior polo team has visited Pakistan, highlighting the sports diplomacy initiative of Islamabad Club. Islamabad Club polo ground proved to be an ideal venue, hosting both matches in a highly professional manner

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Club Junior Polo emerged victorious, defeating Dubai Polo & Equestrian Club with a close score of 6-5 in the second match of the two-match series held at the Islamabad Club polo ground on Sunday. The series commenced with a 4-4 draw in the first match, setting the stage for an intense battle. The second match began with both teams converting one goal each in the first chukker, resulting in a 1-1 tie. Islamabad Club then displayed their dominance in the second chukker, scoring two impressive goals to establish a 3-1 lead. Maintaining their supremacy, Islamabad Club continued their success in the third chukker by converting two more goals, securing an unassailable 5-1 lead. However, Dubai Polo & Equestrian Club made a strong comeback in the

fourth and final chukker, firing in four fabulous goals to equalize the score at 5-5. In the dying moments of the match, Islamabad Club

clinched victory with a match-winning goal, winning the encounter by a narrow margin of 6-5. The event was graced by the presence of the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salim AlZaabi, who attended as the chief guest. Additionally,

Islamabad Club Administrator Dr Touqeer Shah, Col Gill, Sohail Shigri, Hashim Asad, Haider Asad, diplomats from various countries, dignitaries, and polo enthusiasts gathered in large numbers to witness and enjoy the enthralling encounter.

The visiting team from Dubai comprised players Hassan Al Abbar, Ayden Al Ahmed, Charlie Matthews, and Harnes Werle, with Lisa Matthews as the team manager and Jan Azam as the team coach. The Islamabad Club Polo Team showcased their skills with Chengiz Khan Leghari, Akbar Aurangzeb, Saad Mirza, Muhammad Ali Malik, Hashim Waheed, and Saim Abbas as their members. This marks the first time a junior polo team has visited Pakistan, highlighting the sports diplomacy initiative of Islamabad Club. The Islamabad Club polo ground proved to be an ideal venue, hosting both matches in a highly professional manner.



## Briefs

## Le Pen's RN served as mouthpiece for Kremlin

PARIS: After a six-month inquiry and more than 50 hearings, the cross-party parliamentary inquiry found that the National Rally (Rassemblement national or RN) party had served as a "communication channel" for Russian power, notably supporting Moscow's illegal annexation of Crimea, according to the leaked report. The text, due to be published next week, was adopted on Thursday by eleven votes to five – to the dismay of the inquiry's chair and instigator, RN lawmaker Jean-Philippe Tanguy, who promptly dismissed the process as a "farce". The vote came just days after Le Pen was grilled by members of the investigation, swearing under oath that she had no ties to the Kremlin while also reiterating her support for Moscow's takeover of Crimea – which she referred to as a "reattachment". That support is "visibly appreciated in Moscow", wrote the report's rapporteur Constance Le Grip, noting that the Russian press had given ample coverage to the far-right leader's May 24 interview, "echoing with great satisfaction the assertion, in their view reaffirmed by Marine Le Pen, that Crimea is and always has been Russian". —APP

## Climber rescued from Everest death zone

KATHMANDU: A Nepali guide abandoned his client's Everest summit bid to rescue a Malaysian climber in a deadly mountaineering season that has seen at least twelve deaths. Gelje Sherpa was guiding a Chinese client to the 8,849-metre (29,032-feet) peak and planned to assist him to paraglide down. Instead, only a few hundred metres from the summit, they came across a lone man clinging to a rope and shivering in the area known as the "death zone". The area above 8,000 metres has earned its name because of its thin air, freezing temperatures and low oxygen levels that heighten the risk of altitude sickness. It is also notorious for its difficult terrain. "When I found him in that state, my heart did not let me leave him there," Sherpa told AFP. Many other climbers had walked past the man that day, but he declined to criticise them. "It is a place where you have to think of your survival first," he said. Sherpa told his client – who will have paid at least \$45,000 to attempt Everest, including a permit fee of \$11,000 – to return without a summit. "When I decided to go down, my client did not agree at first. Of course, he was there after spending a lot of money, it must have been his dream for years and he had to find time to come here to climb. He got angry and said he wanted to go to the summit." —APP

