



# Islamabad POST

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Detailed News On Page-08

**China tells India to 'stay calm' in border map row**

Detailed News On Page-08



**Novak Djokovic ramps up US Open bid**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Electricity bills

# Relief expected in 'next 48 hours'

Prime Minister says bills has to be paid; warns miscreants against any anti state activities

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar on Thursday said the negotiations were being held with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to discuss relief for public on electricity bills as protests against inflated power tariff continue to widen. The government would announce relief for public in next 48 hours, assured the premier while talking to senior journalists in the federal capital. He said various other options were also under consideration to extend the relief to masses. He said the issue of electricity bills was being oversteered, adding that people had to pay bills as Pakistan had signed an agreement with the global lender. PM Kakar said people were torching the electricity bill on one side and power theft had become a serious issue on the other hand. Talking about elections in the country, he said the government would respect the decision of the Supreme Court on polls date. He also defended latest amendments to laws of the National Database Registration Authority (Nadra) regarding appointments of its chairman, saying the changes were made keeping in view the terrorism and other sensitive matters. He ruled out any crisis in the country but acknowledged that situation is tough and "we will manage to survive". He said it was a pre-planned act to spread uncertainty and disappointment among masses. Earlier in the day, traders announced joining the protests against inflated electricity bills, which have been continuing across the country for the last six days as the caretaker government excused itself on the grounds that the IMF conditions don't allow any relief. People in Azad Kashmir's capital Muzaffarabad observed a wheel-jam strike, while traders in Peshawar pulled shutters of their shops down and tailors in Bagh came out on the streets carrying their sewing machines. Business centres, petrol pumps and private educational institutions remained closed in Muzaffarabad due to the strike. The angry citizens, already reeling under high inflation, set electricity bills on fire while demanding the government to withdraw extra taxes added to the bills.



## Traders observe shutter down strike accross Pak

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Traders across the country joined protesters Thursday to demonstrate against massive hike in electricity tariffs as the caretaker government expressed helplessness to provide relief owing to strict International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions. The incensed citizens, already reeling under runaway inflation, have been protesting across the country for the last six days, setting electricity bills on fire while demanding the government to withdraw the hike in the tariffs. Various traders' associations in different cities including Rahim Yar Khan, Sukkur, Bhawalpur, Quetta, Vehari, Peshawar and others are observing shutter-down strike to force the government to provide relief in the bills. Taking notice of the protest, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar had assured the masses that the government will explore options to provide relief but so far the authorities have failed to come up with an immediate remedy. While showing helplessness to slash taxes on inflated electricity bills, caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamsad Akhtar told senators on Wednesday that the fiscal position was so tied up under the IMF agreement that there was not a penny in coffers for giving any subsidy. In her maiden appearance in the upper house of the parliament, she presented a very bleak economic and financial outlook while giving a briefing to the Senate Standing Committee on Finance. However, parliamentarians vehemently criticised the economic policies by narrating miseries of the poorer consumers in the wake of highly inflated bills.

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## INDEPENDENCE DAY OF KYRGYZ REPUBLIC



ISLAMABAD: Chief guest Jamal Shah Federal Minister for Culture, Ambassador of Kyrgyz Republic Ulanbek Totuiaev and others cutting cake to celebrate the 32nd Anniversary of the Independence of Kyrgyzstan. - DNA

## FBR freezes 13 PIA bank accounts

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Thursday froze 13 bank accounts of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) due to non-payment of Rs8 billion in Federal Excise Duty (FED). According to FBR officials, the national carrier's bank accounts associated with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) would also be frozen. "A decision has been made to register a first information report (FIR) against PIA officials for not submitting the FED," said the FBR officials. "The FED was not submitted"

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## PKR freefall continues unabated

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani rupee extended its losses on Thursday, sliding another Rs1.09 against the US dollar in the interbank market. According to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data, the dollar closed at Rs305.54 against yesterday's close of Rs304.45. The rupee lost 0.4 per cent as Pakistan eased import restrictions to abide by conditions set under a \$3 billion bailout package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and on political instability. Since the induction of the caretaker set-up, the rupee has shed 4.6pc.

# SC dismisses ECP petition seeking review

Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial has expressed concern over the closure of Rs490 million corruption cases by the NAB

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) plea seeking review of the apex court's verdict on holding Punjab Assembly elections on May 14. "The court will intervene whenever there is a Constitutional violation," Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial remarked during the hearing of the case. A three-member bench, headed by CJP Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar, observed that the top election organising body did not have Constitutional right to extend

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## ECP vows to speed up delimitation

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday reiterated its resolve to speed up the delimitation of constituencies and announce a schedule for general elections thereafter, allaying fears that polls could be delayed indefinitely to extend the interim government's tenure. The electoral watchdog gave

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### Xi likely to skip G20 summit

DNA

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping is likely to skip a summit of G20 leaders in India next week, sources familiar with the matter in India and China told Reuters. Two Indian officials, one diplomat based in China and one official working for the government of another G20 country said Premier Li Qiang is expected to represent Beijing at the Sept. 9-10 meeting in New Delhi. Spokespersons for the Indian and Chinese foreign ministries did not respond to requests for comment. Li is also likely to attend a summit of East and Southeast Asian leaders in Jakarta, Indonesia on Sept 5-7, according to a report from Kyodo.

### Country heading towards unrest

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said on Thursday the country was heading towards civil disobedience. Using microblogging website X, the senior politician said no one knew when the elections would be held. Rashid said the 13 parties which had plunged the country into a sea of economic problems were now trying to be a part of the protest by shedding crocodile tears.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Australia Neil Hawkins in a meeting with the caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. The Australian High Commissioner greeted FM Jilani for assuming the charge of the foreign minister. - DNA

# Safe environment for UN Peacekeepers a must: FM

The FM maintained that addressing challenges, including language barriers and administrative obstacles, should also be one of our top priorities

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on Thursday said ensuring a safe and secure environment for United Nations peacekeepers who tirelessly maintain peace around the globe should be the foremost priority. Addressing the 2023 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Preparatory Meeting on "Safety and Security of Peacekeepers" here, the foreign minister said Pakistan's participation in UN peacekeeping, spanning over six decades, was a tangible manifestation of its contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, in line with the UN Charter. He said legal frameworks and adequate accountability mechanisms were paramount for peacekeeper safety. "We must stand firm in holding accountable the perpetrators - individuals and groups that harm or threaten UN peacekeepers." Medical care for peacekeepers is also essential, he said adding "Our peacekeepers deserve the best care including mental health support. Standardized training, first aid provisions, and enhanced medical facilities are crucial for that".



## 'Downgrading IIOJK statehood is temporary'

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI: The Indian government on Thursday told the Supreme Court that the present status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) as a union territory is "temporary" and the government is ready to hold the legislative elections in the occupied region "anytime now." This week, the top court which is hearing petitions challenging legislation that stripped IIOJK of its statehood and special status in 2019, asked the government to indicate if there is a time frame to restore the occupied region's status as a full-fledged state. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta had said he would make a statement on Thursday. "... my instructions are that I am unable to give an exact time period right now for complete

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## Holidays in Gilgit-Baltistan

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## US Consul General calls on Governor Punjab

LAHORE: Newly-appointed United States (US) Consul General in Lahore Kristin K. Hawkins called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman and discussed education, trade, climate change and Jaranwala incident during a meeting at the Governor's House here on Thursday. The Punjab Governor welcomed the incumbent Consul General Ms. Hawkins to Lahore and expressed his best wishes for her successful tenure. US Consulate Lahore's Political and Economic Chief Nickolas Katsakis was also present during the meeting. Muhammad Balighur Rehman hailed the role of former Consul General William K. Makaneole in the passage of legislation to declare Punjab and California as sister states. He stressed the need for enhancing cooperation in the trade, agriculture and climate sectors between both the countries. He also condemned the incidents of torching of houses of the Christian community and desecration of the holy Quran in Jaranwala. He said that Muslims embraced their Christian brethren after the incident and opened doors of their houses and mosques for them. He said the Punjab government restored the damaged churches and handed them over in a better condition than before, adding the government gave compensation to the effectees to repair their homes. —APP

## Health Department issues dengue alert

PESHAWAR: In the wake of a fall in temperature, the Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Thursday issued an alert for sensitive districts of the province with regard to possible spread of dengue fever. A statistical figure said that numbers of dengue cases in Peshawar were 22 while in Mardan 13 such cases were reported, followed by Swabi with 9 cases and Chitral Lower with 7 cases. In Bajaur the number of dengue fever cases was 6, in Kohat 4, Nowshera 3, Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber, Abbottabad, and Lower Dir each 2 cases and Battagram, Hangu, Tor Ghar, Mansehra, Lakki Marwat and Bannu each with one case. According to a report, with regard to dengue fever, most of the cases were being reported from Peshawar and Mardan districts. —APP

# COMSTECH, Indonesia launch fellowships in virology

The ceremony was attended by H.E. Amb. Mr. Adam Tugio, the Ambassadors of OIC member states and the representatives of UNPAD, UNAIR and BioFarma

MUHAMMAD ADIL

ISLAMABAD: Ten fellowships have been awarded to scholars from eight OIC member states: Egypt, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Uganda, Iran, Jordan and Kazakhstan. In the field of virology and vaccine technology. The fellowships award ceremony was held on Thursday, at Ministry of Health, in Jakarta, Indonesia. These fellowships have been awarded under the COMSTECH Fellowships Program for Research and Advanced Training in Virology and Vaccine Technologies. The program is a collaborative effort of Ministry of Health,

and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia, Bio-Farma, Universitas Padjadjaran (UNPAD) and Universitas Airlangga (UNAIR), and the Embassy of Indonesia in Pakistan. The award ceremony was addressed by H. E. Ambassador, Askar Mussinov, Assistant Secretary General (S&T) OIC, Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Director General for Multilateral Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, Director General for Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices, Ministry of Health, Republic of Indonesia. The Assistant Secretary General OIC for science and technology Ambassador Askar Mussinov

appreciated the initiative. He appreciated the leadership of COMSTECH for coining such programs of fellowships for the S&T capacity building of OIC member states. He assured support to COMSTECH programs. The Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary welcomed the participants of the ceremony and said that I am happy to see this program up and running for two consecutive years. He informed that this year, we have participants from eight OIC member states, who will benefit from the excellence of Republic of Indonesia in the fields of virology and vaccine technology. He said that these participants are early

career scientists, virologists and public health researchers. Prof. Choudhary said that this program is a collaborative effort of Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of Indonesia, Bio-Farma, UNPAD and UNAIR, and the Embassy of Indonesia in Pakistan. Prof. Choudhary extended profound gratitude to MoH, Indonesia, for organizing this major initiative in key areas of viral disease surveillance and epidemic/pandemic preparedness, and to H.E. Adam Tugio, the Ambassador of Indonesia in Pakistan for his tireless efforts to make this program possible. Prof. Choudhary said that the purpose of these fellowships is

to enhance the research and development capacity of promising scientists, especially those at the beginning of their research career, helping them to foster linkages for further collaboration in the field of virology and vaccine technology. He said that this program provides OIC Members states an opportunity to work collaboratively in the field of virology and vaccine technologies to reach their national health related SDGs goals collectively and individually. The ceremony was attended by H.E. Amb. Mr. Adam Tugio, the Ambassadors of OIC member states and the representatives of UNPAD, UNAIR and BioFarma.

## Home secretary for gender sensitive training of jail staff

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Secretary for Home Syed Aijaz Ali Shah on Thursday directed the Inspector General of Prisons to put up a proposal for gender-sensitive training to jail staff in the training curriculum in all Sindh prisons to ensure better conduct with the women prisoners in jails. "There is an exigent need to make genders sensitive training available in all the prisons as the females go through more serious issues including physical, mental, and above-all family issues including children born in jails", he said during a visit to the women's jail in central prison Karachi.

