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Economic Survey 2022-23

Pak falls short of all economic goals in 2022-23

Dar says global supply disruptions, political uncertainty major causes of inflation

SHUJAAT HAMZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar Thursday took the wraps off the Pakistan Economic Survey 2022-23, a document that sums up the government's performance, to the utter dismay of economists as none of the targets was met, while the GDP growth rate crashed to 0.3%, which can be chalked up to natural and political disasters.

Key takeaways:

- Real GDP posted a growth of 0.29% in FY23.
- GDP at current market prices stood at Rs84,657.9 billion in FY23, showing a growth of 27.1% over last year (Rs66,623.6 billion).
- Per capita income stood at \$1,568 as compared to \$1,765 last year.
- Investment to GDP ratio stood at 13.6% in FY23 compared to 15.6% in FY22.
- Growth of agriculture sector estimated at 1.55% in FY23.
- The industrial sector posted a negative growth of 2.94% in FY23.
- Services sector witnessed meager growth of 0.86%.

At the start of the presser, Dar reminded the journalists how bad the state of economic affairs

Mini-budget likely after IMF deal: Miftah Ismail

ISLAMABAD: Former finance minister and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader Miftah Ismail said Thursday that the federal government could have brought a mini-budget if it signs a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Talking exclusively to a private television channel to comment on the Economic Survey, Miftah Ismail said when Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) came into power the previous government violated the IMF agreement by not increasing the electricity and gas tariffs for two years. Miftah Ismail said that the inflation rate is 35% and prices of roti, rice and wheat have significantly increased, causing extreme difficulties for common people. "The incumbent government has taken some good decisions, however, it could have done more."

was back in 2013 when Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government assumed office. He explained the economy was in tatters, the country was facing 18 hours of a power blackout, and terrorism reigned supreme.

While talking about the outgoing fiscal year 2022-203, the finance minister said that this year the government has added information and technology to the economic survey as "stand-alone". "This sector has the potential for growth in the coming days," said the minister. He added that the govern-

ment's aim is to achieve macroeconomic stability along with inclusivity and resilience. "We want it to be inclusive to avoid the maldistribution of resources," said the finance minister. He emphasised that if this is done that the investors' confidence can be restored. Coming back to the outgoing year, the minister said that when the PML-N-led coalition government took charge in 2022, it "faced extreme challenges as fiscal space had shrunk, inflation was on the rise,

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ISLAMABAD: Maksat Babayev, State Minister of Turkmenistan and Head of Turkmen Gaz and Minister of State for Petroleum of Pakistan Dr. Musaddiq Malik signing TAPI Joint Implementation Plan meanwhile Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif witnesses the signing. - DNA

'Shar killed over enmity'
Latif Khosa exposes propaganda, claims Khan

IHC grants 14-day bail to PTI chief

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has said that former Governor Punjab Latif Khosa clarified that Advocate Abdul Razzaq Shar was murdered because of personal enmity. Sharing a video of Latif Khosa on his twitter handle on Thursday, PTI Chairman said that Latif Khosa affirmed and condemned the false allegation of murder being pinned on him. Imran Khan stated that he further clarified that Advocate Abdul Razzaq Shar was murdered because of personal enmity. The Islamabad High Court granted a 14-day protective bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief in the Quetta-based lawyer's murder case. A two-member bench, led by the Islamabad High Court chief justice, conducted the hearing, and the court ordered the PTI chairman to appear before the relevant court within two weeks. Meanwhile, during an informal talk in the courtroom, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said on Thursday that Shah Mehmood Qureshi had come with a formula for the release of the PTI workers from jails. "The pound equals four hundred rupees. How will I survive if I go abroad? Their properties and billions of dollars lie abroad. I have nothing out of the country," he said to a question about leaving Pakistan.

Pak, Turkmenistan ink deal to implement TAPI pipeline project

PM Shehbaz Sharif terms TAPI important for the progress of the entire region

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Turkmenistan signed a joint implementation plan on Thursday to execute the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project. The ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and a delegation of Turkmenistan led by Minister of Energy and Water Resources Daler Juma'ia in Islamabad. State Minister for Petroleum Musaddiq Malik and Turkmenistan's State Minister and Chairman of TurkmenGas, Maskat Babayev inked the accord. The 1,800-kilometre pipeline is expected to carry 33 billion cubic metres of natural gas every year from Turkmenistan's Galkynsh - the world's second-largest gas field - to the Indian city of Fazilka. It will pass through Herat and Kandahar,

in Afghanistan, and Quetta and Multan. The project has two phases: a free flow phase with an estimated cost of \$5-6bn and installation of compressor stations for at least \$1.9bn. Speaking on the occasion, PM Shehbaz termed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India a very important project for the progress of the entire region, adding that it would help the region secure natural gas with concrete assurances and mutually agreed terms and conditions. Highlighting the significance of energy for developing countries, he said: "We have to negotiate with this challenge through speedy action." The prime minister expressed confidence that the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India project would lead to an era of regional cooperation, development, and prosperity. He asked the Pakistani team to expedite its planning and subsequently its execution.

Briefs

Budget to be people friendly

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs Qamar Zaman Kaira has said that the government was taking serious steps in the budget for the welfare of the poor and working class to make it people-friendly. Talking to a private news channel on Thursday, he said that the federal budget would be a surprise for the opposition, adding that it would not only provide relief to the working class of the country in every sector but will also fulfill their aspirations. He assured that protection would be provided to the weaker sections of society, adding priority would be to reduce the financial burden on the common people.

Judges cases can be referred to NAB

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Accountability, Irfan Qadir, said on Thursday that matters of superior court judges could be referred to NAB if they have "criminal overtones" or an "element of corruption". "The National Accountability Ordinance has the jurisdiction and NAB can be referred to ... there is no sacred cow for this law," Qadir said in a news conference in Islamabad. Qadir's remarks come at a time when Parliament has passed a law to curtail the suo motu powers of the chief justice through the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act, 2023.

PTI defectors join JKT Tareen launches new political party Istihkam-e-Pakistan Party to work for country, says ex-PTI leader

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Jahangir Tareen has officially launched his political party called the Istihkam-e-Pakistan Party. "We are laying a foundation of a new political party - Istihkam-e-Pakistan Party," announced Tareen at a press conference flanked by former PTI leaders including Aleem Khan, Imran Ismail and others on Thursday. Tareen, who is a former close aide of PTI Chairman Imran Khan and played a major in the formation of the PTI -led government in 2018, said that he joined politics to play his role for the betterment of the country. "We have gathered at one platform to make joint efforts to lift the country out of this quagmire," he said, adding that the country needed a political leadership which could resolve all prevailing issues including social, economic and others.

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Pervez Khattak mulls forming new party

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Pervez Khattak, who recently resigned from the president of the party's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter over the May 9 violent protest, has decided to form a new political party. Sources privy to the development stated that PTI deserters are expected to join the new political setup led by senior politician Pervez Khattak. The sources divulged on Thursday that

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11 killed in blast at funeral for killed Afghan governor

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said on Twitter it "unequivocally condemns this and a recent spate of appalling and indiscriminate attacks

CENTRELINE REPORT

KABUL: At least 11 people were killed by a blast Thursday at a funeral service for an Afghan acting provincial governor whose assassination this week was claimed by Islamic State, the interior ministry said. An interior ministry statement said the blast at the funeral for the acting governor of northeastern Badakhshan province also injured more than 30 people as "a great number of compatriots" gathered for a mosque service honouring Nisar Ahmad Ahmad. "The Ministry of Interior of the IEA condemns this brutality of the disgraced enemies," a statement said of the explosion in the provincial capital of Faizabad. "I was standing outside the mosque to receive the guests coming, suddenly a terrible sound shook the mosque," said witness Naseer Ahmad. "When I entered the mosque, I saw bloodied dead bodies laying on the ground," the 37-year-old told agencies. A journalist near the scene of the blast said Taliban government security forces had set up checkpoints around the funeral site in the morning.

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200 Afghans arrested in Islamabad

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In view of the involvement of some Afghan nationals in May 9 riots, police and other law-enforcement agencies (LEAs) in Islamabad have rounded up 200 Afghans living in different parts of the federal capital in the last few days in a crackdown ordered by the interior ministry. Sources in the police stated that cases against Afghan nationals had been registered under the Foreign Act. Moreover, they disclosed, audit of all Afghan settlements in the federal capital had begun, and the report would be submitted to the interior ministry. They explained that the LEAs had even approached the National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) in order to know the exact number of Afghans living in different parts of the country.

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Experts, envoys stress to increase Pakistan, African trade co-op

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The African Missions in Pakistan, in collaboration with the Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI), organized a Round Table Discussion on African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The Speakers included: Dean of African Group/Ambassador of Morocco, H.E. Mohammad Karmoune; Additional Secretary (Africa) MoFA, Mr. Javed Ahmad Umerani; H.E. Wankele Mene, Secretary General of African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) in Accra, Ghana (through Zoom); Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood; Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG ISSI; and Director CAMEA, Ms. Amina Khan. The Heads of African Missions in Pakistan and Heads of Pakistan Missions in Africa also spoke on the occasion. Senior Officers from the Foreign Office and Ministry of Commerce, academics, area specialists, and members of the business community and students participated in the event. In his keynote address, Ambassador Mohammed Karmoune, said that Africa has a significant role to play in driving inclusive growth

and sustainable development globally. AfCFTA is the common will of the 54 African countries to build a common market for goods and services, unlock the potential for the development of the Continent, and increase the inter-state trade among African countries. He stressed that the main objective of AfCFTA is the Continent's economic integration and development. While talking about Pakistan, he said that business communities from Africa and Pakistan can collaborate in order to benefit from numerous opportunities in the Continent. The implementation of the AfCFTA will undoubtedly unveil an excellent potential for further growth in Pakistan-Africa trade and economic relations. Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his welcome remarks, stated that for several years now, Pakistan's engagement with Africa continues to grow steadily. In this regard, the "Engage Africa" policy being pursued by Pakistan seeks to expand its diplomatic footprint in Africa and forge a robust economic partnership with the Continent. The Ministry of Commerce's "Look Africa" initiative has been instrumental in the convening of three Trade and Investment Conferences in key economic centers in Africa and has led to an

increase in two-way trade. He added that as the process of integration and economic development accelerates in Africa, there are vast opportunities to be tapped for both African nations and their international partners including Pakistan. The most crucial requirement is to make sure that the business communities and potential investors on both sides are fully aware and cognizant of the opportunities being opened up by AfCFTA. In this regard, a continuous flow of information and dynamic interface among all key stakeholders in Pakistan and Africa remain indispensable, he said. Director CAMEA Amina Khan, while giving her views, said that AfCFTA represents significant growth potential for the African economy, as it establishes a structure for fostering regional economic integration, growth, and progress throughout the Continent. The agreement has the potential to offer Pakistan fresh avenues to enhance its trade and investment connections with African nations, thus generating business and reinforcing economic relations. Amidst the extensive discussions and discourse surrounding the untapped trade potential between Pakistan and Africa, today's primary objective is to investigate and explore economic prospects.



ISLAMABAD: Researcher Nida Rehman Khattak, Director Foreign Affairs (CASS) Ambassador Muhammad Haroon Shaukat (Retd), Former Foreign Minister Mr. Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, President (CASS) Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd) and Director Warfare and Aerospace (CASS) Air Vice Marshal M Z Faisal (Retd).—DNA

Climate of hostility is neither beneficial for Pak nor India

DNA

LAHORE: A seminar was conducted by the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore on the theme of "Managing Pakistan's Relations with India" today. The seminar was arranged against the backdrop of the existing stalemate in the bilateral relations between Pakistan and India. It featured an address by the former Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri. Mr. Kasuri is regarded as an expert on India, as he has vast experience dealing with India, especially from 2002-2007. His address was followed by an extensive question and answer session. President CASS,

Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd) made the concluding remarks while summing up the recommendations. The seminar underscored that Pakistan desired good neighbourly relations with India on the basis of sovereign equality, mutual respect and the peaceful settlement of outstanding issues, especially the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. However, India's refusal to have a meaningful discussion on Kashmir and its hegemonic policies have been a recurrent source of conflict and tensions between the two countries. Mr. Kasuri emphasised that a climate of tension and hostility was neither in the interest of Pakistan nor of India. He further

underscored the necessity of dialogue as the only way forward. Referring to a statement of Mr. Narendra Modi that he had "resolved the Kashmir issue", Mr. Kasuri affirmed that the "Kashmir issue is alive and will remain so, as long as the Kashmiris refuse to accept the Indian occupation". The former Foreign Minister also talked about the current Indo-Pacific strategy of the US, adding that its main purpose was to confront the rising power of China with India added in as a counterweight. India has been brought into a number of defense agreements and arrangements with the US. All this has serious ramifications for Pakistan. In his concluding

remarks, President CASS, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd) reiterated Pakistan's desire for good neighbourly relations with India on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect. He also underscored the inalienable right of the struggling people of Jammu and Kashmir for their right to self-determination which cannot be over-written by illegal Indian actions. He added that the history of Pakistan-India relations is one of lost opportunities. He felt that relations with India can still improve through meaningful and uninterrupted dialogue, building trust and showing flexibility. The seminar ended with a vote of thanks by the President, CASS, Lahore.