## Ukraine lacks weapons to launch counteroffensive

KIEV: Ukraine needs more weapons and ammunition to be able to carry out a successful counteroffensive against the Russian forces, the deputy head of President Vladimir Zelensky's office has said. In an interview with British newspaper The Times on Saturday, Igor Zhovkva was asked why the much-anticipated operation by Ukraine, aimed at retaking land lost to Russia, still hasn't been launched. "If you want to start a successful counteroffensive you need everything at your disposal, including artillery, armored vehicles and tanks, so probably we don't have enough," he replied. "More weapons is the No 1 topic in each and every conversation" that Zelensky had during his numerous foreign trips over the past month, Zhovkva, who is also the Ukrainian president's top foreign affairs adviser, stressed. "Every country knows what kind of weapons we need from them, to protect our territory, stop the rockets," the official added. —APP



AMMAN: A view of wedding of the Crown Prince of Jordan.—DNA

## No breakthrough in NATO-Turkey talks about Sweden

"I understand it is hard to see demonstrations against Turkey and against NATO in Sweden," Stoltenberg said. "But let me be clear, freedom of assembly and expression are core values in our democratic societies. These rights must be protected and upheld"

## NEWS DESK

ISTANBUL: NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg made no breakthrough on Sunday in talks about Sweden's membership in the military organization with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, with officials from the two countries to meet in just over a week to try to bridge their differences. NATO wants to bring Sweden into the fold by the time U.S. President Joe Biden and other allied leaders meet in Lithuania on July 11-12, but Turkey and Hungary have yet to endorse the move. All 31 member countries must ratify a candidate's accession protocol for it to join the trans-Atlantic

alliance. Turkey's government accuses Sweden of being too lenient on terror organizations and security threats, including militant Kurdish groups and people associated with a 2016 coup attempt. Hungary has also delayed its approval, but the reasons why haven't been made publicly clear. "President Erdogan and I agreed today that the permanent joint mechanism should meet again in the week starting on June 12. Membership will make Sweden safer, but also NATO and Turkey stronger," Stoltenberg told reporters in Istanbul. The permanent joint mechanism was set up to address Turkey's concerns about Sweden and Finland, the



latter of which became the 31st member of NATO in April.

"Sweden has fulfilled its obligations," for membership, Stoltenberg said. He noted that the country has amended its constitution,

strengthened its anti-terror laws, and lifted an arms embargo on Turkey since it applied to join NATO just over a year ago. Fearing they might be targeted by Moscow after Russia invaded Ukraine last

year, Sweden and Finland abandoned their traditional positions of military non-alignment to seek protection under NATO's security umbrella. As Stoltenberg held talks in Istanbul, hundreds of people, including dozens of pro-Kurdish protesters, gathered in Stockholm to demonstrate against Sweden's planned NATO membership. Up to 500 people took part in the action titled "No to NATO – no Erdogan Laws in Sweden." They rallied under the banner of the "Alliance Against NATO," an umbrella for a mix of Kurdish organizations, leftist groups, anarchists, youth and climate activists and people opposed to Sweden's new anti-terror laws, which took

effect on June 1, as well as those calling for free media. In January, a protest in Stockholm involving the burning of a copy of the Quran brought Sweden's membership talks at NATO to a grinding halt, after Erdogan suspended the meetings. The incident led to anti-Sweden demonstrations around the Muslim world. Stoltenberg appeared to suggest that the protests might have been raised during his talks. "I understand it is hard to see demonstrations against Turkey and against NATO in Sweden," Stoltenberg said. "But let me be clear, freedom of assembly and expression are core values in our democratic societies. These rights must be protected and upheld."