## ICCI calls for focusing on agriculture sector

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that despite being an agricultural country, Pakistan has to import agricultural commodities worth over USD 5 billion per annum. However, by focusing on better development of the agriculture sector, Pakistan can increase the exports of the agricultural sector by over USD 10 billion per annum, which will help revive the economy. He said that the Fruits & Vegetable Market of Islamabad is located at an important place as it supplies fruits & vegetables to twin cities, KPK, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and many other areas. Therefore, this market should be de-

veloped on modern lines that would help promote business activities and exports of this sector. He said this while talking to a delegation of the Market Committee of I-11/4 Fruits and Vegetables Market that visited ICCI led by its Chairman Sajid Abbasi. Safdar Siddique Vice Chairman, Naeem Azam Khan, Agha Siraj Durrani, Ch. Ilyas, Sohail Chaudhry and others were in the delegation. Ahsan Bakhtawari briefed the Chairman Market Committee about the key issues of the traders of Fruits & Vegetable Market, I-11/4, Islamabad and stressed for their early solution. Speaking on the occasion, Sajid Abbasi, Chairman, Market Committee, Fruits & Vegetables Market, I-11/4, Islamabad said that he is a public representa-

and the Market Committee will be used in the best interests of the people and the traders. He said that all possible efforts would be made for the better development of the fruits & vegetable market. He said that encroachment of sabzi mandi would be removed soon and the sanitation system would also be further improved. He said that providing fruits and vegetables and other commodities to the citizens of Islamabad at reasonable prices is a key priority for him. He said that for the convenience of the citizens, he will try to arrange fruit, vegetable and meat shops in every market of the Capital on the pattern of flower shops in collaboration with ICCI. He said that he will solve the problems of the sabzi mandi in collaboration with ICCI.

Khalid Iqbal Malik, Group Leader ICCI stressed that the auction platform in the sabzi mandi needs better development, sanitation system needs further improvement and cold storages need reduced power tariffs and hoped that the Market Committee would address these issues. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that Sajid Abbasi is a public representative and hoped that he would deliver up to the expectations of the people. He said that the Market Committee should take ICCI in the loop on important matters of traders to resolve issues with mutual consensus. Masood Tabish, Khalid Chaudhry, Amir Hamza, Ch. Sohail, Baber Chaudhry and others were also present on the occasion.

## Margalla college hold English Poetry recitation competition



STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The sunlit morning of August 31 witnessed a symphony of eloquence and emotion as the esteemed Chief Guest, Ms. Noor Anna Malik, Principal Consultant at SEED was given. Accompanying her, were the distinguished panel of judges: Ms. Ghazala Ishtiaq, Ms. Birjees Anwar, and Mr. Muhammad Rashid Saleem, each possessing a wealth of literary discernment. The report of the previous competition was presented, underscoring the legacy of excellence fostered by the institution. The stage then transitioned to the formal competition, where participants eloquently

expressed their selected verses along with multimedia presentations, captivating the audience with the charm of their recitations. The Chief Guest, Ms. Noor Anna Malik, illuminated the gathering with her address, weaving the tapestry of poetry's relevance to modern times. Her insights resonated deeply, underlining the timeless connection between words and human experience. Prizes were awarded cumulatively in pairs for recitation and the accompanying multimedia presentation. The results revealed Hareem Mohsin and Aynoor Talat as the winning pair, Mahnoor Aftab and Dua Zahra as runners up, and the pair comprising Naval Kamran and Muskan Mehtab as the third-place holders.

## First shipment from China via Pakistan landed in Afghanistan

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: First shipment from China to Afghanistan via Sust border under the Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) Conventional cross bordered at Torkham border to Afghanistan. This historic event marked a major development in the realm of transit trade and will go a long way in enhancing the transit trade activities on Pak Afghan border

as well as strengthening economic ties with China, Afghanistan and Central Asian republics. Importantly, the TIR facility is being regularly availed by the traders for import, export and transit to Central Asian States and Russia via Torkham. The ceremony of cross border of the consignment was held at Torkham Zero Point. It was attended by the officers of Directorate of Transit Trade, Peshawar, Collectates of Customs, Appraisal and Enforcement, Peshawar, Incharge Pak Army, Incharge NLC, representative of Afghan Gumrak, office holders of Pak Afghan Chamber of Commerce and local traders. The Director, Transit Trade, Peshawar, Mr. Arbab Qaisar Hamid, under lined the significant developments and major initiatives undertaken by Pakistan customs in the recent past to enhance, facilitate and streamline the Transit and Bilateral Trade.

## ISSI launches new book

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "India was feverishly indulged in unprecedented increase in its fissile material stockpile and acquisition of all kinds of weapon systems and technologies, posing great risk to this region and beyond," stated Lieutenant General (Retd) Sarfraz Sattar, former Director General, Strategic Plans Division (SPD), in his keynote address at the launch of a book titled Emerging Threats and Shifting Doctrines: Challenges to Strategic Stability in South Asia, edited by Malik Qasim Musfata. The event was hosted by the Arms Control & Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI). Speakers on the occasion included: Major General (Retd) Ausaf Ali, Advisor, SPD; Malik Qasim Musfata, Director ACDC-ISSI; Ms. Ghazala Yasmin Jalil, Research Fellow ACDC-ISSI; Dr. Aqeel Akhtar, ACDA, SPD; Dr. Ahmad Khan, ACDA, SPD; Ms. Aamna Rafiq, Research Associate, ACDC-ISSI; Air Commodore (Retd) Khalid Banuri, former DG, ACDA, SPD; Dr. Adil Sultan, Dean, FASS, Air University, Islamabad. Lt. Gen. (R) Sarfraz Sattar said that this book was a second breath of fresh air coming out of Pakistan's strategic community this year after Ambassador Zamir Akram's book on Pakistan's Nuclear Deterrence and Diplomacy.



ISLAMABAD: European Union Ambassador Dr. Riina Kionka called on Federal Minister for Law and Justice Ahmad Irfan Aslam. —DNA

## Ambassador Jemal Beker receives national peace award

DNA NEWS AGENCY

ISLAMABAD: The National Peace and Justice Council (NPJC) honored Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula, with the esteemed National Peace Award. This recognition was bestowed upon Ambassador Jemal Beker for his dedicated efforts in laying foundation and fostering closer ties between the two brotherly nations. The award ceremony took place during the National Peace Seminar which held at the Islamabad Club. NPJC Chairman Mian Abdul Waheed presented the award to Ambassador Jemal Beker, lauding his commitment to strengthening the bilateral relations between

the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and Pakistan by bridging the gap and bringing people to people, institutions, and business communities closer. He said, indeed Am-

bassador Jemal Beker play a crucial role in advancing fraternity and brotherhood between the two heirs of civilizations. Addressing the ceremony, H.E. Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula

extended gratitude to NPJC for acknowledging his endeavors to enhance friendship and partnership between the two countries. He emphasized peace as shared values between

Ethiopia and Pakistan while highlighting their significant role as major contributors to the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission to ensure peace, stability and prosperity across the globe. Both nations, he noted, played pivotal roles in preserving global peace and security, with their people working hand in hand to save lives worldwide. The ambassador took a moment to pay tribute to Pakistan's brave sacrifices in the pursuit of international peace and security, stating that the nation's unwavering commitment to this cause would forever be remembered. He also noted Ethiopia's own contributions, with a considerable number of Ethiopian soldiers sacrificing their lives for international peace and security under blue helmet of UN peacekeeping missions in different countries.



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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### August

Aug 01/China  
Armed Forces Day

Aug 01/Switzerland  
National Day

Aug 01/Lebanon  
Armed Forces Day

Aug 01 /Syria  
Armed Forces Day

Aug 4/Bukino Faso  
National Day

Aug 09 /Singapore

Aug 15/DPR Korea  
Independence Day

Aug 15/India  
Independence Day

Aug 15/Poland  
Armed Forces Day

Aug 17 /Indonesia  
Independence Day

Aug 24/Ukraine  
Independence Day

Aug 25/Uruguay  
Independence Day

Aug 30 /Turkey  
Armed Forces Day

Aug 31/Kyrgyz  
Republic  
Independence Day

Aug 31/Malaysia  
National Day

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Marriott.....051- 2826121  
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



### Emergency

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



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PIA Flight Info.....114  
PIA Cargo.....9280979  
Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
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: Ambassador of Turkiye Mehmet Pacaci and embassy staff posing for a picture on the occasion of the Victory Day celebrations.—DNA

## PIDE report unravels state of engineering industry

A staggering 83% of surveyed firms expressed that the unavailability of electricity creates hurdles in achieving their production goals

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has unveiled a groundbreaking report shedding light on the challenges faced by the engineering industry in Pakistan. The comprehensive study, conducted by a team of esteemed researchers led by Dr Nadeem ul Haque, and including Dr Usman Qadir, Dr Abid Rehman, and Mr Mohammad Ar-mughan, delves into the realities faced by engineering firms and provides valuable insights into the state of the industry. The report is based on an extensive survey of 328 engineering firms from across the Golden Triangle of Lahore, Gujrat, and Gujranwala. It reveals compelling statistics that underscore the critical concerns affecting the industry's growth and productivity.

One of the foremost issues outlined in the report is the severe

impact of electricity unavailability on daily production targets. A staggering 83% of surveyed firms expressed that the unavailability of electricity creates hurdles in achieving their production goals, resulting in a detrimental gap between demand and supply for the industry. Moreover, 78% of these firms reported that electricity scarcity hinders their operational efficiency, a crucial factor where economies of scale need to be achieved. Load-shedding and voltage fluctuations further exacerbate the challenges by increasing the risk of machinery malfunctions and damage, affecting 68% of the firms. The financial strain of arranging alternate supply, amounting to PKR 71,000 per unit annually, adds to the burden on firms' operations, impacting 72% of the surveyed companies.

The report underscores the significance of addressing these challenges. It recommends that engineering firms adopt international and national qual-

ity standard certifications to maintain quality standards, a move endorsed by 89% of the surveyed firms. Moreover, the government is urged to focus on enhancing the electricity supply in industrial areas, with smaller firms exploring backup power options to ensure uninterrupted operations, a sentiment echoed by 76% of the respondents. An interesting finding of the report is the lack of an online presence among Pakistani engineering enterprises. With a surprising 63% of surveyed firms lacking any online presence, there is an urgent need for businesses to establish themselves online to reach a wider customer base and enhance engagement. The study also reveals that while a significant portion of firms (63%) show no intent to expand in the coming years, a proactive minority plans to invest in advanced technology, machinery, land, and skilled labor to boost their business prospects. Another critical issue highlight-

ed in the report is the lack of access to credit for the majority of firms. The majority of firms lack adequate collateral to secure loans due to their small size. This reduces their marketability to commercial lenders and has resulted in only 5% of surveyed companies having loans or lines of credit. Limited access to finance this hampers the industry's growth potential. To address this, the report suggests that financial institutions introduce special credit schemes for small and medium-sized enterprises to encourage business expansion and development.

The research also explores the complex landscape of international trade for Pakistani engineering firms, revealing obstacles related to tax implications, product quality, branding, and pricing. Most notably, a substantial 84% of firms source their raw materials domestically, emphasizing a need to diversify suppliers

and engage with international markets.

The report emphasizes the importance of a thriving relationship between businesses and the government for economic prosperity. However, political instability and unfavorable economic policies have led to a lack of trust and dissatisfaction among business owners, impacting productivity and profit margins. The release of this comprehensive report marks a significant contribution to the understanding of Pakistan's engineering industry. The recommendations provided serve as a roadmap for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and businesses to collaborate and drive positive change in the sector. By addressing the identified challenges, Pakistan can position itself for a brighter industrial future. Note: For more information and to access the full report, please visit the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics website:

## ICSF inaugurates 'Shared Future Bazaar' in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: China-Pakistan think tanks, the Institute for a Community with Shared Future (ICSF), and the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future (PRCCSF) inaugurated the 'Shared Future Bazaar' in Islamabad.