PBF backs NEC's energy conservation plan

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) has backed the decision of the NEC to close markets and commercial centres at 8:00 pm to save energy. In a statement issued here on Thursday, PBF Vice President and Chief Organiser, Chaudhry Ahmad Jawad said steps for energy conservation recommended under this plan, such as the closure of shops and commercial centres at 8 pm, switching to LED lights and upgrading geysers to make them more energy efficient.—APP

Senate body condemns 9th May incidents

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training on Tuesday unanimously passed a resolution condemning the incidents that occurred on 9th and 10th May. Senator Rana Maqbool Ahmad, during the meeting, moved the resolution, demanding legal action against those allegedly involved and their conspirators. Chairman of the Committee, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, emphasized that these recent incidents have

exposed a lack of tolerance, cultural norms, religious understanding, and democratic values within society, particularly among the youth. Expressing concern, Senator Siddiqui lamented the job-oriented nature of the current education system, emphasizing the need for a character-oriented approach. He proposed the introduction of short courses or syllabi at various levels to strengthen cultural, religious, and democratic values. In light of this,

he directed the Secretary of Education to develop a plan and present it before the committee. During the committee meeting, extensive discussions took place regarding the introduction of reforms inspired by the Japanese Educational Model at the Playgroup, Montessori, and KG levels. Dr. Ikram Ali, the Director-General of the Federal Directorate of Education, shared that a project worth Rs. 7.4 million has been included in the PSDP 2023-24.—APP

Punjab police implementing latest info-tech based e-policing: IGP

LAHORE: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar has said that the Punjab Police were following the latest e-policing based on information technology, and using information technology and modern tools to improve law and order, curb crimes and improve service delivery. In a special message about the latest IT reforms and projects, being used by Punjab Force, the IGP said the working of Punjab police had been built on modern systems and applications of information technology. He said that 1787 and Complaint Management System were active continuously for transparent, impartial and accountability of police

force, tracking, feedback, follow-up of all complaints of citizens related to police were done at high level of supervision. In this regard, thousands of complaints had been redressed in time. He said that along with the gradual functionalisation of all safe city cameras, a system was being launched at the local level in other three cities. He said that anti-vehicle lifting system, latest mechanism of vehicle checking through e-gadgets applications was in use. Likewise, facial recognition system, checking number-plates through artificial intelligence, arresting criminals, and reunion of missing persons with their families were under way with

the use of technology. Dr Usman said that the e-post system of the police was being exploited for arrest of dozens of court fugitives, proclaimed offenders and bringing them to justice on a daily basis. The IGP Punjab said that every police constable had human resource management system, welfare and crime prevention app, as well as smart eye, hotel eye, tenancy registration and other applications to track criminals and anti-social elements. The IGP said that the Punjab Police's 'Pakistan app', compatible with Android and IOS system, had integrated all the police apps through which citizens could eas-

ily access 14 facilities at home in the style of a service centre. He said that the driving licence issuing system of the Punjab Police had been upgraded and every Pakistani, who had a national identity card, could get a licence from the driving centres through modern IT system of Punjab Police. He said that the police station record management system in use at the police station level helps in the effective use of available personnel and resources, while the office work of the police has been harmonised with the Chief Minister's Secretariat and has become paperless through the e-foas system.—APP

Rs1,222 bln provided to farmers during July-March, 2023

ISLAMABAD: In order to promote the agriculture sector in the country local lending financial institutions have disbursed an amount of Rs1,222 billion to the farming community during the period from July-March, 2023. According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2022-23 launched here Thursday, the disbursement was comprised of 67.2 per cent of the overall annual target and 27.5 per cent higher than the Rs958.3 billion disbursed during the same period last year. Further, the outstanding portfolio of agricultural loans has increased by Rs 80.2 billion and reached Rs 712.9 billion at the end of March 2023 compared to Rs 632.7 billion at the end of March 2022, witnessing 12.7 per cent growth. In terms of outreach, the number of outstanding borrowers reached 3.04 million in March 2023. Analysis of the sector-wise disbursement reveals that out of the total disbursement of Rs 1,221.9 billion, the farm sector has received Rs 625.1 billion, which was 51.2% and Rs 596.8 billion 48.8% has been disbursed to the non-farm sector during July-March 2023. However, the data on farm credit by land holdings reveals that Rs 234.4 billion has been disbursed to the subsistence farm size which witnessed 37.5 per cent growth during the period.—APP

Balochistan Govt keen to implement Balochistan Disability Act 2017

Quetta: In their efforts towards ensuring inclusion and rights of persons with disabilities in Balochistan, Social Welfare Department Government of Balochistan alongwith Sightsavers held a 2-day consultation workshop on the development of Rules of Business for Disability Act 2017. Muhammad Saleem Khosa, Director General Social Welfare Department appreciated Sightsavers and other stakeholders including HANDS, CBID Network, TSO and Quetta Online on this much needed support especially consultations with people with disabilities. He said that this will help in ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities creating an equal access to opportunities and services for them.

He requested stakeholders for their active participation and open feedback. The workshop was attended by multiple stakeholders including government line departments, UN agencies, national NGOs and representatives of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their networks. This initiative will help translating disability act into practical guidelines to ensure an effective implementation of the Disability Act 2017. Balochistan pioneered the approval of Disability Act in 2017 but the Act has not been fully implemented due to absence of rules of business. Itfaq Khaliq Khan, Senior Program Manager Sightsavers said that including voice of people with disabilities is critically important

to make sure that rules of business are addressing their needs. He appreciated the department of social welfare on being forthcoming and including all key stakeholders in the process. He reiterated that Sightsavers will be happy to support this initiative further to get the rules of business approved from parliament. He further added that approval of rules of business will be a step towards ensuring implementation of UNCRPD and SDGs in the province of Balochistan. Mr Asim Zafar, Secretariate Coordinator CBID Network talked about the history of disability legislation in Pakistan and appreciated the government of Balochistan on taking lead in approval of Disability Act in 2017.—APP

President urges universities to play role in preventing extremism

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday called upon the universities to play an active role in preventing intolerance, extremism, and violence in society, particularly among students, and guide them towards a positive mindset. The universities, he said, should arrange regular capacity-building training sessions for their management and faculty members to inculcate in students the ability to address extremism. Addressing the National Vice Chancellors' Peace Conference, the president said banning the students' unions in universities was not a solution and stressed that there was a need to change their mindset through proper teaching methodologies. He said such measures

would ensure the reformation of students to help them contribute towards the country's better future, sustainable peace and prosperity. The president emphasized the need for research-based learning and said equal opportunities should be given to students and women in the field of education. Keeping in view the rapid development of modern technology in every sector, President Alvi said usage of modern technology was inevitable in current scenario, which he said was vital to meet the advancement of the contemporary world. He said promoting good values and morality in the society was need of the hour. He also pointed out the phenomenon of the "invasion of fake news" across the globe, which he said needed to be

addressed on priority. Dr Arif Alvi said highly educated IT graduates should be prepared to meet the growing needs of current and future requirements. Expressing gratitude over the participation of large number of women in the conference, the president said women's role was significant in educating and training the future generations. He urged sensitizing the society on creating opportunities for educated women to help them work according to their abilities. President Alvi stressed the need for promoting ethics, morality, empathy, forgiveness, and tolerance among students and society. He asked the students not to indulge in activities that caused stress among them. The president hoped that the

challenging times would pass soon and the country would witness exponential growth within five to seven years. The country will stand on a strong footing again, he said. The two-day conference was jointly organized by Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan, National Counter-Terrorism Authority (NACTA), and Shaor Foundation for Education and Awareness (SFEA). The conference themed "Academic Discourse on Countering Extremism - The Way Forward" is a significant milestone in the implementation of the Peace, Advocacy, and Community Engagement through Transformation (PACT) for Tolerance project, which is built on a foundation of collaboration and cooperation between SFEA, HEC Pakistan, NACTA, and other poli-

cy-level stakeholders. Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, sharing his thoughts on the issues within society, said that conflict permeated various sectors of society including families, and deserved a collaborative and coordinated response. Apart from teaching, he said, as a beacon of knowledge and enlightenment, the universities had the responsibility to foster responsible citizenship and produce good human beings. Highlighting the importance of youth in the society, Member NACTA Muhammad Inksar Khan highlighted the role of youth in policy-making for sustainable peace and preventing extremism in the society. Founder SFEA Syed Ali Amir said youth were the asset of the society and their abilities needed to be explored.—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

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Monal.....0334-5421812



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Emergency

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



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Edhi Ambulance.....115
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Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Ishaq Dar presents Economic Survey for fiscal year 2022-23 during a press conference. —APP

Govt allocates around 44b rupees for HEC

Individual grant of ISF award is US\$35,000 with a total approved budget for 15 awards of Rs 118m out of which Rs 72.73 million was released as 1st installment in FY2023

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government during the period from July, 2022 to May, 2023, had allocated Rs 44.719 billion to Higher Education Commission (HEC) for the implementation of 154 development projects (138 ongoing and 16 newly approved projects) of public sector Universities/HEIs/HEC, under Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP-2022-23). According to the Economic Survey 2022-23, initially, 2.6 percent of people had access to higher education which has presently increased to 10 percent. Meanwhile, during the period July-December 2022, an amount of Rs 7.667 billion was released to development projects. During the period January-May, 2023 an amount of 35.212 billion were released. Hence accumulative Rs 42.879 billion were released from July-May FY2023. Following major development

initiatives have been launched during the above cited period, 5000 scholarship for Balochistan and FATA students (Phase-III), scheme of 200 scholarships for the coastal region of Balochistan, establishment of federal institute at North Waziristan tribal district, PM's Youth Laptop (100,000) Scheme (Phase-III), establishment of University of Gwadar (Phase-I) and strengthening of Lab facilities in 05 leading Engineering Universities (UET Peshawar, Taxila, Lahore, Khuzdar and NED Karachi). During the current FY 2023, 30 projects have been planned for completion, while out of these funding to 04 projects have been completed. The Increase in Access and HEC Recognized Universities Public Sector and Private Sector Universities has been increased to 247 ((Public Sector: 147 and Private Sector: 100) with

tertiary enrollment of 2 million students. Human Resource Development (HRD)/ Scholarship Division of HEC had announced several scholarship programmes. During the current FY 2023, an amount of Rs 8.891 billion has been allocated for 18 national scholarships schemes, including Rs 2.059 billion has been allocated for 3000 scholarships for Afghan students, 75 new scholarships have been announced in the top 25 Universities of the world on the occasion of 75th Anniversary of Pakistan, Research and Development, grant of Rs 1,020.0 million had been released to National Research Programme for Universities (NRPU). Similarly, around 88 projects have been completed and new 184 research projects have been awarded from July-May FY2023. Seven projects have been

awarded under Technology Transfer Support Fund (TTSF) at a total cost of Rs 72 million. A total of 37 Business Incubation Centers (BICs) at public sector Universities have been established by the HEC; out of which, 8 BICs were established in FY 2022 and FY2023 at an approved budget of Rs 168 million out of which Rs 112 million has been released as 1st trench. HEC awarded 15 projects under Innovator Seed Fund (ISF) Call 2021-22. The projects are from young and budding entrepreneurs working on innovative business ideas to convert them into sustainable businesses. Individual grant of ISF award is US\$35,000 with a total approved budget for 15 awards of Rs 118m out of which Rs 72.73 million was released as 1st installment in FY2023.—APP

Govt completes first phase single curriculum

ISLAMABAD: In order to bring uniformity in curricula in particular and education in general, Single National Curriculum (SNC) now modified as National Curriculum of Pakistan is being developed through the project titled "Establishment of National Curriculum Council (NCC) Secretariat" under Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. According to the Economic Survey 2022-23, the first phase for SNC for Grade Pre-IV has been developed and textbooks have also been prepared. Moreover, the work on Teacher Training Modules (TTMs) and Assessment Framework is also developed. NCC serves as a professional, advisory and consultative national body to steer and guide the development of curriculum in close collaboration with all the federating units.—APP

Rs. 1.26 bn disbursed among 375,150 beneficiaries

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has disbursed Rs.1.26 billion among 375,150 beneficiaries under the Conditional Cash Transfer scheme of Benazir Nashonuma during July-March FY 2023. According to the Economic Survey 2022-23 released on Thursday, the programme is operationalized in 156 districts of the country through 442 Facilitation Centers. Pakistan's high rates of malnutrition (40.2% stunting, 28.9% underweight, and 17.7% wasting) are indicative of an ongoing child nutrition crisis. Such levels of malnutrition rank Pakistan as the second highest-burdened country in the region. The first 1,000 days of a child's life are a window of opportunity to lay a strong foundation for later achievements.—APP

Sectors collaborate to promote opportunities in KP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Carrying forward the vision of sustainable development of communities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and providing them with economic opportunities, Hashoo Foundation has joined hands with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Board of Investment and Trade (KP-BOIT).

In this regard, an MoU was signed between Mati Ullah Khan, CEO KP-BOIT / Secretary IC&TE KP, and Ayesha Khan, Country Director Hashoo Foundation to ensure their common goal of socio-economic development of KP. Ayesha Khan, Country Director Hashoo Foundation shared that with this partnership we aim to enable people to become resilient

through customised trainings, job placements and entrepreneurship promotion with the Hashoo ETHIC program. She said that HF is committed to carry forward the its values in synergy with KP-BOIT to facilitate skilled trainees for job placements, apprenticeships, and hands-on training thus ensuring their economic mobility, and financial independence.

Mati Ullah Khan, CEO KP-BOIT / Secretary IC&TE KP appreciated this partnership and said KP-BOIT looks forward to working with HF and effectively acting as a bridge to mobilize economic opportunities for the people of KP. Career aspiring youth will be engaged so that they can optimally utilize all resources to sustainably enhance the local economic growth.

