



Islamabad POST

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UAE President says seeking close ties with Russia

Detailed News On Page-07

Raisi secures deals in Latin America tour

Detailed News On Page-07



Andy Murray confident for Wimbledon

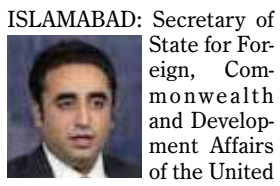
Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Bilawal, talks to UK foreign secretary

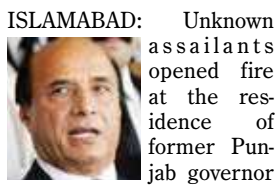
DNA



ISLAMABAD: Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom, James Cleverly telephoned Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari today and discussed issues of mutual interest. In a tweet, Bilawal Bhutto said that he was pleased to receive the phone call from his British counterpart, with whom he discussed bilateral ties. He said that the conversation focused on the urgent need for mitigation measures to combat climate change and natural disasters. The Foreign Minister said that the critical role of international financial institutions in climate financing and reconstruction in disaster-hit areas also came under discussion.

Khosa's residence attacked

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Unknown assailants opened fire at the residence of former Punjab governor Latif Khosa late on Thursday night, leaving his driver injured. Soon after the incident was reported, Superintendent of Police (SP) Cantt Owais Shafiq reached the location and police personnel began to collect evidence. According to the initial reports, seven shots were fired at Khosa's house using rifles and pistols. The bullets hit the door of the house and the car parked in the garage, whereas a bullet also injured the leg of Khosa's driver, Javed. Police personnel said that the injured driver was shifted to the hospital for medical assistance and his statement will be taken at the hospital for further investigation. Moreover, the police are using CCTV footage to identify the attackers and clarify whether they were in a car or on motorcycles.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday.

— Editor

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Welcome any remedy against 184(3) if done with caution: SC — Page 08

Bill sails through Senate
ECP entitled to announce election dates

Bill also limits period of disqualification to max 5 years

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Friday approved a bill seeking amendments to the Election Act 2017 that would give the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) the authority to announce a date for the general election. In April, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja asked parliament to pass legislation by writing separate letters he sent to National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani. The bill was tabled by State Minister Shahadat Awan in the upper house of parliament which would allow the ECP to announce an election date and make alterations to the election programme. The amendment to the bill was opposed by PTI and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). Leader of the Opposition Shahzad Waseem said that parliament was being bulldozed, adding that allowing the ECP to choose a date for polls would be a "violation of the Constitution". Section 57-1 stated that the ECP would be authorised to announce the date for the general elections. Section 58 said: "The Commission may, at any time after the issue of the notification under sub-section (1) of that section [57-1], make such alterations in the Election Programme announced in that notification for the different stages of the election or may issue a fresh Election Programme as may, in its opinion to be recorded in writing, be necessary for the purposes of this Act."

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PPP accuses PML-N of pushing populist budget

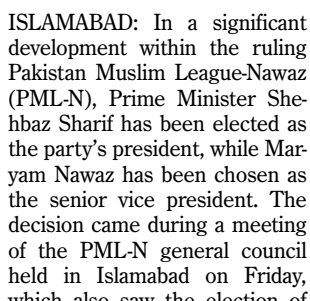
SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) Friday called out its ruling partner, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), for presenting an "unrealistic" and "election-oriented budget", questioning the party's intention behind this "populist" move despite economic uncertainty. PPP's Nafeesa Shah, during the debate over the budget in the meeting of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue, said that Shehbaz Sharif-led government told the lawmakers that "tough decisions" would be taken in the budget; however, no such measure was unveiled. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar unveiled an Rs14.5 trillion (around \$50.5 billion) budget on June 9, with over half set aside to service Rs7.3 trillion of debt, raising concerns from various stakeholders about the economy's future. "An economic storm is looming over our heads,"

Continued on Page 06

Maryam elected SVP
PM Shehbaz elected PML-N president
PM says govt striving to secure a 'short-term deal' with IMF

SHUJAAT HAMZA



ISLAMABAD: In a significant development within the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has been elected as the party's president, while Maryam Nawaz has been chosen as the senior vice president. The decision came during a meeting of the PML-N general council held in Islamabad on Friday, which also saw the election of several other officials to various positions. The newly elected officials include Ahsan Iqbal as the general secretary, Murriz Aurangzeb as the secretary of information, Ataullah Tarar as the deputy secretary, and Ishaq Dar as the secretary of finance and overseas affairs. The elections were uncontested, indicating a show of unity within the party. Shehbaz Sharif assumed the leadership of the PML-N in 2018 after his brother, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, was barred by the Supreme Court from serving as the party's president due to corruption charges. Speaking during today's event, Prime Minister Shehbaz expressed his desire for Nawaz Sharif's return to the country and his aspiration to work as "Nawaz's soldier" when he contests the election to become prime minister again. The prime minister acknowledged the challenges faced by the government in fulfilling the conditions for an agreement with IMF.

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ISLAMABAD: President JUI-F Maulana Fazl-Ur-Rehman and Federal Minister for Communications Maulana Asad Mahmood call on the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. — DNA

Khan slams govt over gruesome tactics

Says condemnable the way Elahi being treated in jail

FAIZ CH.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan strongly condemned Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) police for unleashing a reign of terror against PTI leaders and workers, who, he said, barged in their homes to terrorise descent people and vandalize their homes to pressurize them to leave PTI. In a statement on Friday, PTI Chairman came down hard on the police for unlawful raids at the senior PTI leadership houses in KP. "Police has barged in their houses and stolen three cars from Shah Farman and his brothers residence while two cars each stolen from Asad Qaiser and Shahram Tarakai's house," he added. Imran Khan said that victimisation reached another level, never witnessed even during the worst dictatorship in Pakistan. "All this is achieving is creating hatred and animosity against this fascist regime while increasing sympathy and vote bank for PTI," he added. PTI Chairman stated that it was absolutely shameful and condemnable the way Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, 77 years old, was being treated in jail only to pressurize him to quit PTI. He went on to say that Punjab police has unleashed a reign of terror against PTI members. "Apart from breaking all norms of decency, this is the height of cowardice to terrorize decent people and law abiding citizens with armed police barging in and vandalizing their house," he added.

Pakistan 'keenly engaged' with IMF to find solution
On IMF's statement, the ministry says that it is clarifying position

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: As the International Monetary Fund (IMF) made its reservations regarding the budget public, the Finance Ministry has said that the document is not part of the pending ninth review that has been delayed since November of last year but is "keenly engaged with the IMF to reach an amicable solution". In a two-page rebuttal of IMF's Resident Representative for Pakistan Esther Perez Ruiz's statement on the budget, the ministry on Friday stated that it was clarifying Pakistan's position. The ministry explained that the ninth review was conducted in early February 2023 and the government had completed "all technical issues at a fast pace". It added that the only outstanding issue was external financing which was "amicably resolved" after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif spoke with the IMF managing director. "Though the budget FY24 was never a part of the 9th Review, however in line with the PM's commitment to the IMF MD,

Continued on Page 06

Moody's warns of funding prospects

DNA

KARACHI: Moody's Investors Service has warned that Pakistan's ability to secure loans from bilateral and multilateral partners will be severely constrained until a new programme is negotiated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The credit company, in an issuer comment report, said: "Whether Pakistan will join another IMF programme may only become clear after elections, which are due by October 2023. Negotiations for any future IMF programme would also take some time, even if they succeed." It further warned that Pakistan is unlikely to access market

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Emergency lifted as Biparjoy fizzles out

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh's coastal residents, who were forced to flee their towns and villages ahead of tropical cyclone Biparjoy's devastating landfall, are returning to their homes after the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) confirmed that the sea storm has lost its strength significantly. "The Very Severe Cyclonic Storm (VSCS) 'BIPARJOY' over the northeast Arabian Sea after crossing the Indian Gujarat coast (near Jakhu port) has weakened into a Severe Cyclonic Storm (SCS)," the Met Office said in its latest advisory. Roofs were blown off houses, and trees and electric poles were uprooted, leaving thousands without power as a severe cyclone

made landfall and rain lashed both the Indian and Pakistani coasts late Thursday. At least two people died in India's western state of Gujarat after being swept away by flood waters just before the cyclone hit. However, in Pakistan, the cyclone had no major impact, with rain reported in some parts of the southern metropolis of Karachi, which is on high alert. More than 180,000 people were evacuated in India and Pakistan in the last few days as authorities braced for the cyclone, named Biparjoy, which means 'disaster' or 'calamity' in the Bengali language. The latest advisory of the PMD mentioned that the cyclone lies near latitude 23.8°N and

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Explosions as African leaders begin 'peace mission'

The African leaders also plan to visit Russia, as a diplomatic standoff brews between South African officials and Poland

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Explosions rocked Kyiv as a group of African leaders including South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Azali Assoumani, African Union chairperson and President of the Union of Comoros, arrived in Ukraine as part of an African peace mission. Air raid sirens also blared in the Ukrainian capital as the visit began, the latest in a series of twists as the mission gets underway.

The leaders who are expected to meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Friday and then travel to Russia for talks with President Vladimir Putin in St Petersburg on Saturday, took cover in a bomb shelter. "Putin 'builds confidence' by launching the largest missile attack on Kyiv in weeks, exactly amid the visit of African leaders to our capital," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba wrote on Twitter afterwards. "Russian missiles are a message to Africa: Russia wants more war, not peace." Earlier, the South African presidency posted footage of Ramaphosa arriving by train in the Bucha area near Kyiv after travelling from Poland.

Vladimir Putin comes down hard on Zelenskyy

MOSCOW: In a controversial statement made at an annual economic forum in Saint Petersburg on Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is Jewish, a "disgrace" to the Jewish community. Putin claimed that many Jewish friends agreed with him and that Zelenskyy does not represent Jewish values and principles. Putin said: "I have many Jewish friends. Zelenskyy is not a Jew, and he is a disgrace to the Jewish people," CNN quoted him as saying. "Ukraine will soon stop using its own equipment entirely. Nothing of it remains. Everything they fight with and everything they use is brought in from the outside. You can't fight like that for long," he added. Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed concerns about the potential escalation of the Ukraine conflict involving NATO during the plenary session of the St Petersburg International Economic Forum, according to CNN. Putin stated that there is a significant risk that NATO will be drawn deeper into the conflict, emphasising the importance of exercising caution, the report said. Furthermore, he claimed that Russia's military had the capability to devastate parts of central Kyiv but had refrained from doing so on purpose, implying a strategic decision to be cautious, as per the report. Putin also suggested that border attacks were designed to divert attention and resources away from other fronts. — Agencies

Ramaphosa is heading a delegation, which also includes Assoumani and leaders from Zambia, Senegal, and Egypt's prime minister. Presidents Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Denis Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt were also meant to go along, but they pulled out of the trip and sent representatives. The peace mission could propose a series of "confidence-building measures" during initial efforts at mediation, according to a draft framework document seen by the Reuters news agency. The document stated that the objective of the mission is "to promote the importance of peace and to encourage the parties to agree to a diplomacy-led process of negotiations". Its measures could include a Russian pullback, removal of tactical nuclear weapons from Belarus and suspension of the implementation of an International Criminal Court arrest warrant targeting Putin. A ceasefire could follow and would need to be accompanied by negotiations between Russia and the West, the document stated. Kyiv said its own plan, which envisages the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian land, must be the basis for any settlement of the war.

President for AI-based solutions to business problems

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday urged Pakistan's business and industrial sectors to adopt Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based solutions for solving their problems and boosting their efficiency and productivity.

The president, talking to a delegation from Artificial Intelligence Education Foundation (AIEF), at Aiwan-e-Sadr, said that exponential advancements in information technology had created new opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs in various fields such as health, education, business and industry, and Pakistan's IT companies should adopt a global outlook to fully benefit from them. Chairman Soliton Investment Fund, Dr Mansoor Ali Khan, Founder and CEO

of Soliton Group, Dr Fauzia Khan, representative of the Ministry of IT and Telecommunication, and senior officials of the government attended the meeting. Talking to the delegation, the president underlined the need for Pakistan's IT companies to develop win-win partnerships with academia and industries at both the local and international levels. He added that robust and mutually beneficial partnerships among academia and industry stakeholders would help achieve key economic and technological milestones. President Alvi emphasised the need for promoting skills-based education in Pakistan, besides equipping the youth with employable skills through online courses and short-term associate degree programs. He said that he had been constantly urging the stakeholders to

produce more skilled graduates, invest in emerging technologies, make fast decisions and timely implement policies for the IT sector. He said that AI-based solutions could also help deliver personalized education/lessons to Pakistan's almost 27 million out-of-school children, which otherwise would consume enormous time and resources.

The delegation briefed the president about Artificial Intelligence Education Foundation (AIEF) which aims at promoting AI-based industry solutions at a massive scale. The delegation also highlighted the diverse applications of AI and its benefits for various sectors of the economy. President Alvi appreciated the AIEF for promoting AI in Pakistan in partnership with local universities, besides urging them to widen the outreach and scope of their work.



PESHAWAR: Ambassador of Türkiye Dr. Mehmet Paçacı on the second day of his working visit to Peshawar, calls on Prof. Dr. Muhammed Idrees, Vice Chancellor of University of Peshawar, and handed over books as a contribution for the University's library. — DNA

SMBR asks DCs to enhance service delivery

LAHORE: Senior Member Board of Revenue (SMBR) Nabeel Javed chaired a meeting at his office on Friday to assess the progress of departmental reforms.

The meeting was attended by Tariq Qureshi, Member (Taxes); Muhammad Khan Ranjha, Member (Colonies); Saira Omar, DG Punjab Land Records Authority (PLRA); Mehr Shafiqullah Mushtaq, Secretary (Revenue); Secretary (Colonies); Roman Burana, Deputy Secretary (Staff); along with commissioners and deputy commissioners participating via video link. Commissioners, DG PLRA Saira Omar and others provided briefings on the initiatives taken for revenue sector reforms. Nabeel Javed acknowledged that computerized mutations are being carried out seamlessly through the e-registration system for computerized mauza jaat. —APP

Sikh pilgrims mark Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji

LAHORE: The main event of martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji (Jore Mela) was held at Gurdwara Dera Sahib, here on Friday.

Apart from Indian Sikh pilgrims, 25 Sikh groups from different cities of Pakistan also participated in the Mela. Additional Secretary Shrinis Rana Shahid Saleem welcomed the Sikh pilgrims. Deputy Secretary Shrinis Saifullah Khokhar also met pilgrims. Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (PSGPC) Pradhan Sardar Amir Singh, former Pradhan Sardar Satwant Singh and others were also present. At the closing ceremony, the Sikh yatrees performed other religious rituals including Kirtan and Ardass. Officials of Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) and Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee presented gifts to the guests. Sikh group leader Sardar Gurbachan Singh and others said the government and the ETPB made the best arrangements for yatrees during their visit to Nankana Sahib, Hasanabdal, Sucha Sauda, Rohri Sahib, Kartarpur and Gurdwara Dera Sahib Lahore. The Shrinis additional secretary said protection of religious places of non-Muslims and their lives and property is specially focused. —APP

TDS of Rs.171 billion for Karachi'ites on cards

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Power, Engineer Khuram Dastgir Khan, on Friday, said that government will earmark Rs.171 billion as Tariff Differential Subsidy (TDS) in new financial year to provide relief to citizens of Karachi.