Designed to foster connections through commodities with China and Central Asia, this unique market will not only retail imported goods from China and Central Asian countries in Pakistan but also provide a platform to export Pakistani products

to China and the Central Asian regions. The Chinese delegation from ICSF joined members of PRCCSF at the inauguration site. Speaking to Gwadar Pro, Executive Director of PRCCSF, Khalid Taimur Akram, mentioned that this multibillion project will allocate space specifically for Chinese and Central Asian investors to showcase their products. He emphasized that the objective of the Shared Future Market is not just to introduce Chinese products but also to bridge landlocked Central

Asian countries with China and Pakistan. "30% of the work is already completed, and the remaining construction is anticipated to conclude within the next two years. Three floors of one of Islamabad's largest malls will be reserved for this trade corridor," he added. Prof. Li Huailiang, Dean of ICSF at the Communication University of China (CUC), remarked during the ceremony that the project would leverage the CPEC route. He drew parallels between the historical significance of trading through

the ancient Silk Road and the modern transformation of that route into the CPEC. "The Shared Future Market will bolster bilateral ties between the Chinese and Pakistani communities," he noted. A related event, the Chinese delegation from CUC also inaugurated the 'Social Media Cell' at the PRCCSF headquarters in Islamabad. This media cell will disseminate Chinese news in English, aiming to address and rectify misconceptions about CPEC and Chinese investments in Pakistan.—APP

## Alvi for imparting quality training to civil servants

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has underscored the need for imparting quality training to civil servants and equipping them with essential skills such as problem-solving, fast decision-making, and efficient management of resources to ensure good governance and improve service delivery. He said that bureaucracy must be more responsive to people's needs and focus on solving problems being faced by the country in different sectors, particularly health, education, and community services. The President expressed these views while chairing the 23rd meeting of the Board of Governors (BOG) of the National School of Public Policy (NSPP), at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The meeting was attended by the Secretary Establishment Division, Mr Inamullah Khan Dharejo, Rector NSPP, Dr Ijaz Munir, and other members of the BOG. During the meeting, the President urged the need for making collaborative efforts with different national and international organizations and educational institutions to conduct research.—APP

## DC reviews doorstep services

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon on Thursday chaired a review meeting which was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner (East) Usman Ashraf, Assistant Commissioners, Facilitation Centre staff, and other stakeholders. The staff of the facilitation centre gave a briefing on their performance, highlighting the challenges and the steps taken to address the issues. The meeting also discussed ways to further improve the services of the facilitation centre, including the development of a mobile application. The Additional Deputy Commissioner East issued necessary instructions to the staff of the Facilitation Centre to develop a mobile application for the convenience of citizens. The app would allow citizens to easily access a variety of services, such as birth and death registration, property tax payment, and issuance of domicile certificates. The Deputy Commissioner also directed the staff to improve the efficiency of the Facilitation Centre by streamlining the processes and reducing the waiting time for citizens. He stressed the importance of providing quality services to the citizens of Islamabad and making their lives easier. The meeting was a productive session that resulted in a number of positive outcomes. The development of a mobile application will make it easier for citizens to access doorstep services, and the streamlining of processes will reduce the waiting time for citizens.

The Deputy Commissioner's directives are a clear indication of his commitment to providing quality services to the citizens of Islamabad to further improve the delivery of doorstep services in Islamabad.—APP

## Health minister calls on President Alvi



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, Dr Nadeem ul Haque, on Thursday met President Dr Arif Alvi here on Thursday and discussed

matters relating to national health in the country.

The president emphasized special focus on issues of breast cancer, growing population and mental health in the country. President Alvi and the minister discussed the proposals regarding nutrition, rehabilitation of dif-

ferently abled persons, and mental and physical weakness among the children.

The president stressed the need to provide consultation facilities to improve mental health in the country. He said the basic treatment of mental health could be provided with the

help of modern technology, Artificial Intelligence and Chatbot. The minister commended the president's special focus and guidance for eradication of polio in the country. President Alvi appreciated the overall services of the Dr Nadeem Jan in the health sector.

## Excise Staff to provide civic facilities at Trail 3 Parking

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to facilitate citizens, the excise staff will be providing civic facilities including vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax of vehicles in the parking lot of Trail 3 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. on Thursday. The facilitation center Doorstep ICT Vehicle will also be present at the venue to provide citizens with a range of services, including domicile certificate, birth certificate, power of attorney, international driving permit, fuel permit (domestic/commercial), and motor vehicle registration, ICT spokesman said. The drive has been organized on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon. He said that the aim of the drive is to provide citizens with a hassle-free experience while registering their vehicles. The drive will be held on a limited basis, so the citizens are advised to reach the venue early.—APP

## Islamabad police to address security issues

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police would address critical security concerns in markets as well as public parks and review the proposal for the installation of surveillance cameras there. In a recent gathering, CPO Safe City/Traffic Shoaib Janbaz met with IT experts from the Islamabad Capital Police and officials from the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to address critical security concerns in public parks and markets. The primary focus was on the efficient identification of stolen or lost mobile phones using IMEI numbers. According to the police spokesperson, the meeting's objectives encompassed devising robust strategies to trace mobile phones linked to thefts and criminal activities through IMEI numbers, alongside revamping outdated recording systems. Notably, the IT experts emphasized their ability to differentiate between original and altered IMEI numbers, even if an individual attempts to change it and use the device elsewhere. During the meeting, CDA officials underscored the necessity of collaboration with Islamabad Capital Police to modernize public parks. Suggestions included the installation of surveillance cameras in public parks, market areas, and both internal and external roads. Monitoring would be conducted through the Safe City Command and Control Center.

Furthermore, there was a proposal to place emergency buttons in poorly lit areas. Additionally, CPO Safe City/Traffic proposed the incorporation of identification card records for individuals visiting public parks into the new system. CPO Safe City/Traffic conveyed unwavering cooperation with the officers and organized a visit to the Safe City Command and Control Center to further solidify these initiatives.



## Briefs

## Gwadar Safe City Project on upward trajectory

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant development, the Gwadar Safe City Project (Phase I) has seen substantial progress with the establishment of the Project Management Unit (PMU) and the submission of technical and financial feasibility reports, all under the framework of the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan 2025. With an estimated cost of Rs 3,325.6 million, the Gwadar Safe City Project (Phase I) is being spearheaded by the Ministry of Homes and Tribal Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Technology under the Government of Balochistan.

Key aspects of the project include the installation of optical fiber cables spanning up to 190 kilometers and the placement of multipurpose cameras at 411 locations. Abdul Razzaq, Gwadar Development Authority's Deputy Director of Town Planning, informed Gwadar Pro that the project, which has been long overdue for completion, is now expected to be expedited. It aims to cover the entirety of Gwadar City, encompassing vital buildings, roads, neighborhoods, the airport, bus stands, parking areas, educational institutions, health centers, and other government infrastructure. An official from the Ministry of Homes and Tribal Affairs also shared with Gwadar Pro that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in January 2022 between the Chief Operating Officer of the Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) and the Project Director of Gwadar Safe City. As per the agreement, a technical team from PSCA will visit the Gwadar Safe City project to assist the installation of Safe Cities Cameras, Networking and Communication, and the establishment of a Command Center.

## SBP will have to boost interest rates shortly to stem rupee's fall

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Hanif Mughal, Senior Vice President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) said on Thursday that inflation is increasing due to the continuous depreciation of the rupee. The State Bank of Pakistan will have to increase the interest rate soon in an effort to stop the fall of the rupee, which will further affect the public and businesses, he said. The rupee has gone down from the limit that was demanded by the IMF, the effects of which can be seen in every sector, including electricity bills, he added. Dr. Hanif Mughal said in a statement issued here today that if the fall of the rupee is not stopped, businesses will suffer, inflation will flood the country, and poverty will increase. He said that the IMF wants to reduce the value of the rupee by 20% in 2024, but the situation is worsening beyond that, which is worrying. The business community's confidence is currently at its lowest ebb, while negative statements from top officials are fueling the fire. He noted that interest rates are already at record levels, which have tripled banks' profits. And if it is increased further, industry and trade will suffer tremendously. This will increase unemployment, and the investment, which is already very low, will completely disappear. Due to the depreciation of the rupee, people are buying dollars, which further increases demand for US currency and has a negative impact on the overall situation. Dr. Hanif Mughal said that electricity rates have been increased by 90% in four years, while people are now paying 32% of the bill as taxes, but no action is being taken against those who brought the country to this state. At the moment, the government is reporting inflation up to 25%, but according to Steve H. Hanke, an American economist and professor of applied economics at Johns Hopkins University, it is actually 50%, which is increasing rapidly.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Malaysia Azhar Mazlan along with embassy staff witnessing the flag hoisting ceremony on the occasion of the 66th Independence Day of Malaysia. (News and another picture on the Back Page).—DNA

## Geo-economic fragmentation impacting Pak competitiveness

Introducing the Pioneering Analysis: "Navigating Pakistan's Economic Landscape in the Face of Global Geoeconomic Fragmentation"

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: In an age of unprecedented global transformation, where economic currents are shaped by geopolitical shifts and trade dynamics, a groundbreaking analysis emerges as a guiding beacon through the complexities of our time. Authored by the distinguished expert in global competitiveness, risk, and narrative development, Amir Jahangir, this analysis, titled "Navigating Pakistan's Economic Landscape in the Face of Global Geoeconomic Fragmentation," illuminates the intricate interplay between the global phenomenon of Geoeconomic Fragmentation and its implications for Pakistan. As a seminal contribution to understanding the forces at play, this analysis unveils a roadmap for policymakers, business leaders, academics, and stakeholders to navigate Pakistan's economic course in an increasingly fragmented world. In an era where the global economic landscape is be-

ing reshaped by geopolitical tensions and trade restrictions, Amir Jahangir's analysis of Pakistan's Economic Landscape in the Face of Global Geoeconomic Fragmentation delivers a comprehensive and incisive exploration of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. This analysis serves as a clarion call to all stakeholders invested in Pakistan's economic prosperity and resilience. The analysis examines the growing specter of geoeconomic fragmentation—a phenomenon that threatens to fracture the world economy into competing factions. As Pakistan grapples with the complex repercussions of this transformation, the analysis underscores the urgency of strategic leadership, visionary policymaking, and international collaboration. By embracing innovation, nurturing diverse partnerships, and advocating for cross-border cooperation, Pakistan can chart a course toward stability amidst these turbulent times. At the core of this analysis is the role of the International Monetary Fund

(IMF), an advocate for global cooperation in countering the effects of fragmentation. By leveraging its financial tools, impartial approach, and global oversight mechanisms, the IMF offers a roadmap for nations like Pakistan to bolster economic resilience and navigate the challenges posed by geoeconomic fragmentation. Amir Jahangir, the author of this groundbreaking analysis, brings a wealth of expertise to the table. His deep insights, informed by his academic pursuits and strategic communication prowess, provide a unique perspective on the complex issues discussed in the analysis. Amir Jahangir is a leading expert in global competitiveness, risk foresight, and development. He leads Mishaal Pakistan, a leading competitive intelligence and strategic planning company and prominent partner institute of the Centre for the New Economy and Societies Platform at the World Economic Forum. With a distinguished academic background and expertise in strategic communication, Amir Jahangir is one of the leading Narratol-

ogists, offering valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing economies in an era of geoeconomic fragmentation. As Pakistan's stakeholders, including policymakers, business leaders, academics, and the wider public, prepare to navigate the uncharted waters of geoeconomic fragmentation, this analysis stands as an invaluable resource. It calls for united action, resilient strategies, and an unwavering commitment to collaboration in order to forge a prosperous path forward. Mishaal Pakistan stands as an acclaimed and award-winning pioneer in the realm of strategic communication and narrative design thinking in Pakistan. As the distinguished Country Partner Institute of the Centre for New Economy and Societies Platform at the World Economic Forum, Mishaal Pakistan occupies a central role in shaping Pakistan's narrative on the global stage. With a steadfast commitment to excellence, Mishaal plays a vital role in generating comprehensive primary data across a spectrum of over 200 indica-

tors, offering insights into Pakistan's competitiveness on various fronts. Anchored in the core principles of behavior change communication and strategic engagement, Mishaal's expertise extends to media-focused strategic communication and the art of crafting compelling narratives. This multifaceted approach ensures a holistic impact in molding perceptions and driving tangible transformation. Mishaal's exceptional contributions have garnered noteworthy recognition, earning the coveted titles of Leading Provider of Competitive Intelligence and Strategic Planning Services for consecutive years. In 2021 and 2022, these accolades were conferred upon Mishaal through esteemed platforms, namely the Corporate Vision Small Business Awards, UK, and Acquisition International's Business Excellence Awards. These honors stand as a resounding tribute to Mishaal's tireless dedication to shaping Pakistan's strategic communication landscape and fortifying its competitive intelligence arena.