PNA celebrates International Archives Day

ISLAMABAD: The National Archives of Pakistan is proud to announce its celebration in honor of International Archives Day. To commemorate this significant occasion, the National Archives will host a spectacular photographic exhibition, showcasing the extraordinary lives and contributions of freedom fighters and renowned personalities, with a special focus on rare documents belonging to the Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam. The exhibition, titled "Flashes of Freedom: An Exhibition of Courage and Heritage," will transport visitors through a visual journey into history, paying homage to the relentless struggle for independence and the immense impact made by exceptional individuals who shaped the destiny of Pakistan. Through a captivating collection of photographs and personal documents, this exhibition aims to provide a unique opportunity to witness the remarkable stories of courage, sacrifice, and unwavering determination. "We are delighted to celebrate International Archives Day with this exhibition, which pays tribute to the freedom fighters and illustrious individuals who played pivotal roles in shaping our nation's history," said Mr. Naveed Alauddin, Director General of the National Archives of Pakistan. —APP

Pakistan has potential to overcome challenges

ISLAMABAD: USAID Deputy Administrator Isoble Coleman on Thursday said despite all facing difficulties on economic fronts, Pakistan had tremendous potential to overcome all the challenges. Talking to the media, she said, "When I look at Pakistan's economy, yes I see high inflation, but I also see enormous opportunities to see IT sector exports grow and enhance food security. The US wants to see a stable and prosperous Pakistan." Responding to another question, she said that Pakistan needed to follow robust economic reforms agenda to come out of the current economic crisis. However, she said the private sector and other stakeholders during meetings with her expressed hope for coming out from the current economic challenges. The USAID official said she held meetings with the private sector working in various groups. She said the US and Pakistan enjoyed cordial relations for the last 75 years. To a question, Isoble Coleman said soon after her arrival in Pakistan she visited flood-affected areas and witnessed that the situation on the ground was not good enough. She said flood-affected areas of Sindh province were facing the worst situation due to damaged infrastructure.—APP

#Ab Nahi To Kab

سوچیں!

اب نہیں تو کب؟

اگر ماں کی صحت برقرار نہ رہے تو پورا گھرانہ پریشانی سے دوچار ہوتا ہے، اس لیے آئیں عہد کریں کہ ہم ماؤں کی صحت کا رکھیں گے خصوصی خیال اور متوازن غذا کی فراہمی یقینی بنائیں گے

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Briefs

Country is at stake: President PEW

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), on Thursday appreciated the decision of the federal government to close markets by 8 p.m.

The move will save billions of dollars and improve the habits of consumers, he said. "Implementation of the directive is linked with cooperation from the provinces; therefore, the provincial government should also react responsibly," he added. Even in rich countries, markets open at 9 a.m. or earlier and close at 5 p.m. or 6 p.m., while many developed countries also observe the closure of shops on Sundays and, in most cases, on Saturday as well, said Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of PEW.

In a statement issued here today, he said that there are no fixed timings for markets opening and closing in Pakistan, which is draining the country's resources at a time when it is on the brink of default. "Our country cannot afford to keep shops open for 14 to 15 hours for the additional profits of shopkeepers who would never pay their employees according to the minimum wage announced by the government," he observed.

Govt contains fiscal deficit at 3.6%

ISLAMABAD: The efforts made by the incumbent government helped in containing the fiscal deficit to 3.6 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the first three quarters of Fiscal Year 2022-23 against 3.9 percent of GDP recorded in the same period of last year. According to Pakistan Economic Survey 2022-23, launched here by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mohammad Ishaq Dar, the government was committed to reducing the fiscal deficit to ensure fiscal sustainability and macroeconomic stability. It says there were two major challenges including to support vulnerable segments of society; and the difficult task of meeting expenditures on rising interest payments.

For this purpose, the budget of the outgoing fiscal year outlined a strategy for fiscal consolidation, it says adding it entailed reducing unnecessary spending and improving tax revenues. According to the survey, the primary balance posted a surplus of Rs 503.8 billion.—APP

Pakistan expressed interest joining the BRICS: Report

The formation of a collective currency is expected to be the most prominent subject of discourse, when the leaders of five emerging nations convene in Johannesburg in August for the BRICS summit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nineteen countries, including Argentina, Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, have expressed their interest in joining the BRICS, and these aspirations will be deliberated upon at the group's upcoming summit in South Africa in August.

According to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Thursday, developing economies, in particular, are harboring deep frustration over the onerous conditions imposed upon them by Western-dominated institutions. But perhaps the most significant source of discontent lies in their skepticism toward Western norms and values, viewing them as mere cover-ups for self-serving actions by Western powers. The failure or reluctance of the West to reform global governance in a way that grants emerging economies like China greater influence has only compounded these grievances. Amidst the ever-evolving global political and economic spectrum, we are witnessing the ascent of an interesting topic that promis-

es to redefine global financial dynamics—the inception of a unified BRICS currency.

The formation of a collective currency is expected to be the most prominent subject of discourse, when the leaders of five emerging nations convene in Johannesburg in August for the BRICS summit. Casting light on the audacious ambitions of these emerging economic powers, China is leading this momentum for an alternative monetary regime. Simultaneously, other members of the group lend their unwavering support to this visionary endeavor of China to challenge the veritable grip of U.S. "dollar hegemony".

Such a stance befits China's transformative rise on the global stage, unveiling its intent to reconfigure the existing financial order. Emboldened by a shared aspiration, the BRICS nations converge upon the idea of unified currency. The proposed creation of a unified BRICS currency represents a clarion call for emancipation from the established conventions, a stride towards forging a new epoch of economic equilibrium. With the prospect of such a drastic shift on

the horizon, the global financial system braces itself for a profound reordering, as the echoes of BRICS currency resonate across the globe. While the prospect of a unified BRICS currency holds the allure of shifting power dynamics, it is not without its numerous obstacles. As the project takes shape, the nations involved must confront complex questions and unbolt the intricacies of forging a new path. The challenges, both practical and geopolitical, loom large, demanding careful deliberation and strategic maneuvering.

Since the culmination of World War II, the U.S. dollar has reigned supreme as the preeminent global currency. A staggering 80% of international transactions flow through its channels, while close to two-thirds of the currency reserves held by central banks are stored in the greenback. The U.S. capital markets, in turn, bank in their liquidity, embodies a pinnacle of financial prowess. This status quo has endowed the United States with hegemonic influence and leverage in the international arena. The far reach of the dollar has facilitated in solidifying

America's position as an economic superpower. The dollar's dominance, however, is not without consequences. While it has bestowed undeniable advantages upon the United States, it has also attracted scrutiny and generated concerns among some actors in the international community.

The immense power wielded by the dollar has led to debates surrounding the potential vulnerabilities and asymmetries inherent in such a system. Critics argue that the inordinate reliance on a single currency in global transactions exposes economies to volatility and external shocks, underscoring the need for diversification and alternatives. The push for de-dollarisation has returned with a vengeance after the Western sanction against Russia due to the Ukraine conflict. In an attempt to exert pressure on Russia, the United States imposed punitive sanctions last year, seizing an enormous \$300 billion of Russia's foreign currency reserves and excluding prominent Russian banks from the global interbank messaging system, SWIFT. However, this strategy of "weaponizing"

the dollar had an unintended outcome— it sparked the rise of alternative financial frameworks championed by Russia and China. As a consequence, there is a renewed momentum towards de-dollarization. The vision of a BRIC alliance, originally conceived by former Goldman Sachs chief economist Jim O'Neill in 2001, took its time to materialize. It wasn't until 2009, in the wake of a global financial meltdown, that the bloc convened for its inaugural summit in Yekaterinburg, Russia. Driven together by the urgency of the economic crisis, the member states pledged to revamp international financial institutions to better reflect the shifting dynamics of the global economy. This entailed devising an alternative to the IMF and the World Bank, as well as challenging the entrenched dominance of the U.S. dollar. The BRICS alliance, which turned from BRIC to BRICS after the induction of South Africa in 2010, has witnessed a wavy evolution, with its intentions occasionally questioned and its influence appearing uncertain.

Campaign for use of safety helmets launched

RAWALPINDI: The City Traffic Police (CTP) has launched a special campaign under which motorcyclists without 'safety helmets' would be checked and fined. According to City Traffic Officer, (CTO) Rawalpindi Taimoor Khan, City Traffic Police on the directives of the Deputy Inspector General of Traffic, Punjab had launched a grand operation to check the use of safety helmets by bikers. He informed that on the first day of the campaign, during the checking of motorcyclists, CTP issued 350 challan slips to those not wearing safety helmets.

He said the 35 motorcycles of several violators were impounded in different police stations. He said, all the Inspectors and Beat in charge of different circles had been directed to check those flouting the rules and not wearing safety helmets while driving motorbikes. Special checking was being conducted on main roads, particularly on Murree Road, Mall Road and Peshawar Road, he added. A special enforcement campaign against various violations of motorcyclists especially focusing on compulsory use of safety helmets had been launched, he added.—APP

Police net 10 drug peddlers, bootleggers

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers and bootleggers conducted raids in different areas and rounded up 10 accused on recovery of over five kg charras, 77 liquor bottles and 28 liters liquor, said a police spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that City, Taxila, Saddar Wah and Saddar Baroni police conducted raids in their respective jurisdictions and held Albert Masih for having 1260 grams charras, Younas with 550 grams charras, a female drug peddler named Asia Bano for possessing 150 grams charras and 40 grams Ice, Waqar for carrying 510 grams charras, Zahid on recovery of 120 grams charras, Ajmal for possessing 1150 grams charras and Imran with 1250 grams charras. Similarly, Chakri, Race Course and Civil Lines police rounded up Siddique ur Rehman for having 77 liquor bottles, Wasif on recovery of eight liters liquor, and Zahid for possessing 20 liters liquor. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway.—APP

Demanding salary increase Govt employees stage protest in front of Pak Secretariat

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Thousands of government employees from various departments staged a protest in front of the Pak Secretariat, demanding an immediate resolution to their financial woes. The protest, organized by the All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) and supported by the Federal Government College Teachers Association (FGCTA), aimed to draw attention to the deteriorating economic conditions faced by public servants in the country.

The protest took place on the eve of the federal budget announcement, as employees wanted to ensure that their demands for improved salaries and allowances were brought to the attention of the government. However, in anticipation of the demonstration, the administration had closed and locked the gates of the Secretariat early in the morning. A significant number of policemen were present to handle any potential disturbances that may have arisen during the protest. While the secretariat's employees



remained within the premises, employees from other departments across the city and provinces were unable to enter due to the locked gates. Nevertheless, both groups joined together in chanting slogans at either side of the gate, making their demands heard loud and clear.

The primary demands put forward by the protesters included a 100 percent raise in salaries to combat the adverse effects of hyperinflation on the real value of money. The employees also

demanding an increase in frozen allowances, which had remained stagnant for many years. Additionally, they called for a reduction in pay disparities among different employee categories.

Dr. Rahima Rehman, the President of FGCTA, led a large group of college teachers during the protest. Expressing the grievances of the employees, she emphasized, "The value of money has plummeted due to persistent inflation over the years, significantly reducing our purchasing power.

Employees are suffering significantly, burdened by debt. The government should step forward and act as a parent to alleviate our hardships. A 100 percent increase in salaries is a just and genuine demand that needs to be fulfilled." Dr. Jabir Hussain, the Press Secretary of FGCTA, highlighted the skyrocketing prices of fuel and essential daily items, which have disproportionately affected the working class. He pointed out the lack of increase in the conveyance allowance for employees.

Govt takes steps to achieve UHC targets

NHSP is characteristic of PforR instrument, the first in the health sector of Pakistan that employs IPF instrument with DLIs

ISLAMABAD: The government has taken various initiatives to achieve the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) targets to ensure that every single individual gets quality healthcare without facing any financial hardship.

The government has been committed towards mobilization of all available resources to achieve third sustainable development goals (SDG), according to the Economic Survey 2022-23 launched by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Ishaq Dar on Thursday. The major initiatives of the government included national and provincial Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS) for different levels of healthcare delivery, World Bank supported National Health Support Program (NHSP), and expansion of Sehat Sahulat Programme (SSP) to provide Universal Health Insurance (UHI). In order to effectively deal with any future public health emergencies such as recent COVID-19, the government has been focusing on improving disease surveillance and reporting mechanism in the country. Under the PSDP project for the development of Integrated Disease Surveillance Response System (IDSRS) with public health laboratories network and strengthening Points of Entry (PoE) is under execution National Health Support Program (NHSP) is characteristic of Program-for Results (PforR) instrument, the first in the health sector of Pakistan that employs Investment Project Financing (IPF) instrument with Disbursement Linked Indicator (DLIs).

The integral part of health sector reform agenda is the development of a national Universal Health Coverage-Benefit Package (UHC-BP), also called Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS) in collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-financed Disease Control Priorities Project, led by the Ministry of National Health Services.—APP

China provides 9,000 food packages for flood-hit people

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Continuing their support for the victims of the devastating 2022 floods in Pakistan, the people of China's Henan province generously donated 9,000 food packages to be distributed among the affected individuals in 25 districts of Balochistan.

To commemorate this gesture, a ceremony took place in Quetta, attended by Balochistan's Home Minister, Meer Zia Ullah Langau, who is also in charge

of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). Dignitaries from China participated in the event via video link, as reported by the PDMA, Gwadar Pro reported. PDMA has already initiated the distribution of the food packages, which include essentials like wheat flour, ghee, sugar, and pulses, among the affected population. On June 5, PDMA announced that it had distributed ration packages provided by China in the remote district of Kohlu. These packages were specifically given to

the impoverished, disabled, destitute, and deserving individuals in flood-hit areas such as Kunal, Jeoni, Manjhra, and others, according to the PDMA.

The food packages were donated by the people of Henan province as a heartfelt gesture to strengthen the sister provinces' relationship, which was established in 2021.

China's aid to the flood-affected people of Pakistan has surpassed \$90 million thus far, showcasing their ongoing commitment to support those in need.