The minister while addressing a press conference here said that consumers of K-Electric would get a significant relief in electricity tariff under the TDS, a targeted subsidy aimed at providing protection to masses against increasing cost of electricity generation.

Moreover, Rs.151 billion were allocated in the budget 2023-24 for other parts of the country including Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and merged ex-FA-FA districts, he informed adding that IMF conditionalities would not affect TDS as it was a targeted subsidy.

The minister while spelling out strategy for dealing with any potential emergency situation due to cyclonic storm Biparjoy said that on directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif a comprehensive strategy was formulated at national level for ensuring safety of people and supply of electricity in vulnerable areas.

Under the national endeavour, over 2000 personnel from different power distribution companies including GEPSCO, LESCO, MEPCO and SEPCO were deployed

in Southeastern districts of Sindh on emergency basis along with vehicles and necessary equipment, he informed. Sindh government has extended the fullest cooperation in the regard and a close coordination was being maintained among all the stakeholders while technical teams deployed at generation plants and grid stations were on high alert for ensuring electricity supply, the minister said.

The cyclone has landed and its severity has been decreasing gradually while supply of electricity was continue as per routine in the most of the areas, Khuram Dastgir said adding that there was no load shedding for 70 percent domestic consumers and industry at the moment.

The cyclonic storm Biparjoy did not affect power supply in Karachi except a disruption for four hours that was caused due to issues in supply of LNG to power generation units, he informed and added, but the issues was immediately addressed by provision of 100 mmcf gas from the national network.

The minister said that K-E has informed that several measures were taken for safety of citizens which included raising the transformers above the ground, strengthening electricity polls and removing bunches of tangled wires for preventing accidents and loss of lives. The minister while responding to a question said that KE claimed that 70 % areas of the metropolis were receiving round the clock power

supply while load management was being carried out in 30% areas due to issues of low recovery and high line losses. He said that ministry was devising a policy of micro load management at the level of transformers for plummeting the suffering of bill paying consumers. All the stakeholders including the elected representatives have to sit together for resolving the issue as getting free electricity was unlikely, he urged.

On another query about handing over control of power distribution companies to provinces Khuram Dastgir said that it was not a concept of privatisation but it was 'provincialisation' of power distribution networks. The matter would be presented in the Council of Common Interests (CCI) and after principal decision of the council asset assessment of the Discos and further process would be carried out, he said.

On another query, the minister clarified that government possessed 24% shares in K-Electric and appoint directors in the board proportionally. Government neither sold its shares in K Electric nor it purchased more shares from any shareholder, he added.

Protection of consumers' rights and interests was our topmost priority and reorganisation of K Electric would be done in a transparent and clear manner, he said adding that a committee, led by Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, was working to settle the issues between KE, SSGC and government and 90% reconciliation has been achieved so far.

Connect Hear CEO meets IGP

LAHORE: Sign Language Interpreter and Chief Executive Officer of Connect Hear social organisation Azima Dhanji met Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar at the Central Police Office on Friday and offered providing the facility of interpreters from his organisation to the hearing-impaired citizens.

Dhanji said that through the Connect Hear App, interpreters of her organisation provide two-way communication between the affected citizen and another person by translating the sign language through video link technology. She said at the head office of her organisation in Karachi, expert interpreters were available all the time in two shifts and the aim of her organisation was to provide assistance and convenience to the deaf citizens.

Dr Usman Anwar said that Connect Hear would be used to talk to hearing-impaired citizens, who came to the Punjab police stations, service centres, protection centres, and other offices, and hearing-impaired citizens coming to police offices would not face difficulty now. The IGP said that the link of Connect Hear app would also be added to HRMIS App, Public App and Crime Prevention App of Punjab Police. Azima Dhanji also had a meeting with the staff, in-charges in which she also presented a demo of the Connect Hear app. —Agencies

CJ PHC chairs 11th provincial justice committee meeting

PESHAWAR: The Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Musarrat Hilali on Friday chaired the 11th Provincial Justice Committee (PJC) meeting at the PJC Secretariat, PHC here. The committee reviewed the implementation status of the decisions taken in the previous meeting and the chair expressed satisfaction with the implementation of the decisions.

A press release issued here on Friday said that directions were issued to departments regarding decisions partially implemented. The Committee was informed that land at Hayatabad had been earmarked and possessed by the Home Department where after the release of funds by the concerned department, a state-of-the-art Forensic Science Laboratory would be established in a phase-wise manner. The Offenders' Management System and data integration of Justice Sector Stakeholders were

also on the agenda. The Committee was apprised that a Technical Working Group (TWG) was constituted in this regard where after deliberations and meetings, certain recommendations were made regarding data entry of all the documents in the public domain by the Police Department. It was said that the IT Wing of the Peshawar High Court would ensure the introduction of the feature of accessibility of data to the presiding officers of the courts and it would work on introducing modules of police, prosecution, and prisons with a case flow management and information system while the prisons department would give regular updates on the deployment of the new software. Regarding the simplification of inter-provincial transfer of accused persons, the Advocate General and Secretary Home informed the Committee that the requisite data had been shared

with the Ministry of Interior for further process. The representative of the P&D, Peshawar High Court, stated that the acquisition of land for the construction of Judicial Complexes at Newly Merged Districts is smooth, however, the allocation of funds was the need of the day. The establishment of Shelter Homes and Darul-Aman also came under discussion. The Secretary of Social Welfare informed that the Shelter Homes had been established and working on a regular basis in eight districts while for capacity enhancement of Darul-Aman, one each in Peshawar, Mardan, Haripur, Abbottabad, Mansehra, and Swat were reflected in ADP 2022-23. Regarding the establishment of a facility at district DI Khan, it was directed that the bottlenecks shall be removed and in this respect, the Advocate General will coordinate with the concerned department. —APP

Govt to make no compromise on quality education

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Friday said that provision of quality education was the top priority of the government and no compromise would be made on the supremacy of merit and learning in the educational institutions.

He was addressing a function after laying the foundation stone of the Peshawar Model Softer project of the Peshawar Model Educational Institute during his

visit to the City University of Science and Technology, Peshawar. Provincial ministers Adnan Jalil, Saboor Sethi, Gayoor Sethi and Secretary Higher Education were present on the occasion. While appreciating the owners and administration of the City University and its allied education institutions for the provision of quality education at a minimum fee to people, the Governor said that the promotion of quality education

was the top priority of the government and no compromise would be made on quality education and supremacy of merit. He said there was a need for solid thinking if the performance of the government education institutions was not improved despite resources provided by the Government. He said the country can make rapid progress and achieve economic growth by providing quality education to children. —APP



LAHORE: Sikhs worships during main ceremony-Bhag Akhand Paatg Sahib to observe Martyrdom Day of Guru Arjun Dev Jee at Gurdawara Dera Sahib. —APP

Sacrificial animals' prices skyrocket with Eidul Azha just 2 weeks away

LAHORE: With Eidul Azha just two weeks away, the prices of sacrificial animals, especially goats and sheep, have increased manifold. Most makeshift sacrificial animals' markets in the provincial metropolises, including the Shahpur Kanjran, the largest one in Lahore, became functional on Friday, attracting a considerable number of potential buyers. However, most of visitors were seen returning without purchasing any animals, as the prices of sacrificial animals, what they say, were skyrocketing. The Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) specified 10 sites for establishment of makeshift cattle markets and sales points this year, and divided the city into seven zones

for the purpose. Traders and cattle breeders, while responding to a survey, carried out by APP, said that major factors of skyrocketing of prices of sacrificial animals were because of high transportation and animal feeding costs, and the loss of livestock during the last year's floods.

The high prices of sacrificial animals have affected the low-income and salaried class the most. According to the survey, most people are giving preference to collective sacrifice due to high prices of sacrificial animals. They said that in Lahore markets, this year around 30 to 35 per cent more prices of sacrificial animals were being demanded by the cattle owners. A visit to different sale

points also revealed that the price of a normal size goat, sheep, or lamb ranges from Rs 65,000 to Rs 75,000, whereas a medium-size cow and calf ranged from Rs 140,000 to Rs 300,000. Transporting animals from south Punjab to cities like Lahore, Rawalpindi or Faisalabad had gone a pricey affair," Israr Gopang, a livestock breeder from Dera Ghazi Khan, said. When asked to comment on the high prices, he replied that last year a truck carrying animals to Lahore from Mithan Kot and Dera Ghazi Khan would cost Rs 48,000 to 50,000, but this year transporters were demanding around Rs 95,000 to 100,000 for the same task. On the other hand, sellers of sacrificial

animals said that the main reason behind high prices of animals was increased costs of transportation and animal fodder. These factors are likely to trigger a supply shortage in the cattle markets as farmers would not be willing to come to Lahore, which would then result in traders charging even more," Gopang claimed. "Another reason why the prices are high this year is the inflation rate. For instance, last year, the price of beef was Rs 450 per kilogram, while this year, it is increased to Rs 700 per kilogram," he added. Moreover, caretaker Punjab Local Government Minister Ibrahim Murad chaired a meeting recently to review the arrangements for sale and purchase of sac-

rificial animals. He directed the officials concerned to make the sale points operational with the best arrangements ahead of Eidul Azha, and widely publicise its locations for public convenience through the media. Murad also directed them to provide cleaning arrangements including comprehensive security at the sale points. Moreover, arrangements for clean drinking water, power generators, lights, and parking should be ensured at these points while sewerage, ramps, and water tanks should be provided," he ordered, adding that drains should be cleaned within five kilometres radius of animal sale points, to avoid public inconvenience. —APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JUNE

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

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police...9266044
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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France to Pakistan, posing for a group photo with the media community of Islamabad.—DNA

Lawmakers demand more funds for water infrastructure

She further criticized the PTI, labeling it as a symbol of lies, propaganda, misbehavior, polarization, and hatred

ISLAMABAD: The Lawmakers in the National Assembly on Friday demanded allocation of more funds for construction of new water reservoirs in the financial year 2023-24 to meet water and energy requirements of the country. Participating in the National Assembly debate on the federal budget, they highlighted key points of the fiscal plan tabled before the House for achieving economic stability and the growth targets. Muhammad Afzal Khokhar of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) praised Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar for presenting a balanced budget that prioritized the needs of the common man and farmers. He also acknowledged the government's efforts in improving the road infrastructure across the country and supporting the much needed reforms in the agriculture sector, considered backbone of the national economy.

Khokhar commended the government's decision to increase salaries and pensions of government employees and provide laptops to students, enabling them to acquire modern skills needed to get education matching the international market requirement. He pointed out that former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif initiated significant projects in the field of health, infrastructure development and laying a wide network of motorways and building new water reservoirs. Nasir Khan Musazai of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) demanded allocation of additional funds for the construction of dams, emphasizing the importance of addressing the problems faced by underprivileged citizens. PPP's Mir Amer Ali Khan Magsi endorsed the sentiments of MNA Musazai, declaring the government's allocation for construction of new water reservoirs in the federal budget 'insufficient.'

Appreciating the government's focus on agriculture sector, Magsi suggested taking along all stakeholders from the agriculture sector while finalizing policies as it would help get better production of various crops. Minister for Defence Production Sardar Muhammad Israr Tareen strongly condemned the May 9 incident and asserted that it was not an act perpetrated by an external enemy. He also supported the resolution passed by the National Assembly, calling for the trial of individuals involved in the incident under the Army Act without any single-day delay. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh of PML-N drew attention of the House towards Pakistan's defence budget saying that its arch rival India's defence budget was almost 14-time higher. He urged the government to promote small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as this sector had the great potential to move the economic wheel at the faster pace and strength-

en the national economy. In response to discussions about Pakistan's financial situation, Sheikh refuted claims of an impending default and highlighted that Pakistan's total assets amounted to approximately \$4000. However, he acknowledged the current cash flow issues faced by the country, and asked foreign investors to consider investing in diverse sectors of Pakistan and there existed tremendous potential of business because of the friendly policies announced by the government. Syed Abrar Ali Shah of Pakistan Peoples Parliamentarian (PPP) acknowledged that the present government presented the budget despite difficult economic situation, keeping in view the hardships of the common man and setting achievable development targets for the next fiscal year. He appreciated the measure proposed in the budget for increasing the salaries and pensions of the government employees to miti-

gate their financial miseries in the scenario of increased inflation. He asked for allocation more development funds for the Sindh province and paying pending amount to execute the ongoing schemes at a faster pace. He condemned the incidents of May 9 and criticized the leadership and workers of PTI for vandalism of military installations and memorials of martyrs just because of their ouster from the power through a constitutional way. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Lawmaker Mehnaz Akbar Aziz termed the federal budget the 'best one' and appreciated the incumbent government for adopting an effective strategy to pull the country out of financial crisis and avoided the looming threat of default. She said results of the prudent policies adopted by the government had started yielding the required results as inexpensive oil and gas started arriving Pakistan from Russia and Azerbaijan respectively.

PM asks CDA chairman to ensure fast execution of devt projects

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the Chairman of Capital Development Authority (CDA) to pace up the work on development projects in the capital to facilitate the residents. Chairing a review meeting on the ongoing mega development projects here on Friday, he said any delay in their execution would not be tolerated. The PM emphasized ensuring quality work while implementation of the development projects. He also laid stress on the landscaping of the projects at par with international standards. Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, Adviser to PM Ahad Khan Cheema, Member of National Assembly (NA) Hanif Abbasi, the director general (DG) of Frontier Work Organization, the (DG) of National Logistic Cell and senior officials attended the meeting. The meeting was informed about the progress on development work being carried out by the CDA.—APP

No one can dare to cast ill eyes on Pakistan: Azam Nazeer

ISLAMABAD, Jun 16 (APP): Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tareen on Friday informed the Senate that Pakistan is a responsible state and no one can dare to cast ill eyes on atomic and other assets of the country. Speaking in the Senate in response to points raised by Senator Mushatq Ahmed, the minister said that no member of the federal cabinet was taking salaries and very minimum perks were being given to them. Only 1800 CC car and petrol at par with federal secretary was being given to them.

Earlier resuming debate on the budget, Senator Mushatq Ahmed said that International Monetary Fund (IMF) wanted to default Pakistan and creating hurdles in disbursement of \$1 billion tranche. Such tactics were being adopted to snatch atomic bomb facility of Pakistan, he added.

He suggested that elimination of elite and protocol culture besides curbing various 'mafias' were mandatory to address the key challenges to the national economy. He criticized the government for not giving any concrete plan for debt retiring, controlling inflation, civil and police reforms.