## We need AI driven ground breaking initiatives

DNA

ISLAMABAD: At the crossroads of technological innovation, the convergence between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Sustainability has forged new avenues, agreed by esteemed experts during a conference titled "AI for Sustainable Future: Its Role in Ethical Policies and Climate Resilience," jointly organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) and the Center of Pakistan & International Relations (COPAIR). The conference encompassed two distinct sessions: "Exploring AI Benefits, Ethics, and Policy Considerations" and "From Data to Action: AI and LLM's Role in Shaping Climate Action and Finance Strategies." During the first session, Ms. Anam Munawwar Awan, President of COPAIR, underscored that the primary objective should be the advancement of humanity, not mere technological progress. She expounded on how AI can catalyze positive transformation, countering the escalating climate crisis. Ms. Mehreen Afzal, Director of Security and GRC for the National CERT project of NTISB during her talk in the first session, stressed the necessity of AI governance, its potential to fortify threat detection and defence, and the emergent national security

concern posed by AI-driven cyber threats. Mr. Yasar Ayaz, the Founding Chairman and Central Project Director of NCAI, explained AI frameworks encompassing AI-enabled industries, applications, and infrastructure. He further highlighted the benefits of AI and ethical considerations like privacy, data governance, transparency, and fairness. Ms. Saira Siddique, Founder and CEO of MediQ, reflected on the substantial role of AI in healthcare, expressing her opinion that AI can substantially enhance diagnostic accuracy and treatment planning within the healthcare sector. During the second session, André Ferreira, a data scientist at TransitionZero, emphasized the importance of smart electric grids for sustainable energy management. He went on to explain that institutions seeking to amplify climate investments need in-depth analysis of net-zero transitions, augmented by AI and LLMs. Mr. Adnan Reshi, BaKhabar Kissan from highlighted the imperative of developing robust critical infrastructure to generate accurate weather information and underscored the need for public-private partnerships to enhance responses to meteorological disasters. Ms. Safa Baig, from atomcamp, emphasized the significance of implementing green structures in urban cities to combat the urban heat island effect.

## AI to create 97 million new jobs in future: CEO

ISLAMABAD: Artificial Intelligence (AI) has stirred concerns about job security among individuals whereas experts are predicting a surge in job opportunities across diverse sectors that are yet to be fully envisioned. Talking to APP here on Thursday, the CEO of DatumSquare IT Services said that projections indicate that AI could displace around 80 million jobs by 2025, but simultaneously it will create 97 million new jobs. Moreover, he said a substantial 60% of these forthcoming jobs and their characteristics remain unimagined as AI reshapes the landscape of employment responsibilities. He said that the adoption of AI in today's world is vital and those who will fail to embrace this cutting-edge technology could result in lagging in developmental pursuits. —APP

## PFC delegation left for Russia

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation of Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) led by its Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq Thursday left for Russia with the primary objective of exploring investment opportunities, fostering joint ventures and collaboration within the furniture industry. In a press statement CEO PFC said that the council is a representative body of the country's vibrant furniture sector, and has taken this initiative with the intention of promoting economic collaboration and mutual growth between two great nations. Recognizing the strengths and potential of both the Russian and Pakistani furniture industries, this delegation seeks to facilitate partnerships that will not only enhance trade but also foster cultural exchange and strengthen the diplomatic ties that bind both countries, he added. —APP




ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Czech Republic Tomáš Smetánka called on FM Jaiil Abbas Jilani.—DNA


## Minister launches tour packages for families

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Provincial Caretaker Minister for Tourism, Museum, and Archaeology, Syed Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel here Thursday launched tour packages under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority for families and females. Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCCTA), Barkatullah Marwat, General Manager Planning KPCCTA, Hayat Ali Shah, GM Culture, Sajjad Hameed and Commandant Tourism Police were also present at the inaugurating ceremony. The tour packages include the City Tour which would cost Rs 3000 per person, Takht Bahi which would cost Rs 1000 per person and Khanpur Lake Tour would cost Rs 3500 per person. Addressing the ceremony, the minister said that KPCCTA would also start a bus service enabling tourists to visit and enjoy the beauty of famous tourist destinations of KP and historic places of Peshawar City. He said that the city tour would include visit of Sethi House, Namak Mandi, Museum, Ghor Ghatri and other famous places. He said that KPCCTA has also arranged various recreational events including paragliding, boating, and jet skiing for visitors on Khanpur Lake. He appreciated the efforts of KPCCTA to promote tourism and facilitate visitors and said that the hospitality of KP people in well known in the world. He also highlighted the steps of KPCCTA to boost tourism and said that the government would provide all the needed assistance and cooperation to visitors. The minister said that the government is also working to improve the law and order situation in the province which would also help attract foreign tourists to the province. He said that work is also underway on historic places of Buddhism. He said that Nathia Gali tour for blind children would start from tomorrow and they would be provided all the needed help. He said that tourism department is working to boost tourism in KP and to promote its soft image and natural beauty in the world.



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## Effort to repair bilateral ties

UNITED Kingdom Foreign Secretary James Cleverly's visit to Beijing this week, the first high-level exchange between China and the UK in five years, is widely perceived as being a tentative effort to repair bilateral ties. Vice-President Han Zheng and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met separately with Cleverly in Beijing, both expressing hope that the UK government would work with Beijing to enhance mutual understanding and trust. Cleverly, on his part, said that the UK wants to keep lines of communication open and create an enabling business environment for pragmatic cooperation. Prior to his visit, Cleverly had made remarks to the UK media which raised expectations that his visit would herald a thaw in the frosty relations between the two countries. His remarks include that "it would be a mistake to isolate the world's second-largest economy" and that "no significant global problem – from climate change to pandemic prevention, from economic instability to nuclear proliferation – can be solved without China". These suggest that the Rishi Sunak government has a more sober view of bilateral relations than its immediate predecessors, which on-the-boil ideologically were more intent on turning the heat up under the pot than fostering the UK's relations with key trade partners such as the European Union and China. As a result, of course, those relations have fractured. Rather than continuing to invest in the "golden era" for ties that promised long-term returns, the UK government chose to buy the fool's gold claims of immediate gains promised by the US in return for it more provocatively playing the "Hong Kong and Taiwan cards". The Sunak government's seemingly more rational and pragmatic perception of China offers a window of opportunity for the two countries to begin restoring trust and finding common ground on which to rebuild their cooperative relations. Reinforcing this more sensible approach to ties, the UK is reportedly set to send a large business delegation to China to attend the upcoming China International Fair for Trade in Services, at which it will be the Guest Country of Honor. The representatives of more than 60 UK enterprises are expected to attend CIFTIS in search of new business opportunities. Putting bilateral trade cooperation back on the right track is probably an easier task than bridging the current political differences between the two sides. But doing so would not only bring real benefits to the two sides, it would also bolster the resilience of bilateral ties, which in turn would provide a more stable foundation on which to build mutual political trust. However, that foundation will always be shaky if the UK infringes on China's core interests and meddles in its internal affairs.

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti  
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



## Strategic autonomy of Europe benefits world

AMONG major Western leaders, French President Emmanuel Macron stands out for talking with sense and substance and for his strong advocacy of the strategic autonomy of Europe and it adopting an independent stance on key issues such as trade and security. He has a clear vision for Europe's place in the scheme of things, and is eloquent and reasonable when expounding on it. In a speech he made to French ambassadors gathered in Paris on Monday, Macron warned again that European countries, and the West in general, were in danger of decline, as evidenced by their diminishing wealth creation and shrinking share of global trade. "I believe that the international context is becoming more difficult which brings the risk of a weakening of the West, and especially our Europe. We must be clear-sighted in this context," he said. Behind the changing international landscape, as he pointed out, are Sino-US tensions, the energy crisis, and the fact that "war has returned to European soil", among others. Europe needed to bolster its independence of thought and action if it was to successfully navigate the changes of the times. The rise and fall of nations, and even civilizations, is a flux of history, and visionary leaders try to adapt to, rather than go against, this historical trend. Europe will have no future if it accepts its strategic dependence on the US as a natural state of affairs. As Macron said in April, it would be "a trap for Europe" to get caught up in crises "that are not ours". If there was an accelerated escalation of the conflict between the United States and China, "we will not have the time, nor the means to finance our own strategic autonomy and we will become vassals," he warned. To this end, the European Political Community, launched shortly after the start of the conflict in Ukraine, is a "decisive" factor for achieving "a Europe of peace", he said on Monday. The EPC, an intergovernmental forum that brings together more than 40 European countries, will meet for a third summit in a year in October in Spain, where the participants will discuss security, the economy, the environment and immigration. Given the dire situation Europe finds itself in as a result of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, one of the most pressing tasks the attendees face is salvaging the European economy from a recession, so as to provide a stable foundation on which Europe can assert its autonomy. This can only be achieved through greater integration among the European economies and more extensive cooperation with other parts of the world, including China. Relatively low consumer spending and persistent inflation have already led to two consecutive quarters of economic contraction in the European Union starting in the last quarter of 2022, and growth this year is likely to be weak. China and the European countries share substantial common interests that provide a solid platform for enhanced cooperation. Greater Sino-European cooperation would not only help them build trust and overcome differences, but also enable them to play a more constructive role in global governance and face common challenges together. This in turn would help bring stability to increasingly turbulent world.

## Interim Governance, elections, and military dynamics

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The current temporary government is led by Anwarul Haq Kakar, a former senator from Balochistan, a volatile province in Pakistan, with Pashtun heritage. His close ties with the military have caused some controversy.

Other members of the government include politicians connected to major parties, except for Imran Khan's party. The Foreign Minister used to be Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, and the Ministry of Finance is led by a former head of the State Bank of Pakistan

AFTER the coalition government, the interim government has taken over in Pakistan. This new temporary government is similar to caretaker governments seen in other countries with parliamentary systems. The current people in charge have limited powers and will continue to run the country until a new government is formed. However, this interim government is made up of people who were not elected, and they will oversee the country at both the national and local levels until new elections can be held. This system was started in 1985 by President and General Zia-ul-Haq to set up temporary governments until new assemblies are formed without political bias. Despite the idea of having capable and unbiased individuals run the country temporarily until a new government is elected, most of the previous interim governments in Pakistan have shown clear biases that hurt their credibility. Pakistan was supposed to have a general election in the next three months. But a recent announcement from the country's Electoral Commission suggests that these elections might be postponed until next year because they want to redraw voting districts based on a new population count.

The current temporary government is led by Anwarul Haq Kakar, a former senator from Balochistan, a volatile province in Pakistan, with Pashtun heritage. His close ties with the military have caused some controversy. Other members of the government include politicians connected to major parties, except for Imran Khan's party. The Foreign Minister used to be Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, and the Ministry of Finance is led by a former head of the State Bank of Pakistan. The cabinet also includes Mashaal Malik, who is married to a Kashmiri leader in jail, and she is responsible for Human Rights. This choice might be related to the military's interest in the situation of people in Kashmir near the border with India. The cabinet is quite large, with around two dozen members, and some oversee less important areas like culture and tourism. This has led to suspicions that this temporary arrangement might last longer than expected. The interim government now has the power to make decisions about the economy, especially to help get much-needed foreign loans. So far, they have focused on issues that matter to the military, like holding those responsible for the disturbances last May accountable, which also

involved attacks on military installations. Some organizations that watch over the government have asked the president not to approve laws that give more power to the military and its intelligence agencies.

Even though caretaker governments are usually meant to be temporary to help transition to elected governments, the current interim government in Pakistan is causing doubts because of who is in it and potential biases. Anwarul Haq Kakar is leading the government, and it includes politicians linked to major parties, raising questions about its fairness. Despite its controversial start, the temporary government now has control over economic decisions and has addressed important national issues, especially those concerning the military. Since the country's election schedule might change due to a new population count, it's uncertain how long this temporary government will last. Some people think it could continue until the military figures out a way to share power that lets them keep control and influence over the economy. In this changing situation, how the government manages to rule fairly while protecting democracy will greatly affect Pakistan's path in the coming months.

## A new understanding of 'Genocide'

Muhammad Sayed Anwar

The practice of any community or ethnic group's own culture is their identity of who they are, what portrays their exclusivity. But sometimes state-sponsored maneuvers against cultural practices might be deemed as genocide because diminishing one's identity certainly means diminishing one's existence as physical existence is what that everyone has but what makes a community or a nation exclusive is their culture. The Uyghur Muslims in China's Xinjiang province are enduring a state-patronized aggression against their Islamic and cultural attachments.