Zardari withdraws petition against Park Lane

ISLAMABAD: The IHC on Thursday disposed of the petitions seeking to terminate the Park Lane reference against former president Asif Ali Zardari and others after the PPP's co-chairman withdrew the cases. A two-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri heard the case wherein Asif Zardari's lawyer told the court that Park Lane reference had been returned to the NAB.—APP

GB to expand CPEC's 'smart classrooms' concept


ISLAMABAD: Taking inspiration from the remarkable achievements of the 'smart classrooms' established in five high schools of Gilgit-Baltistan as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the regional government has decided to expand this concept to an additional 37 schools situated in the remote and distant areas of Pakistan's northern region. Furthermore, they have plans to implement this technology-driven education system in 130 more public-sector schools. A senior official from the education department of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) told Gwadar Pro that in 2018, smart classrooms were established in five high schools located in Gilgit,

Skardu, Sost, Altit, and Chilas as part of the CPEC initiative. These classrooms yielded remarkable results for the students attending those schools. However, students from other schools or those studying from home were unable to reap the benefits due to the unavailability of reliable internet services in the region. Therefore, in December 2022, the Chief Secretary GB, Mohyuddin Wani, made the decision to replicate this concept in other government schools across the region. Initially, smart classrooms were set up in 37 additional high schools, catering to both boys and girls. The concept proved to be immensely beneficial as it not only addressed the issue of teacher shortages


in government schools but also provided students from remote areas with access to world-class course content, the official explained. Muhammad Sajjad, the owner of GBeeTechive, the company responsible for installing smart classrooms in the 37 schools, shared with Gwadarpro that the basic idea was derived from CPEC's smart classrooms. However, they had to make modifications considering the constraints such as the unavailability of reliable internet and uninterrupted electricity in the remote areas. Muhammad Ayub, a Chinese language teacher who supervised the CPEC smart classroom in Government High School No. 1, Gilgit, from 2018 until a month ago, expressed that

the results were incredibly impressive.

The school experienced a sudden increase in student enrolment, along with heightened enthusiasm among the already enrolled students. In this impoverished and underserved region, the students had no prior exposure to computers. However, CPEC provided them with an opportunity to not only learn advanced digital systems but also access high-quality content in various disciplines. In a recent tweet by the Chief Secretary GB on June 6, it was announced that smart classrooms would be established in an additional 130 schools in July, thanks to a grant from the federal government.—DNA



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Blinken in Saudi Arabia

AFTER CIA Director William Burns' trip in April and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's in May, United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken is in Saudi Arabia for a third visit to the country this year by a senior official of the Joe Biden administration. In public, these visits, in Washington's words, are reconciliatory moves to repair and stabilize the US' commitment to its strategic partnership with the Middle East powerhouse as well as peace and stability in the broader region. In private, US sources have revealed a likely more imperative priority on their government's agenda – to counter China's growing influence in the area. Blinken tried to lower anticipations about Saudi Arabia and Israel normalizing relations prior to his trip, one of his most important topics in discussions with his Saudi hosts. The two sides did agree to continue discussing the matter. But just as he conceded earlier, it may not happen any time soon. But the reality is none of the goals for his trip will be easy to accomplish. After all, too much has changed. From Iran to regional security to oil prices and human rights and the US-Saudi Arabia alliance itself, Washington and Riyadh have too much fence-mending to do for it to be done in a few visits like these. Just days before Blinken's arrival, Saudi Arabia decided to further cut oil output on top of a broader OPEC+ deal to limit supply, despite Washington's opposition. And the day Blinken arrived, Iran reopened its embassy in Saudi Arabia; Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman met with visiting Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and talked about bilateral cooperation. Two days after Blinken leaves, Riyadh is reportedly going to host a major Arab-Chinese investment conference. Washington may be alarmed at the changes that have taken place in its comparative absence in the Middle East over the past years, especially after news broke that Beijing successfully brokered the normalization of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. If its ongoing fence-mending is driven purely by its own geopolitical needs, rather than genuine concerns for regional peace and stability, the US should have no illusions about the outcomes. As many have observed, as the US depends less on Saudi Arabia for oil supplies and the latter depends less on the former for protection, the longstanding "oil for security" formula is losing its appeal. With countries in the region growing increasingly conscious of regional unity and autonomy, they are at the same time taking the initiative in regional peace-making. Not to mention China has become Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner, and is proactively engaging in the regional peace process. The US has been the dominant strategic power in the Middle East for decades and remains so today, but will it be so in the coming years? Washington is trying to ensure that it will be, so that it will be able to dictate where the region's energy resources go. However, regional countries are demonstrating that they want to hold their future in their own hands.



Prince Harry: rewriting the rules of royalty

PRINCE Harry's war with the tabloid press this week became a courtroom battle, with words as weapons. His antipathy can be traced to his mother's death, which he blames on reckless journalists. As a child he was deeply affected by an aggressive, intrusive press. Newspapers reported with "surprising" detail how he broke his hand as a 14-year-old. Two years later, it was "Harry's Cocaine Ecstasy and GHB Parties". While remarking how stressful such stories were, in seven hours of testimony over two days, he remained calm. An invasive tabloid culture produced, he confessed, a "huge amount of paranoia". The first British royal to be cross-examined in a court of law since the 19th century, the prince contends that journalists working for the Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror and People hacked his voicemails and illegally used private investigators to obtain stories about his private life. The 38-year-old says that he was a victim of phone-hacking "on an industrial scale". The newspapers deny this, saying that they obtained the stories legitimately. Much of the prince's evidence is circumstantial. Could this be enough to convince a judge on the balance of probabilities that the younger son of King Charles III is right? If this were to come to pass, others on Fleet Street would worry they could be next. The central role of the media in perpetuating monarchy is well known. The symbiotic relationship means that tabloid editors end up as royal spokespeople. The prince's court appearance raises the stakes for an often infantilising news culture. In a break with royal protocol, he used his appearance to criticise the current government, which he said was, like the press, at "rock bottom". His claim that democracy is "failed" by journalists who choose to align themselves with the government, rather than holding it to account, is not far-fetched. Few people can generate the headlines that the prince, and his wife, can with such statements. He can always get a hearing in the court of public opinion. The paradox is that the couple have rewritten the rules of royalty, and not always in bad ways, by behaving as celebrities rather than dutiful public servants. One of the reasons the prince stepped back from royal duties was that he could no longer stick by the family motto: never complain, never explain. Self-effacement was part of the job description. This translates as not saying anything interesting in public. The prince has left that all behind. Where he is going, nobody can say.

The promising new diplomatic trend in the Middle East

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

The international community has already witnessed some of the positive consequences of these latest diplomatic moves. According to The Wall Street Journal, the Iranian government has agreed to stop arming the Houthis. Security in the region has also been enhanced, as tensions between Tehran and the other Gulf states appear to have eased. Following the Saudi-Iran rapprochement, the Iranian government is improving its ties with states such as Bahrain. The Gulf nations' emphasis on diplomacy and conflict mitigation, along with de-escalation, has even been seen beyond the region. For example, Saudi Arabia and the UAE last year played...

THE latest developments in the Middle East reveal a new trend: The region has been changing into a more stable and prosperous place due to the fact that diplomacy has taken a front seat. This significant shift ought to be supported by the major world powers and the wider international community. Between 2000 and 2020, the Middle East witnessed several major conflicts, increased instability and widespread insecurity. The US invasion of Iraq triggered years of domestic war in Iraq between terror groups and sectarian militias. This caused tensions between other states and non-state actors in the region. The civil war in Syria also turned many groups against each other. These events tipped the fragile balance of power between countries in the Middle East. In such a conflict-driven era, military options appeared to be the only path to winning the battles. But as the evidence of the last two decades shows, militarization, political polemics and support for proxy groups not only do not resolve tensions, but they also further destabilize the region and make it more insecure for everyone. But this trend began changing after the Gulf nations took a powerful leading role in attempting to stabilize the region and bring peace and security through diplomacy and dialogue. This diplomatic mission was firmly supported and advanced by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who prioritized bringing peace to the Middle East, enhancing regional security and bringing about a peaceful environment in which everyone could prosper. It is important to point out that diplomatic initiatives and de-escalation strategies tend to succeed when they are accompanied by strong incentives, which are offered to the involved parties. These incentives can be political and/or economic. One of the latest examples was the decision of the Gulf nations – particularly Saudi Arabia – to give diplomacy a chance when it comes to ties

with the Iranian government. Although China brokered the recent Saudi-Iran agreement, the significant role that the Kingdom played should not be disregarded. Jon Alterman, director of the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, pointed to this fact when noting: "By paying so much attention to China, Americans risk missing the most important part of this agreement: the changing regional role of Saudi Arabia. A week of smoothly integrated diplomacy not only showed Saudi Arabia to be a skillful diplomatic actor, but also a creative one. The popular image of Saudi Arabia in the United States is that of a largely passive consumer of US-provided security. With the agreement, Saudi Arabia cast off the passivity of many decades, and demonstrated it is a diplomatic force to be reckoned with." Another diplomatic move was initiated toward Syria last month. The Arab League readmitted Damascus, ending its decade-plus suspension. According to the Saudi Foreign Ministry, the objectives of the move were laid out by the Arab League's foreign ministers, who "consulted and exchanged views on the efforts made to reach a political solution to the Syrian crisis that ends its repercussions and preserves Syria's unity, security, stability, and Arab identity; returns it to its Arab surroundings, to achieve the good of its brotherly people." The international community has already witnessed some of the positive consequences of these latest diplomatic moves. According to The Wall Street Journal, the Iranian government has agreed to stop arming the Houthis. Security in the region has also been enhanced, as tensions between Tehran and the other Gulf states appear to have eased. Following the Saudi-Iran rapprochement, the Iranian government is improving its ties with states such as Bahrain. The Gulf nations' emphasis on diplomacy and

conflict mitigation, along with de-escalation, has even been seen beyond the region. For example, Saudi Arabia and the UAE last year played a major intermediary role in facilitating an exchange of prisoners between the US and Russia. In a joint statement, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its UAE counterpart announced the success of efforts that led to the release and exchange of two prisoners, one of which was US basketball star Brittney Griner. A lack of dialogue and diplomatic relations between countries can have unintended consequences, such as exacerbating mistrust and causing misunderstandings, tensions, conflict or even wars. And some diplomatic attempts may work for a period of time and then fail. For diplomatic initiatives to last and be sustainable, they should help not only those on the state level who negotiated and made the deals, but also – and more importantly – ordinary people. When ordinary citizens witness the benefits of diplomacy, de-escalation and conflict mitigation, rapprochements are more likely to be sustained and successful. This is why it is critical for the wealthier countries in the Middle East to invest in other countries in the region. The economic benefits of having good relationships and diplomatic ties with other countries, particularly neighbors, are countless. For example, stable nations can attract more investments and visitors, significantly contributing to their economic development and providing revenue for ordinary people, along with small, medium and large businesses alike. In a nutshell, diplomacy is the key to de-escalation, enhancing Middle Eastern stability and security and making the region safer and more prosperous for all nations. Economic and political incentives are the core pillars of successful, effective and sustainable diplomatic initiatives.

– Courtesy: Arab News

Analyzing the healthcare landscape in Okara

Sobia Azhar



The adequacy of healthcare professionals, particularly doctors and specialists in Okara. It follows of workforce distribution, retention, and proposes strategies to attract and retain skilled professionals. The quality of nursing staff and paramedics, this subsection underscores their critical role...

OKARA, a city nestled in the heart of the Punjab province in Pakistan, is confronted with significant challenges in its healthcare sector. This article aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the medical situation in Okara, shedding light on the existing challenges and exploring potential pathways for progress. By examining healthcare infrastructure, access to healthcare services, prevalent diseases, healthcare professionals, and initiatives for improvement, we can gain a deeper understanding of the medical landscape in Okara and identify strategies to enhance its healthcare system. The healthcare infrastructure in Okara is encompassing hospitals, primary healthcare centers, and diagnostic facilities. The availability, capacity, and quality of hospitals and medical facilities in Okara are assessing their adequacy in meeting the healthcare needs of the population such as diagnostic and Testing Facilities, Access to Healthcare Services and Geographic Accessibility. To meet the burden of communicable diseases in Okara, such as respiratory infections, vector-borne illnesses, and

waterborne diseases, this section emphasizes preventive measures and treatment strategies. There is focus on non-communicable diseases prevalent in Okara, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancer, this subsection explores the importance of prevention, early detection, and management. The unique healthcare challenge is facing by mothers and children in Okara, maternal mortality, infant mortality, immunization coverage, and access to reproductive healthcare services. There is an availability of healthcare professionals in Okara, encompassing doctors, specialists, nurses, and paramedics. It also discusses training and professional development opportunities. The adequacy of healthcare professionals, particularly doctors and specialists is in Okara. It follows of workforce distribution, retention, and proposes strategies to attract and retain skilled professionals. The quality of nursing staff and paramedics, this subsection underscores their critical role in providing comprehensive healthcare services. It emphasizes the need for their training and capacity building. Highlighting the significance of continuous training and professional development for healthcare professionals in Okara, this section explores strategies to enhance their skills, knowledge, and expertise. Various initiatives undertaken to improve the medical situation in Okara by NGOs. It explores efforts by the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), public-private partnerships, and the role of telemedicine and technology. The government's initiatives to improve the medical situation in Okara, including policies, healthcare programs, and infrastructure development plans. There is potential of public-private partnerships in enhancing healthcare services, this section explores successful collaborations and the positive impact they can have on Okara's medical landscape. One of the significant challenges in healthcare delivery in Okara is the limited availability of resources. This includes a shortage of medical equipment, medicines, and supplies, as well as inadequate funding for healthcare facilities. Limited resources hinder the ability of healthcare providers to deliver optimal care and may result in substandard treatment and compromised patient outcomes. Another challenge is the lack of awareness among the local population about healthcare practices, preventive measures, and available healthcare services. This lack of awareness can lead to delayed or neglected healthcare-seeking behavior, as individuals may not recognize the importance of early intervention or preventive care. Health education and awareness programs are essential in addressing this challenge and promoting a better understanding of healthcare practices. Inadequate healthcare infrastructure poses a significant challenge in Okara. The healthcare facilities, especially in rural areas, lack proper infrastructure, including buildings, sanitation facilities, and essential utilities such as electricity and water supply. This limits the ability to provide quality healthcare services and may hinder the implementation of advanced