He said that the national debt has surged to record Rs 60,000 billion and the budget lacked any concrete plan to address this grave issue. He demanded that a commission should be formed to investigate who had borrowed these hefty loans and where it had been spent. He said inflation has also touched to 38 per cent which was even more than Sri Lanka. There was no programme to overpower circular debt which was a result of mismanagement and poor governance, he added. He claimed that there was also dire need of reforms in FBR as there was leakage of Rs 1000 billion in it.—APP

Dinner reception for Media fraternity held at IIUI

ISLAMABAD: President, International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI), Dr. Hathal Hamoud Alotaibi Friday hosted a dinner reception for media fraternity at Faisal Masjid campus. The participants included anchor persons, editors, article writers and veteran media persons. They agreed that youth was the real power to bring positive change in the society and educational institutions must focus on producing skilled graduates. The participants suggested to provide best guidance and education to youth as they had potential to change the fate of nation. The president IIUI said that promotion of education must be the top priority of the government, urging the Muslim world to focus on producing skilled youth equipped with knowledge of modern market trends. "If a nation has a well-educated & nurtured youth, nothing can bar it to achieve the destination of prosperity and success" he added. The IIUI president called for the meaningful role of educational institutions urging them to be relevant to the needs of the society. Talking about the university's new approach and initiatives, Dr. Hathal said he was proud to serve the university that had a unique distinction across the Muslim world. He appraised of the varsity's new strategic plan, recent reforms and its academic and infrastructural achievements. He said at the varsity leadership had achieved the milestones of digitization and initiatives for online and open distance learning had been launched. The IIUI president said the university had completed a comprehensive project of Campus Management System as well as in the academic excellence, IIUI has been put on the right track as it is shining in all the leading ranking across the globe. Talking about the infrastructural development, he briefed the university has just inaugurated two academic blocks while construction work was in process on the library building and medical block. About age of information and social media, he said there was dire need to guide youth to handle these forums in positive manner.—APP

Cheema, Zafar get approval for exporting more rice to Russia

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister National Food Security and Research (NFSR) Tariq Bashir Cheema, through the scholastic guidance of Secretary Zafar Hassan, successfully got approval for the Department of Plant Protection (DPP) to export rice to Russia by 15 more mills, following the recommendation after a technical audit by the DPP, said a press release issued here Friday. The development is a major success towards boosting exports and the overall economy of the country. Russia had put a ban on rice exports a few years back because of pest interception in rice. However, the ban was lifted in 2021 and only four rice mills which complied with their quality standards,

were allowed to export rice from Pakistan to Russia. The DPP with the support of the Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) took special steps to upgrade 15 more mills as per the Guidance Document prescribed by the Russian Federation for compliance with the requirements for rice exports. Tireless efforts were put in this direction to ensure these establishments were in conformity with the SPS requirements of Russia and make them able to export rice through improvement in quality and quantity of rice. Now, 19 rice enterprises from Pakistan can export rice to the Russian Federation. This was a big achievement of the Government

of Pakistan which brings good news especially, for the rice farmers of Punjab and Sindh, as its ultimate beneficiaries. Moreover, Pakistan being an agrarian economy, can also look for enhancing exports in other domains as well by improving quality standards as per global markets. This agreement opens a gateway to further exports to international markets given the quality standards remain sound. Further, the upgradation of more rice processing facilities is in the pipeline with DPP, to make them at par with international standards in order to achieve major shares in high-end markets of Asia, Europe, USA and Australia.—APP

NDMA announces first-ever Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik on Friday inaugurated the launching of the first-ever Pakistan Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR-23) to be held from July 12-14. The event was attended by government officials, representatives from international partners, humanitarian organizations, academia, media and members of private sector, a news release said. The PEDRR-23 is part of NDMA's efforts to raise awareness of disaster risk reduction and to build resilience to disasters in Pakistan. It will showcase the latest technologies and innovations in disaster risk reduction.—APP

AIOU aims to accommodate out-of-school children

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) aspires to play an exemplary role in increasing the literacy rate of the country as existing number of out-of-school children (OOSC) in Pakistan is 20 million. This was said by the Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood in a meeting with tutors and resource persons at Multan Regional Campus regarding admission campaign for autumn semester 2023. "Our mission is to include all the out-of-school children in the educational network" he said. Director General Regional Services, Dr. Malik Tauqeer Ahmad Khan also accompanied the VC AIOU in the visit to South Punjab. Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood also inaugurated a computer lab in regional campus Multan. Addressing the tutors, resource persons and students in Multan region, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood said that AIOU was paying special attention to the promotion of education in remote areas of the country. The university was focusing on the areas with low literacy rate in various districts of South Punjab, he added. Dr. Nasir said that scholarships and fee discounts will be awarded to the poor and deserving students and the children of martyrs of Pakistani armed forces. He added that all tutors, resource persons and students were the ambassadors of the university and you all must actively participate in the admission campaign to ensure that no child was left out of school.—APP

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Briefs

Police arrest 12 including four POs

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Police have arrested 12 including four bootleggers and four Proclaimed Offenders (POs) wanted in different cases, said a police spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that Taxila, Sadder Wah and Gungmandi police managed to arrest Saeed Akhtar, Atif, Ayaz and Umar wanted in different cases including attempt to murder. The spokesman informed that in an operation, Chontra police conducted a raid and rounded up four namely Danial, Zain, Rashid and Madad for possessing illegal weapons including a 223 bore rifle, two 30 bore rifles, a pistol and ammunition. He said, Airport and Naseerabad police in Potohar division in their operations against bootleggers conducted raids and arrested four accused namely Safdar, Moaz, Amjad and Iqbal for having 60 bottles of liquor and 18 liters liquor.

He said that Rawalpindi district police were taking stern action in accordance with the law against the lawbreakers, adding, the operations would continue and all POs and outlaws and they would be sent behind the bars. SSP Operations, Rawalpindi Muhammad Amir Khan Niazi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against POs and most wanted criminals, he added.

Real estate sector growth vital for economic uplift

ISLAMABAD: President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said on Friday that the real estate sector was the backbone of the economy, which was contributing to economic recovery, employment creation and promoting investment in the country. Addressing a ceremony organized by Islamabad Estate Agents Association (IEAA), he said that the collaborative efforts of both organizations helped to solve the issues and problems confronted by the business community, said a press release.

He said the current body of the ICCI was also taking measures to serve the interest of business community and address their issues, adding that it had taken many steps during the last 8 months, including representation of the chamber in CDA Board, construction of expo centre, FM Radio, school, hospital and multi-purpose ground to facilitate its members and efforts were on to complete all these projects as soon as possible. Speaking on the occasion, President IEAA Sardar Tahir Mehmood thanked President ICCI and said IEAA was the second largest organization of the business community in the city after the Islamabad Chamber and intended to work closely to address the problems of businesses. He said the incentives announced in the current budget for the real estate sector were the result of joint efforts of the chamber and IEAA, adding that real estate was the most important sector of the economy providing more than 7% of total employment and more than 72 industries were connected with this sector.

Unwise pursuit, as Washington's bid to include India in NATO Plus

This move signals an escalation of America's interventionist agenda, driven by a desire to exert control and influence in the region

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Surprisingly, a US Congressional Committee's recent recommendation to include India in the "NATO Plus" alliance raises questions about global defense equilibrium.

The timing of this proposal, just ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington, has further added a thick layer of curiosity over these questions, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Friday. "NATO Plus" is a US-led, defense-oriented group consisting of all NATO members and five other nations: Australia, Japan, Israel, New Zealand, and South Korea. The House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the United States and the Communist Party of China, led by Chairman Mike Gallagher and Ranking Member Raja Krishnamoorthi, overwhelmingly adopted a policy proposal to enhance Taiwan's deterrence, including through strengthening NATO Plus to include India. This expansionary move to incorpo-

rate India into NATO Plus, which is ostensibly aimed at creating deterrence against China, appears to be an attempt to further consolidate US hegemony and encircle potential rivals. While touted as a mechanism to ensure Taiwan's territorial integrity in the face of direct threats, the real motive behind such a proposition remains extremely questionable. It seems to be a calculated effort to strengthen the military influence of the United States and its allies, thereby exerting control over regions of strategic importance. This move perpetuates an agenda of dominance rather than fostering genuine global defense cooperation. Simultaneously, the purported plan to establish a NATO liaison office in Tokyo is nearing finalization, underscoring a concerning wave of NATO's expansion into Asia, instigated by the bellicose factions within the American establishment. This move signals an escalation of America's interventionist agenda, driven by a desire to exert control and influence in the region. The hawkish elements in Washington, driven by their own strategic in-

terests, seem intent on spreading the reach of NATO beyond its original scope. Such actions fuel anxieties among nations, heightening the specter of geopolitical tensions and potentially disrupting delicate regional dynamics. This expansionist inclination risks further exacerbating global rivalries and undermining efforts for peaceful coexistence and cooperation in Asia. The timing of this proposal regarding inclusion of India into NATO Plus, ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's forthcoming state visit to the US, raises eyebrows. Is it mere posturing or a deliberate pressure tactic employed by Washington to exert control? The truth likely lies in the fact that India's growing assertiveness - in addition to China's dominance - in leading the Global South at international forums has become a huge irritation in the field of diplomacy for the American policy makers. The move to involve India in matters related to the "deterrence of Taiwan," an entity that India doesn't even formally recognize, seems disconnected and suspicious. It suggests that

behind the scenes, ulterior motives are at play, driven by Washington's desire to co-opt India into its broader strategic agenda in the Indo-Pacific region. This development casts doubt on India's intent to steer a "neutral" foreign policy and raises concerns about its role in a potentially escalatory confrontation between the United States and China - and Russia as well. The notion of NATO's foray into the Indo-Pacific region is highly contentious and raises valid concerns about the alliance's expanding reach. NATO, originally established with a North Atlantic focus, risks provoking instability by involving itself in far-flung regions that are outside its traditional mandate. Countries within NATO advocating for a more nuanced and cooperative approach to China are likely to view this move as a slight, as the alliance sets its sights on Asia as a potential sphere of influence. It is undeniable that the United States spearheads the push for NATO's presence in Asia, leaving little room for doubt about its motivations and intentions. By advocating for NATO's involvement in a region already fraught with complex power

dynamics, the United States risks exacerbating existing tensions and further entangling itself in potential conflicts. Rather than fostering stability, such actions can contribute to the creation of powder kegs that threaten global security. NATO should tread carefully and reevaluate its role, remaining mindful of the potential repercussions of overreach and avoiding actions that could heighten tensions and undermine regional stability. The good thing is that New Delhi has given a cold-shoulder to this proposal which threatens to disrupt its long-standing ties with Moscow. It is apparent that the United States is actively pursuing this outcome, aiming to sever Russia's connections while exploiting India's defense deals and leveraging its strategic position in the Indo-Pacific region. By venturing beyond its traditional North Atlantic focus, NATO risks unsettling regional stability and exacerbating existing tensions. The United States' leading role in advocating for NATO's presence in Asia underscores its motivations and intentions, but New Delhi is not likely to fall in this trap.

Gold prices increase by Rs 2,700

ISLAMABAD: The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 2,700 and was sold at Rs 223,400 on Friday against its sale at Rs 220,700 the previous day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 2,315 to Rs 191,530 from Rs 189,215 whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went up to Rs 175,569 from Rs 173,447, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs 100 to close at Rs 2650 and ten-gram silver also increased by Rs 85.73 to close at Rs 2,271.94. The price of gold in the international market increased by US\$ 36 to \$1965 against its sale at \$1929, the association reported. -APP

RDA organizes seminar

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) here on Friday organized a seminar and walk in connection with anti-dengue awareness campaign. Following the directives of Director General (DG), RDA, Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa, the authorities concerned were taking steps to spread anti-dengue awareness. The seminar and walk were attended by RDA Director Engineering Muhammad Anwar Baran, Director MP&TE, RDA, Muhammad Tahir, Deputy Director Admin Iftikhar Ali, Deputy Director, Ali Raza and other officers as well as staff. The speakers while addressing the seminar, gave a briefing on standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the prevention of dengue. They said that the citizens are requested to remove stagnate water from their homes. The RDA spokesman informed that DG RDA had urged the citizens to take special care. -APP

PHA directed to make Murree Road model area

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatha here on Friday directed the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) to utilize all available resources to make Murree Road a model area. Chairing the 21st Board of Directors' meeting of PHA, the Commissioner appreciated the performance of the Authority and instructed to plant more saplings under plantation campaign besides efforts to improve the beauty of Rawalpindi city as well as Murree. The board approved setting up of nurseries in different areas and also contemplated a proposal for establishing a food chain in Rawalpindi and Murree. The representatives of various departments participated in the meeting. Earlier, the Director General, PHA briefed the board members on the performance of PHA Rawalpindi which was appreciated by the board members. -APP

Zong 4G celebrates first successful completion of women digital program

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Zong 4G, in collaboration with Pakistan Bait ul Mal (PBM) and Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety (MO-PASS), held a momentous Graduation Ceremony at Zong headquarters, celebrating the achievements of the first graduates of the center's Digital Program. The talented individuals successfully completed the comprehensive training program to gain valuable skills in various digital do-

mains. The initiative aims to provide women with essential digital skills and empower them to thrive in the digital age. The state-of-the-art digital lab at PBM's women empowerment center in Islamabad was inaugurated in December 2022. The Graduation Ceremony also celebrated the achievements of 35 women from PBM's Vocational centers who had skillfully crafted handmade sleeves for the company's Sustainability Report for the year 2022, showcasing their creativity, skill, and craftsmanship. Certificates of excellence were awarded to all deserving attendees, acknowledging their exceptional achievements and dedication to personal growth and development. Speaking at the ceremony, Zong 4G's official spokesperson expressed the company's commitment to women empowerment and emphasized the importance of providing equal opportunities for all. "We firmly believe that empowering women is crucial for a progressive and inclusive society," he said. "Through the

digital lab and vocational initiatives, we aim to equip women with the necessary skills to excel in the digital era, opening doors to better opportunities and a brighter future," he added. The digital lab, will continue to provide women with essential digital skills, empowering them to become active participants in Pakistan's digital economy. By equipping women with technological proficiency, this initiative aims to bridge the gender gap in the digital sector and enable women to pursue meaningful careers.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Petroleum, Musadiq Malik, received the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Maliki. -DNA

Pakistani officer receives Trafficking in Persons Prevention Award

ISLAMABAD: Zaheer Ahmed, a Pakistani law enforcement officer, was presented with the prestigious Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Hero award by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in ceremony in Washington, DC. This annual award brings international attention to the fight against human trafficking. Officer Ahmed was recognized for his efforts in guiding the Government of Pakistan's implementation of anti-trafficking in persons reforms, his leadership in capacity building, and his training initiatives said a news release issued by the embassy. These efforts were instrumental in Pakistan's promotion from TIP Tier 2 Watchlist to Tier 2 in 2022. Zaheer Ahmed is a former director of the Federal Investigative Agency's Anti-Human Smuggling Unit and is passionate about stopping human trafficking in all its forms. Within Pakistan, he raised awareness of this global issue, how it disproportionately affects the most vulnerable Pakistanis. His unwavering commitment and innovative approach increased collaboration between Pakistani law enforcement agencies and civil society, leading to improved recognition of TIP and identification of TIP victims. As the director of the FIA's Anti-Human Smuggling Unit, Ahmed was at the forefront of numerous training and capacity building initiatives for law enforcement agencies, social welfare, and other partners on preventing, identifying, and assisting with TIP cases. Ahmed's efforts extended to local and international advocacy groups, forming strategic partnerships and fostering a united front against human trafficking. His hard work was pivotal in influencing policy reforms. -DNA