## Promote inter-religious harmony, Masood Khan urges faith leaders

WASHINGTON: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Masood Khan, urged faith and community leaders to work together to promote inter-religious harmony when he met them at his residence on Saturday. The faith leaders comprised Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs. "The strong bonds of humanity bind us all together; While we maintain our religious beliefs and identities, we have to work collectively, as one community, for the larger national interests and projecting the true image of Pakistan," the ambassador told them, according to a press release issued by the Pakistani embassy. "Pakistan is committed to protecting the rights of minorities and providing them with an enabling environment to contribute towards socio-economic development and nation-building process." Terming visits of American faith leaders to Pakistan as a means of promoting people-centric diplomacy, Masood Khan invited leaders of all faiths to explore the country and to build bridges among communities. Many of the faith leaders who were at the Ambassador's reception had visited Pakistan and shared their pleasant experiences. Masood Khan appreciated the services of faith and community leaders, including Ilyas Masih and Raj Rathore, who he said have been making efforts not only to unite communities but also towards bringing the US and Pakistan together through people-to-people contacts and exchanges. Ilyas Masih, President All Neighbors International, thanked the Ambassador and the Embassy of Pakistan for providing a platform to all faiths and communities and also facilitating people-to-people exchanges. Other participants also spoke on the occasion and shared their thoughts about Pakistan and its people along with their experiences of visiting the country. —APP



OSLO: Prime Minister Adviser on Kashmir Affairs Qamar Zaman Kaira hosted by Pakistan Ambassador to Norway Saadia Altaf in Oslo.—DNA

## Budget: APBF stresses focus on small industries

He said that the APBF, in its budget proposals, also urged the government to reduce sales tax to single digit and also cut corporate tax to make the upcoming budget business-friendly

## DNA

LAHORE: With a view to help grow the businesses the government will have to take solid measures in the upcoming Federal Budget 2023-24 to strengthen the industry, especially the SMEs, saving the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the small industries. The government will have to make a visible reduction in taxes in the budget to help grow the businesses, particularly the SME sector, as Pakistan needs millions of jobs annually. Mere statements will not work unless the government takes solid measures. A sizable reduction in fuel prices, a major cut in the key policy rate, regionally competitive energy rates, quick refunds payment, and relaxation in duties &

taxes are need of the hour. These recommendations were put forward by APBF president Syed Maaz Mahmood, in a joint meeting of various trade and industrial sectors held here to review the Budget proposals for the upcoming fiscal year of 2023-24, urging the finance ministry to make focus on greater relief to the documented and registered SMEs. Unveiling the budget proposals, APBF President said that the Forum has submitted comprehensive proposals for the upcoming federal budget with main objective to bring liberal investment policy, infrastructure development, broadening of tax base and creating jobs through industrialization. The budget proposals were compiled in an unbiased and transparent manner, incorporating

feedback received from business community on hosts of sectors from all over the country. APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi proposed the budget makers to reduce tax rates with a view to widen the tax base and curtail parallel economy, also providing a competitive edge to Pakistan's products in global markets. Ibrahim Qureshi said that the SMEs are the major victims of corona pandemic; therefore, the government should introduce supportive policies. He said that the small and medium enterprises are backbone of the economy and their role was crucial for economic development. He said that major issue of the SMEs is limited access to the financing, as just 5-7% of the total lending to the private sector was being given

to them while the number of SME borrowers are below 0.2 million, which should be increased. APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood called for introducing soft policies for SMEs including special financing schemes where they can get credit at low markup rates with no collateral requirement. Moreover, there should be a holiday for all taxes and levies for five years for the newly registered companies, especially SMEs. There should also be exemption from audit for the newly registered SMEs in this period. He said that with a view to save the economy the government should announce special incentives for a cash-strapped Small and Medium Industry, which represents more than 90 percent of around 3.2 million business enterprises in Pakistan, contributing 40 percent to the GDP,

employing more than 80 percent of non-agricultural workforce, and generating 25 percent of export earnings. Syed Maaz Mahmood asked the government to take solid measures, as a significant cut in fuel rates, a major cut in the key policy rate, regionally competitive energy rates, quick refunds payment, and relaxation in duties & taxes are need of the hour. He added that promoting foreign direct investment, increasing the share of direct taxes and slashing the slab of indirect levies topped the proposals presented by the All Pakistan Business Forum for the federal budget 2023-24. He said that the APBF, in its budget proposals, also urged the government to reduce sales tax to single digit and also cut corporate tax to make the upcoming budget business-friendly.