Reciting religious scriptures are prohibited

RAPHAEL Lemkin, a Jewish-Polish lawyer, coined the term 'genocide' by combining two Greek words "genos" and "cide", which mean 'race or tribe' and 'to kill' respectively. Witnessing the horrors and atrocities of the 'holocaust', he, who lost every member of his family except his brother during the incident, campaigned to have genocide recognized as a crime under international law. His attempts paved the way to the materialization of the 'United Nations Genocide Convention' in 1948. The convention issued a definition of genocide illustrating that "any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such": killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, or forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. The convention excluded targeted political and social groups, was unable to specify how to prove the intention of the perpetrator and ambiguous of duration and intensity and how many deaths equal genocide, and overlooked extinctive measures against cultural distinctiveness. In the past, extensively today, demolition of one ethnic or racial groups by another or other entity is denominated as genocide. But vividly a trend of annihilation of opposition political parties or groups can be apprehended especially with the advent of liberal democracy, which doesn't accredit such endorsement, thus creating a predicament of authoritarian democracy. During the period of Nazi Germany, all the oppositions were strictly handled and obliterated. In the contemporary world, we can describe a drift of exterminating antithetical associations. The practices of judicial killing, assassination, unlawful sentences, arranging rigged polls, press control, creation of intimidation in public via state forces, arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearances, filing fraud cases, and manipulation of the constitution are the tools of extinguishing the opposite troupes. We may notice such a tendency in Cambodia, Myanmar, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, meant to be persistent throughout third-world countries. The number of individuals in this type of elimination may not

reach a huge amount but the way an ideology, a political ideology to be more specific, or a party's political identity is submerged must be tagged as genocide. If we look at present Cambodia, which country endured a genocide in the 1970s, the opposition parties are strictly dominated by Hun Sen's despotic measures of rigged elections, fraud cases filed against them, manipulation of the legislation and constitution, and unleashing the police forces against them. Putin has made the Russian Federation a de jure multi-party system but as a de facto one-party system submerging all the oppositions including Alexei Navalny, an opposition leader and firm critic of Putin's absolutism, who is in jail for several years known as a 'prisoner of conscience'. Actually, the whole state apparatus is controlled by Putin and his close aristocrats that people's will have no importance. By extinguishing diametrical political pools in a country, those tyrants are not only extinguishing the will, hope, and freedom of the particular parties but also of the whole people of the polity and potential blaze of democracy. Such a situation, likewise literally, doesn't only kill that certain party but an identity of the whole nation. The practice of any community or ethnic group's own culture is their identity of who they are, what portrays their exclusivity. But sometimes state-sponsored maneuvers against cultural practices might be deemed as genocide because diminishing one's identity certainly means diminishing one's existence as physical existence is what that everyone has but what makes a community or a nation exclusive is their culture. The Uyghur Muslims in China's Xinjiang province are enduring a state-patronized aggression against their Islamic and cultural attachments. Reciting religious scriptures are prohibited. An estimation shows that, since 2017, some sixteen thousand mosques have been razed or damaged. Learning religious teachings is stringently detected. A huge number of children has been forcibly separated from their parents and sent to boarding schools. Furthermore, internment, forced birth control or sterilization, forced abortion, torture, brainwashing, and textbook stratagem are routinely phenomena in the country. Along with the hardship conditions in the boarding schools, the Uyghur children are taught cultural and ideological facets dissimilar to the Uyghurs. Many children, re-

leased from boarding schools, can't even understand how to speak and listen to their mother tongue. The Muslim ethnic minority people are sent to detention camps where they are taught Mandarin Chinese and Chinese political ideology. This is, clearly an effort to mold minority adults and children into speaking and acting like the country's dominant Han ethnic group and make everyone Chinese, see themselves as Chinese, and have a single cultural background, a slow erasure of the Uyghur language and culture. The intensity and duration of genocide have been changed in the new genocide. We can see that traditional genocidal events like the Holocaust, Rwandan genocide, Darfur genocide, Bosnian genocide, Isaaq genocide, Albigersian crusade, or the Armenian genocide, were intensified and short-lived but as of now, it is less intensified and long-lasting. Just look at India, minorities are in a state of terror. The Muslims are shown as demons by the BJP, RSS, and other Hindutva-related individuals and organizations. A state-sponsored project of gradual extermination of the Muslims has been taken. Events of communal violence are heard frequently; the Manipur and Haryana tragedies are the latest ones. The settlements and commercial stores of Muslims in the country are illegally bulldozed, anti-Muslim laws such as the NRC and CAA are taken, and social ghettoization of the community is patronized by the state apparatus. This is indisputably a slow and subtle process of genocide in India. In Myanmar, the Rohingyas have been enduring brutal measures by the state since the 1980s. The Palestinians are facing ferocious treatment of the Zionists since the 1940s. We can notice a new methodology of genocide executed by the perpetrators. The strategy and tactics of genocide have been changed. The perpetrators are not taking short-lasting brutal measures but rather exterminating a certain community via a slow and less-intensifying footprint. They are unleashing massacre not only through physical destruction but also by cognitive, that is cultural and psychological dimension, wreckage. Accordingly, the connotation and meaning of the word 'genocide' must modified.

- The writer is the Student of International Relations Jahangirnagar University Dhaka, Bangladesh



## Briefs

## Traders observe shutter...

FROM PAGE 01

After listening to views, the finance minister replied in a lighter vein that she was wondering why she had accepted the position, but stated in the same breath that it was a responsibility one had to discharge after assuming the office. "I have inherited the IMF programme, tied up under structural benchmark, signed by predecessor government. It's not the IMF about which I am worried, but I am worried about the political and economic stability of the country. There is no other choice but to continue with the IMF programme for keeping dollar inflows intact from bilateral partners, which is totally tied up under the IMF programme," Dr Shamshad said. The minister pointed out that dollar inflows were less than the expected outflows, indicating more difficulties surfacing on the dwindling foreign exchange reserves position. Meanwhile, Pakistan has shared its plan with the IMF for providing relief to power consumers on account of inflated electricity bills, with assurances that none of the Fund's agreed targets would be breached, according to The News. Insiders in the Ministry of Finance said there was a provision for an emergency allocation of Rs250 billion in the budget for 2023-24, which could be utilised to provide relief to power consumers.

## Safe environment for UN...

FORM PAGE 01

The FM maintained that addressing challenges, including language barriers and administrative obstacles, should also be one of our top priorities. He said the spectre of the threat posed by Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) to peacekeepers' security needs a commensurate response. "We must intensify pre-deployment training; equip our peacekeepers with cutting-edge technology; and augment their capabilities for countering the IED threat." The minister highlighted that leveraging technology was vital to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers. "The Strategy for the Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping underscores the need to enhance situational awareness, counter disinformation, and optimise the use of technology. By doing so, we empower our peacekeepers to make informed decisions and fulfil their mandates more effectively." Jalil Abbas Jilani said while Pakistan was proudly contributing over 4,000 troops to various ongoing UN peacekeeping missions, the attention should also be focused on the realm of peacebuilding.

## FBR freezes 13 PIA bank accounts

FROM PAGE 01

despite the accounts being restored last month." According to a PIA spokesperson, the freezing of the national carrier's bank accounts would not affect its flight operations. "There is contact at the government level. PIA's accounts would be restored soon," the spokesperson added. It should be noted that on July 27, the FBR had frozen all bank accounts of the PIA over non-payment of taxes, sources had told Geo News. Subsequently, on July 28, the accounts were restored following the settlement of issues between the FBR and PIA, according to sources. In recent years, mismanagement of funds, a rise in operating costs and a surge in fuel prices have led to financial difficulties for the national carrier. The PIA also faces scrutiny over its compliance with international safety standards, leading to temporary bans and restrictions on Pakistani airlines in various countries. The national flag carrier, in response, had claimed that its flights continued uninterrupted despite the tax bureau freezing its accounts. The sources in the FBR said the PIA had not deposited the FED of Rs4 billion, which it had collected through plane tickets.



ISLAMABAD: A view of the closed shops at Aabpara Market during the protest by the Traders Action Committee of Aabpara Market against the unjust price hike of the electricity and unbearable inflation. - Online

## Pakistan squad reaches SL for clash against India

The arch-rivals Pakistan and India will face each other on September 2 in the second Group-A match. The green shirts will rest today before hitting the nets to train for the much-anticipated match of the Asia Cup

OUR CORRESPONDENT

COLOMBO: The Pakistan squad landed in Colombo on Thursday for their second Asia Cup 2023 group match against arch-rivals India. The team reached Colombo on a chartered flight and then travelled to Kandy by road.

The green shirts will rest today before hitting the nets on Friday at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium from 6 p.m. to train for the much-anticipated match of the Asia Cup. Beforehand, a squad member will hold the pre-match press conference. The arch-rivals Pakistan and India will face each other on September 2 in the second Group-A match. The Asian Giants will come face to face again on September 10 in Colombo if both manage to qualify for the Super 4s. Pakistan kicked off their Asia Cup campaign with a 238-run victory over the debutant Nepal in the opening game



Pakistan's bowling unit decimated Nepal in the second innings of the tournament. Pakistan's bowling unit decimated Nepal in the second innings of the tournament. Pakistan's bowling unit decimated Nepal in the second innings of the tournament.

total in the first innings. It must be noted that despite being hosts Pakistan will host only a total of four matches including a Super 4s fixture. India's group stage matches including the anticipated clash against Pakistan, scheduled on September 2, will be held in Kandy while the rest of the Super 4s matches, including the final will be played in Colombo.

Pakistan are placed in the same group as arch-rivals India and Nepal while the other group includes defending champions and co-hosts Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Pakistan squad: Babar Azam (captain), Shadab Khan (vice-captain), Abdullah Shafique, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imam-ul-Haq, Mohammad Haris (wk), Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Naseem Shah, Salman Ali Agha, Saud Shakeel, Shaheen Afridi and Usama Mir Traveling reserve: Tayyab Tahir.

## Miami failed to score for the first time since Messi joined

MIAMI: Inter Miami failed to score for the first time since Lionel Messi joined the team, playing a scoreless draw with Nashville. Messi failed to convert two free kick attempts in his first Major League Soccer match at home, and it was the first time during his Inter Miami tenure that he was kept off the score sheet. Inter Miami still earned a point in the standings as it looks to make a late-season playoff push. Messi entered the game 11 points shy of the MLS playoff line and needed to move up from 14th to ninth place to make the playoffs with 11 regular-season matches left. Miami had won its previous nine matches as Messi's addition gave the team an immediate boost. He has scored 11 goals, including three multi-goal performances. Inter Miami coach Tata Martino said despite its success, the team is still gelling after undergoing so many changes over the past two months. Miami hired Martino in June, weeks after firing Phil Neville. Miami had the worst re-

cord of the 15 Eastern Conference teams at the time, but Messi won all seven of its Leagues Cup matches and its U.S. Open Cup semifinal match. Since Messi's arrival, the club also signed his former Barcelona teammates, Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba. "We really haven't had a full week working with this team," Martino said. "Even with the evolution of this team through Leagues Cup and Open Cup, the fact that we play every four days hasn't allowed us the enough time, the necessary time, to train and continue building this group. But what we've been able to do is correct through videos and see the improvements through the games." Messi started the game Wednesday along with Busquets after the two entered Miami's previous match against the New York Red Bulls in the 60th minute. Miami had no shots on goal Wednesday through the first 60 minutes as the team struggled to break through Nashville's defence. - Agencies



## Hockey training camp underway

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The training camp of national players, under the auspices of Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF), in preparations for the Asian Games, was underway at the Naseer Banda Hockey Stadium of the Pakistan Sports Complex. According to Camp commandant and head coach Olympian Shahnaz Sheikh, the players were training in morning and evening sessions in the camp. The selected team from the players would feature in the Asian Games to be played in Hangzhou, China from September 23 to October 8. He said a lot of players were new in the camp and were preparing hard for the mega event. To a question, he said he was fully satisfied with the facilities, accommodation, food, and other amenities provided by the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB).