British Council Pak launches schools connect Programme

DNA

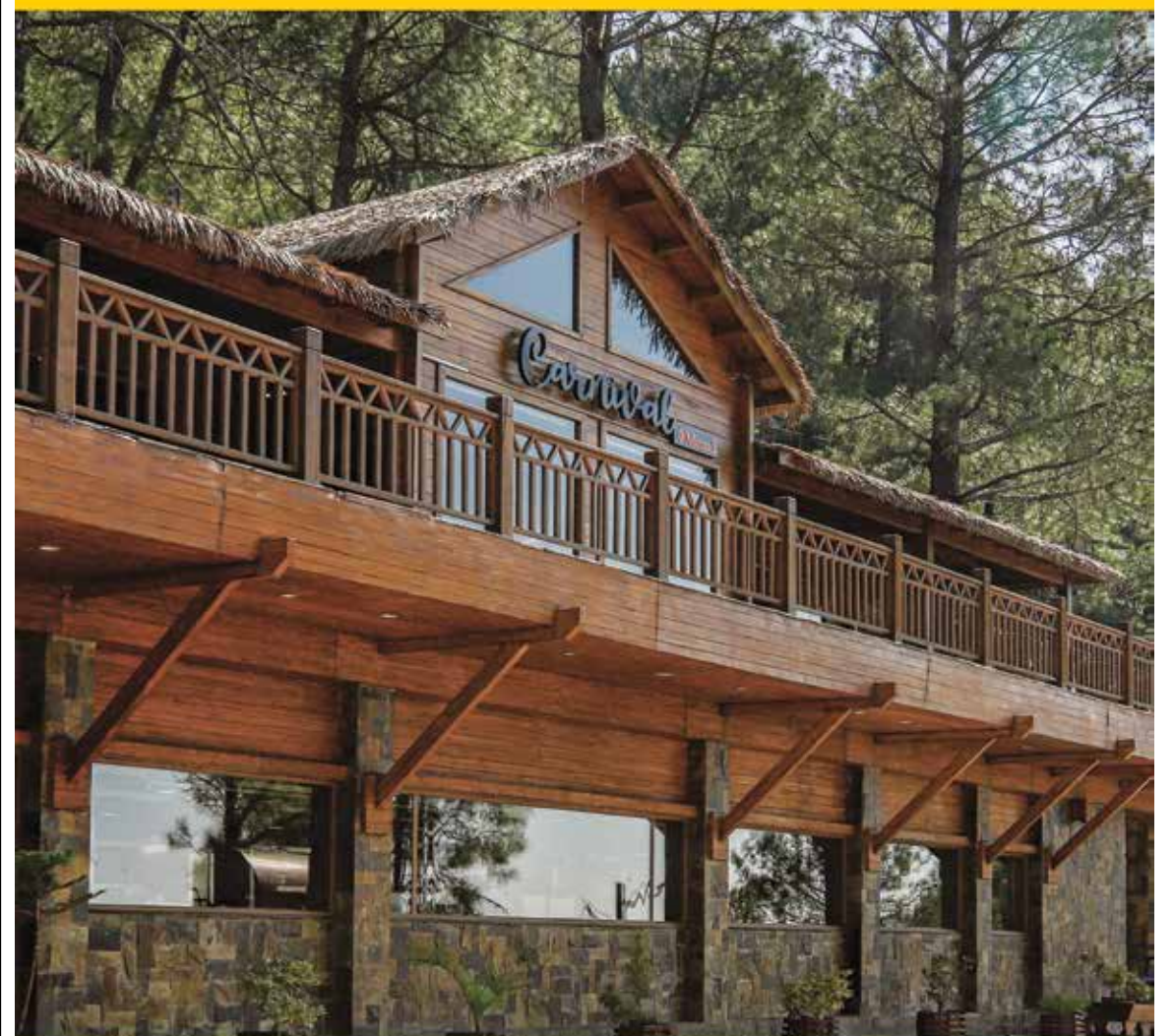
ISLAMABAD: The British Council Pakistan, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Professional Training and the Federal Directorate of Education has launched the school leadership standards for head teachers under Schools Connect Programme. The ceremony was held at British Council Pakistan was also attended by senior representatives including the Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain, the Director General Federal Directorate of Education Dr. Ikram Ali Malik and Country Director British Council Pakistan

Amir Ramzan. This initiative aimed to address the challenges faced by Pakistan in achieving high-quality and inclusive education, particularly in the areas of teaching, school leadership, inclusion of marginalized children, and curriculum effectiveness said a news release. Through the Schools Connect Programme, local institutions will have the opportunity to learn from successful school systems around the world, enabling them to enhance their quality domestically while internationalizing their curriculum. The programme focuses on system development and reforms on education through leadership training of more than 200+ school leaders in

Federal territories. Country Director British Council Amir Ramzan said: "We are delighted to organize this programme in collaboration with our education partners. This will provide local institutions the tools they need to impact tens of thousands of children across Pakistan. Our aim is to support inclusive and quality education for all learners, including girls and marginalized children, as well as enhance the professional knowledge of school sector policy makers and leaders." As part of the programme British Council has co-created a draft leadership framework for school leaders in Pakistan. The National Standards for Headteachers and Principals.



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Center for Marine Sciences to get established by Uni of Gwadar

The members deliberated and resolved all immediate issues related to the academic, administrative, and finances of the university

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The University of Gwadar decided to establish a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Study Center and a Center for Marine Affairs and Marine Sciences. In this regard, the University of Gwadar's third syndicate meeting was held at the higher education commission regional centre Quetta with Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Abdul Razaq Sabir in the chair. "The syndicate besides a few

new teaching departments decided to establish a CPEC study center and a Center for Marine Affairs and Marine Sciences," said an official statement issued after the meeting. According to Gwadar Pro, the meeting among others was attended by syndicate members including UG's Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr Syed Manzoor Ahmed, Secretary Colleges & Higher and Technical Education Balochistan, Hafiz Abdul Majid Bohair, Registrar Dolat Khan, Director Finance

Shafi Muhammad, acting Dean faculty of Management Sciences, Commerce and Social Sciences Professor Dr Jan Muhammad and acting controller Examination Dr Kambhar Farooq. The UG's registrar presented the agenda of the meeting before the house for deliberation and decisions. The forum discussed each agenda in detail and decided on important matters such as launching new programs and granting approval to regularize the services of contract employees who have fulfilled

all recruitment procedures and completed their probation periods. The members deliberated and resolved all the immediate issues related to the academic, administrative, and finances of the university. The house confirmed the minutes of the 1st meeting of the Syndicate, the 3rd meeting of the academic council, the 3rd meeting of the Finance and Planning Committee for the Budget Estimates of FY 2023-24, and the Annual Report of the University for the year 2023.

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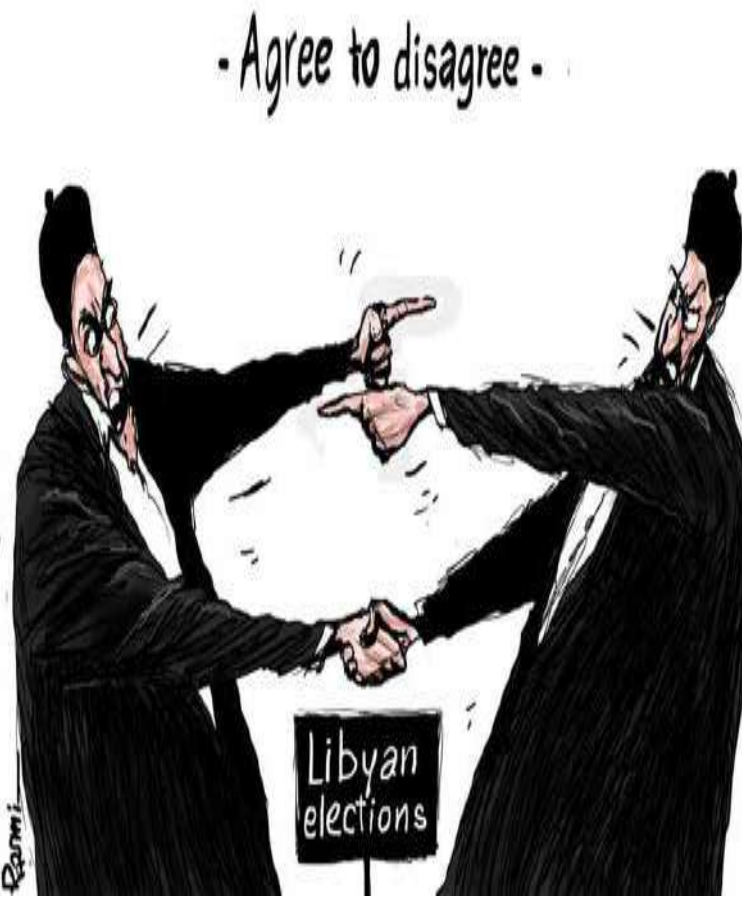
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Another migrant tragedy

ACCORDING to survivors, the fishing boat carrying migrants towards Italy capsized almost instantaneously on Wednesday. At least 78 people are known to have died, but the true number may be much higher. Hundreds of people were packed into the inadequate vessel, which foundered 50 miles from the Greek coastal town of Pylos. In Greece, political parties suspended pre-election campaigning, and three days of mourning have been declared. But there is a reason why the doomed boat was travelling on the open sea, in one of the deepest parts of the Mediterranean. Migrant boats are taking bigger risks and making longer journeys to avoid the patrols and illegal pushbacks documented in Greece. As this week's tragedy illustrates, draconian deterrence measures do not stop irregular migration; they force desperate people to contemplate still more dangerous actions. But it is not only Greece that should take stock. Throughout Europe, governments are disingenuously claiming that the erection of high walls and barbed-wire fences, and the palming off of responsibility for asylum seekers to third-party countries, can be construed as a moral act. Drivers of forced displacement – conflict, the climate emergency, attacks on human rights and economic insecurity – have become features of the 21st-century geopolitical landscape. But the new Europe, increasingly influenced by the radical right, is busily outsourcing its conscience via dubious deals. On Sunday, the EU outlined a potential agreement with Tunisia's authoritarian leader, Kais Saied, in which the north African country will receive economic aid in return for ramping up border control and facilitating repatriations from Italy. Mr Saied recently promoted a conspiracy theory that black African migrants are being deployed as a threat to Tunisia's Arab-Muslim culture – leading to violent attacks on sub-Saharan refugees. Neither this, nor the appalling abuse of migrants held in neighbouring Libyan detention camps funded by Italy, appears to have given the EU pause for thought. In fact – in accordance with the wish of the Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni – the rules on "safe" non-EU destinations for applicants denied asylum were watered down last week. Britain, of course, still plans to summarily dispatch irregular migrants to Rwanda, in contravention of international law. This week, the UNHCR reported a record 19.1m rise in forced displacements year on year. Europe, to its lasting discredit, is largely leaving the world's poorer countries to cope with the fallout. But without more safe and legal routes to European countries, a very small proportion of these people will try to reach the continent somehow. And as was the case this week, some will die in the attempt. A change of approach and a change of heart is needed.



Just settlement of Palestinian issue

RESOLVING the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the crux for realizing lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. That means delivering the two-state solution which is the fundamental requirement for any lasting peace between the two sides. The root cause of the constant exacerbation of the situation is that the peace talks between them have stalled and implementation of the two-state solution has been delayed. China has long been calling for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue through talks between the two sides. And it has sought to facilitate this by keeping its door open to welcome Palestinian and Israeli representatives to China for direct negotiations. With the interruption of the talks between Palestine and Israel in 2014, the peace process has become stuck. But the China-brokered rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran has brightened the prospects for the Middle East, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' visit to China this week has garnered much attention as it has raised hopes that there will be fresh impetus to restart the talks aimed at realizing a historic accord whereby Israel and Palestine can coexist peacefully. President Xi Jinping, in his meeting with Abbas on Wednesday, stressed the need for the peace process to adhere to the correct direction, saying that the fundamental way to resolve the Palestinian issue lies in the establishment of an independent Palestinian state enjoying full sovereignty on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. With the China-proposed Global Security Initiative gaining increasing support in the international community, it offers a blueprint for creating the conditions conducive to the resumption of talks to restart the long-stagnant peace process. The international community should act with a sense of urgency, prioritize the Palestinian issue on the international agenda, and promote the convening of a larger, more authoritative and influential international peace conference to encourage Israel and Palestine to reach a just settlement of the Palestinian issue on the basis of the two-state solution at an early date. Decades of confrontation have brought untold sufferings to both sides. The two parties should refrain from incitements and provocations, and all countries should refrain from taking actions that may lead to the deterioration of the situation. In this regard, the United States in particular should not sabotage any progress that is made in the peace process. Its long-time, one-sided, unconditional support for Israel has been a key factor in the two-state solution not being implemented. With the changing dynamics in the Middle East, it should give talks a chance. After all, it too would be a likely beneficiary of peace in the Middle East.

IMF, Pakistan on collision course

Qamar Bashir

The govt of Pakistan's promises and pledges could not change the IMF's tough stance; it even disregarded guarantees promised by China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates for the maintenance of combined deposits of \$5.3 billion with the SBP

THE International Monetary Fund (IMF) has rejected Pakistan's fiscal year 2023-2024 budget, calling it a "missed opportunity," and has asked Pakistan to share budget specifics for inspection and reshaping before it is presented to parliament for approval. The IMF has expressed a number of reservations about the budget and has warned that until these concerns are addressed, the IMF would not deliver the next tranche of its \$6 billion rescue package. This illogical rejection of Pakistan's budget, which the incumbent administration anticipated would help stabilize the economy and stimulate foreign investment, was inappropriate and unwarranted. Our finance minister is confident that the country will survive even in the absence of the IMF, but independent economic wizards have warned that if Pakistan is unable to reach an agreement with the IMF, the country may face a debt default, which would have a devastating impact on the economy and could lead to political instability. The IMF slammed the budget, stating that the fiscal deficit target of 6.54% of GDP is too high and should be reduced to 4.5%, that taxes on the wealthy and businesses should be raised, that spending on subsidies and the military should be reduced, that tax collection should be increased by 1% of GDP from 0.5%, that spending should be reduced by 0.5% of GDP from its current level of 0.2% and that the energy sector should be reformed by privatizing power distribution companies. The IMF warned Pakistan that if it fails to reach its budgetary targets, it may postpone the distribution of the next tranche of its loan, further straining Pakistan's already frail economy. The IMF's hostile stance against Pakistan was also apparent in its absurd demands and requests that Pakistan take steps to minimize political polarization and foster consensus-building by establishing a national discourse on vital subjects such as the economy and security. It additionally pushed the government to improve the rule of law and ensure that all citizens are treated equally, as well as to reform the judiciary and police force. It urged the government to increase openness and accountability in government by passing legislation requiring government employees to disclose the assets they own and by establishing an independent anti-corruption body. It also demanded the government to protect fundamental freedoms such as free expression and assembly, and to abolish legis-

lation that restrict these freedoms, as well as to ensure that security personnel do not use disproportionate force to disperse the protesters. These demands and conditions are incompatible with the IMF's mandate, which was established to promote economic cooperation and financial stability and, as such, does not have a mandate to intervene in the political affairs of its member countries, particularly where the implementation of economic reforms can lead to political implications such as reducing budget deficits, which can lead to cuts in government spending, resulting in a negative impact on public services. The IMF is advising Pakistan on how to ensure democratic ideals, while the same IMF has been chastised for its role in backing authoritarian regimes. From 1966 through 1998, it backed Indonesia's Suharto administration, which was responsible for massive human rights violations, including the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. During the 1990s, it offered financial support to Argentina's right-wing dictatorship, which was responsible for crushing opposition and human rights violations. It backed President Fernando Collor de Mello's right-wing dictatorship in Brazil in the 1980s and 1990s, which was responsible for suppressing dissent and human rights violations, among other things. Its adversarial behavior also contradicts its basic beliefs, which require the IMF not to intervene in the political affairs of its member countries and, above all, to respect the sovereignty of a recipient country, which in the case of Pakistan has been flagrantly disregarded.