## Hakan Fidan, Türkiye's new foreign minister

DNA

ANKARA: Hakan Fidan, the head of the National Intelligence Organization (MIT),



has been appointed to the foreign minister post in the new Cabinet announced Saturday by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Fidan was born in Ankara Hamamonu in 1968. He graduated from the Army Signal School and the Army Language School, and completed a significant part of his academic studies during his service in the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK). During his overseas NATO assignment, Fidan obtained undergraduate degrees in politics and management science from the University of Maryland which was followed by master's and doctoral degrees from the International Relations Department at Bilkent University. After his service in the TSK, Fidan focused on academic life and taught international relations courses at Hacettepe and Bilkent universities in the Turkish capital of Ankara. Fidan held critical positions in foreign policy and security in state institutions. He served as Deputy Undersecretary for Foreign Policy and Security at the Prime Ministry and Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency and was a member of the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency, special representative of the prime minister, Deputy Undersecretary of MIT, Head of MIT and special representative of the president. Fidan has been serving as the head of MIT for 13 years since May 27, 2010.

## Seoul pushes back on Borrell's claim

SEOUL: South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-Sup never discussed ammunition shipments to Ukraine with EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, the ministry told journalists on Sunday. It was referring to Borrell's since-deleted tweet saying he had "a good meeting" with Lee on the sidelines of Shangri-La Dialogue security summit in Singapore. "Shared alarm at continued [North Korean] provocations and discussed Ukraine's needs for ammunition," he wrote at the time. The South Korean Ministry of Defense contradicted this statement, however, claiming it was "not true" that Lee Jong-Sup and Borrell had a "discussion about ammunition support" for Kiev. It went on to elaborate that the EU diplomat had "mentioned that various weapon systems and other support means are needed to improve Ukraine's situation against Russia, but there was only a unilateral position that ammunition was important." Following the backlash from Seoul, Borrell's tweet was deleted and replaced with another one, with the last phrase reading "I explained Ukraine's needs for ammunition." —APP

## Tension in Kosovo may lead to renewed bloodshed

BELGRADE: The recent tension in Kosovo is dangerous and it could lead to renewed bloodshed, Russia's ambassador to Serbia warned Saturday. "This situation is dangerous, because there could be an outbreak of an even bigger conflict, and renewed bloodshed in northern Kosovo, and that could lead to the spread of tensions to the entire Balkans, or at least to one part of the Balkan region," Aleksandar Bocan-Kharченко told Russian state outlet RT Balkan. He added that the European Union and the West as a whole always take a one-sided approach to solving problems. Russia has a traditional kinship with the region's ethnic Serbs and Serbia – which borders Kosovo – as both are Slavic peoples following the Eastern Orthodox faith. Russia does not recognize the 2008. —APP

## Briefs

### CJP approves allowance for SC employees

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umer Ata Bandial has approved the revised Special Judicial Allowance (SJA) for the employees of the Supreme Court, media reported. After the approval, the SC workers (BPS-1-22) will be able to draw the allowance with effect from May 1, 2023, which is equal to one initial basic pay of the Pay Scales of 2022. "In continuation with notification of even number dated 07.02.2023, the Chief Justice of Pakistan, having exercised powers in terms of Finance Division's (Expenditure Wing) O.M.No.F.1(5)R.12/81 dated 24th November 1993, read with Rule 4 of the Supreme Court Establishment Service Rules, 2015, has been pleased to unfreeze Special Judicial Allowance which was admissible equal to one initial basic pay of the Pay Scales of 2017 to the employees (BPS 1-22) of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, allowing them to draw the revised Special Judicial Allowance with effect from 01.05.2023 equal to one initial basic pay of the Pay Scales of 2022," the notification dated May 31, 2023, issued by SC deputy registrar (Admin)," read a statement issued by SC deputy registrar (Admin). It further stated that apex court employees shall continue to draw the revised Special Judicial Allowance equal to three initial basic pays of the Pay Scales of 2022 and the same shall stand frozen at this level till further orders and the expenditure involved will be met from within the sanctioned budget grant of this court.

### Scores held in Hong Kong on crackdown anniversary

DNA

HONG KONG: Hong Kong police searched and detained scores of people on Sunday, including four arrested for "seditious" intent, as authorities tightened security for the 34th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. Restrictions in Hong Kong have stifled what were once the largest vigils marking the anniversary of the bloody crackdown by Chinese troops on pro-democracy demonstrators, leaving cities like Taipei, London, New York and Berlin to keep the memory of June 4 alive. Near Victoria Park, the previous site of yearly vigils, hundreds of police conducted stop and search operations, and deployed armoured vehicles and police vans. Reuters witnesses saw more than a dozen people taken away, including activist Alexandra Wong, 67, who carried a bouquet of flowers, a man who held a copy of "35th of May", a play on the Tiananmen crackdown, and an elderly man standing alone on a street corner with a candle.