## Mc Gahey: first transgender to play an int'l match

OTTAWA: Canada's Danielle McGahey is set to become the first transgender cricketer to play in an official international match. McGahey has been included in Canada's squad for a qualifying tournament on the pathway to the 2024 Women's T20 World Cup in Bangladesh. The 29-year-old opening batter has fulfilled all of the eligibility criteria the International Cricket Council (ICC) has for male-to-female transgender players before the event in Los Angeles from 4-11 September. McGahey's participation comes despite other sports - including athletics, cycling, swimming and both codes of rugby - banning transgender women from taking part in elite women's competition. A spokeswoman for WRN - a group which says it seeks to "defend the sex-based rights of women" - said transgender women had a "significant advantage" over athletes whose sex is recorded as female at birth, and called the ICC's policy "unfair and unsafe". McGahey emigrated from Australia to Canada in February 2020, socially transitioned to a woman in November 2020 and started medically transitioning in May 2021. McGahey told BBC Sport: "I am absolutely honoured. To be able to represent my community is something I never dreamed I would be able to do." What is the ICC's stance on transgender women? The ICC's player eligibility regulations released in 2018 (and amended in 2021) state trans women wishing to play women's international cricket must demonstrate "the concentration of testosterone in her serum has been less than 5 nmol/L1 continuously for a period of at least 12 months, and that she is ready, willing and able to continue to keep it below that level for so long as she continues to compete". - Agencies

## US Open 2023 results

## Tsitsipas &amp; Casper Ruud out, Novak Djokovic through

Djokovic, who is aiming to match Margaret Court with a record-equalling 24th major title, was already the heavy favourite to reach the men's final

SPORT DESK

NEW YORK: Grand Slam finalists Stefanos Tsitsipas and Casper Ruud became two of the highest US Open men's seeds to fall in shock second-round defeats. Seventh seed Tsitsipas lost 7-5 6-7 (2-7) 6-7 (5-7) 7-6 (8-6) 6-3 to Swiss qualifier Dominic Stricker. Ruud, seeded fifth and last year's runner-up, lost 6-4 5-7 6-2 0-6 6-2 to Chinese world number 67 Zhang Zhizhen. But second seed Novak Djokovic cruised through with a 6-4 6-1 6-1 win over Spain's Bernabe Zapata Miralles. Djokovic, who is aiming to match Margaret Court with a record-equalling 24th major title, was already the heavy favourite to reach the men's final from the bottom half of the draw. Now his pathway has been made even smoother - on paper, at least - by the exits of Tsitsipas and

Ruud, who joined Danish fourth seed Holger Rune as an early casualty in this section. Serbia's Djokovic plays compatriot Laslo Djere on Friday for a place in the last 16. "I still feel like I can play better but I'm happy to be back playing in New York," said Djokovic, who has won three titles at Flushing Meadows. "That's what gives me strength at 36 years of age. I still have the hunger and the desire to play my best tennis on this court. "Every single match I play myself the most, in my mind. If I win this battle, then I win the battle outside against the opponent." American ninth seed Taylor Fritz is still a prospective quarter-final opponent for Djokovic after he cruised past Peru's Juan Pablo Varillas in a 6-1 6-2 6-2 success. Fritz was one of four American players to go through on Wednesday as the host nation looks for a

first home men's champion since Andy Roddick in 2003. Tenth seed Frances Tiafoe also won in straight sets against Austria's Sebastian Ofner, but 14th seed Tommy Paul had to fight back from two sets down to beat



Russia's Roman Safullin. Big-serving youngster Ben Shelton edged a tight first set against 2020 champion Dominic Thiem before the Austrian, fighting his way back up the rankings after spending 10 months out last year

with a wrist injury, retired early in the second set through illness. Singing Stricker shows confidence in big upset Dominic Stephan Stricker takes a shot during his US Open second-round match Dominic Stricker came through three rounds of qualifying to make the main draw at the US Open debut but the 21-year-old has displayed a calmness and self-belief that belies his age so far at this tournament. Both of those qualities were evident at a crucial point of the fifth set against Tsitsipas. Leading 5-2 up and a game away from the biggest win of his career, he was singing along to Whitney Houston's I Want to Dance With Somebody as it played out around the court. "I felt pretty good from the first set onwards," said former junior French Open champion Stricker, who saved a match point before winning his second quality-

ing match. "It was a tough battle but I'm just super happy right now. "Right now the belief is very, very high. The confidence is high and I believe a lot in myself." But it was another early exit for Tsitsipas, who has never gone past the third round in New York. The Greek, who reached this year's Australian Open final and the 2021 French Open final, served for the match at 5-3 in the fourth set but could not close out and paid the price. "Usually, I'm much tougher mentally and I have shown it by coming back," said the 25-year-old, who has replaced his father Apostolos as his main coach with former Wimbledon finalist Mark Philippoussis. "Even though sometimes I get broken serving for the match, let's say, I still find ways in the tie-breaker or perhaps in the fifth set if that has ever happened. "Today was not the case. I was not able to bounce back after it."

## 'Downgrading IIOJK statehood is temporary'

FROM PAGE 01 statehood while saying that union territory is a temporary status because of the peculiar circumstances the state had passed through with repeated and consistent disturbances of decades. It might take some time," Mehta said on Thursday. He added the government is progressing towards making it a full-fledged state. Mehta also said that the Indian government is ready to hold the legislative assembly in IIOJK "anytime now" and that the elections commission has to take a call on how out of three elections due in the region, including legislative assembly elections, are to be held. Jammu and Kashmir has been without an elected government since 2018. In 2019, India repealed the special status of the disputed territory, stripping it of its flag and legislature. Article 35A was also scrapped, which had allowed the region to define its residents and barred outsiders from buying properties or taking up government jobs. The Himalayan state was divided into two centrally ruled union territories, now called Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

## SC dismisses ECP petition seeking...

FROM PAGE 01 the poll date. During the hearing, the ECP's counsel Sajeel Swati maintained that they had received the detailed order regarding the Punjab polls two weeks ago therefore they wanted to submit some additional documents in the light of this verdict. He requested the court to give him a week time to prepare his arguments. To which, Justice Akhtar remarked that the matter before the bench was a review petition and a verdict on the election delay case had already been announced. Justice Ahsan observed that the Constitution does not give the ECP the authority to extend the election date, while the SC has also ruled the same. Before wrapping up the case, the CJP declared that the ECP's plea could not be accepted in the current situation, so it is being dismissed. "The court will intervene whenever there is a Constitutional violation," Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial said. It may be noted that the initial bench formed to hear the election delay case comprised five members, including the existing bench members and Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan, and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail.

## ECP vows to speed up delimitation

FORM PAGE 01 the assurance to a PML-Q delegation that visited the ECP Secretariat in Islamabad for a meeting to discuss a roadmap for the coming elections. The ECP has been holding consultations with various parties on the electoral roadmap in recent days. The meetings come against the backdrop of the electoral watchdog ruling out elections this year, while the 90-day limit for holding polls - mandated under Article 224 of the Constitution, ends on November 9. The ECP reasons its decision to push elections beyond November 9 on the basis of the notification of results of the new digital 2023 census and Section 17(2) of the Elections Act, which states: "The commission shall delimit constituencies after every census is officially published." In line with this requirement, the ECP has said the process of fresh delimitation is expected to be completed by December 14 - over a month beyond the constitutionally mandated deadline for conducting general elections. However, during its meeting with PML-Q today, the ECP said it intended to squeeze the delimitation timelines as much as possible and immediately issue the schedule for polls. The meeting was chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikan- dar Sultan Raja and also attended by senior ECP officials. The PML-Q delegation was led by Muhammad Tariq Hussain, Farukh Khan, Ghulam Mustafa Malik, Rizwan Sadiq and Hafiz Aqeel Jalil.



## Briefs

## Lithuania summons Vatican envoy

VILNIUS: The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry has requested a meeting with the Vatican's envoy to the country about recent remarks made by Pope Francis on Russian history, local media have reported. "The Foreign Ministry has invited the apostolic nuncio for a conversation in early September, when Archbishop Petar Rajic will return from his vacation," the Baltic News Service quoted spokesperson Paulina Levickyte as saying on Wednesday. The Pope stirred anger among Moscow's critics of with his remarks to young Russian Catholics last week. He urged them to cherish their nation's history, naming Peter I and Catherine II as examples of great Russian political leaders. The monarchs were bestowed with the honorific "the Great" and are two of three such Russian rulers.

The Pontiff's words were met with fury in Kiev. A spokesman for the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry accused Pope Francis of praising "grand-state ideas, which are the cause of Russia's chronic aggression." Mikhail Podoliak, a senior aide to President Vladimir Zelensky, branded the Catholic leader an "instrument of Russian propaganda."

The Vatican's ambassador to Kiev rejected claims that the remarks supported imperialism. The Lithuanian Embassy to the Holy See reposted his comments, according to local media, although the Foreign Ministry said the apparent endorsement had not been coordinated with Vilnius. Moscow reacted to the controversy by stating that it agreed with the Pope's assessment that Russia has a rich and much-valued history. There are many teachers in Russian schools and universities whose goal is to inspire students with this legacy, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, adding that "the fact that the Pontiff sounded in unison with those efforts was very pleasing."—Agencies

## British arms maker to launch production in Ukraine

LONDON: The British arms manufacturing giant BAE Systems intends to "localize in Ukraine" the production of British L119 and US M77 howitzers, as well as Swedish CV90 infantry fighting vehicles, Ukrainian president Vladimir Zelensky announced on Thursday. There are also plans to "open an office of BAE Systems in Ukraine," Zelensky wrote on his Telegram channel after a meeting with the head of the company, Charles Woodburn. According to Zelensky, the enterprise has already started working in Ukraine. "I met with the company's CEO Charles Woodburn. Very productive: the company's office in Ukraine, localization of production in Ukraine," Zelensky wrote, adding that Kiev "highly appreciates when private companies open their offices in our country at this time." Ukraine and the UK arms maker have signed an agreement on cooperation in localizing the production of BAE Systems weapons. Under the deal the British company will produce, repair and supply spare parts for new L119 light guns, Zelensky's press service said.

"The best weapon... should be produced in Ukraine. The development of our own weapons production is one of the top priorities," the Ukrainian president declared. Earlier this month, Woodburn confirmed it was making progress on a plan to set up a base in Ukraine to produce and repair weapons, from tanks to artillery. "It's definitely progressing," he said, adding that "[the] first step is around opening an office and then working with a local partner."—Agencies

## Armenia always pursues policy of terror against Azerbaijanis

People of Armenian origin gathered in front of the administrative building of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Lebanon, and threw bottles with paint and explosives into the building

NEWS DESK

BAKU: The Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan issued a statement in connection with the provocation committed against the Azerbaijani embassy in Lebanon by persons of Armenian origin. It was noted that throughout history Armenia has pursued a policy of terror against Azerbaijanis and Turkish diplomats. Another case, which became one of the consequences of this policy, occurred in Lebanon, where about 50 people of Armenian origin gathered in front of the administrative building of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Lebanon, and threw bottles with paint and explosives into the building. Of serious concern is the fact that the Armenians continue their radical attacks and violent acts in order to carry out the action, shouting unfounded slogans with accusations of disrespect for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Regarding the event, the statement of the Human Rights Commissioner reads: "The monument dedicated to the terrorist operation 'Nemesis' was unveiled as



a symbol of Armenia's terrorist policy towards Azerbaijani-Turkish diplomats throughout history. Although there were no casualties among the embassy staff, such cases should be considered provocations aimed at causing harm to the life and health of Azerbaijani diplomats. At the same time, the fact that the people who committed the provocation left the place when law enforcement officers arrived should not prevent them from taking appropriate measures of responsibility. It is known that, according to international

law, the buildings of embassies are inviolable and must be protected from any interference and damage. Each state must take the necessary measures to ensure the security of the diplomatic service. Unfortunately, the Armenians have repeatedly attacked the diplomatic missions of Azerbaijan in foreign countries and committed various acts of vandalism. A similar incident happened last year in front of our embassy in Lebanon. For this reason, it is of serious concern that the Armenians continue their radical attacks under

the pretext of holding action and committing violent acts, shouting unfounded slogans demonstrating disrespect for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. We want to inform you that we have repeatedly openly called for the propaganda of Armenia's hatred against Azerbaijanis to become more acute. Thus, the continuation of this policy of Azerbaijanophobia leads to the commission by Armenians, both inside Armenia and outside it, of actions directed against Azerbaijan in various forms. I call on all foreign states to fulfill their obligations under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, strongly condemn cases of attacks on diplomatic missions, and support the adoption of the necessary measures of responsibility". Meanwhile, Separatist leader Arayik Harutyunyan announced his intention to resign from his so-called position in Azerbaijan's Garabagh, Azernews reports, citing a post on his Facebook account. He noted that he had made this decision two days earlier. Also, he added that Samvel Shahramanyan will replace him as a leader of separatists. To recall, taking advantage of internal turmoil, Armenia in-

vaded Azerbaijan's Garabagh and adjacent seven districts, and expelled all non-Armenian residents of the region at the beginning of the 1990s when the USSR collapsed. Later Armenians guise their illegal action as a self-determination of nations. Ostensibly, the Armenian minority in Garabagh "declared" their self-determination. Azerbaijan tried to solve the issue through negotiations over 30 years. However, Armenian aggression in 2020 forced Azerbaijan to launch the counter-offensive operation that resulted in liberating most of the invaded territories. It should be noted that during the 44-day War, Arayik Harutyunyan was accused of four terrorist acts against civilians in Ganja in October 2020. The terror was committed from the territory of Armenia. As a result, 26 civilians were killed and 175 were wounded. On 4 October, Arayik Harutyunyan claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack on his social media account. A criminal case was opened under various articles of the Criminal Code, and Arayik Harutyunyan is wanted.