The government of Pakistan's promises and pledges could not change the IMF's tough stance; it even disregarded guarantees promised by China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates for the maintenance of combined deposits of \$5.3 billion with the State Bank of Pakistan. China has also offered \$1 billion in currency swaps, allowing Pakistan to use Chinese currency to meet its foreign exchange demands. Saudi Arabia has offered \$1.5 billion in oil supplies on delayed payments, implying that Pakistan will not have to pay for the oil right away, but will be able to do so later, when its economy improves, while the UAE has given \$500 million in cash. The recalcitrant IMF, however, did not value such enormous guarantees and refused a bailout package, despite the fact that Pakistan is a member of the IMF, which authorizes it for drawing privileges, and as such, the IMF is not doing any special favors to Pakistan. On the other hand, the government had been serious and totally dedicated to meeting all legal IMF demands and denying only those where the IMF had no right to demand and had trespassed its mandate, such as interfering in the country's sovereign decision making. The government also promised the IMF that it would take additional measures to increase revenue and reduce spending, as well as take tangible steps to reform its energy sector. However, given the government's shady past behavior, the IMF may believe that mere pledges and promises are insufficient guarantees, and it now demands merit-based tangible and concrete guarantees that cannot be undone by any government. This is possibly an excessive demand, prompting Ishaq Dar, our Finance Minister, to rebut the IMF's unreasonable demands, particularly political ones labeling them "unreasonable" and "unrealistic," as the IMF was asking Pakistan to do things that were "not possible" and would "only hurt the people of Pakistan."

Dar referred to IMF demands to raise taxes on the poor and middle classes, cut spending on essential services such as education and healthcare, privatize state-owned enterprises,

and devalue the Pakistani rupee as highly irrational because they would harm Pakistanis and the economy. Rather than demanding unattainable and harmful reforms, he believes the IMF should concentrate on supporting Pakistan in improving its economy and creating jobs. He went on to explain that the IMF has no authority to compel Pakistan to lessen political polarization and enhance human rights. He stated that these were matters for Pakistan's people to decide, and that the IMF should not interfere in Pakistan's internal affairs. Many Pakistanis agreed with Dar, saying that the IMF was expecting too much from Pakistan. The IMF has declared that it is anxious to engage with Pakistan in order to reach an agreement, but Dar's remark has made it clear that Pakistan will not accept the IMF's demands without a battle, and Dar is a strong fighter and a difficult nut to crack.

He may have had many surprises in his pocket because no one knows better than him how important it is to sign a deal with the IMF because it would not only provide a lifeline to Pakistan's struggling economy and balance of payment issues, but it would also unlock aides, loans, and deposits from friendly countries that would help Pakistan ease some of the stringent curbs on imports such as industrial raw materials, animal food, and industrial machinery which is vital for sustained economic growth. Import restrictions have already devastated major and small-scale industrial sectors and businesses, as evidenced by a survey of the economy, which revealed that these sectors were under severe stress.

It appears that the IMF, Moody's, and other such institutions have banded together to take control of Pakistan's sovereignty. In its most recent assessment, Moody's cautioned that Pakistan could collapse without an IMF deal because it faces \$23 billion in debt next fiscal year. Moody's downgrading Pakistan's rating to Caa3 in February 2023 was an attempt to further demoralize Pakistan and scare away potential investors. Moody's citing, the country's high debt levels, weak economic growth, and political instability as reasons, warned that Pakistan's creditworthiness could be further downgraded if the government is unable to sustain its economic reforms or if the country's political situation deteriorates further. It also noted that the country's economy has been growing slowly for several years, owing to political insecurity, energy shortages, and security concerns, making it difficult for the government to pursue economic reforms.

The World Bank joined the IMF and Moody's in painting a bleak outlook. According to the World Bank, Pakistan's real GDP growth slowed sharply in FY23 to 0.4 percent as a result of corrective and stricter fiscal policies, flood damage, rising inflation, high energy prices, and import bans. As a result of the floods, agricultural output also fell for the first time in more than 20 years. Industry output is also declining as a result of supply chain disruptions, decreased confidence, higher finance costs and fuel prices, and increasing uncertainty. Lower industrial activity filtered down to the wholesale and transportation and services sectors. According to the World Bank, assuming the IMF program is completed and prudent macro-economic management is pursued, GDP growth will gradually recover in FY24 and FY25 but will remain below potential due to low foreign reserves and import restrictions. According to the World Bank, if social investment is not increased, the lower middle-income poverty rate which was 37.2 percent in FY23 may further deteriorate, and poor households will remain vulnerable to economic and climate shocks due to their reliance on agricultural, small-scale manufacturing, and con-

struction activity, which are all negatively impacted. Pakistan is not alone in its catastrophic economic predicament; many other countries are facing serious economic situations including Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Argentina, and Venezuela for a variety of reasons. Afghanistan is in the grip of a humanitarian crisis, with millions of people facing hunger and destitution. Argentina is in the grip of a profound recession, with inflation at an all-time high and the government failing to pay its obligations, prompting widespread protests and social unrest. Sri Lanka is experiencing its greatest economic crisis in decades, with a severe lack of foreign exchange, resulting in shortages of basic products and services, and the government being forced to implement rationing and curfews. Venezuela is in the grip of a severe economic and political catastrophe, with hyperinflation, major food shortages, and the collapse of its healthcare system. The economic situation in these countries and many other countries is having a devastating impact on the lives of millions of people who are struggling to afford food, water, and shelter besides facing a lack of access to healthcare, education, and other essential services leading to social unrest and political instability.

Salvaging the situation is not easy, these countries need foreign aid to provide essential goods and services to people in need and to support economic development and job creation. Debt relief can help to reduce the burden of debt on countries, which can free up resources to invest in development. Trade and investment can help to boost economic growth and create jobs. Good governance can help to create a more stable and predictable environment for economic development.

To avert a dollar shortage, our government has taken a number of novel steps and executed a variety of out-of-the-box solutions. It created barter trade agreements with Iran, Afghanistan, and Russia, thereby eliminating the need for foreign exchange. It paid for Russian oil in Chinese currency, preserving valuable foreign exchange. It has just signed an agreement for cheap LNG delivery with Azerbaijan. With the government's incentive to promote solar energy, homes and industrial units are rapidly converting to telemetering in order to save money on imported coal and oil used to power expensive Independent Power Plants. On April 19, 2023, it enacted the State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) Policy, which established a framework for transitioning SOEs into profit-generating entities. It has made several initiatives to reduce line losses in the power distribution system. It has established border markets with Iran to reduce smuggling and give a good livelihood for people living in border areas, and it is pushing industry to diversify its products and services in order to reduce imports. Above all, it is considering restructuring bilateral debts. While Governor SBP denied knowledge of such a proposal, it is an incredibly important move that should be carefully considered before proceeding or abandoning it.

Pakistan is a resilient and innovative country. It has endured numerous trials and tribulations in the past with great tenacity, patience, and resolve, eventually emerging victorious. This time, too, we will be successful in improving our financial and economic outlook on the strength of proven resilience of our economy, both formal and informal, and by thinking creatively and employing out of the box solutions.

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

Int'l community is failing Palestinian refugees

Yossi Mekelberg

Please forgive me for not supplying detailed answers to these questions, mainly because they are rhetorical, given that the answers are way too obvious and hence alarming. In this case, the UNRWA budget of \$1.4 billion is nothing short...

EARLIER this month, on the eve of this year's pledging conference for the UN Relief and Works Agency, the international body in charge of the welfare and human development of what is by now four generations of Palestinian refugees rather succinctly, although pointedly, warned that: "The agency has reached the limits of its ability to manage the chronic underfunding of the last 10 years through a combination of cost-control, austerity measures and debt accumulation." According to UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini, this financial crisis will, by September, prevent it from securing the delivery of basic services and lifesaving humanitarian assistance, in education, health, social services, microfinance, infrastructure and camp improvement, and protection. Common sense dictates that, when such a clear alarm is sounded by the person leading one of the most complex humanitarian and development organiza-

tions on Earth, the donor countries should rush to plug the hole in the budget. This is an agency that not only provides essential services to 5.7 million registered refugees, including emergency food assistance to 1.5 million Palestinian refugees in the Occupied Territories and Syria, but it is also a major source of regional stability.

Alas, eventually, the pledges fell short of those required, putting schools, clinics, small businesses and tens of thousands of jobs held by Palestinian refugees at risk. More than anything else, this was not a reflection of UNRWA, but a demonstration of the weakness of the international community and its inability to not only live up to its members' commitment to the welfare and development of refugees, but also to understand that, without the dedication of this rather unique organization, there is a real threat to the fragile stability in the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and especially in Gaza. No foreign aid is a mere act of charity, but also a tool of foreign policy. And as much as supporting generations of millions of Palestinians that have been the victims of wars and conflict is a worthy cause of the highest order, those countries that do not help UNRWA meet its budgetary targets should ask themselves a series of questions, such as what might be the implications for the Palestinians, for Israel, the wider region and, as a consequence, themselves, if the organization's activities should cease or are drastically reduced? What if 1.2 million people in Gaza, who are living under Israel's blockade-style occupation, suffer from starvation? Are the causes of pragmatism, coexistence and peace going to win the day if UNRWA's schools are closed, or will this mean driving youths into the willing arms of the most extremist forces, which advocate armed resistance and violence? How is it going to affect the stability of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank or the stability of Jordan, which could also be detrimental to the rest of the region? Lastly, is Europe going to welcome with open arms hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of Palestinians becoming (once again) refugees if it all implodes?

Please forgive me for not supplying detailed answers to these questions, mainly because they are rhetorical,

given that the answers are way too obvious and hence alarming. In this case, the UNRWA budget of \$1.4 billion is nothing short of a bargain basement price for the international community, considering the proven high-quality services this UN agency has been providing for nearly three-quarters of a century.

Those who malign UNRWA do so for various reasons, which are less than convincing and most of them are disingenuous. For some, the organization is merely a scapegoat for their own failures. For instance, their failure to end the longest conflict in the post-Second World War era and their utter failure to address the plight of the Palestinian refugees, either when it comes to humanitarian aid or ensuring they enjoy human rights and citizenship rights.

Much of the Israeli government's accusations against the organization do not stand the test of any factual examination. To argue that UNRWA is perpetuating the conflict is preposterous, both morally and practically. It exists because there is no peace agreement and because there is an Israeli occupation, and I have not heard anyone suggesting an alternative provider of its services, and most definitely not Israel, which played a crucial role in creating the refugee issue in the first place and has been prolonging it with no end in sight. In Gaza and in the West Bank, it is actually the responsibility of the occupying power to ensure the well-being of those occupied, not the international community, although do not expect a thank you card from the Israeli government addressed to UNRWA anytime soon. Moreover, no one is more concerned about the possible collapse of UNRWA, which would leave behind it a trail of anger and chaos not of its doing, than the Israeli security forces.

Additionally, one of the most debauched arguments that questions the right of UNRWA to exist is that most of those registered with the agency are not the original refugees. If this argument becomes an international norm, it will be one that accepts that whatever wrongdoing is committed against other people, even deliberate atroci-

ties, time will whitewash it and there are no obligations to the successor generations of the original victims. This would be a dangerous precedent that undermines everything the UN Charter stands for.

Other accusations that have been made regarding textbooks in Palestinian schools that promote hate speech against Israel and Jews have proven to be anecdotal. And, in any case, the books are not selected by UNRWA but by the host countries or the PA. Certainly, there have been a few occasions when a Palestinian employee has promoted antisemitic language or smuggled weapons on behalf of a militant group. Every such case – and they are very rare – is taken very seriously and addressed through the organization's disciplinary process. If one follows the logic of disbanding an organization because of the transgressions of individuals, then the Israel Defense Forces, for instance, would also be disbanded on account of its soldiers occasionally stealing weapons and ammunition and selling them to criminal groups, Palestinian armed groups or Israeli institutions where individuals, not to mention the institutions themselves, use despicable hate speech against Arabs and ideological rivals.

Back to reality, and away from unwarranted incitements against UNRWA, the UN General Assembly that mandated it with the almost impossible task of delivering quality services, which in most cases it has carried out so successfully, should unreservedly support it politically against those who have used it as a lightning rod for their own shortcomings. It should grant it a longer-term mandate and guarantee an adequate budget for at least three to five years that would allow it some stability, continuity and certainty, until there is a peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. September is around the corner and, if UNRWA cracks, the ensuing earthquake will cause enormous damage not only to the Palestinian refugees, but also to their host countries, the region and the credibility of the UN system.

- Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

ECP entitled to announce election dates

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The bill presented also included an amendment to Section 232 (Qualifications and Disqualifications) of the Election Act, 2017. The amendment, which was approved by the Senate, proposed that the disqualification period of a person will not exceed five years if the duration is not determined in the judgment. Senator Hafiz Abdul Kareem presented the bill which said that anyone convicted under a judgment, order or decree of the Supreme Court, high court or any court would be disqualified for five years starting from the date of the judgment. According to Article 62, Clause 1F, anyone would not be disqualified for over five years and that person should be eligible to become a member of parliament or provincial assembly.

PPP accuses PML-N of pushing...

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she warned, lamenting that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is pressuring Pakistan and the economy will be in more trouble in the coming days. Committee Chairman Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh regretted that despite his important position, he wasn't briefed, "even asked for a briefing about IMF matters but wasn't given any update." Highlighting the issues which were still unaddressed, the chairman said that no action was taken against those banks which subjected businessmen to injustice and refrained from opening letters of credit (LCs) due to which containers are stuck at ports and those who manipulated the dollar rate.

PM Shehbaz elected PML-N...

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He called on the nation to pray for the finalisation of an agreement with the global lender. He said the government was striving to secure a 'short-term agreement' with IMF. Shehbaz also emphasised the importance of Nawaz Sharif's presence in Pakistan, stating that the country's political and economic landscape would undergo a significant transformation upon his return. He lauded the efforts of Finance Minister Ishaq Dar in improving the country's economy, highlighting Dar's dedication and sacrifices made for the nation's progress. Shehbaz warned party members against accusing or criticising Dar, emphasising the importance of unity and support within the PML-N. Maryam Nawaz, in her address, praised Shehbaz Sharif for his role in the economic revival of the country. She emphasised that Shehbaz never made any decision without consulting Nawaz Sharif, highlighting their close partnership. Maryam also commended Nawaz Sharif's patience and moral values, stating that he never incited chaos or unrest, but instead acted as a teacher and role model for the nation.