# China: War with US to be unbearable disaster

"It is undeniable that a severe conflict or confrontation between China and the US will be an unbearable disaster for the world." Wearing the general's uniform of the People's Liberation Army, Li made his address on the 34th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown

NEWS DESK

SINGAPORE: Chinese Defence Minister Li Shangfu told Asia's top security summit on Sunday that conflict with the United States would be an "unbearable disaster" but that his country sought dialogue over confrontation. Speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Li said the world was big enough for China and the US to grow together – remarks made days after he refused to meet his US counterpart for direct talks. "China and the US have different systems and are different in many other ways," he said in a speech that marked his first significant international address since he was named China's Minister of National Defence in March. "However, this should not keep the two sides from seeking common ground and common interests to grow bilateral ties and deepen cooperation," he said. "It is undeniable that a severe conflict or confrontation between China and the US will be an unbearable disaster for the world." Wearing the general's uniform of the People's Liberation Army, Li made his address on the 34th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown.

Ties between Washington and Beijing are badly strained over a range of issues, including democratically governed Taiwan, territorial disputes in the South China Sea and President Joe Biden's restrictions on semiconductor chip exports. As delegates at the summit debated the risks of accidents and miscalculations amid those tensions, the US Navy said a Chinese destroyer made "unsafe" manoeuvres near a US warship in the Taiwan Straits on Saturday, highlighting the dangers. China's military criticised the United States and Canada for "deliberately provoking risk" after their warships staged a rare joint sailing through the sensitive strait. US Indo-Pacific Command said US and Canadian ships were operating routinely and under high-seas freedoms. Canadian defence minister Anita Anand said that Canada would continue to sail where international law allows, including the Strait, and that "actors in this region must engage responsibly". In his speech, Li said China would not allow such freedom-of-navigation patrols by the United States and its allies to be "a pretext to exercise hegemony of navigation". After his remarks, regional scholars asked Li repeatedly about the incident as well as China's extensive maritime

deployments in the disputed South China Sea. He did not answer them directly, saying moves by countries outside the region were raising tensions. Richard Marles, Australian deputy prime minister and defence minister, said his country's efforts to improve its military capabilities and presence in the region were aimed at "playing our part in contributing to the collective security of the Pacific and the maintenance of the rules-based order". "It is a point I made that we have repeatedly made to the region and to the world since we announced the optimal pathway to acquiring nuclear-powered submarine capability," he said on the sidelines of the security meeting, referring to the AUKUS pact with the United States and Britain. US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin rebuked China in a speech at the summit on Saturday for refusing to hold military talks, leaving the superpowers deadlocked over their differences. Austin said dialogue "is not a reward, but a necessity". Li was more restrained in his address, although he took thinly veiled digs at the United States, accusing "some countries" of intensifying an arms race and willfully interfering in the internal affairs of others. "A Cold War mentality is now resur-

gent, greatly increasing security risks," he said. "Mutual respect should prevail over bullying and hegemony." Li – sanctioned by the United States in 2018 over weapons purchases from Russia – shook hands with Austin at a dinner on Friday but the two have not had a deeper discussion, despite repeated US demands for more military exchanges. Alongside the speeches and panel discussions, senior intelligence officials from both sides attended a secret meeting of spy chiefs in Singapore on the fringes of the summit, media reported on Sunday. After Li's speech, retired veteran Chinese diplomat Cui Tiankai urged the United States to ease military deployments close to China in an act of "good faith" if high-level defence talks between the two superpowers are to resume. Chong Ja Ian, a political scientist at the National University of Singapore, said that Li's approach and tone appeared gentler than that of Chinese positions stated at previous summits but that "the content was the same". "It was a reflection of the distance between the U.S. and the PRC, which also suggests that any hope that there will be some resolution is naive. US, PRC competition is here to stay," he said.

### Kim's sister vows 2nd attempt to launch spy satellite



DNA

SEOUL: The influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed again Sunday to push for a second attempt to launch a spy satellite as she lambasted a U.N. Security Council meeting over the North's first, failed launch. The North's attempt to put its first military spy satellite into orbit last Wednesday failed as its rocket crashed off the Korean Peninsula's western coast. An emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council was still convened at the request of the U.S., Japan and other countries to discuss the launch because it had violated council resolutions banning the North from performing any launch using ballistic technology.