## Japanese premier eats seafood to stem fears

TOKYO: Seeking to stem fears after the release of treated radioactive water, Japan's prime minister on Wednesday made a public show of eating local seafood. "Let's support the Sanriku and Joban regions through food! These regions, consisting of Iwate, Miyagi, Fukushima and Ibaraki prefectures, offer wonderful fish and other marine products. We've just eaten some of their fine products here," Fumio Kishida said in a video message, which shows the prime minister joined by other colleagues during the meal. Tokyo's public campaign to boost the fisheries sector comes as China imposed a blanket ban on imports of aquatic products from Japan. Japan began releasing treated radioactive water from the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant last week. It has triggered a furious reaction from Beijing, while opposition parties in South Korea have held rallies against the move. "You can enjoy these items (wonderful fish and other marine products) at the very peak of their flavor in ekiben lunch boxes or by placing an order online," Kishida said. Earlier this week, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo shared a seafood meal during their weekly lunch meeting on Monday. The move is seen as part of the government's efforts to promote seafood safety as people stopped eating aquatic products fearing for their health.—DNA

## Burkina Faso endorses troop deployment to Niger

KIGALI: Burkina Faso's Cabinet has given the government the green light to send troops to help defend neighboring Niger, where the military deposed President Mohamed Bazoum about a month ago. A Cabinet statement late Wednesday said the government was allowed to deploy a military contingent to Niger "in line with our country's strategic commitments." "Without warmongering, it must be noted that this commitment is made to prevent and in the best interest of our fight against terrorism, a deep aspiration of the Burkinabe people," said Defense Minister Col. Maj. Kassoum Coulibaly. "What affects Niger's security fundamentally affects the security of Burkina Faso." Last week, Niger's military administration authorized troops from neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso to intercede on their side "in the event of aggression" following threats of military intervention by a West African bloc Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) force seeking to reinstate President Mohamed Bazoum. Niger was plunged into turmoil July 26 when Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani, a former commander of the presidential guard, led a military intervention that ousted Bazoum. The military juntas in Burkina Faso and Mali have declared their strong backing for the military administration in Niger.—DNA

## Dengue tally reaches 202 cases in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi's dengue total tally had reached 202 cases with the arrival of 16 more patients during the last 24 hours. District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control (DCEPC), Dr. Sajjad Mehmood, said that eight patients had arrived from the Potohar town Urban, five from Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi, and one of each from Chaklala Cantonment and Kahutta areas. He informed that 149 patients had been discharged after recovery while 66 patients were admitted to the district's health facilities out of which 36 confirmed cases. During the last 24 hours, he said that the district administration had registered 99 FRs, issued tickets to eight, sealed two premises, and a fine of Rs 39,000 was imposed against the violations of dengue SOPs.—DNA

## 5 rail maintenance workers killed by train in Italy

ROME: Five railway workers died after being hit by a train during overnight maintenance on a track in northern Italy, prompting shock and outrage Thursday. The train, which was transporting empty carriages on the Milan-Turin line, was reportedly travelling at 160 kilometres (99 miles) per hour when it struck the team replacing parts of the track near Brandizzo, on the outskirts of Turin. RFI, the company which manages Italy's rail network, confirmed five maintenance workers employed by an external contractor had died after a train "not in commercial service" hit them shortly before midnight. In a statement, it expressed its "deep sorrow" at the deaths of the workers and offered condolences to their families, adding that investigations were underway into the incident. The

fire service confirmed that "five workers were killed by a passing train" and two others were injured. Media reports suggest the pair who escaped, including the foreman, were physically unharmed but under observation. The bodies of the men who died, aged between 22 and 52 or 53 years old, were said to have been dragged for several metres. The train driver, one of two people in the engine cab, was unharmed but in shock, according to Italian news agencies. Paolo Bodoni, the mayor of Brandizzo, said an emergency worker had described to him a "chilling scene, with human remains across 300 metres". "It's a huge tragedy," he told the AGI news agency.

"It cannot be excluded that there could have been a communication error," he said, but said that would be a matter for investigations.

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni offered her "deepest condolences" to the men's families and said she was closely following the case, "with the hope of shedding light on what happened as soon as possible". Her deputy premier and transport minister, Matteo Salvini, the leader of the far-right League party, also lamented a "terrible tragedy". "The rule is that works on the tracks can begin when it is confirmed that there are no trains on the line," he said. "Prosecutors and technicians are investigating how such a dramatic accident could have happened last night." Luigi Sbarra, the head of one of Italy's biggest trade unions, CISL, said he was left "stunned" by the accident. "Five workers died, five families... destroyed due to the failure to apply safety measures," he said.

"It is yet another tragedy that outrages all Italian workers." The head of transport union Ultrasporti, Claudio Tarlazzi, said the accident was "shameful and unworthy of a civilised country". He said his union had for some time raised safety concerns with RFI. Elly Schlein, head of the centre-left Democratic Party, also offered her condolences to the victims of the "terrible massacre". While she said she would wait for the inquiries, she demanded an urgent plan of investment in safety in the workplace. "One thing is already certain - we cannot be a country where people continue to die of work," she said. Two rail workers died and 31 people were injured in February 2020 when the train they were travelling on derailed before dawn near Lodi, south of Milan.—Agencies

## Speakers highlight mango cooperation

BEIJING: In an aim to deepen collaboration and share technological advancements, experts from nine countries including China and Pakistan, along with one international organisation, participated in the Second Annual Meeting of the South and Southeast Asia Mango Network held in Baoshan city in China's southwest province of Yunnan. At the meeting, experts shared the latest developments in mango research and industry practices and presented their latest research findings and shared experiences from their respective countries. Certificates of membership were presented by Gong Jiashun, the Vice President of the Yunnan Academy of Agricultural Sciences (YASS), to the members of the network. He acknowledged the contributions of the network to the regional mango industry and expressed hope for a brighter future for mango enterprises through continued collaboration. Experts at the meeting agreed to expand cooperation, emphasising the importance of joint research projects, capacity building, and joint publication of scientific results. This collaboration aims to address common challenges in the mango industry, such as the lack of superior varieties and quarantine pests. Organised by the Yunnan Academy of Agricultural Sciences (YASS), the "Belt and Road" South and Southeast Asia Crop Regional Science and Technology Innovation Institute, and the South and Southeast Asia Agricultural Science and Technology Joint Research Centre, the two-day conference focused on "Exchange and Cooperation for Green Development".—DNA

## EU delegation to stay in Gabon

BRUSSELS: EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Thursday that the EU for now is not planning to evacuate its personnel from coup-hit Gabon as the "situation is calm." Speaking to reporters ahead of an informal meeting of EU foreign affairs ministers in Toledo, Spain, Borrell said recent events in the Central African country "give ground for preoccupation but we are not doing evacuation like in Niger." A group of high-ranking Gabonese military officers on Wednesday said they had seized power, and annulled results of the recently held general elections. Borrell stressed the "situation is calm at the moment, there is no violence" in Gabon that would justify the evacuation of the EU delegation. He asserted that "a military coup is not a solution" even if "there might have been irregularities around" Saturday's polls. The EU is "working on the diplomatic front" and analyzing the developments, he added. The EU foreign affairs ministers will again meet on Thursday to discuss the union's response to the war in Ukraine and the situation in Africa's Sahel region. The meeting is being hosted by Spain, which assumed the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union on July 1. Joined by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, the ministers will discuss support for Ukraine, as well as diplomatic means to end the war, Borrell said. According to the EU official, Moscow's decision not to extend the Black Sea grain deal, which was brokered by Türkiye and the UN in July 2022, has "weakened Russia's position" in international relations. The meeting of EU foreign affairs also gives a chance for the bloc to "review its Africa policy," he added. The ministers will also assess the EU's response to the military coup in Niger, including a sanctions regime.—APP

## India cabinet celebrates Chandrayaan-3 Mission

DNA

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet joins the Nation in celebrating the historic success of the Chandrayaan-3 Mission to the Moon. The Cabinet also appreciates the monumental achievement of our scientists. This is not just a victory for our space agency but is a bright symbol of India's progress and ascent on the global stage. The Cabinet welcomes that 23rd August would be celebrated as the "National Space Day". The Cabinet congratulates the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for its efforts. Thanks to our scientists, India is the first country to land near the Moon's south pole. Landing on the moon, with predicted accuracy, in itself is a momentous achievement. Landing near the South Pole of the Moon, overcoming the arduous conditions, is a testament to the

spirit of our scientists, who since centuries have sought to push the boundaries of human knowledge. The wealth of information being sent by 'Pragyan' rover from the Moon will advance knowledge and pave the way for ground-breaking discoveries and insights into the mysteries of the moon and beyond. The Cabinet firmly believes that in an era defined by rapid technological advancements and the quest for innovation, India's scientists stand as shining beacons of knowledge, dedication and expertise. Their analytical prowess, combined with a fervent commitment to inquiry and exploration, has constantly propelled the nation into the forefront of global scientific achievements. Their relentless pursuit of excellence, unyielding curiosity, and indomitable spirit to overcome challenges have not only cemented their reputation on the international

stage but have also inspired countless others to dream big and contribute to the vast tapestry of global knowledge. The Cabinet is proud to see that a large number of women scientists have contributed to the success of Chandrayaan-3 and India's space programme in general. This will motivate several aspiring women scientists in the years to come. The Cabinet also congratulates Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for his visionary and exemplary leadership, and his unwavering commitment to India's space programme for human welfare and scientific progress. His faith in the capabilities of our scientists and his constant encouragement have always fortified their spirit. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always encouraged science and innovation. In the last 9 years, a series of reforms have been ushered which have made research and innovation easier.

For the space sector, Prime Minister Modi ensured that the private sector and our StartUps got more opportunities in India. The establishment of IN-SPACE as an autonomous body under Department of Space, to create an eco-system of industry, academia and start-ups and to attract major share in the global space economy was launched in June 2020. It has become an instrument for enhancing India's strides in the world of space. The emphasis on Hackathons has opened up many opportunities for young Indians.

The Cabinet welcomes the naming of two points on the moon as Tiranga Point (footprint of Chandrayaan-2) and ShivShakti Point (Chandrayaan-3's landing spot). These names beautifully capture the essence of our past while embracing the spirit of modernity. These names are more than just titles.

## OIP: Non-Aligned Movement role for global peace urged

DNA

JAKARTA: The ongoing international Online Internship Program co-organized by the Indonesian Embassy and the Bahria University, Islamabad, held its Session 12 on August 29, 2023. Dr. Connie Rahakundini Bakrie, Executive Director of Institute of Defense and Security Studies was the speaker at the session who shared her insight with the participants on the topic of Indonesia & Non-Aligned Movement: is it still relevant in today's global politics? The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has become the largest grouping of states worldwide after the United Nations; however, with hanging global politics, its relevance has been widely debated. The importance of NAM as a political power in the current international scenario is being frequently questioned.

The speaker highlighted the significant transition in global geopolitics following the collapse of communism in the USSR and Eastern Europe, which was supposed to end the cold war. She emphasized the ongoing Cold War, which is increasingly becoming ultra-cold. Commenting on the situation between Russia and Ukraine she stated that "the Cold War is still present and becoming increasingly ultra-cold". In the context of NAM Jakarta conference in 1992, the speaker stressed that despite the end of the cold war, the NAM struggle must continue. She reminded that in resolving Russia Ukraine armed conflict, UN Multilateral crisis management has not been successful and the UN agencies were unable to prevent and provide solutions such as peace accords, ceasefires and new appeasements. Dr. Connie said that in the current global scenario NAM should



more proactive role and cited "the NAM 'RE-NEW' Declaration that advocates for equality, sovereignty, friendly relations, peaceful resolution of international disputes, opposes force and weapon of mass destruction and aims to protect the entire human race". "The Asia Pacific is facing growing geopolitical tensions between China and the US, intensifying competition between the Indo-Pacific Eco-

economic Framework and Belt and Road initiative, and increasing security threats of cyber-attacks that could disrupt and undermine critical infrastructure". Dr. Connie elaborated. She stressed that NAM should oppose military alliances, call for a world power balance, oppose Cold Supra War models and advocate for dispute resolution through negotiation and diplomatic means. She made special reference to Indonesian President Soekarno's famous 1960 United Nations speech, "To Build the World A New", that emphasized the importance of a fair World Order Conception. "Indonesia's President Jokowi has proposed building the country as the nexus of international maritime and airspace, as it is at the heart of strategic sea line communication" she explained when sharing Indonesia's response to the emerging situation. The Asian-African Conference in

Bandung in 1955 was the initial process for the birth of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM). The Conference was held on 18 - 24 April 1955 and was attended by 29 Heads of State and Heads of Government from the newly independent countries. The NAM, central to Indonesia's foreign policy, focuses on issues such as disarmament, economic development, poverty alleviation, climate change, and establishing a just world order. Indonesia supports NAM's role in international peace, security, counter terrorism, environmental concerns, and achieving Sustainable Development Goals. She concluded that NAM should continue maintain its influence on the world peace and should campaign for a new international and regional economic order based on political and economic equality and continue to contribute its support in strengthening the UN organization.