Moody's warns of funding...

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financing at affordable costs, either from Eurobonds or commercial banks, in the foreseeable future. In fiscal 2023, the government issued no Eurobonds and raised only Rs521 billion (\$2.8 billion) from commercial banks, far short of the Rs1.4 trillion target set in the fiscal year 2022-23 budget. The country's external debt repayment will remain high for the next few years, with about \$25 billion of repayments (principal and interest) due in fiscal 2024, while foreign exchange reserves are very low at \$3.9 billion as of June 2. "Pakistan's external funding prospects for fiscal 2024 and later are highly uncertain," Moody's said. "It is not guaranteed that Pakistan will be able to secure \$2.4 billion from the IMF as budgeted."

Sethi addresses speculations surrounding PCB chairmanship

Zaka Ashraf, the former chairman of PCB, met Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Ehsan Mazari twice this month. Their meeting sparked a new debate related to a change in PCB chairmanship

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB)'s management committee chairman Najam Sethi responded to speculations regarding the change in PCB chairmanship. Speaking to media in Lahore today, Sethi said he will accept any decision taken by PM Shehbaz Sharif who is also the PCB's patron. "I have heard speculations surrounding PCB chairmanship. I don't get involved in this matter because it depends on the patron," he said. "Our responsibility was to restore the 2014 constitution. At this point, we are ready for elections with regional and departmental representatives on board. We are waiting for two nominees after which I will announce the election. "If you ask me, I don't want a mess. If the patron and Zardari Sahab want me to continue, I will be okay with it. If they want Zaka Sahab to become the chairman, I would welcome their decision and leave," he added. Zaka Ashraf, the former chairman of PCB, met Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Ehsan Mazari twice this month. Their meeting sparked a new debate related to a change in PCB chairmanship.



Mazari, in an interview, already said that he has got directions from his party (PPP) leadership to send Ashraf's name for the PCB chairmanship election. It must be noted here that the extended tenure of the management committee led by Sethi will end on June 20.

Najam Sethi, the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) management committee, has revealed that Pakistan's national cricket team will have the opportunity to play two home games in the upcoming Asia Cup. As per the recent announcement made by the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), Pakistan will host four matches in their own country before the tournament moves to Sri Lanka. All participating countries, except for India, will come to Pakistan for the Asia Cup. However, India will be playing their matches in Sri Lanka, which means that Pakistan's only group stage match on home soil will be against Nepal, who is the other team in their group. The other three matches to be played in Pakistan are expected to involve teams from the second group, which consists of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan. However, Sethi has made it clear that the host country, Pakistan, will have the privilege of playing two matches at home instead of just one. He revealed, "Pakistan will play a minimum of two games [at home]."

Asia Cup 2023 will take place from August 31st to September 17th, 2023 and the tournament will feature two groups, with two teams from each group advancing to the Super Four stage. The top two teams from the Super Four stage will then compete in the final to determine the champion.

Pakistan's probable 16-member Test squad for Sri Lanka tour

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan is expected to announce their 16-member Test squad in the next two days for the upcoming two-match series against Sri Lanka in July. There are a few exciting prospects who may receive their maiden Test call-up, namely Omaid Yousuf and Mohammad Hurrara. These young talents have shown impressive performances recently and are likely to be given an opportunity in the Test format. Omaid Yousuf, a 24-year-old batsman, had an outstanding outing during

Pakistan Shaheens' tour of Zimbabwe. He topped the batting charts with 348 runs from three innings, including his highest first-class score of 250 not out in the first four-day match. On the other hand, Mohammad Hurrara, who has featured in 24 first-class matches, finished second on the batting charts with 242 runs from two innings, boasting an impressive average of 121. Their consistent performances have caught the attention of the selectors, leading to their potential Test call-ups. Another player likely to make his Test debut

is all-rounder Amir Jamal. His consistent performances in domestic cricket have earned him recognition, and he is expected to be part of the Test squad. Meanwhile, veteran wicketkeeper Sarfaraz Ahmed and pacer Hassan Ali will retain their places in the squad, providing the team with valuable experience. However, there are a few players who might face exclusion from the squad. Mir Hamza, Zahid Mahmood, and Mohammad Wasim Jr. are the players who are likely to be dropped from the Test squad for the se-

ries against Sri Lanka. The training camp for the upcoming tour will be set up in Karachi during the first week of July. The players will have an opportunity to fine-tune their skills and prepare themselves for the challenges ahead. Squad: Babar Azam (C), Abdullah Shafique, Shan Masood, Imam ul Haq, Sarfaraz Ahmed (wk), Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Salman Ali Agha, Saud Shakeel, Nauman Ali, Mohammad Nawaz, Abrar Ahmed, Muhammad Hurrara/Omaid Bin Yousuf, Aamer Jamal, Shaheen Afridi, Naseem Shah, Hassan Ali.

Andy Murray upbeat ahead of Wimbledon

LONDON: Former world number one Andy Murray is confident ahead of next month's Wimbledon after reaching the quarter-finals of the Rothesay Nottingham Open. The 36-year-old three-time Grand Slam champion, who went through a hip resurfacing surgery, skipped the clay court season in the past to focus on the grass court events. The Scot clinched the second-tier Aix-en-Provence Challenger Tour titles last month but suffered early exits in Monte Carlo, Madrid, Rome and Bordeaux before pulling out of the French Open. "In terms of physically how I have been, the last six to nine months have been really good and that has been the best I have felt since my surgery, that is really positive," Murray said he said after beating Hugo Grenier 6-3 7-5. "I always feel really comfortable on the grass courts, so the next few weeks will be a good test for me." Murray also said that competing against top-ranked players will allow him to get a better assessment of where his game stands at the moment. "It is really hard to say if I'm playing my best level overall," Murray added. - Agencies

Ambassador hosts reception for Pakistan's Special Olympics squad

DNA

BERLIN: Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Faisal hosted a welcome reception at the Pakistan House, Berlin, for the Pakistani squad of Special Olympics World Games 2023, said a news release received here on Friday. The delegation, comprising 54 male and 33 female athletes, alongside their coaches and support officials, was given a heart warming welcome by the officers and staff of the Embassy. Prominent members of the community were also invited to encourage the young privileged athletes aspiring to bag success in the event. Pakistani athletes are participating in 11 different sports, including athletics, badminton, basketball, Bocce, cycling, hockey, power lifting, swimming, tennis and table



tennis. In his welcome remarks, Ambassador, Dr. Mohammad Faisal, stated that "I feel very proud to see you all with shining eyes, hopeful hearts and firm determination to represent Pakistan." He further added that, "I would also want to congratulate the team management, Ronak Lakhani, Yasmin Hyder and all the coaches and affiliated personnel who enabled our privileged guests reach this point with adequate training and the aim to raise the flag high." He said that this indeed was a very happy moment for the nation, to see its privileged children participate in an international event and reiterated that the Embassy would render every possible support to the Special Olympics Team during their stay in Berlin. Ronak Lakhani, Chairperson Special Olympics Pakistan, who is leading the delegation, thanked the ambassador and for utmost support and hoped that the team would perform well in the event, which was scheduled to kick off on June 17 and continue till 25th June, it added. The Embassy also arranged music performances, alongside refreshments, for the guests, which the participants fondly enjoyed.

Mominul, Najmul take Bangladesh to mammoth 614-run lead

DHAKA: Mominul Haque closed in on his 12th Test ton as Bangladesh reached 378-4 before tea Friday on the third day of their one-off Test against Afghanistan in Dhaka. Najmul Hossain became only the second Bangladeshi to score a century in each innings of a Test match, making 124 to go with his first innings score of 146. , the other Bangladeshi to achieve that feat, was unbeaten on 95 alongside skipper Liton Das on 48, stretching the hosts' lead to a gargantuan 614 runs at the break. Afghanistan toiled hard but could only take three wickets in two sessions, including two wickets in the same over off leg-spinner Zahir Khan. Zahir ended the prolific innings of Najmul who gave a catch to Abdul Malik at short midwicket to end his 151-ball knock with 15 boundaries. Mushfiqur Rahim hit a six soon after coming to the crease but an attempted reverse sweep in the next ball brought his downfall for eight as Ibrahim Zadran took the catch at slip. Resuming at 134-1 overnight, Najmul and Zakir Hasan batted with confidence before Afghanistan got an unexpected breakthrough against the run of play. - Agencies

IPC issues NOC for SAFF Championship in India

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) received No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination ahead of the national men's team's participation in the SAFF Championship in India. The IPC issued the notification, which was addressed to Director Pakistan Sports Board Shoaib Khoso, on Friday (today). The Pakistan team will depart for the event, which will be held in Bengaluru, India,

from June 21 to July 4, on June 18 from Mauritius - where the Shaheens are currently participating in a four-nation cup. Pakistan have already submitted visa applications to the Indian embassy in Mauritius. In the SAFF Cup, Pakistan have been bracketed with India in Pool A which also carries Kuwait and Nepal. On Thursday, Pakistan High Commission in Mauritius hosted a dinner in the honour of Pakistan team being led by Denmark-based striker Hasan Bashir. In the four-nation cup, Pakistan have played two matches

against hosts Mauritius and Kenya and lost both. They will play their final game against Djibouti on June 17. The tournament is being held on a single league basis. The outfit, which will finish at the summit on points, will be declared the winners. Kenya are the highest-ranked side in the tournament with 102 ranking. They are followed by Mauritius at 180 ranking. Djibouti stand at 193 and Pakistan are the lowest-ranked side at 195. **Pakistan squad:** Saqib Hanif, Salman-ul-Haq,

Yousaf Ijaz Butt **Defenders:** Muhammad Umar Hayat, Ali Khan Nazki, Muhammad Sufyan, Mamoona Moosa Khan, Syed Abdullah Shah, Ha-seeb Ahmed Khan, Sardar Wali, Easah Suliman, Abdullah Iqbal **Midfielders:** Alamgir Ali Khan Ghazi, Ali Uzair Mahmood, Moin Ahmed, Shayak Dost, Muhammad Waleed Khan, Rahis Nabi, Harun Hamid, Muhammad Adnan Yaqoob **Forwards:** Abdul Samad Shahzad, Otis Jan Mohammad Khan, Hassan Naveed Bashir, Muhammad Waheed.

Utd negotiating with Sheikh Jassim sale talks

DOHA: English football club Manchester United (MANU.N) is negotiating granting exclusivity to the consortium led by Qatar's Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani in talks to sell itself for more than \$6 billion, people familiar with the matter said on Thursday. While a deal remains uncertain, the development represents a major milestone in the efforts of Sheikh Jassim - the son of Qatar's former prime minister who is one of the richest men in the Gulf state - to take over the iconic sports brand. Members of the Glazer family, who own minority stakes in Manchester United and control it thanks to a dual-class share structure, would be cashing out as part of the proposed deal, one of the sources said. The Qatari offer is currently viewed by the Glazers more favorably than a bid from British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe, founder of chemicals producer INEOS, the sources added. Ratcliffe's offer envisions that the Glazers would keep some interest in Manchester United. Manchester United would not be allowed to negotiate with any bidder other than Sheikh Jassim for the exclusivity period. It could not be learned how long this period may last. The sources cautioned that

the situation remained fluid and a new bid from Ratcliffe could prevent Sheikh Jassim from securing exclusivity. The sources requested anonymity because the matter is confidential. Representatives for Manchester United and Sheikh Jassim did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Shares of Manchester United jumped as much as 15% on the news and ended trading in New York on Thursday up 6.8% at \$24.81. A \$6 billion-plus deal for Manchester United would be one of the biggest ever in the sports world, following a similarly sized sale of the National Football League's Washington Commanders earlier this year. It would also represent a significant premium to other soccer deals. Last year, the \$3.1 billion acquisition of Chelsea Football Club by an investment group led by Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital

valued it at 5.7 times revenue for its last financial year. A sale for more than \$6 billion would value Manchester United at more than 10 times last year's annual revenue, according to Refinitiv data. The Glazer family, which made its fortune in real estate, retail and healthcare and also owns the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers, bought the team for 790 million pounds (\$1 billion) in 2005. Record 20-time English champions, Manchester United has over 650 million fans worldwide, according to market research firm Kantar. A large number of them have been clamoring for a change of ownership. That is because the Glazers have overseen a significant downturn in the club's fortunes, with the club winning just the last of their 20 top-flight titles in former manager Alex Ferguson's final season

in charge in 2012-13. Manchester United won the League Cup under Erik ten Hag this season, but their third-place finish in the league, 14 points behind local rivals and treble winners Manchester City, underscores the scale of the turnaround required. While a section of supporters may view the deep pockets of a new Qatari owner as the quickest way to shrink the gap between United and Abu Dhabi-backed Manchester City, others have expressed "deep concern" at Qatar's human rights record. Several Middle Eastern nations have made huge investments in sport in recent years, leading to criticism that they are trying to "sportswash" their images. Qatar hosted football's showpiece event, the World Cup, in 2022, while state-run Qatar Sport Investments (QSI) owns Ligue 1 club Paris St Germain. Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) bankrolls the breakaway LIV Golf Series, which recently agreed to merge with the PGA Tour, as well as Premier League team Newcastle United. Reporting by Anirban Sen in New York Additional report by Amy-Jo Crowley in London Editing by Greg Roumeliotis, Deepa Babington and Matthew Lewis. - Agencies

Pakistan 'keenly engaged' with IMF to find solution

FROM PAGE 01

we shared the budget numbers with the IMF mission. And we are continuously engaged with them even on the budget," said the ministry. On the IMF official's concern about the broadening of the tax base, the ministry said that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has added 1,161,000 new taxpayers in the last 11 months. "This is an ongoing exercise and will continue. The 0.6% advance adjustable withholding tax on cash withdrawals over Rs. 50,000 is another big step in this direction," said the ministry. The ministry also shared that the tax exemptions that have been announced in the budget are "triggers" of growth in the real sectors of the economy. "This is the sustainable path to provide employment and livelihood to the common citizen. In any case, the amount is fairly small." On the concerns regarding Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), the ministry said that "pro-poor initiatives in the budget" are not confined to the beneficiaries. "There are millions of vulnerable people above the poverty line and the budget provides Rs35 billion for targeted subsidies on five main items of food consumption through the Utility Stores Corporation for families up to a PMT scorecard 40. This facility is also available for BISP beneficiaries," the ministry said. On the amnesty, the ministry shared that the only change is to "dollarise" the value of an existing provision of the IT Ordinance.

Emergency lifted as Biparjoy fizzles out

FROM PAGE 01

longitude 69.4°E at a distance of 110km south of Badin, 200km southeast of Keti Bandar, and 180km southeast of Thatta. "The associated maximum sustained surface winds are 80-100 Km/hour with sea conditions being over Northeast Arabian Sea with wave height 10-12 feet. The system is likely to weaken further into a Depression by today evening."