## 31000 Australian Sikhs vote for Khalistan despite threats



MONITORING REPORT

SYDNEY: Over 31,000 Sikhs voted for Khalistan Referendum in Sydney amid stiff resistance from the Indian government and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal campaign to stop Sikhs from holding the third phase of referendum in Australia. The Sydney phase of Khalistan Referendum was organized to mark the anniversary of the 1984 Operation Blue Star Amritsar Genocide when Indian authorities killed thousands of Sikhs during a bloodied attack on Sri Harmandir Sahib (popularly known as the Golden Temple). Thousands of Sikh men and women queued outside Shaheed General Shabeg Singh Khalistan Referendum Voting Centre on Sterling Road, Michinbury, from 9am and cast their votes till 5pm under the super-

vision of independent Punjab Referendum Commission which is overseeing the worldwide referendum voting, commissioned by Pro-Khalistan separatist group, Sikhs for Justice (SFJ). Two weeks before Khalistan Referendum voting in Sydney, PM Modi was in Australia where he met the Australian govt authorities and urged them to stop Sikhs from going ahead with voting but the Australian govt told Modi that whole Canberra respected India's position it was not in position to stop its own citizens from expressing their legal and democratic right. Pro-Khalistan Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) booked Khalistan Referendum voting at four different venues but all venues ended up cancelling the booking citing security and organisational issues as Hindutva groups, backed by the Indian govt, raised false alarms of potential violence between Sikh and Hindutva groups with the centres.

Large sized banners and posters hung outside the venue with the following slogans: "Khalistan Referendum Australia, Shimla Capital secession of Punjab from India"; "1984 Sikh Genocide, 100+ Sikhs burnt alive in furnaces by India's Hindu mobs"; "Khalistan Referendum, the last battle to liberate Punjab"; "Khalistan Referendum – Punjab – Shimla Capital". The Sikhs for Justice General Counsel Gurbatwant Singh Pannun said: "Sydney Khalistan Referendum voting is a prodigious journey of Sikh Sovereignists from June 1984 defending Sri Akal Takht Sahib With 'bombs-bullets' to 'ballot-voting' in 2023 to liberate Punjab from Indian occupation." Pannun said the Sydney turnout was a reflection of an extraordinary growing global support for liberation of Punjab from Indian occupation. Dr Bakhshish Singh Sandhu, President Council of Khalistan said: "Sikhs in their thousands in Sydney have sent a clear message that they want liberation of Punjab from the Indian occupation, in the same way Hindus got freedom from the English Raj. We are under occupation of India and the only solution is liberation. We will liberate Punjab to save Punjab from India, to preserve our values, religion and culture. Tens of thousands of Sikhs have taken part in the Khalistan Referendum all over the world to express their democratic right in a peaceful manner." Khalistan Referendum's voting in Sydney was the third phase of the Australian campaign.

## Landslide in China's Sichuan kills 14

SICHUAN: A landslide in China's southwestern Sichuan province has killed 14 people and left five missing, Chinese state media outlet reported on Sunday. The landslide occurred at around 6am on Sunday morning in a mountainous area near the Leshan city in the south of the province. More than 180 rescue workers have been dispatched to the site, with search and rescue operations still ongoing, CCTV said. The Leshan city was hit by heavy rain over the two days before the incident, weather tracking data indicated. Earlier this year, at least four people were killed in a collapse at a coal mine in northern China, while the progress in the search for dozens who were missing was hampered by a massive landslide. In September last year, rain, flash floods and mudslides threatened the search for dozens of people still missing days after a strong earthquake rocked mountainous southwest China, killing at least 82. – Agencies

## India train disaster: Signal fault the likely cause

WEB DESK

NEW DELHI: India's railway minister has suggested a signal fault led to the Odisha rail disaster, with a "change in electronic interlocking" the likely cause. Ashwini Vaishnaw later said the cause and people responsible for the deadly three-train crash in eastern India had been identified but did not elaborate. India's Railway Board said there had been "some kind of signalling interference" rather than failure. A report into India's worst rail accident this century is due later. Meanwhile the death toll has been revised down to 275 af-

ter some bodies were counted twice, officials said. Of the 1,175 injured people taken to hospital, 793 have been discharged. Some families are still searching for their loved ones. In railway signalling the electronic interlocking system sets routes for each train in a set area, ensuring the safe movement of trains along the track. The crash saw a passenger train collide with a stationary goods train and derail, after being wrongly directed onto a loop track by the side of the main line. Derailed carriages then struck the rear carriages of a second passenger train passing in the opposite direction.