medical technologies and procedures. A shortage of healthcare professionals, including doctors, specialists, nurses, and paramedics, is a critical challenge in Okara. The existing healthcare workforce is often insufficient to cater to the growing healthcare needs of the population. The shortage of skilled professionals can result in increased workload, burnout, and compromised patient care. Addressing this challenge requires strategies to attract and retain healthcare professionals, improve training programs, and provide opportunities for professional development. The efforts should be focused on improving the physical infrastructure of healthcare facilities. This entails the construction and renovation of hospitals, clinics, and primary healthcare centers to meet international standards. Additionally, investments should be made in essential utilities such as electricity, water supply, and sanitation facilities. Upgrading and expanding healthcare infrastructure will enhance the capacity to deliver quality healthcare services to the population. Improving access to healthcare services requires a multifaceted approach. Firstly, efforts should be made to ensure geographical accessibility by establishing healthcare facilities in underserved areas, particularly in rural and remote regions. Mobile healthcare units can be utilized to reach inaccessible areas. Secondly, financial barriers should be addressed by implementing health insurance schemes and expanding coverage to a wider population. This will alleviate the burden of out-of-pocket expenses and make healthcare services more affordable. Lastly, culturally sensitive approaches should be adopted to overcome social and gender-related barriers that hinder access to healthcare. This may involve community outreach programs and the involvement of community leaders in promoting healthcare-seeking behavior. Promoting health education and awareness is crucial to address the challenge of limited awareness in Okara. Comprehensive health education programs should be developed and implemented at various levels, including schools, community centers, and healthcare facilities. These programs should focus on preventive measures, early detection of diseases, healthy lifestyle choices, and the importance of regular healthcare check-ups. Information should be disseminated through various channels, including mass media, community engagement, and digital platforms. Addressing the challenges in Okara's healthcare system requires collaborative approaches involving various stakeholders. Public-private partnerships can be established to leverage the expertise and resources of both sectors. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can play a significant role in implementing healthcare initiatives and supporting underserved communities. Collaboration with academic institutions can help in training and capacity building of healthcare professionals. Additionally, involving local communities and community-based organizations in healthcare planning and decision-making processes can ensure that interven-

tions are tailored to the specific needs of the population. By strengthening healthcare infrastructure, enhancing access to healthcare services, implementing health education and awareness programs, and fostering collaborative approaches, Okara can make significant progress in improving its medical situation. These strategies, combined with sustainable funding and policy support, will contribute to a more robust and effective healthcare system that meets the needs of the local population. The medical situation in Okara, Pakistan, presents several challenges that must be addressed in order to enhance healthcare delivery and outcomes. The limited resources, encompassing medical equipment, medicines, and funding, pose significant obstacles to providing optimal care to the population. Moreover, the lack of awareness among the local population regarding healthcare practices and available services contributes to delayed or neglected healthcare-seeking behavior. Inadequate healthcare infrastructure, encompassing buildings, sanitation facilities, and utilities, further obstructs the provision of quality healthcare services. The scarcity of healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and paramedics, exacerbates the challenges faced in delivering healthcare effectively. These factors combined create a complex scenario for healthcare in Okara. To surmount these challenges and ameliorate the medical situation in Okara, several measures can be undertaken. It is crucial to strengthen the healthcare infrastructure by investing in hospitals, clinics, and primary healthcare centers, while also improving utilities and equipment. Enhancing access to healthcare services can be achieved by establishing healthcare facilities in underserved areas, implementing health insurance schemes, and addressing social and cultural barriers to healthcare access. Health education and awareness programs can play a vital role in promoting preventive care, early detection of diseases, and regular healthcare check-ups. Collaborative approaches involving partnerships between the public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, and community-based organizations can help collectively address these challenges and ensure the success of healthcare interventions. By addressing these challenges and implementing targeted strategies, Okara can strive towards improving the medical situation and the overall health and well-being of its population. Continued investment in healthcare infrastructure, increasing awareness, attracting and retaining healthcare professionals, and fostering collaboration will contribute to a more robust and effective healthcare system in Okara. At the end, I Thank to Respected Sir Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer for his valuable source of guidance. He generously shared his time and knowledge, providing me with valuable feedback and constructive criticism that has significantly improved the quality of my work. His patience, encouragement, and willingness to engage in meaningful discussions have been truly inspiring.

Briefs

Pak falls short of all economic...

FROM PAGE 01
ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Accountability, Irfan Qadir, said on Thursday that matters of superior court judges could be referred to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) if they have "criminal overtones" or an "element of corruption". "The National Accountability Ordinance has the jurisdiction and NAB can be referred to... there is no sacred cow for this law," Qadir said in a news conference in Islamabad. Qadir's remarks come at a time when Parliament has passed a law to curtail the suo motu powers of the chief justice through the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act, 2023. "There is only one category," Qadir said. "And that is our superior court judges for whom confusion was created [with regard to laws]."

11 killed in blast at funeral...

FROM PAGE 01
When the explosion rang out people fled into nearby streets, and shops closed in panic as security forces cordoned off the area.. IS claimed responsibility for Ahmad's killing on Tuesday, when a suicide bomber drove a car filled with explosives into his vehicle. The driver was also killed and six others were wounded in that attack, which also took place in Faizabad. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said on Twitter it "unequivocally condemns this and a recent spate of appalling and indiscriminate attacks that have shown a total disregard for civilian lives".

Pervez Khattak mulls...

FROM PAGE 01
Mr Khattak met former lawmakers in Islamabad. Khattak has claimed that more than 50 former members of parliamentarians (MPs) are in contact with him and would join his new political set-up, say sources. Moreover, Pervez Khattak's residence in Islamabad has become the centre of political activity as Khattak group has intensified efforts to contact more PTI bigwigs from KP and other areas.

Chelsea vow brighter future

LONDON: Chelsea's owners insist they remain committed and optimistic about the future under new manager Mauricio Pochettino after a disastrous season for the Premier League club. The consortium led by American businessman Todd Boehly and US-based Clearlake Capital has endured a torrid first year in charge, sacking managers Thomas Tuchel and Graham Potter before a miserable end to the campaign under interim boss Frank Lampard. Chelsea's 12th-place finish was their worst since 1994 despite a spend of more than £500 million (\$624 million) on new players in the new owners' first two transfer windows. Former Tottenham and Paris Saint-Germain boss Pochettino was hired last week with the task of reviving the troubled club, who won the Champions League under Tuchel just two years ago. "It's been just over a year since we completed our purchase of Chelsea," the owners said in an open letter published on Thursday. "It was and remains a privilege for us to be custodians of our wonderful club." They added: "Our promise to you was to make our fans proud. We remain completely committed to the long-term and sustainable success of our club and fulfilling that promise we made to you. "We know the huge potential we must grow to develop Chelsea FC and it is a role we take seriously. Everybody working here is relentlessly focused on driving us forward." - Agencies

Lobbying begins for PCB chairman post

"We hope and expect that we will soon be receiving Zaka Ashraf's name as one of the PM nominees for the post of PCB Chairman

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The future aspirants for the coveted post of Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman spent a busy day in the capital Wednesday, lobbying and brandishing their credentials reaching the corridors of power by using their respective connections. While Najam Sethi, the sitting chairman of the Management Committee (MC) met PCB patron-in-chief Shahbaz Sharif, former Chairman Board Zaka Ashraf met the Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ehsan Mazari at his office Wednesday evening. Zaka, a PPP stalwart is strongly backed by Chairman

Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto for the post of board chairman. In a more than an hour meeting with Zaka Ashraf, the minister assured him of full support for the post of chairman in accordance with the party policy. "We have clear instructions from our party leadership to support Zaka Ashraf credentials as his previous tenure as the PCB Chairman turned out to be a real success. He is our stalwart and a fine administrator as he has proved during his previous tenure. Even the Pakistan Super League (PSL) was his brainchild," the minister, when questioned by 'The News', said. A couple of months back and before the PCB MC's extension notification, 'The News' broke the story



ry on Zaka Ashraf's being a strong contender for the post of a permanent PCB chairman. "There is no rule and moral ethics that caretakers start contesting elections when he was only appointed to make necessary preparations for free and fair elections. Secondly, since the sports Ministry for that matter IPC Ministry falls within the PPP ambit in the coalition government, it is our right to have a PPP-backed candidate for the post. We cannot interfere in Ministries where PML (N) or JUI have their ministers and expect everyone to respect our mandate also," Mazari said.

When questioned on the purpose of Wednesday's meeting with Zaka Ashraf, he said he has been nominated by the PPP leadership as the future chairman PCB, the meeting was meant to discuss the future set-up and formalities involved. "We hope and expect that we will soon be receiving Zaka Ashraf's name as one of the PM nominees for the post of PCB Chairman. The summary we have moved recently was carrying his name with a request to the PM." Zaka Ashraf on the occasion appreciated the Minister's role in streamlining sports in the country. "I am really thankful to the minister for the role he played in broadening the

base of sports infrastructure and even making efforts for free and fair PCB elections. The Mazari family has a history of contributing for Pakistan and I am glad that Mazari is carrying forward that legacy," Zaka Ashraf told The News. Zaka Ashraf also briefed the Minister on the importance of departmental and regional cricket and the role it had played in development of cricket in the country. The PCB MC extension expires on June 21 and before that efforts are being made to conduct the Chairman elections. A meeting has already been convened on June 12 by the MC Chairman Sethi to discuss the formalities and to give the Electoral College the required final shape.

Tareen launches new political party

FROM PAGE 01

"We worked day and night to strengthen the party [PTI]. We injected zeal and fervour into the party. The facts will be disclosed in the coming days about our contributions to the PTI," he added. Tareen was disqualified for life after Supreme Court ruled in 2017 that he was found guilty in assets beyond means case. At the same presser, he said May 9 vandalism culprits should be brought to book "or else the houses of political opponents will be attacked in the future". The country, he further said, needs a new political leadership which could put it on a path of progress saying that people have lost all hope in the current political system. The country's politics needs a new direction and urged the government and the opposition to adhere to their constitutional role to strengthen the country's democracy, Tareen added. "In the coming days, more people will join our party and we will reveal our reform agenda in the coming days." At the outset of the press conference, Aleem said Pakistanis were worried about the current situation in the country. "We were concerned about the situation, hence, we decided to form a separate party."

He also thanked Tareen for uniting the leaders saying: "We believe that the solution to Pakistan's problems is to make the country stable." He further said that chaos was weakening Pakistan and that it needs to be ended. "We need to make a stable Pakistan in which parliament, judiciary and establishment are on the same page," Aleem added. "We will contribute to this struggle together under the leadership of Jahangir Tareen." Before the official announcement of the new political party, several former senior PTI leaders including Fawad Chaudhry, Imran Ismail, Ali Zaidi and others reportedly joined or intended to join the Tareen's ranks. Tareen made considerable headway in wooing PTI defectors after over 100 leaders from across the country participated in a dinner thrown by Aleem Khan at his residence in honour of Tareen and his group a day earlier.

Former PTI leaders present at the huddle, who according to sources will join the new party, include Murad Raas, Firdous Ashiq Awan, Muhammad Zaheer-ud-Din Khan Alizai, Fayyaz ul Hasan Chohan, Malik Nauman Ahmad Langrial, Chaudhry Muhammad Norez Shakoor, former secretary general Aamir Kayani, Javed Ansari, Tariq Abdullah, and Syed Ghazi Gulab Jamal. Moreover, Razaqat Gillani, ex-MPA from Chishtian, Mumtaz Mehravi and ex-MPA from Sahiwal, Meher Irshad Kathia, From Nankana Sahib, Mian Usman Ashraf and Major (ret) Khurram Rokhri also announced joining the Tareen party. It is interesting that at the time of their resignations, several of the defectors had announced in press conferences that they were quitting or "taking a break" from politics.

Latif Khosa exposes propaganda, claims Khan

FROM PAGE 01

"Brutality is being committed to women and children. This issue will be raised at international forums," he said. "Every civilised society has a transparent system for investigation. We have evidence that who was behind all the incidents [of May 9]. Action should be taken against those involved in the violent incidents on May 9," he added. "Those who protested peacefully are being arrested. There has never been a minus in democracy to date. In a democracy, it is the public that minuses someone," he stated. The PTI chairman rejected any bitterness with Shah Mehmood Qureshi. "Who said there is bitterness?" To a question about meeting with Shah Mehmood Qureshi, he said: "What would a meeting with Shah Mehmood Qureshi be like? He had been in jail for a month. Our people's houses are being destroyed, and they are being arrested."

'I'm going to Miami', Messi confirms move

LOS ANGELES: Lionel Messi on Wednesday announced that he intends to join Major League Soccer side Inter Miami as a free agent after parting ways with French champions Paris Saint Germain and snubbing a lucrative contract offer in Saudi Arabia. Messi, who played his final game for PSG over the weekend, was also linked with a return to Barcelona, but the Spanish club have had their hands tied due to LaLiga's financial fair play rules. "I made the decision that I'm going to go to Miami," Messi said in an interview with Mundo Deportivo and Sport newspapers. "I still haven't closed it 100%. I'm still missing a few things, but we decided to go ahead. If Barcelona didn't work out, I wanted to leave Europe, get out of the spotlight and think more about my family." Messi, who led Argentina to World Cup glory in Qatar in December and has earned a record seven Ballon d'Or awards, won the Ligue 1 title in his two seasons with PSG as well as the French Super Cup in 2022. "After winning the World Cup and not being able to go to Barca, it was time to go to the U.S. league to experience football in a different way and enjoy the day-to-day," Messi said. "Obviously with the same responsibility and desire to want to win and to always do things well. But with more peace of

mind." The move is also a big win for MLS, which welcomed Messi while adding that work remained to finalise the details of the formal agreement. "The (goat) is coming," MLS tweeted, with a goat animal emoji standing in for the phrase "greatest of all time". "Millions of MLS fans all over the world welcome you, Leo." Messi had wanted to go to a club where he could eventually have an ownership stake, a source with knowledge of the negotiations told Reuters this week, and his contract is expected to pave the way for him to do so after he retires.