## Briefs

### 9 killed, 17 injured in suicide attack

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: At least nine personnel of security forces were killed and 17 other injured when a suicide bomber targeted a vehicle within convoy at Janikhel area near to Southern Bannu city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Thursday evening. Preliminary reports from Bannu reveals that conditions of several injured stated in danger. Local tribesmen from Janikhel connecting Bannu with tribal District North Waziristan informed that a motor bike rider suicide bomber struck his bike with a vehicle within convoy of security forces at Janikhel. As a result several vehicles damaged and personnel on board killed and injured. Soon after the incident other personnel qothin convoy cordoned off the area and shifted the dead bodies and injured shifted to Combined Military Hospital Bannu. So far no any individual or alleged militant group claimed responsibility. But local civil administration and police officials termed it a terror act. No any formal official statement issued so far. However no there exists curfew like situation in the area.

### Biden says climate crisis cannot be denied anymore

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden said Wednesday that the climate crisis cannot be denied any longer as countries around the globe grapple with the fall-out from increasingly severe disasters. "I don't think anybody can deny the impact of the climate crisis anymore. Just look around," Biden told reporters at the White House as the west coast of the state of Florida grapples with unprecedented storm surge brought to the Big Bend region by Hurricane Idalia. "Historic floods, more intense droughts, extreme heat, significant wildfires have caused significant damage like we've never seen before, not only throughout the Hawaiian Islands in the United States, but in Canada and other parts of the world. We've never seen this much fire," he added. Biden said he has ordered the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to deploy 1,500 emergency personnel and 900 Coast Guard service members throughout the southeast as Idalia closed in on the US mainland. FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell is leaving Washington for Florida later Wednesday to meet Gov. Ron DeSantis and other state officials as she prepares the federal assessment of the damage left in Idalia's wake. - Agencies

### China tells India to 'stay calm' in border map row

BEIJING: China has told India to "stay calm" over a new Chinese map that Delhi says lays claim to its territory. India protested after Beijing released the map showing north-eastern Arunachal Pradesh state and the disputed Aksai Chin plateau as China's territory. Beijing responded by saying its neighbours should refrain from "over-interpretation" the issue. Meanwhile, media reports say Chinese President Xi Jinping is likely to skip next week's G20 leaders talks in Delhi. Unconfirmed reports suggest Premier Li Qiang will attend instead. Mr Xi had earlier confirmed he would travel to Delhi for the meeting from 9-10 September - but China's foreign ministry would not confirm his attendance when asked to do so at a regular press briefing on Thursday. Unidentified sources told Reuters news agency that he cancelled his plan over the map controversy. The BBC could not independently verify claim. - Agencies

## 66th Independence Day of Malaysia

# Malaysia blessed with a rich tapestry of cultures, traditions

As High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, I am proud to bear witness to the strong and enduring bond of brotherly ties between Malaysia and Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Malaysia Azhar Mazlan has said Malaysia values its unity in diversity blessed with a rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and traditions. 'As we progress into the future, we have forged a strong sense of nationhood which is deeply-rooted in our aspiration, shared values, mutual respect among our diverse ethnicities'. The high commissioner made these remarks on the occasion of 66th National Day of Malaysia. A flag hoisting ceremony was performed on this occasion. He further said, 'on this auspicious occasion of the 66th Independence Day of Malaysia, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations and sincere felicitations to fellow countrymen and countrywomen residing in Pakistan with a wish... "Selamat Hari Kebangsaan. Malaysia MADANI: Tekad Perpaduan Penuhi Harapan". High Commissioner Mazlan added, as Malay-



sians living abroad, we should be proud of our beloved nation taking cognizant of the success stories Malaysia has achieved since

independence as a progressive dynamic country. "We take immense pride in multiculturalism which has been the bedrock of

our strength, unity in diversity. Over the past six and a half decades, Malaysia has achieved significant growth in nation building'. As High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, I am proud to bear witness to the strong and enduring bond of brotherly ties between Malaysia and Pakistan. The excellent diplomatic ties strengthened by close people-to-people contacts have contributed to an even closer relationship between Malaysia and Pakistan. In this context, I intend to take our relationship to a higher level, he added. 'On this auspicious occasion, I would like to call on all Malaysians to reaffirm commitment to chart our future together premises on Malaysia MADANI principle of inclusivity, tolerance, and progress'. H.E. Azhar Mazlan said, let us march ahead with unity in our hearts and determination in our souls. Like our forefathers before us, we should strive and work harder for a Malaysia we can be proud of for the generation to come, he concluded.

### Shapps appointed as new British defense secy

LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Thursday appointed Grant Shapps as the country's new defense secretary, replacing Ben Wallace. Shapps, the energy security and net zero secretary before his promotion, briefly served as the home secretary under Liz Truss, transport secretary under Boris Johnson and previously as chairman of the Tory party. Shapps said he is "honoured" to assume the new role. "I'd like to pay tribute to the enormous contribution Ben Wallace has made to UK defense and global security over the last 4 years. "I am looking forward to working with the brave men and women of our Armed Forces who defend our nation's security. And continuing the UK's support for Ukraine in their fight against Putin's barbaric invasion," he added. Wallace formally submitted his resignation as the UK defense secretary this morning. In his resignation letter, following on his announcement this July that he intended to leave his post, Wallace spoke of the "honor to serve alongside the men and women of our Armed forces and intelligence services who sacrifice so much for our security." He added: "After careful contemplation, I have made the decision to request permission to step down. I first won my seat in 2005, and after many years of service, I believe it's time for me to devote attention to aspects of life that I've neglected and to explore fresh opportunities." He extended gratitude for the support and friendship he has received, assuring Sunak and the government of his ongoing support. - Agencies

### Saqib Rafiq appointed as Chairman RWMC

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The caretaker Cabinet of Punjab Government with the approval of Election Commission of Pakistan appointed President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) as Chairman Rawalpindi Waste Management Company. The appointment tenure is for three years. As per notification the non executive board members are Danyal Chaudhry, Raja Abdul Hanif, Zia Ullah Shah, Abdul Basit Javed and Shahram Bin Shahzad.

## Rabbani alarmed over ECP meetings with foreign diplomats

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) senior leader Senator Raza Rabbani has objected to the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) interactions with foreign diplomats. The former Senate chairman has expressed his concerns over foreign dignitaries holding meetings with Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja in his personal capacity and issuing statements regarding the election timeline and transparency. "Elections are Pakistan's internal matter. We're not a client state." The veteran politician is of the view that whatever's left of

Pakistan's political independence mustn't be allowed to be violated via foreign involvement. The development comes as the country's top electoral body has held meetings with all the major stakeholders in order to create a consensus for the upcoming general elections. The ECP has held consultations with various political parties including PPP, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), Balochistan National Party (BNP), Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) and Awami National Party (ANP). A day earlier, the electoral body once again reiterated

its commitment to finish the delimitation process by December and hold elections by mid-February. Last week the PML-N's delegation backed the election organising authority to hold polls after carrying out delimitation of constituencies based on the new census. As per the election watchdog, the Nawaz Sharif-led party informed the ECP that the Council of Common Interest (CCI) had unanimously given the approval for the publication of census results. "All political parties agreed that 2023 elections should be held as per the new census. The delimitation schedule issued by the Election Commission is in accordance with the Constitution and the law." The PML-N informed the ECP as per the watchdog.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chaired a meeting on Pakistan's economy in Islamabad. - DNA

## Johannesburg building fire: Death toll rises to 73

JOHANNESBURG: At least 73 people have died and dozens more were injured after a fire tore through a five-story building in central Johannesburg which had been turned into informal housing. Authorities said they have moved through the building floor by floor, searching for survivors and pulling out charred bodies and laying them on the streets. Children are believed to have been killed, according to local media. The fire has now been extinguished, rescue officials said. In addition to the dead, more than 50 other people were injured, according to Robert Mulaudzi, a spokesperson for the city's emergency services. Wiseman Mpepa, who survived the fire, told CNN he woke up to people screaming. After seeing the fire blocking the building's exit, he broke his window, but struggled to climb through. Mpepa said he tried to tell other people in the building to go to a gate to exit the building, but the gate was shut. "They closed the gate," he told CNN on the ground. "After that, I had no plan. I just sat (in my room)."

Videos taken moments after the fire broke out show huge orange flames engulfing the lower floor of a building and scores of people standing outside. Photos from Thursday morning showed onlookers crowding around burnt out and cordoned off areas, broken glass windows, and clothes strewn around the building. The cause of the blaze remains unclear but authorities at the scene gave no indication it was deliberate. The fire broke out around 1:30 a.m. local time, when many people inside the building were asleep. South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa called it a "tragedy." Fire worst in recent memory It took place in a "hijacked" building in central Johannesburg, Mulaudzi said, referring to what he said were hundreds of settlements inside. "Hijacked" buildings, seen in many parts of downtown Johannesburg, refer to buildings abandoned by landlords and taken over by gangs or other groups and leased out mostly to migrants and South Africans who don't have the means to afford other forms of housing. - Agencies

## British HC gifts state-of-the-art airport security scanners to Pakistan



NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott CMG OBE Thursday handover two airport security scanners to Pakistan during a ceremony held at Karachi Airport. British High Commissioner Jane Marriott CMG-OBE addressing the ceremony said "I'm delighted to handover

these state-of-the-art airport security scanners here in Karachi, a demonstration of UK support for security at Pakistan's airports." "We all want travellers to fly safely and securely, this new technology means passengers can fly with greater confidence from Pakistan. Aviation plays a vital role in growing trade between the UK and Pakistan and enabling the diaspora to travel. Making flying safer brings

the UK and Pakistan even closer together", she added. "I want to thank the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority for arranging today's ceremony and for the excellent cooperation we have on both aviation security and safety issues." With over 1.6 million people of Pakistani heritage in the UK making up every part of British society, we have a special and ever-growing special bond, she concluded. It is pertinent to mention here that the Hundreds of thousands of people travel between the UK and Pakistan every year, proof of the hugely significant UK-Pakistan people-to-people relationship. Air links are of vital importance for trade between the UK and Pakistan and the diaspora. UK funding of £164,000 (60 million Rupees) has provided two state-of-the-art screening units for Karachi and Lahore airports to detect illicit items in passenger baggage. This technology will help to protect both British and Pakistani nationals travelling from Pakistan to the UK and elsewhere. This is one small part of the UK's ongoing aviation work with Pakistan, which is helping to raise safety and security standards.

## Muzamil lashes out PDM over sugar prices

ISLAMABAD: Lashing out at the PDM government for opening the floodgate of inflation, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Focal Person on Economy Muzamil Aslam made a startling revelation that the sugar moguls pocketed around Rs. 255 to Rs. 260 billion in profit during the last six months due to alarming escalation in sugar price. PTI Focal Person on Economy said that if the current price of sugar remained unchanged till November, the sugar barons could earn a whopping Rs. 127 billion extra in profit. He stated that the sugar price doubled during the last three to four months that compounded the miseries of the inflation-ridden and poverty-stricken masses manifold. Muzamil recalled that sugar was available at Rs 85 per kg 16 months ago when PTI government was toppled through conspiracy but now the commodity was being sold at exorbitant rate ranging from Rs. 150 to Rs. 180 per kg. He stated that the annual consumption of sugar in Pakistan was six million tons, as five lakh tons of sugar was being consumed per month in the country. Muzamil revealed that an increase of Rs. 85 per kg in the price of sugar would earn a profit of Rs. 85,000 per ton, adding that if calculated the annual profit, the sugar moguls would pocket a whopping Rs. 510 billion in profit from the sale of only six million ton. He raised a question as how much money the sugar mafia would have earned due to the massive increase in the prices of sugar. Muzamil stated if the price of sugar remained the same till November, the people associated with sugar business would get a whopping Rs. 127 billion extra in profit. - DNA

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Ph: +92 51 228 7691 / +92 51 228 7692 | Fax: +92 51 228 7693