## 40,000 Pakistani pilgrims arrive in Saudi Arabia

It is pertinent to mention that this is first full force Hajj after 2019 in which around 17,9,000 Pakistani pilgrims will participate

MAKKAH: Out of these 13095 have arrived in Makkah after completing their eight-day stay at Madinah while others have been accommodated in Madinah Munawwarah. These numbers also include 1000 hajj pilgrims who arrived in Saudi Arabia under private hajj scheme through 18 hajj group operators. According to the spokesperson of Ministry of Religious Affairs, Muhammad Umar Butt the Ministry's monitoring team has completed the assessment of 12 hajj group operators. He said arrangements are being made to provide the sacrifice coupons for the pilgrims at their accommodations. Umar Butt said 522 Moavineen including medical mission is present in Saudi Arabia to assist pilgrims in every possible manner. Out of these 334 are deputed at Makkah, 172 at Madinah while 19 at Jeddah Airport. It is pertinent to mention that this is first full force Hajj after 2019 in which around 17,9,000 Pakistani pilgrims will participate. On the other hand, Secretary Religious Affairs Dr Aftab Akbar Durrani has said Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has made exemplary arrangements for pilgrims in Saudi Arabia aimed to improve the image of Pakistan. He said Pakistani pilgrims have also demonstrated resilience in the face of difficult circumstances. – DNA

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## Bakhmut: Ukraine ups pressure after Russian declaration

BAKHMUT: Watching imagery from a drone camera overhead, Ukrainian battalion commander Oleg Shiryayev warned his men in nearby trenches that Russian forces were advancing across a field toward a patch of trees outside the city of Bakhmut. The leader of the 228th Battalion of the 127th Kharkiv Territorial Defense Brigade then ordered a mortar team to get ready. A target was locked. A mortar tube popped out a loud orange blast, and an explosion cut a new crater in an already pockmarked hillside. "We are moving forward," Shiryayev said after at least one drone image showed a Russian fighter struck down. "We fight for every tree, every trench, every dugout." Russian forces declared victory in the eastern city last month after the longest, deadliest battle since their full-scale invasion of Ukraine began 15 months ago. But Ukrainian defenders like Shiryayev aren't retreating. Instead, they are keeping up the pres-

sure and continuing the fight from positions on the western fringes of Bakhmut. The pushback gives commanders in Moscow another thing to think about ahead of a much-anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive that appears to be taking shape. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar said Russia sought to create the impression of calm around Bakhmut, but in fact, artillery shelling still goes on at levels similar to those at the height of the battle to take the city. The fight, she said, is evolving into a new phase. "The battle for the Bakhmut area hasn't stopped; it is ongoing, just taking different forms," said Maliar, dressed in her characteristic fatigues in an interview from a military media center in Kyiv. Russian forces are now trying – but failing – to oust Ukrainian fighters from the "dominant heights" overlooking Bakhmut. From the Kremlin's perspective, the area around Bakhmut is just part of

the more than 1,000-kilometer (621-mile) front line that the Russian military must hold. That task could be made more difficult by the withdrawal of the mercenaries from private military contractor Wagner Group who helped take control of the city. They will be replaced with Russian soldiers. For Ukrainian forces, recent work has been opportunistic – trying to wrest small gains from the enemy and taking strategic positions, notably from two flanks on the northwest and southwest, where the Ukrainian 3rd Separate Assault Brigade has been active, officials said. Russia had envisioned the capture of Bakhmut as partial fulfillment of its ambition to seize control of the eastern Donbas region, Ukraine's industrial heartland. Now, its forces have been compelled to regroup, rotate fighters and rearm just to hold the city. Wagner's owner announced a pullout after acknowledging the loss of more than 20,000 of his men. – Agencies