He will also receive a cut of the revenue from Apple TV's MLS Season Pass, which broadcasts the league's games, and be able to maximize his existing sponsorship deal with Adidas. MLS earns a flat fee of around \$250 million per year from Apple until it reaches a certain threshold of subscriptions, after which point it will earn a share of the revenue from those subscriptions. Messi's move to MLS is expected to drive viewers to the Apple TV streaming platform given he is the world's most recognisable soccer player. Forward was also linked with a move to Saudi Arabian side Al-Hilal after he received a formal offer. The Gulf country has been looking to bring the game's biggest players to its league and was successful in convincing Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo to join Al Nassr soon after the World Cup. French striker Karim Benzema joined Al Itihad this week. - Agencies



PHF named 45 players for training camp

LAHORE: The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has called 45 players for a training camp ahead of Asian Champions Trophy, scheduled from August 3 to 12 in Chennai, India. Chairman of national selection committee, Olympian Kaleemullah finalised the probables and sent the list to PHF president Khalid Sajjad Khokhar. After the president's approval, the names of probables were announced today. The camp will start on June 12 in Lahore. Probables for training camp Goalkeepers: Abdullah Shafique, Akmal Hussain, Ali Raza, Mohammad Faizan Janjua, Waqar, Abdullah Sheikh, Bilal Khan Defenders: Arbaz Ahmed, Mohammad Sufiyan Khan, Mohammad Abdullah, Aqeel Ahmed, Mohammad Bilal Aslam, Saad Shafique Midfielders: Junaid Manzoor, Ihtisham Aslam, Mohammad Murtaza Yaqoob, Mohammad Baqir, Arbaz Ayaz, Mohammad Nadeem Khan, Mohammad Zain, Mohammad Amad Forwards: Rana Abdul Waheed, Mohammad Umar Bhutta, Afraz, Abdul Hannan Shahid, Roman, Mohammad Shahzaib Khan, Usama Bashir, Mohammad Imran, Arshad Liaquat, Abdul Wahab, Abdur Rehman, Zikriya Hayat, Ali Murtaza, Basharat Ali, Abdul Qayyum, Bilal Akram, Mohammad Adnan, Rana Sohail Riyaz, Waqar Ali, Shoaib Khan, Abdul Wajid, Taimur Javed Khan, Syed Shehbaz Haider, Mohammad Arsalan Asian Champions Trophy is a big event as it serves as an opportunity to prepare the team for the Asian Games 2023 in China, which are also the qualifying rounds for securing a berth in the 2024 Paris Olympics. India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Japan, China and South Korea will participate in the 7th edition of the Asian Champions Trophy. Pakistan and India have won the event twice and once jointly in 2018. - Agencies

PCB requests ECB to reschedule ILT20

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has requested Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) to reschedule International League T20 (ILT20) due to its clash with Pakistan Super League (PSL) schedule next year. According to the reports, the PSL's window has been kept between February 12 to March 10 next year. However, ILT20 is likely to be played from January 13 to February 12. PCB wants to accommodate national players for ILT20, hence rescheduling was requested by the high-ups. Earlier, reports said that PCB's current set-up is interested in sending players to the cash-rich league. Pakistani players including Babar Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Mohammad Rizwan were offered a whopping USD 900,000 alongside a three-year captaincy contract before the inaugural edition of ILT20. However, then-PCB chairman Ramiz Raja wasn't interested in sending the players to ILT20. Instead, he asked compensation from the ECB in exchange for releasing their players. Apart from Babar, Shaheen, and Rizwan, Fakhar Zaman and Mohammad Hasnain were also in demand for the league. Later on, wicketkeeper batter Azam Khan was picked up by Desert Vipers but he didn't get No-Objection Certificate (NOC). ILT20 was launched last year and claimed to be one of the richest leagues after the Indian Premier League (IPL). The league has a huge investment from India. Dubai Capitals, Abu Dhabi Knight Riders, MI Emirates, Sharjah Warriors Gulf Giants, and Desert Vipers competed in the inaugural edition of the ILT20. Giants, under the leadership of Colin Munro, beat Vipers in the final to lift trophy on Feb 12 this year. - DNA

Siraj strikes as India fight back in WTC final

LONDON: Mohammed Siraj led an India fight back as they finally saw the back of Australia centurions Travis Head and Steve Smith on Thursday's second day of the World Test Championship final at the Oval. India were facing a potentially huge Australian first-innings total with Smith (121) and Head (163) at the crease. But their pacemen struck as Australia lost four wickets for 41 runs, including Head and Smith, to slip from 361-3 to 402-7. India eventually dismissed Australia for 469 after lunch, fast bowler Siraj leading the way with 4-108 from 28.3 overs. Smith had batted in relatively sedate fashion to reach 95 not out off 227 balls overnight while Head blazed his way to an unbeaten 146 off just 156 balls. But Smith, who relishes English conditions, wasted little time in reaching his hundred, taking just two more balls in Thursday's opening over to

reach the landmark by clipping successive Siraj deliveries for legside fours. - Smith's seventh test hundred in England - The 34-year-old Smith joined compatriot Steve Waugh in having scored seven Test hundreds in England. Among non-England batsman, only Australia great Don Bradman, with 11 centuries, has scored more. It was also Smith's third Test century at The Oval and 31st in total, leaving him 12th on the all-time list. Head extended his first overseas Test century to 150 with a superbly cut four off a Mohammed Shami ball that was only fractionally short. But the left-hander continued to look uncomfortable against short-pitched bowling and a short ball proved his undoing when he tried to whip Siraj legside and gloved a simple catch to wicketkeeper Srikanth Bharat. Head's dismissal ended an impressive

stand of 285 runs with Smith after they had come together with Australia in trouble at 76-3 having lost the toss. Soon afterwards there was another wicket for an India-dominated crowd to celebrate at a sun-drenched Oval when Cameron Green (six) edged a drive off Shami, bowling from wide of the crease, and Shubman Gill held a sharp chance at second slip. Shardul Thakur then captured the prized wicket of Smith, who inside-edged an outswinger into his stumps, with India suddenly into Australia's tail. Mitchell Starc did not last long, run out by substitute fielder Axar Patel for five. But wicketkeeper Alex Carey kept India at bay with 48 before he fell to Ravindra Jadeja, the lone spinner in the attack after India omitted Ravichandran Ashwin, the world's top-ranked Test bowler, to play an extra seamer. - APP

Man City, Inter target UCL glory

ISTANBUL: Manchester City are hoping to get their hands on the Champions League trophy at last, and complete a historic treble, when Pep Guardiola's team face outsiders Inter Milan in Saturday's final in Istanbul. City have been building towards winning Europe's elite club competition since the Abu Dhabi-backed takeover of 2008 which transformed them and helped reshape the sport on the continent. They came agonisingly close to Champions League glory in 2021, losing narrowly to Chelsea in the final, before being denied in last year's semi-finals by a remarkable Real Madrid comeback. Having exacted revenge on Madrid, the holders, in this season's last four with a 5-1 aggregate triumph, they are now expected to complete the job at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium. "We have all been working for this for a long time," City goalkeeper

Ederson, at the club since 2017, said this week. "The whole team have seen a lot of victories but also defeats as well. The players who have been here for five or six years who have seen these sorts of defeats, we have learnt from them so that helps us to grow as a team." A victory for City will see them complete the treble after they claimed a fifth Premier League title in six seasons and then lifted the FA Cup last weekend, beating Manchester United 2-1 in the final. United were the last English club to achieve the treble, in 1999. Ilkay Gundogan was City's goal hero in the FA Cup final, as Erling Haaland drew a rare blank, but the Norwegian has scored 52 times for his club this season. His goals appear to have taken City to another level, and Guardiola seems poised to finally win a third Champions League, 12 years

after claiming a second in three seasons with Barcelona. "If we want to make a definitive step as a big club, we must win in Europe," Guardiola, who joined City in 2016, told UEFA.com. "We have to win the Champions (League). That's something you can't avoid." Simone Inzaghi's Inter may have something to say about that, however, and

perhaps being the underdog will suit the Nerazzurri. They are one of Europe's grand old names, having won the European Cup twice in the 1960s. This is their sixth final altogether, and first since Jose Mourinho's team triumphed in 2010, completing a treble of their own. No Italian club has lifted the trophy since.

Money talks more than ever in football, and City topped this year's Deloitte Football Money League with revenue of over 700 million euros (\$749m). Their revenue was more than double that of Inter, a club swimming in enormous debts. Nevertheless, their proud history means Inter will be in Saturday's final to win it. "We are a big club and we have a lot of expectation," said goalkeeper Andre Onana. "When Inter gets into a final they have to win. We're all big players, we know how to play finals." Inter, who finished third in Serie A and won the Coppa Italia, could have had a harder run to this stage, beating Porto, Benfica and neighbours AC Milan in the knockout rounds. However, they did qualify from a difficult group ahead of Barcelona. Curiously, City's first ever appearance in the old European Cup came

against Istanbul club Fenerbahce in the 1968/69 first round, and ended in a 2-1 defeat. That team, featuring Francis Lee, Colin Bell and Mike Summerbee, was City's last great side before Abu Dhabi's arrival. City did not return to Europe's top table until 2011, by which time former Inter coach Roberto Mancini was at the helm. The Ataturk Olympic Stadium has hosted a Champions League final between English and Italian clubs before. This year's match will need to go a long way to equal the drama of 2005, when Rafa Benitez's Liverpool recovered from a three-goal half-time deficit to draw 3-3 with Carlo Ancelotti's Milan before winning on penalties. The 72,000-seat stadium, located around 25 kilometres west of central Istanbul, now finally gets the chance to stage the showpiece game again. - Agencies



Briefs

UK to host 1st global summit on AI safety

LONDON: The UK will host the first global summit on AI safety later this year as "the world grapples with the challenges and opportunities presented by the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence," the British prime minister announced on Thursday.

The summit, which will bring together key countries, leading tech companies, and researchers to evaluate and monitor the most significant risks from AI, will be held in the UK this autumn, according to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office.

"AI has an incredible potential to transform our lives for the better. But we need to make sure it is developed and used in a way that is safe and secure," Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said in the statement.

The prime minister's statement was released during his visit to Washington DC, where he will meet with US President Joe Biden later on Thursday at the White House to discuss the opportunities and challenges of emerging technology. "Time and time again throughout history we have invented paradigm-shifting new technologies and we have harnessed them for the good of humanity. That is what we must do again," Sunak noted. "This is going to take a global effort," he underlined, mentioning his country's willingness to lead global efforts on the issue.—DNA

Poland's new law breaches 'democratic process'

BRUSSELS: The recently adopted Polish law on probing Russian influence "unduly interferes with the democratic process," the European Commission said on Thursday in a letter sent to the Polish government. With the letter, the EU executive body officially launched an infringement procedure against Poland for violating EU law by its new bill.

According to the European Commission, the new law "unduly interferes with the democratic process" because it risks creating "grave reputational damage for candidates in elections" and can "limit the effectiveness of the political rights of persons elected."

The bill also "violates the principles of legality and non-retroactivity" because it sanctions people for activities carried out before the law entered into force, the EU institutions argued.—APP

1,500% surge: India's crude imports from Russia

LONDON: India's crude oil imports from Russia hit a new record of over 2.15 million barrels per day in May, a staggering 1,500% rise from March 2022 levels, according to data compiled by Turkish news agency.

Figures from commodity data firm Kpler show India's Russian crude oil imports stood at 67,000 barrels per day in January 2022, a month before the war began. The numbers started rising in March, reaching 136,000 barrels a day that month, and climbing above 1.12 million barrels per day by June. By the time an EU embargo and a G-7 price cap on Russian crude took effect on Dec. 5, India was buying 1.2 million barrels daily. The figure hit a new all-time high of 2.15 million barrels a day this May, making India the largest buyer of Russian crude oil. Russia has also become India's largest crude oil supplier, accounting for about 45% of its total imports. While India's Russian crude imports have soared 1,500% since March 2022, they have also grown 79% since the EU embargo kicked in.

Overall, as Western buyers backed off, Russia has shifted over 90% of its crude oil exports to India and China after the war. Cheap Russian crude gave India a competitive edge and the chance to ramp up supply of refined oil products to Europe, raising questions about whether the EU is circumventing the sanctions on Russian oil.—APP

Kazakh president calls for reforming UN Security Council

The two-day international event aims to find solutions to the current global challenges and find ways to promote peace, prevent conflict, and organize the global order for the benefit of the whole world

NEWS DESK

ASTANA: Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Thursday called for reforming the UN Security Council to give more voice to "average states."

Speaking at the Astana International Forum in Kazakhstan's capital Astana, Tokayev said the UN remains the only universal global organization that unites all countries, but it would not be able to meet the challenges without comprehensive reform of the Security Council.

According to the Kazakh president, the current global instability is rooted "deep in our past."

Tokayev said that the "dividing forces" are not "exclusively" geopolitical but also economic. "Economic policy itself is openly used as a weapon. This confrontation includes sanctions and trade wars, targeted debt policy, restriction of access or isolation from sources of financing, as well as control over investments," he stressed. Together these factors are



gradually undermining the foundation on which global peace and prosperity of recent decades were based — free trade, global investment, innovation and fair competition, he said. Efforts to reverse negative trends are becoming increasingly difficult due to widespread misinformation, Tokayev lamented. The growing mistrust pushes governments to increase spending on defense, which in turn "pushing the global world order to a critical point," he said. "For the first time in half a

century, we are faced with the prospect of using nuclear weapons," the Kazakh president said. President Tokayev shared the stage with heads of state and government and executives of international organizations, including the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sadyr Japarov, and Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Kristalina Georgieva. Richard Quest, distinguished British journalist and CNN International

news anchor, moderated the plenary discussion. In her remarks, Georgieva stressed the importance of human contribution to world development, urging the young population to realize their potential. "We know that there are a lot of opportunities. For example, in the private sector. The most valuable asset of the region are people! Some 60% of people are under 30. Central Asia can demonstrate to the rest of the world that working together is possible," she said.

Georgieva emphasized the need for multilateralism and cooperation, saying that "if we master the political will, we can do it." United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres addressed the AIF participants via a video address, calling on the world community to act promptly "to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reform an unfair financial architecture and address common threats at a series of important summits starting with the SDG Summit."