Hamilton expects wins mark to fall to Verstappen

MONTREAL, June 15 (Reuters) - Lewis Hamilton holds the record for Grand Prix wins but the seven-times Formula One world champion recognised on Thursday that Max Verstappen could smash that mark. Even though Hamilton is on the verge of signing a contract extension with Mercedes and will have an opportunity to add to his 103 victories - including seven at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve which will host this weekend's Canadian Grand Prix - he said the 25-year-old Dutchman had time on his side. "He's got a very long career ahead of him so absolutely," Hamilton said referring to Verstappen's chances of eclipsing his record. "Ultimately records are there to be broken. "We've got to work harder to continue to extend it and, at least within the last period of time of my career, I hope we get to have some more close racing." Verstappen can deliver Red Bull's 100th Formula One victory this weekend and step up alongside the late Brazilian great Ayrton Senna with a career haul of 41 wins. If not in Montreal it is almost certain, barring injury or something else unforeseen, that Verstappen will significantly add to his total this season. The Dutch double world champion has won five of this season's seven races, stretching his lead in the drivers' standings to 53 points over Mexican team mate Sergio Perez, who has won the other two. With 22 races on this year's calendar, if Red Bull and Verstappen can continue their imperious ways, the Dutchman could be at the end of the season already more than halfway to the 38-year-old Hamilton's record. - APP

Briefs

UAE seeks to develop relations with Russia

MOSCOW: UAE president Mohamed bin Zayed has reaffirmed his country's commitment to reaching a political solution through dialogue to achieve global peace and stability during a meeting with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Friday.

The two leaders met in St. Petersburg where they discussed bilateral relations and regional and international issues. The UAE's president said cooperation between Russia and his country was strong and that they were seeking to develop relations. He emphasized the UAE's determination to achieve peace and stability in the region and internationally. "The UAE continues to support all efforts aimed at reaching a political solution through dialogue & diplomacy - towards global peace & stability." The UAE president tweeted shortly after the meeting.—DNA

U.S., Japan, Philippines discuss South China sea

WASHINGTON: The national security advisers of the United States, Japan and the Philippines on Friday discussed regional security issues and ways to strengthen the trilateral alliance, they said in a joint statement.

It was the first meeting between White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan and his counterparts, Akiba Takeo of Japan and Eduardo Ano of the Philippines. "The three (advisers) discussed a wide range of regional security challenges, including with respect to the South China Sea and the East China Sea, as well as North Korea. In addition, they reiterated the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," the joint statement said.—APP

Food group exports reduced 0.84%

ISLAMABAD: Food group imports into the country during 11 months of current financial year reduced by 0.84 percent as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July-May, 2022-23, food commodities costing \$8.380 billion imported as against the imports of \$8.451 billion of same period of last year, according to the data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The imports of the commodities including milk cream decreased by 10.35 percent, dry fruits 41.75 percent, tea 11.09 percent, spices 30.89 percent and sugar imports reduced by 97.21 percent as compared to the imports of same period last year, it added. The other commodities that observed negative growth in their respective imports during the period under review included palm oil 0.43 percent and all other food items reduced by 18.33 percent.—APP

BISP serves nine million households: Shazia Marri

BERLIN: Federal Minister and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Ms. Shazia Marri has said that a cash assistance initiative of BISP provided financial assistance to nine million women heads of households under Benazir Kafalat. In addition to Benazir Kafalat, under Benazir Nashunama, 710 thousand lactating mothers and their children under two years of age are being supplied with food supplements to overcome malnutrition among them, she told. During a panel discussion at the closing session of the "Global Forum on Adaptive Social Protection: Protecting lives and livelihoods in times of crisis" in Berlin, Germany on Friday, the Chairperson BISP said that since its inception in 2008, the Programme had greatly contributed towards uplifting the socio-economic conditions of the improvised and economically marginalized segments of the society, particularly the women. The BISP is an ideal model of social protection that could be emulated in other parts of the world as well, mainly in the developing nations, she expressed. Shazia Marri expressed gratitude to the German Government, specifically Minister Schulz, and other partners, including the World Bank and German Development Partner GIZ, for hosting an event on such an important subject. She acknowledged Pakistan's vulnerability to climate hazards, citing the examples of last year's devastating floods and the ongoing threat of a cyclone BIPARJOY targeting Pakistan and neighboring India. The closing session was moderated by Ms. Conny Czymoch, an Independent International Moderator and journalist. Other speakers, inter alia, included Ms. Svenja Schulze Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ; Ms. Esther Schüring, Social Protection Advisor, GIZ; Mr. Colin Andrews, Program Manager, World Bank; Mr. El Hadji Ndiogou Diouf. In her talk, Shazia Marri shed light on the climate vulnerability faced by Pakistan. She said, the country has experienced devastating floods in the past, including in 2010, 2011, 2022, and most recently last year, adding that approximately 33 million people were displaced, with 6000 pregnant women directly affected due to flood 2022. However, our coalition government, through the BISP, disbursed a cash assistance of over Rs 70 billion among 2.8 million families affected by these floods, she expressed. Highlighting the significance of coordination, Shazia Marri emphasized that BISP was working closely with provincial setups and social safety initiatives to maximize the benefits extended to the marginalized and poorest segments of society. She expressed her government's willingness to share experiences with the representatives of the 58 countries present at the forum, showcasing the country's commitment to global collaboration for social protection. Shazia Marri apprised the audience on National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER), a comprehensive database of over 35 million households.—DNA

South Korea recovers part of North's rocket

SEOUL: South Korea has recovered from the sea part of a rocket used in North Korea's failed attempt to launch its first military satellite last month, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said on Friday. The announcement came about two weeks after North Korea unsuccessfully tried to launch its first spy satellite, with the booster and payload plunging into the sea. The debris was salvaged on Thursday evening from the seabed about 75 metres (246 feet) below the surface off the west coast, the military said, adding that the search continued for additional objects from what the North said was a space launch vehicle. South Korea began retrieving debris shortly after the launch, and had already recovered smaller parts. But the operation had faced difficulties partly because of a strong tide and bad visibility, prompting the military to dispatch 10 vessels and dozens of deep-sea divers.—APP

Canadian High Commission, Serena Hotels screen 'Minahil'

The premiere of "Minahil" proved to be an extraordinary event, uniting supporters of gender equality, sports enthusiasts, and champions of women's empowerment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On Friday June 16th, the film "Minahil", directed by Wajahat Malik, premiered at the Serena Hotel Islamabad. Minahil is an inspirational docu-drama about a young girl from Chitral playing ice-hockey and how her participation in the sport has contributed to her empowerment. The film was co-funded by Serena Hotels and the Canadian High Commission in Islamabad. Serena Hotels has been actively supporting women in sports via sponsorships. Notable mentions are acclaimed mountaineer Samina Baig whose first solo climb was in sponsorship of Serena Hotel talented footballer Karishma Ali to attend the Global Sports Week in Paris, France. Other sports and adventure initiatives include partnerships with diplomatic missions such as supporting cricket for blind girls, where professional Australian players train young girls & Serena hosts matches to hone their talent, providing them with skills to help them build their futures. Along with a mentorship programme that the management launched with professional female golf players to encourage the participation of females in golf. Mr. Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, South and Central Asia, believes in supporting gender equity & empowerment through our



various initiatives.

Serena Hotels partners with the High Commission of Canada in Pakistan to uplift and empower rural communities, one example of this partnership is supporting girls playing ice-hockey as a part of the High Commission's signature winter sports public diplomacy initia-

ive. This collective effort by the High Commission, in partnership with other local partners, aims to empower women and girls, drive socio-economic development at the community level, promote sustainable tourism, and raise awareness about climate change and environmental conservation

in line with Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy. This year, the High Commission of Canada in Pakistan and Serena Hotels supported Eyebox Films with the hopes of bringing the stories of personal victories and achievements of some of the beneficiaries of the programme to the big screen.

The docu-drama "Minahil" highlights the inspiring journey of the Booni Girls ice hockey team from Chitral, showcasing their determination and the transformative power of inclusion and gender equality. Through this we hope to inspire support for women and girls' equal access to all aspects of socio-economic life. It serves as a poignant reminder that human rights are universal and that women's rights are human rights. Speaking at the premiere, Amanda DeSadeleer, First Secretary for Political and Public Affairs at the High Commission of Canada, expressed her enthusiasm for the project, stating, "The Booni story is a powerful one, and that is why we were thrilled when film director Wajahat Malik wanted to take on the job of capturing the work of the Booni Environmental Academy and how ice hockey, specifically girls ice hockey, has been at the heart of their journey. We hope you, and the rest of the world, will be as inspired as we have been to watch these courageous girls become confident and successful young women, both on and off the ice." Mr. Imran Hassan, Corporate Director of Sales & Marketing, Serena Hotels, South and Central Asia, commented on the film's impact, stating that stories like this should be showcased on a global platform, as it promotes and showcases the potential of the females of Pakistan positively and proactively, especially in sports.

FM stresses on multi-dimensional foreign policy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) celebrated its 50th Foundation Day today. The event was attended by a large number of former diplomats, senior officials, members of the Islamabad-based Diplomatic Corps, academics, scholars and researchers, and representatives of civil society, think-tanks, and the media. The Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Delivering his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood dilated in detail on the Institute's rich history, proactive contributions, and impressive achievements over the past 50 years since its establishment in June 1973. The DG ISSI expressed deep gratitude to the previous Chairmen/Directors General and all scholars and researchers



that have been part of the ISSI's 5-decades journey. Several of them were also attended the ceremony. The DG ISSI emphasized the importance of recognizing think-tanks as a vital component of the policy eco-system. They offer a vital platform to a range of stakeholders - most im-

portantly scholars and policy-makers - to constructively engage, collaborate on ideas, generate research, and impact policy. He added that ISSI would continue its efforts to bridge the gap that has traditionally existed between the academics and the practitioners. As for ISSI's future vision, Am-

bassador Sohail Mahmood outlined that it would focus its endeavours on strengthening its interface with all relevant national institutions; promoting interaction with the private sector, civil society and the youth as important stakeholders in the policy process; expanding beneficial.

1 million children displaced in Sudan war: UNICEF

KHARTOUM: The conflict in Sudan has displaced more than one million children including 270,000 in the Darfur region, the United Nations children's agency said, warning many more were at "grave risk." Fighting has raged in Sudan since mid-April between army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan

Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). As well as the more than one million displaced, at least 330 children have been killed and more than 1,900 others wounded, UNICEF said in a statement on Thursday. "Many more are at grave risk." Mandeep O'Brien, UNICEF representative in

Sudan, said: "The future of Sudan is at stake, and we cannot accept the continued loss and suffering of its children. "Children are trapped in an unrelenting nightmare, bearing the heaviest burden of a violent crisis they had no hand in creating - caught in the crossfire, injured, abused, displaced and subjected to disease and malnutrition,"

he added. UNICEF said an estimated 13 million children were in "dire need" of humanitarian assistance. The UN agency said it was ready to assist them but called for "safe, unrestricted access and guaranteed security to all areas where children are in desperate need." It said the situation in the western region.—APP

Lebanese protesters attack banks

WEB DESK

BEIRUT: Protesters vandalized the facades of several banks and set fires alight in a suburb about 8 km east of Beirut on Thursday, frustrated at being denied access to their money. The attacks targeted branches of Bank Audi, Bank of Beirut and Byblos Bank in Sin El-Fil in Mount Lebanon Governorate. Soldiers and internal security forces were deployed at several banks in Beirut out of fear of similar attacks. Other groups protested in front of Al-Amin Mosque in downtown Beirut, raising banners condemning any encroachment on their funds and accusing the judiciary of corruption. They demanded the return of their money and called for central bank governor Riad Salameh, the association of banks and any other officials involved in corruption to be brought to account. Joining the protesters was Issam Charafeddine, caretaker minister of the displaced, who represents the Lebanese Democratic Party led by Talal Arslan, an ally of Hezbollah and the Syrian regime. The protests came just 24 hours after the Lebanese parliament failed to elect a president for the 12th time. A political observer, who asked not to be named, said the protests on the streets of the predominantly Christian area had a political message.

Iran's Raisi secures deals on Latin American tour

TEHRAN: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has returned from a tour of Latin America, where he signed dozens of agreements with three allies who share Tehran's defiance of Western powers. The Iranian president, who was accompanied by his ministers of foreign affairs, defence, petroleum and health, arrived in Tehran on Friday after a five-day trip that took him to Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba. Throughout the trip, Raisi criticised the United States and the economic sanctions imposed on Iran and its allies in Latin America. "Relations between Iran and Venezuela are not normal diplomatic ties. They are strategic," Raisi said in Caracas, where he was warmly received by President Nicolas Maduro. "The nations of Iran and Venezuela have shared enemies, who do not wish us to live independently," he said in reference to Washington. The two countries signed more than two dozen agreements. Several related to energy, including deals on developing an oil platform and a petrochemical products plant, while agreements were also signed on maritime transport, agriculture, medicine, information technology, insurance and cultural ties. Iran and Venezuela signed a 20-year cooperation plan last year during a Maduro visit to Tehran.—DNA

PSX loses 67.87 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) shed 67.87 points on Friday, a negative change of 0.16 per cent, closing at 41,301.30 points against 41,369.17 points the previous day. A total of 156,023,085 shares were traded during the day as compared to 149,676,270 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs.3.746 billion against Rs.3.606 billion on the last trading day. As many as 323 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 108 of them recorded gains and 183 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 32 companies remained unchanged. The three top-trading companies were TPL Properties with 24,009,338 shares at Rs.13.53 per share; K-Electric Ltd. with 17,821,031 shares at Rs.1.64 per share and Hascol Petrol with 16,293,500 shares at Rs.5.84 per share. Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.147.80 per share price, closing at Rs.8,499.00, whereas the runner-up was Colgate Palm XDXB with an Rs.84.44 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,210.33. Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.680.00 per share closing at Rs.22,020.00; followed by Bhanero Tex with Rs.64.99 decline to close at Rs.1,075.00.—APP

Pakistan Post refutes news item about UPU

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Post on Friday refuted a news item that appeared in a section of the press regarding Pakistan's ranking in the Integrated Index of Postal Development (IIPD) report of the Universal Postal Union (UPU). Pakistan Post in a statement said that it had erroneously been mentioned in the news item that Pakistan had achieved a rank of 155. In reality, Pakistan has achieved a higher rank of 55th in the UPU ranking, the statement added.—APP

RCB starts survey to identify dilapidated buildings

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) on the directives of Cantonment Executive Officer, here on Friday started a survey to identify dangerous buildings. According to an RCB spokesman, the Board had directed the owners of the old buildings to take all possible precautionary measures and get the dangerous buildings repaired before the start of monsoon rains. He informed that after completing the survey within a couple of days, notices would be issued to the owners under Section-126 of the Cantonment Act, 1924 and they would be directed to vacate or demolish their dilapidated commercial and residential properties. The owners of the dangerous buildings particularly near Nullah Lai and other nullahs in Cantonment areas would be asked to either repair the buildings or vacate them so any damage that may result from monsoon rains could be avoided.—APP

Weekly inflation increases by 0.20 pc

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.20 per cent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on June 15, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 255.17 points as compared to 254.67 points during the past week, according to the PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 34.96 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs17,732.—APP



German Director General for Asia and Pacific Petra Sigmund hosted a farewell lunch in honour of Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Faisal at the German Foreign Office.—DNA

Briefs

Journalists should be allowed to do work, US tells Pak

DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States said Thursday that journalists in Pakistan should be allowed to cover the ongoing events and do their work freely.