President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Sadyr Japarov, spoke to moderator Richard Quest about regional integration, stating that "Central Asian countries need to act together as a region through solidarity and coordinated policies." Chairwoman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Željka Cvijanović, Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Aripov, Director-General of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Audrey Azoulay, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana and Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Helga Schmid also attended the flagship session of the AIF. The two-day international event aims to find solutions to the current global challenges and find ways to promote peace, prevent conflict, and organize the global order for the benefit of the whole world.

Some NATO members could deploy troops to Ukraine

LONDON: Certain individual NATO member states might consider deploying troops to Ukraine if other members of the alliance in general do not offer significant security assurances to Kyiv, especially at its summit this July, according to a former NATO chief. "If NATO cannot agree on a clear path forward for Ukraine, there is a clear possibility that some countries individually might take action," former Secretary General Anders Rasmussen, now serving as an official adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, told Britain's The Guardian in a piece published Wednesday. Paying visits to various European capitals and Washington ahead of the Vilnius, Lithuania summit, Rasmussen has been stressing the importance of providing Ukraine with written security assurances, said the daily, including such areas as intelligence sharing, training support, ammunition production, and ongoing arms supplies. Rasmussen said while these guarantees are crucial, they should not overshadow Ukraine's primary focus on its path towards NATO membership.—APP

EU countries on cusp of deal to revamp migration rules

MONITORING DESK

BRUSSELS: After years of divisive and bitter debates, the European Union is nearing a major deal to establish a unified migration policy. Ministers of home affairs from across the European Union are meeting today in Luxembourg to decide if they vote or reject a new set of rules to collectively manage the reception and relocation of asylum seekers. "If there should be an agreement, it is today," said Maria Malmer Stenegerd, Sweden's minister of migration, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the EU Council and acts as a broker in the discussions. "I think we are, in my opinion, so close that there is no acceptable reason not to walk the last mile." "It will never be easier," she went on. "I have full respect for the fact that all countries

have their unique situation at home and it's a very tough debate nationally." Her French counterpart, Gérald Darmanin, echoed the optimism and urged countries to move past their differences and seek common ground. "This is a very difficult text and France is coming with a spirit of compromise," Darmanin told reporters on Thursday. "Even if we still have some work to do this morning, there's everything we need to do to get things moving." "What we want is to turn the tide on migration," he added. Spain's Fernando Grande-Marlaska was equally buoyant, describing the meeting as an "important day" with a "momentous decision within reach." "We have been talking a lot for the last five years, six years, so I think that today is the moment to find that agreement," Grande-Marlaska said.

Austria has most asylum-seeking children

GENEVA: Austria has the highest proportion of asylum-seeking children in the EU, according to the Fundamental Rights Report published Thursday by the Vienna-based EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA). The number of unaccompanied children seeking asylum more than doubled in Austria in 2022, with 13,275 applications, according to the report. This puts Austria at the top of the EU, followed by Germany (7,275) and the Netherlands (4,205). In 2021, 5,605 children had applied for asylum in Austria. Across the EU, the number of asylum applications from children has also risen sharply — from 25,130 applications in 2021 to 39,520 in 2022, according to the report. In Austria, the number of asylum-seeking children was also higher in the previous year than in 2015, the so-called migration crisis year, according to the report. In 2015, 8,275 applications were registered in Austria. The rising number of asylum applications has led to declining reception capacities in Austria in the second half of 2022, according to the report. There was a shortage of about 5,000 shelters in Austria. The report mentions that the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has criticized the use of tents to house asylum seekers in very cold conditions. Further, the report said the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, also found deficiencies in the system of guardianship for unaccompanied children after a visit to Austria.—APP

Ukrainian victory remains priority: NATO chief

ATHENS: NATO's top official on Wednesday reiterated that the alliance's priority is to assist Ukraine in its war with Russia. "We need to strengthen Ukraine's position on the battlefield so that the outcome of this war ensures that Ukraine prevails as a sovereign independent nation and that (Russian) President (Vladimir) Putin does not win," Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said during a live podcast he joined with US Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith. Stoltenberg focused specifically on Ukraine's expected counteroffensive to reclaim Russia-controlled areas within its borders and said, without revealing operational details, that the fighting had intensified. "What we do know is that the Ukrainians have now capabilities, weapons, ammunition, and also training, provided by NATO Allies and partners," he said, noting that Kyiv had the capabilities it needs to liberate more land. In regard to the escalating tensions in Kosovo, Stoltenberg emphasized the significance of alliance and cooperation between NATO and the EU. "For instance, in Kosovo we have KFOR troops (NATO peacekeepers) supporting and facilitating the diplomatic efforts of the European Union," he said, adding that the alliance had recently boosted its presence with Turkish troops in the country. Smith, for her part, argued that the alliance needed to address the two priority threats: Russia and terrorism. "But what was really important about that (NATO's) Strategic Concept was that it included mention of China for the first time," she added.—DNA

Pence demands F-16s for Kiev

KIEV: The unprecedented military assistance that the US government and its NATO allies have sent to Ukraine to fight Russia was not expedient enough, former Vice President Mike Pence, who seeks the Republican nomination for president in 2024, believes. "President Joe Biden has been slow in providing military resources to Ukraine," the politician stated during a CNN town hall on Wednesday. "We are [still] waiting on F-16s to be transferred from somewhere." The US-manufactured fighter jets are one of the few weapon systems requested by Kiev that the incumbent Democratic administration has not agreed to provide. The Pentagon cited logistical problems and the long time required to train Ukrainian pilots. "I believe the United States of America needs to continue to provide the courageous soldiers in Ukraine with the resources they need to repel... the Russian invasion and restore their territorial integrity," Pence declared during an that followed his official campaign announcement. Moscow considers the hostilities in Ukraine to be part of a US-led proxy war against Russia. It said it was left with no option but to act militarily after in late 2021 NATO refused to address Russia's security concerns and pushed on with a progressively deeper involvement within Ukraine. The GOP is split on the aid issue. Some party heavyweights believe that the billions of dollars sent to Ukraine could have been spent to address domestic issues such as border security.—DNA

No Western troops will enter Ukraine

KIEV: Kiev has refuted suggestions by former NATO Secretary-General Anders Rasmussen that Poland could lead a "coalition of the willing" and send troops into Ukraine. The Ukrainian government has never asked for such a step, its top diplomat claimed. "Until the armed conflict on Ukrainian territory is over, foreign nations will not send their troops into our nation. Moreover, we are not requesting that. We say: 'give us weapons,'" Foreign Minister Dmitry Kuleba said in an interview on Thursday, commenting on Rasmussen's remarks. The former NATO chief suggested that an intervention scenario could materialize, should the US-led military bloc fail to offer formal security guarantees to Ukraine during a summit in Vilnius, Lithuania next month. Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky has reportedly threatened to boycott the event unless his nation is given a concrete roadmap to membership. Kuleba expressed certainty that Ukraine will become part of NATO, insisting that Kiev would then deploy military units to other allies to defend them. The aspiration to join the bloc is enshrined in the Ukrainian constitution. Moscow has described the hostilities in Ukraine as a conflict against the entire Western military organization, which has been providing weapons, training, intelligence and other forms of assistance to Kiev. Russian officials have also accused NATO members of facilitating Ukraine's recruitment of mercenaries, and have suggested that military personnel from donor states may even be operating some of the weapons sent to the country.—APP



OSLO: Pakistan Ambassador to Norway, Sadia Altaf Qazi received DG National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA) VADM(R) Ahmed Saeed HI(M) in the embassy to discuss prospects of Pakistan-Norway cooperation in shipping sector.—DNA

Germany pushes for citizenship reforms

BERLIN: Germany is forging ahead with plans to reform its outdated citizenship law, a move rooted in the country's drive to attract qualified workers to address a worsening dearth of skilled labor. The changes also aim to enhance integration and participation of immigrants, who remain largely underrepresented in the political sphere. The figures on Germany's labor crunch present a damning picture. Just over 43% of German companies reported a shortage of skilled workers this January, inching down from an all-time high of nearly 50% last July, according to data from Ifo Institute, one of the country's largest think-tanks. The issue affects companies across the service, industry and construction sectors, with health care, childcare, engineering, and IT being particular areas of concern. When the government put forward a plan in March, Labor Minister Hubertus Heil said securing the "skilled labor base is one of Germany's greatest economic tasks for the next few decades." Chancellor Olaf Scholz's

coalition government is aiming to finalize the draft law before the summer holidays, after which it will be submitted for parliamentary approval. Canan Bayram, an experienced lawmaker from the co-ruling Greens Party, told Anadolu that the planned reform would simplify the process and enable multiple citizenship for immigrants. "I'm hopeful we will soon get a very good legislation, and we will make life easier for immigrants here," she said. "I worked as a lawyer, and I know that the current law, with restrictions on dual citizenship, creates many problems for immigrants, either here or in their country of origin." According to official statistics, over 9 million foreign citizens have lived and worked long enough in the country to apply for German citizenship, but remain reluctant to do so, most of them put off by tedious bureaucratic procedures or strict regulations. Bayram underlined that Germany's existing citizenship law is unfair toward particular immigrant groups, especially Turkish

citizens. Germany has a 3 million-strong Turkish community, many of whom are children or grandchildren of workers who immigrated in the 1960s. Around 1.5 million of them still do not have German citizenship due to discriminatory legislation. Turkish citizens have been unwilling to apply as they do not want to give up their nationality, said Bayram. "Multiple citizenship has been possible for any person coming from European Union countries, for Americans, but denied for many others. We're saying that this law, this practice is wrong," she said. "In fact, this law was long known to be legislation aimed at Turks. That was a law discriminating against Turkish citizens. Now we're putting an end to this, we're changing it." Many immigrant groups, including Turkish citizens, often find themselves in a disadvantaged situation in the German labor market, and while dealing with bureaucratic matters. They are also underrepresented in political life, as many

of them cannot vote in local or national elections. Mikolaj Ciechanowicz, a senior expert on immigration, said reforming the law would definitely address these problems by enhancing integration and political participation. "This is an overdue reform that has been expected and hoped for by many people for many years," he told MEDIA. After the reform, many immigrants would likely apply for German citizenship, said Ciechanowicz. "Maybe it's better to use the term participation. This would enhance participation, it's also about political participation, and it is a point that is now being addressed with this reform," he said. Ciechanowicz, who is the manager of non-profit organization Deutschlandstiftung Integration, said acquiring German citizenship strengthens the feeling of belonging to the country. "If the majority of society sends a signal that they are welcome, that we are all natural citizens here, and we want to and can live together on this basis, then

a big step forward would be taken. And that is why I support, and Deutschlandstiftung Integration supports, these steps," he said. In each year over the past decade, the number of immigrants becoming citizens in Germany has been under 170,000. In 2022, a total of 168,545 foreigners acquired German citizenship. Ciechanowicz said Germany is currently facing a significant shortage of skilled workers, and reforming citizenship and immigration legislation is also important to address this major problem. "I believe that Germany has an existential interest in enabling immigration, as much and as targeted as possible, and this step towards modern immigration law and modern naturalization law is part of this package," he said. "Everyone knows about the problem of a shortage of skilled workers in Germany, and that we can only maintain our prosperity and our future with targeted and controlled immigration."—Agencis

Rohingya demand repatriation, protest ration cut

DHAKA: Thousands of persecuted Rohingya in Bangladesh held a rally to push for early repatriation to Myanmar. They raised banners which said: "Don't Stop Repatriation. We Want to Go Back Home. We Don't Want to Remain Refugees Anymore." Muhammad Ayaz, 35, who lives at the Teknaf refugee camp in the country's southeastern coast, told Anadolu: "We are the citizens of Myanmar. We urge the global community to hear our appeal of returning home with proper citizenship rights and protection in Myanmar after repatriation." He also said that the food support cut by the UN has pushed them to starvation. Women and children are the worst victims of the food ration cut, he added. He urged the global community, including the UN, to immediately ensure the necessary food support and other basic needs as the refugees in Bangladesh completely depend on aid for their survival.—APP

Briefs

Bilawal's Iraq visit yields major achievements

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Iraq have reiterated their shared desire to continue to maintain regular high-level contacts and expand cooperation in all fields including trade and investment in traditional and non-traditional sectors.

According to joint statement issued after conclusion of the three-day visit of Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to Iraq, the Foreign Minister held wide-ranging interactions with Iraqi leadership including President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Parliament, Interior Minister, Head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, President Al-Hikmet Party and Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Bashir Al-Najafi. During these interactions, the two sides agreed to expand bilateral cooperation in diverse areas including Agriculture, Water Management, inclusion of Pakistan in the Iraqi Development Corridor, establishing sister port cities relations between Basra and Karachi, defence production, health, textile, pharmaceutical and supporting Iraq's efforts in their reconstruction and rehabilitation. During the visit, the Iraqi authorities conveyed their full support for the establishment of a Pakistani Consulate in Najaf, while Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari made a historic announcement of opening up of a pilgrimage center in Karbala.

The two sides also witnessed the signing of the MoUs on Visa Abolition for the holders of diplomatic and official passports, on Cultural Cooperation and on Cooperation between the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Pakistan and Iraq Chamber of Commerce. During the visit, the Foreign Minister along with his Iraqi counterpart witnessed historic ceremony for laying the foundation stone of Pakistan Embassy Complex in Baghdad.

Court adjourns hearing on Asad Umar, Ali Nawaz pleas

ISLAMABAD: A local court on Thursday adjourned the hearing till June 26 on a petition seeking to remove Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) clauses from a case registered against PTI leader Asad Umar, Ali Nawaz Awan, and others.

ATC Judge Raja Jawad Abbas Hassan heard the case filed by Asad Umar and Ali Nawaz Awan. The court also granted a one-time exemption from hearing to the two petitioners at the request of their lawyers. The court instructed the lawyers to give arguments at next hearing regarding the removal of ATA clauses from the FIR. The further hearing of the case was then adjourned.