"I would say that we generally urge all governments to respect the role of journalists and media," US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told a press briefing in Washington.

The department's spokesperson noted that the press performs a critical function in democratic societies.

"We expect that journalists covering the events in Pakistan should all be allowed to do their work," Miller said. The spokesperson noted that a press without restrictions plays an important role in helping democratic forces evolve.

"A free and independent press is a vital, core institution that undergirds healthy democracies by ensuring that electorates can make informed decisions and holding government officials accountable." The development comes as cases have been registered against several journalists and anchorpersons for their alleged involvement in May 9 riots.

Asad Gilani assumes charge as Nadra chief

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Asad Rehman Gilani on Friday formally assumed the charge as the new chairman of the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra). He assumed the office of Nadra head days after his predecessor Tariq Maalik stepped down from his post over a "charged political environment". Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif accepted the resignation of Malik and appreciated his contributions to the country. Gilani is a grade 22 officer of the Pakistan Civil Service and also the secretary of the Board of Investment. He assumed additional charge as the new chairman Nadra today. On his first day at work, the newly-appointed Nadra chairman directed all the employees to perform their duties efficiently and ensure uninterrupted services to the people.

Electoral rolls to be frozen after July 13: ECP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday urged the people to get their votes registered before July 13 as the electoral rolls will be frozen after the date. "Avail this last opportunity and check your vote by sending CNIC# on 8300 and get your vote registered before 13th of July, 2023," the election organising authority added.

Under the Elections Act 2017, no revision or correction can be made in the electoral roll during the period beginning 30 days before the day on which the term of an assembly or a local government is due to expire (hereinafter referred to as 'the cut-off date') till the announcement of the results of the general election to the assembly or the local government. However, this clause is not applicable in the case of an election held to fill a casual vacancy in an Assembly or a local government. The electoral rolls are important as it maintains the lists of voters. The current national and provincial assemblies are set to expire in August of this year as their five-year term will end. As per the Constitution, the next general election is due within 60 days of the end of the current National Assembly's term on August 13.

Welcome any remedy against 184(3) if done with caution: SC

CJP says the question is on what basis a review should be allowed

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial said on Friday that the apex court would welcome any remedy against Article 184(3) if it was done with caution. Article 184(3) of the Constitution sets out the Supreme Court's (SC) original jurisdiction and enables it to assume jurisdiction in matters involving a question of "public importance" with reference to the "enforcement of any of the fundamental rights" of Pakistan's citizens.

CJP Bandial made the remarks as a three-member SC bench heard a set of appeals challenging the Supreme Court (Review of Judgments and Orders) Act, 2023 and the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) review against the verdict fixing May 14 as the date for holding Punjab Assembly elections. On Thursday, the top judge stated that the SC had no issue with the new law, expanding the scope of review petitions under Article 184(3), but the problem lay in the way the law was enacted.

The chief justice observed that the government can enact any law which provides an effective remedy in case of the apex court's decisions but the problem lies with the method and manner of enacting the law. He said changes should not have been made through a constitutional amendment and not ordinary law. During hearing, Attorney-General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan presented his arguments.



Giving the example of a 2002 judgement by the Indian supreme court regarding curative pleas, Awan said: "The Indian supreme court had said that ensuring justice is no less important than the finality of a decision. The verdict said that absolute justice is God's desire." At this, Justice Munib Akhtar said that a review was still a review and was not granted the status of an appeal.

The CJP then remarked that a "complete test of justice" lay before the SC, adding that the Indian law also stated the same. "In an appeal, a case is heard once again. We should solve this issue," he said. "We welcome any remedy against Article 184(3) of the Constitution if it is done with caution. The question is on what basis a review should be allowed," he said. In his arguments, the AGP also said that from high courts to the top court, petitioners were given the opportunity to present their cases. "That is why the SC has limited the scope of review," he said.

He said that under Article 184(3), the SC heard the case directly which is why the scope of review under the article had been expanded. He argued that because of this, petitioners would be able to "fully convince the court".

Due to the limitations of the scope of review, many affected persons were not able to file review petitions, he said. Awan further said that the constitution of a larger bench did not mean that it would exclude the judges who originally heard the case. "If a three-member bench makes a decision, then two more judges will hear the case alongside them in the review," he said.

At one point during the hearing, the ECP's lawyer said that he would also like to present his arguments. However, the CJP told him that he was "invited as a guest" and the SC was not hearing the electoral watchdog's case at the moment. The hearing was later adjourned for Monday (June 19) at 1pm.

Xi meets Bill Gates, calls him 'an old friend'

DNA

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping called Bill Gates "an old friend" and said he hoped they could cooperate in a way that would benefit both China and the United States, in Xi's first meeting with a foreign entrepreneur in years. In a meeting at Beijing's Diaoyutai state guest house, where China's leaders have traditionally received senior foreign visitors, Xi said he was very happy to see the Microsoft (MSFT.O) co-founder and philanthropist after three years, and that Gates was the first American friend he had met this year. "I often say the foundation of U.S.-China relations lies with its people. I place my hopes on the American people," a video published by state broadcaster CCTV showed Xi as saying. "With the current global situation, we can carry out various activities beneficial to our two countries and people, activities that benefit humanity as a whole," he said. Gates, who arrived in Beijing on Wednesday, said he was "honoured" to have the chance to meet. "We've always had great conversations and we'll have a lot of important topics to discuss today... it's very exciting to be back."

Sikh community seeks probe as Khalistan leader mysteriously dies

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Sikh community in the United Kingdom has called for a "full investigation" into the death of Avtar Singh Khanda, a Khalistan Movement leader who mysteriously died in Birmingham. Avtar Singh Khanda had led the protests at the Indian High Commission in London earlier this year when the Indian flag was pulled down by the Khalistan activists. Cellphone

videos posted on social media showed protesters climbing the building and taking down the Indian flag. Avtar Singh Khanda was seen leading the protest in the videos. India had registered a strong protest over the incident, saying, "The UK government's 'indifference' to Indian diplomats and personnel was 'unacceptable'."

According to the media reports, Avtar Singh Khanda was admitted to a Birmingham hospital after he complained of uneasiness on Monday. The exact

cause of his death is not clear yet, however, the Sikh community cast doubts over the death and sought a probe into it.

In a letter to the UK Police, CEO Khalsa Aid International Ravinder Singh requested a "full investigation and a full coroner's report" into the death of Avtar Singh Khanda which caused concern among the community across the UK and globally. "This death follows a number of other untimely deaths of Sikh activists within the last 18 months. We seek

reassurance that this death is not politically motivated or sinister," he said.

He said the deceased's family had also requested a post-mortem to establish the cause of death. The Indian media reported that Avtar Singh Khanda suffered from blood cancer, while the close circles rejected the claim. Some Indian newspapers also reported that Avtar Singh Khanda was suspected to have been poisoned, though the facts were yet to be ascertained.

Blinken heads to Beijing hoping to calm US-China ties

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken goes to Beijing this weekend with expectations low that he will make headway on the long list of disputes between the United States and China. But he and his Chinese counterparts can achieve at least one thing, say analysts - show that the world's most important bilateral relationship is not about to fall off the rails. Blinken will hold meetings in China on June 18-19 and may

meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping, sources said. He will be the highest-ranking U.S. government official to visit China since Biden took office in January 2021. In a pre-trip briefing on Wednesday, U.S. officials said they have no expectation the trip will yield a breakthrough in how the U.S. and China deal with each other. That followed a tense evening phone call with Blinken on Tuesday during which Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang told the U.S. to stop meddling in China's affairs. China's foreign ministry followed up on Friday, warning that "vicious competition ... cannot be engaged in" and that the United States "should not fantasise that it is dealing with China from a position of strength." "This is not so-called responsible competition, but extremely irresponsible hegemonic behaviour which will only push China and the U.S. towards confrontation," foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told reporters. The visit, which could set the stage for a flurry of other diplomatic engagements including a meeting between Xi and U.S. President Joe Biden later in the year, would show that the two rivals have not given up on diplomacy.



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, Qamar Zaman Kaira visiting a stall at Furniture Exhibition. - DNA

Indian minister's home set ablaze in Manipur

GUWAHATI: A federal Indian minister's house was set on fire by a mob in the remote northeastern state of Manipur, which has been hit by clashes between members of rival ethnic groups for over a month, officials said on Friday. Junior foreign minister R. K. Ranjan Singh's office confirmed that a mob vandalised and set fire to his house

in the Manipur capital Imphal. "Fortunately none of the caretakers or family members were injured in the attack on the house," said an aide to Singh in New Delhi. Singh is a federal minister in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. Modi's ruling party also governs the state of Manipur. "I am shocked. The law and order situation in Manipur has totally failed," Singh told ANI, Reuters TV partner in India.

The attack comes after weeks of violent clashes between members of the Kuki ethnic group, who mostly live in the hills, and Meiteis, the dominant community in the low lands of the state. Singh is from the Meitei community. No group has taken the responsibility for the latest attack. Clashes between the two communities erupted on May 3, sparked by resentment over economic benefits and quotas for easy access to government jobs and education reserved for the Kukis. - Agencies

India court bars airing of another documentary

ALLAHABAD: A court in India has restrained Al Jazeera from broadcasting an investigative film on hate crimes against Muslims by Hindu supremacist groups in the country. The Allahabad High Court in the northern Uttar Pradesh state on Wednesday barred the Doha-based media network from airing the film India ... Who Lit the Fuse?, saying the broadcast could lead to "evil consequences". "Considering the evil consequences that are likely to occur on the telecast/broadcast of film ... we are of the view that the broadcast/telecast of the film in question be deferred pending consideration of the cause in the present petition," the court said as it heard a petition against the film filed by an Indian national. The court directed the Indian government to take measures to ensure the film is not broadcast or promoted on social media unless its contents have been examined by the authorities and the necessary authorisation obtained. India ... Who Lit the Fuse? is part of Al Jazeera's Point Blank investigation series. Backed by testimony and documents, it uncovers the activities of Hindu supremacist outfits, such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the far-right ideological mentor of the ruling BJP. The RSS, a secretive militia group with millions of members across India, was inspired by the Nazis in Germany. - Agencies

Taliban bank governor meets Chinese envoy

DNA

KABUL: The Taliban's acting governor of the Afghan central bank met China's ambassador this week to discuss banking relations and business, the bank's spokesperson told Reuters on Friday. Afghanistan's banking system has been severely hampered by U.S.-led sanctions, a drop in liquidity from frozen central bank assets and a cut in development spending. Regulatory risk concerns of international banks have also largely cut off the country's formal banking sector from the global financial system. China does not have formal diplomatic ties with Afghanistan but has continued to maintain an embassy in Kabul since the Taliban took over the country in 2021. Beijing has recently signalled economic interest in its neighbour, and although some Chinese business executives have raised security concerns, they have said they are looking into investment opportunities, especially in mining.

"In this meeting, economy, banking relations, business and some related topics were discussed," the bank's spokesperson Hassibullah Noori told Reuters, adding the meeting took place on Thursday in Kabul between Ambassador Wang Yu and acting governor Mullah Hidayatullah Badri.

Danish Minister lauds meetings with Pak leadership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Danish Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy Dan Jørgensen has described his meetings with Pakistani leadership as highly productive and fruitful. Talking to media in Islamabad on Friday, he expressed satisfaction with his discussions with Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman. Danish Minister said Denmark and Pakistan have agreed to enhance cooperation in building climate-resilient green energy infrastructure including wind energy to overcome the challenge of climate change and to resolve energy problems in Pakistan. Meanwhile, Minister Jørgensen participated in a momentous tree plantation event at Margalla Hills in Islamabad to reinforce Denmark's commitment to engaging youth in the climate agenda and supporting Pakistan's initiative to plant ten billion trees.

Gold price increases for second day

DNA

KARACHI: The gold price in Pakistan continued to go up for the second consecutive day in line with an increase in the international market on Friday. According to the data released by All-Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association (APSGJA), the price of gold (24 carats) increased by Rs2,700 per tola and Rs2,315 per 10 grams to settle at Rs223,400 and Rs191,530 respectively.

Meanwhile, the price of the yellow metal gained \$36 to settle at \$1,965 per ounce in the international market. Cumulatively, the prices of the precious commodity increased by Rs4,400 in the last two sessions.

The gold rate has been volatile in Pakistan recently amid continued political and economic uncertainty, high inflation, and currency depreciation. People prefer to buy yellow metal in such times as a safe investment and a hedge. The market had seen a major decline due to several reasons including the international rates, depreciation of the dollar against the rupee, Biparjioy and the current weather which has restricted the buyers from going out.

Protests across Greece over migrant shipwreck

Greek authorities have been criticised for not acting to rescue hundreds as their boat sank off the coast of Pylos

NEWS DESK

GREECE: Protests have taken place across Greece over the sinking of a boat carrying migrants and refugees that left at least 78 people dead. More than 100 people were rescued from a capsized boat off the coast of Pylos but hopes have faded for hundreds of others who were still missing. A huge search and rescue operation recovered 78 bodies, but authorities estimate the trawler may have carried as many as 750 passengers, who each paid thousands of dollars for passage on the battered vessel. Nine men had been ar-

rested on suspicion of belonging to the smuggling ring that arranged the voyage. "It's thought they were junior functionaries, not the ultimate beneficiaries of the \$3m this passage may have been worth," Psaropoulos said. Greek rescuers on Thursday scoured the Ionian Sea for survivors as hope of finding more people faded. The vessel sank in international waters, 47 nautical miles (87km) southwest of Pylos, off the Peloponnese coast. The spot is close to one of the deepest areas of the Mediterranean. United Nations migration agency, the International Organization for Migration, estimated the number of passengers based on inter-

views with survivors and said the complement included at least 40 children. Coastguard spokesman Nikolaos Alexiou told the ERT TV station that "the fishing boat was 25-30 metres long". "Its deck was full of people, and we assume the interior was just as full," he said. Acting migration minister Daniel Esdras said the survivors would eventually be taken to Malakasa migrant camp near Athens by Friday. Greece would examine their asylum claims, but those not entitled to protection would be sent home, he added. Thousands of people demonstrated on Thursday in cities across Greece to protest against the authorities' handling of the

shipwreck, as well as the European Union's migration policies. Greek authorities were criticised for not acting to rescue the migrants and refugees. A coastguard vessel escorted the trawler for hours and was present as it sank in minutes. Greek officials argued that the passengers repeatedly refused assistance and insisted on continuing to Italy. The vessel appeared to be sailing normally until shortly before it sank and refused repeated rescue offers, they said. But Alarm Rescue, a self-organised hotline for refugees and migrants in distress in the Mediterranean Sea, said they received repeated distress calls from the vessel during the same timeframe.