It may be mentioned here that Sangani Police Station had registered FIR against nine people including Asad Umar, Ali Nawaz Awan, Malik Aamer Mehmood, Sajid Mehmood, Jamsheed Mehmood and others under a section of ATA pertaining to the protest after the decision of ECP against Imran Khan in Toshakhana case. -APP

Ali Bukhari, Shoab new PTI Core Committee members

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PTI expended its core committee, as Barrister Ali Bukhari and Shoab Shaheen were added to it as its members. PTI Secretary General Umar Ayub Khan issued a notification about the appointment of the Barrister Ali Bukhari and Shoab Shaheen as members of the PTI Core Committee on Thursday. Barrister Ali Bukhari and Shoab Shaheen have been made part of the core committee with the approval of Chairman Imran Khan.

US, GCC vow cooperation on international issues

GCC diplomats meet in Riyadh with key regional issues on the agenda

NEWS DESK

RIYADH: The GCC Council members and the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken issued a joint statement on achieving political and economic stability in the region after a meeting in Riyadh on Thursday. The committee highlighted the importance and promise of infrastructure projects to promote regional integration and interconnectivity, contributing to regional stability and prosperity. Navigational rights and freedoms were also discussed and the security of vessels traveling through the region was highlighted. The ministers reiterated the importance of confronting terrorism and violent extremism worldwide and welcomed the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS ministerial meeting, held in Riyadh. Saudi foreign minister Faisal bin Farhan said the Kingdom would chair the focus group on African affairs to confront Daesh. Bin Farhan encouraged the establishment of a focus group to combat the organization of ISIS Khorsasan in Afghanistan and limit the spread of

the terrorist organization in the area. Secretary Blinken reaffirmed the United States' commitment to the security of the region, recognizing the region's vital role in the global economy and international trade.

The GCC Council and the United States confirmed their commitment to freedom of navigation and maritime security in the region and to counter illegal actions at sea that might threaten shipping lanes, international trade and oil installations in the GCC. The two sides reaffirmed their support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and renewed their call for Iran to fully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

On Yemen the committee expressed their appreciation for the efforts of Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the UN. They also expressed their hope to see a Yemeni political process resulting in a lasting end to the conflict.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the committee pointed towards reaching a lasting state of peace in the Middle East in accordance with the two-state solution and the 1967 borders and emphasized Jordan's role in this situation. The committee reaffirmed its commitment to reaching a political solution to the Syrian crisis that is in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 issued in 2015, the ministers welcomed Arab efforts to resolve the crisis.

For Iraq, the ministers discussed the importance of civilian-led efforts, including economic reforms to ensure Iraq's people benefitted from the country's natural resources, stabilization to ensure communities can recover from conflict and Daesh violence, measures to prevent the financing of terrorism, and efforts to counter Daesh narratives, which complement ongoing work to enhance the Government of Iraq's counterterrorism capabilities.

On the war in Ukraine, the ministers reaffirmed the importance of respecting the principle of sovereignty and international law, including the UN Charter and the obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

Support for refugees and displaced people affected by the war in Ukraine was also emphasized. Another round of the GCC-US

integrated air and missile defense and maritime security working groups was agreed to be held later this year. The US remains committed to its Gulf Arab partners, at a time of rapidly shifting regional alliances, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had told Gulf diplomats in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday. Blinken spoke at a GCC ministerial meeting in Riyadh after talks with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan.

"The United States is in this region to say we remain deeply invested in partnering with all of you," Blinken said at the opening of the US-GCC ministerial meeting on strategic partnership. "The GCC is the core of our vision for a Middle East that is more stable, more secure, more prosperous." Key regional issues were on the agenda for Wednesday's meeting, including conflicts in Yemen, Sudan, Syria and the Palestinian territories. "Together, we are working to achieve a ... resolution to the conflict in Yemen," and to "continue to counter Iran's destabilizing behavior," including seizures of tankers in international waters, Blinken told the GCC ministers.

PM to chair special cabinet meeting today

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A special meeting of the federal cabinet in connection with the upcoming budget will be held on Friday. The federal cabinet meeting will be chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and the budget for 2023-24 will be approved. The budget meeting will be held tomorrow at 11 am. On the other side, the federal government is likely to increase salaries and pensions of the employees as budget for the next fiscal year is set to be unveiled on June 9.

Sources said the finance bill had proposed 30 per cent increase in salaries of employees from Grade 1 to 16 and 20pc for Grade 17 and above. They said 15 to 20pc increase had been proposed in pensions of retired government employees, adding that Rs780 billion had been proposed for pensions. Sources said the federal cabinet would give final approval for increase in salaries and pensions on (June 9).

Australia to introduce national ban on Nazi symbols

DNA

SYDNEY: Australia has announced it will introduce a national ban on Nazi symbols, in an effort to crack down on far-right groups. Public displays of the swastika or SS symbols will be punishable by up to a year in prison. However the new laws will not cover the Nazi salute. Nazi symbols are already banned in many states, but this means they won't be allowed anywhere, the government says.

The move comes amid a resurgence in far-right activity. In March, a group of neo-Nazis appeared at a rally in Melbourne hosted by Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull - who is known for her opposition to transgender rights - and performed Nazi salutes on the steps of the Victorian Parliament. Ms Keen-Minshull denied any connection to the group, but the event triggered a political backlash with calls for greater efforts to tackle displays of Nazi regalia. "There is no place in Australia for symbols that glorify the horrors of the Holocaust," Attorney General Mark Dreyfus said, announcing the new legislation.

Taiwan activates air defence as China jet enter zone

TAIPEI: Taiwan activated its defence systems on Thursday after reporting 37 Chinese military aircraft flying into the island's air defence zone, some of which then flew into the western Pacific, in Beijing's latest mass air incursion. China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, has over the past three years regularly flown its air force into the skies near the island, though not into Taiwan's territorial air space.

Taiwan's defence ministry said that from 5 a.m. (2100 GMT on Wednesday) it had detected 37 Chinese air force planes, including J-11 and J-16 fighters as well as nuclear-capable H-6 bombers, flying into the southwestern corner of its air defence identification zone, or ADIZ. The ADIZ is a broader area Taiwan monitors and patrols to give its forces more time to respond to threats. Some of the Chinese aircraft flew to Taiwan's southeast and crossed into the western Pacific to perform "air surveillance and long distance navigation training", the ministry said in a statement. - Agencies

France stabbing: 4 children wounded in knife attack

WEB DESK

ANNECY: A Syrian national wounded four young children and an adult in a knife attack in a park in the southeastern French town of Annecy on Thursday, police said, and some of the victims were in critical condition. A police spokesman said the attacker was a 31-year old Syrian asylum seeker who carried Swedish identity documents and a Swedish driving license. He entered France legally and was not known to security agencies. His motives were unclear, an investigative source said, adding that anti-terrorism authorities had not been asked to lead the investigation at this stage. French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, who travelled to Annecy with Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne, said on Twitter that the attacker had been arrested. BFM TV showed footage of several policemen overpowering an individual in the park. Two children and one adult were in life-threatening condition, while two children were less seriously hurt, police said. The wounded children were aged between 22 months and 3 years, they said. One of the wounded children was a British national, British foreign minister James Cleverly said.



LAHORE: Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) members warmly welcomed to the Sikh pilgrims at Wagah as a large number of Sikh Yatees arrived in Pakistan through Wagha Border to participate in religious rituals on the occasion of Joor Mela. - APP

Pakistan grants US consular access to Khadija Shah

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Interior has granted the US Embassy in Islamabad consular access to PTI leader Khadija Shah, who is in custody in connection with May 9 vandalism. The American embassy submitted an application with the ministry requesting access to Khadija Shah. The ministry received the request through Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Interior Ministry has directed Punjab Home Department to extend full cooperation to the US Consulate in Lahore in this regard.

It may be mentioned here that the US State Department has called on Pakistan

on Tuesday last to grant consular access to fashion designer and PTI leader Khadija Shah who has dual citizenship.

The State Department said its diplomats have not had access to Khadija Shah, the founder of the luxury fashion brand Elan, who was produced before an anti-terrorism court following protests over the May 9 arrest of ousted prime minister Imran Khan.

"We have asked Pakistani officials for consular access to her," State Department spokesman Vedant Patel told reporters in Washington, confirming Ms Shah's dual nationality. "Believe Ms Shah is dual national and so we continue to engage directly with the government of Pakistan," the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson added that the US always urges all foreign governments to allow and follow consular notifications for procedures when American citizens are detained. He indicated that more US citizens have been arrested.

"Whenever a US citizen is arrested overseas, we stand ready to provide all appropriate assistance and we expect Pakistani authorities to respect all fair-trial guarantees owed to these detainees," Patel said. However, he added that he would have to 'check' about the exact number of US citizens under custody in Pakistan after the incidents of May 9. "Obviously these circumstances, depending on privacy considerations, we'll have to circle back on that," Vedant said.

Putin's visit to strengthen ties with Pakistan: Russian envoy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Russian ambassador to Pakistan, Danila Ganich stated that both countries reached an agreement on a free payment structure for barter trade, eliminating the need for US dollars in bilateral transactions. Ganich while talking to a private television channel Thursday emphasized that no third party would determine their efforts and that Russia and Pakistan would be allies and partners amidst geopolitical changes. President Vladimir Putin, he announced, is set to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit, further accelerating the process of regional cooperation. The ambassador also expressed hope that Russian oil would provide relief to Pakistan. He said that being a member of the Paris Club they had rescheduled Pakistan's loans. Pakistan is an independent sovereign state and in this regard, it is to take a political decision concerning the construction of the Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline and Russia's Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline. The ambassador refrained from commenting on the internal politics of Pakistan, emphasizing his commitment to upholding the best relations with the country regardless of which party rules. Ganich urged Pakistan and India to resolve the Kashmir conflict at the negotiating table rather than involve any third party. He suggested that Russia could play a role in resolving the core issue if both sides requested it.

Shelling hits flood-hit region after Zelensky visit

KHERSON: Ukraine and Russia accused each other of deadly shelling in the flood-hit Kherson region on Thursday even as rescuers raced to save people stranded after the destruction of a Russian-held dam unleashed a torrent of water. Shortly after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited the southern city of Kherson, Kyiv said a Russian strike there injured eight people. Moscow-installed authorities, who hold the other bank of the now flood-swollen Dni-pro River, said two evacuees were killed by Ukrainian shelling. The

Dni-pro has steadily risen downstream from the breached Kakhovka dam, forcing thousands to flee their homes, flooding dozens of villages and parts of the regional capital Kherson and sparking fears of a humanitarian disaster. The death toll from flooding reached six as the Moscow-backed administration of Nova Kakhovka, where the dam is located, said five people had died and 41 were hospitalised. Ukrainian police said one man had died in a riverside village in the neighbouring Mykolaiv region, also affected by rising water levels. Zelensky posted videos showing him meeting officials in the Kherson and Mykolaiv regions, as well as viewing evacuation efforts from beside the floodwater in Kherson and visiting survivors in a hospital. "I thank the rescuers and volunteers! I thank everyone involved in this work!" he wrote. AFP journalists heard artillery firing in Kherson on Thursday, striking the area used for rescue boats bringing in people from flooded areas. "Due to targeted strikes by the occupiers during evacuations in the city, a civilian died. Two more people were wounded," Kherson's prosecutor's office said. - Agencies

Flights cancelled as wildfires burn across Canada

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau blamed climate change. "These fires are affecting everyday routines, lives and livelihoods, and our air quality," Trudeau said on Twitter. Some of the worst fires have sprung up in the eastern province of Quebec, and more than 11,000 people had to evacuate their homes in Quebec

OTTAWA: Forest fires continued to burn across Canada on Thursday as the country endured its worst-ever start to wildfire season, forcing thousands of people from their homes and sending a smoky haze billowing across U.S. cities. Flights have been grounded and delayed at some major US airports due to wildfire smoke causing low visibility. About 3.8 million hectares (9.4 million acres) have already burned, roughly 15 times the 10-year average, according to federal Minister of Emergency Preparedness Bill Blair. Warm, dry conditions were expected to persist in the months ahead. Although wildfires are common in

Canada, it is unusual for blazes to be burning simultaneously in the east and west, stretching firefighting resources and forcing the Canadian government to send in the military to help. Hundreds of U.S. firefighters arrived in Canada to help and more were on their way. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau blamed climate change. "These fires are affecting everyday routines, lives and livelihoods, and our air quality," Trudeau said on Twitter. Some of the worst fires have sprung up in the eastern province of Quebec, and more than 11,000 people had to evacuate their homes in Quebec. Wildfire season started unseasonably early in Alberta last month

and burned a record area, and Nova Scotia continues to battle its largest-ever blaze. In parts of the Pacific province of British Columbia, which is facing the second-biggest wildfire on record, temperatures were forecast to hit 33 Celsius (91 Fahrenheit) on Thursday, before thunderstorms and heavy rains arrive on Friday. Rob Schweitzer, executive director of BC Wildfire, said lightning strikes could spark more blazes in tinder-dry forests and the outcome would depend on how much precipitation comes with the storms. "When you get 150 or 200 strikes in one day from lightning coming through the province, it's impossible to have enough resources to

suppress them all," he said. Wildfires have eased in Alberta, the center of Canada's oil and gas industry, but more than 3,000 people remain under evacuation orders and heat warnings are in effect in the south of the province. Smoke-forecasting website BlueSky Canada showed wildfire smoke spreading across much of the country on Thursday. The smoke is set to intensify in Ottawa, Toronto, Cleveland and Pittsburgh and remain thick in other cities along the east coast of the United States, including New York. Countries around the world are sending hundreds of trained specialists to help put out the wildfires. The US is sending 600

firefighters, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said during a daily briefing yesterday. They include a crew making a 1,000-mile (1,600km) trek from Alaska to Alberta.

EU nations including France, Portugal and Spain have offered 280 firefighters, and "more will come", according to European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen. Australia and New Zealand sent 200 firefighters last month, with more from those countries also on the way. And 200 firefighters from South Africa landed in Canada last weekend - and held an impromptu singalong in Edmonton airport before heading off to tackle the fires. - Agencies