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President Xi: China 'deeply pained' by 'severe' Gaza situation

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Govt tackles production costs: Kamal

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Djokovic shrugs off troubles at French Open

Detailed News On Page-06



Let us embrace truth: SC

Top court comes down heavily on British HC Jane

The British envoy has said in her speech 'Not all parties were formally permitted to contest the elections and that legal processes were used to prevent some political leaders from participation, and to prevent the use of recognizable party symbols'

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has severely criticised British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriot's recent speech targeting the South Asian nation's general elections in 2024, calling on the UK to learn from past mistakes and move on. In a speech during the Asma Jahangir conference last month, Marriot while quoting British Foreign Secretary David Cameron raised concerns about Pakistan's February 8 elections. "...not all parties were formally permitted to contest the elections and that legal processes were used to prevent some political leaders from participation, and to prevent the use of recognisable party symbols," Britain's top diplomat had said. She then noted that Pakistan's government, civil society, and global players should work to nurture an "open society" and "vibrant democracy" as open societies are transparent. The top court's registrar, in a letter to the envoy, said that her criticism of a certain political party being sidelined by stripping it of its symbol was unfounded as it did not follow the law. The letter, drawing attention to the court's role, said elections were required to be held within 90 days of the completion of the tenure of the national and provincial assemblies. However, they did not take place because then-president Arif Alvi and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) were at odds regarding who was empowered to announce the election date. "The matter was resolved in just 12 days by the Supreme Court, and general elections

Continued on Page 06

IHC bars telcos from recording calls, data for surveillance

Judge tells AAG illegal surveillance a crime punishable by law, demands clarity on relevant law

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Wednesday ordered telecommunication companies to refrain from recording phone calls for surveillance purposes, warning that they would be held accountable if their equipment was used for illegal surveillance. The order came as Justice Babar Sattar of the IHC resumed hearing on a petition challenging the alleged audio leak involving former prime minister Imran Khan's spouse, Bushra Bibi, and Najam Saqib, the son of former chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar. During the hearing, Justice Sattar asked the lawyer representing

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Buddhist Monks led by Minister of Budhasasana and Religious Affairs of Sri Lanka H.E Vidura Wickramanayaka calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

PTI moves LHC to reclaim 'bat'

Argues a political party cannot be deprived of its right to contest election due to failure to hold intra-party polls

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has moved the Lahore High Court, seeking a directive for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to allot it the electoral symbol of the "cricket bat". PTI argues that a political party cannot be deprived of its right to contest an election, particularly by withholding its symbol due to failure to hold intra-party elections. The petition was filed by PTI Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan, Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan, Information Secretary Raouf Hasan, and others.

Continued on Page 06

ECP gets powers to appoint election tribunal judges

These panels are formed to hear rigging complaints

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A latest development, which can be described as a game changer, about the nature of election tribunals means that the country's top electoral body now enjoys powers to appoint judges for hearing the complaints, sources say. According to the sources in law ministry, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has also got the authority to also transfer the pending cases to the new tribunals.

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Buddhist delegation calls on PM

Shehbaz highlights Pak commitment to interfaith harmony

The Buddhist leaders appreciated the Prime Minister's commitment to fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect for all religions. They also commended Pakistan's efforts to preserve and promote its Buddhist heritage sites and cultural artifacts

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of esteemed Buddhist leaders called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad today. The delegation is visiting Pakistan to attend a symposium and an exhibition titled "From Gandhara to the World," organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The delegation included Sri Lanka's Minister for Budhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs, Honorable Vidura Wickramanayaka, Most Venerable Thich Duc Tuan from Vietnam, Most Venerable Anil Sakya from Thailand and Dr Keshabman Shakya from Nepal. The Prime Minister warmly welcomed the delegation. He expressed his gratitude for their participation in the Symposium, being held in connection with the 'Vesak Day' that commemorates

Continued on Page 06

PML-N huddle decides giving relief to masses

Meeting was co-chaired by party president Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) led government has decided to give maximum relief to the masses in the upcoming budget. A three-hour long meeting was held at Jati Umra with PML-N

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Petrol Prices likely to be reduced

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Petrol and diesel prices are expected to decline by up to Rs5 per litre in the upcoming fortnightly review, sources told Geo News on Wednesday. The Petroleum Division sources said on Wednesday that the per litre price of petrol is likely to go down by Rs5 while diesel is expected to be slashed by Rs4 per litre. However, they said the next two days are important regarding any change in the fuel prices as the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) will forward its summary to the Finance Division on May 31. The final decision on the petroleum products prices will be made following the Ministry of Finance's consultation with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Final notice issued to Tariq Fazal

The tribunal has ordered to submit Form 45, 46, and 47 along with an affidavit by June 5

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Election Tribunal has given MNA Tariq Fazal Chaudhry from NA-47 a last and final opportunity to submit his reply in a case of alleged rigging. The tribunal has ordered Chaudhry to submit Form 45, 46, and 47 along with an affidavit by June 5. This directive comes in response to a petition filed by PTI independent candidate Shoab Shaheen, alleging election rigging. The tribunal, led by Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, issued a five-page written order highlighting Chaudhry's failure to comply with the previous court orders to submit the required forms.

PTI's fight isn't with army

Establishment piling up pressure on state institutions

PTI spokesperson says Imran will have to spend more time in prison as "more cases to be lodged"

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: A delay in the ruling on the un-Islamic nikah case has apparently shattered Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) hopes of the early release of its founder Imran Khan from prison. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad on Wednesday, PTI Information Secretary Raouf Hasan said state institutions were trying to keep the party founder behind bars despite him securing bail in several cases. "Establishment's pressure on state institutions is piling up," he stated while reacting to the delay in the announcement of a reserved verdict in the iddat case against the PTI founder and his wife Bushra Bibi by an Islamabad sessions court earlier today. The Islamabad court had reserved the verdict last week on appeals filed by the PTI founder and his wife against their conviction in

Continued on Page 06

No verdict in Iddat case as judge seeks transfer of appeals

PTI supporters, lawyers angry at Maneka's 'delaying tactics' assault him in and outside courtroom

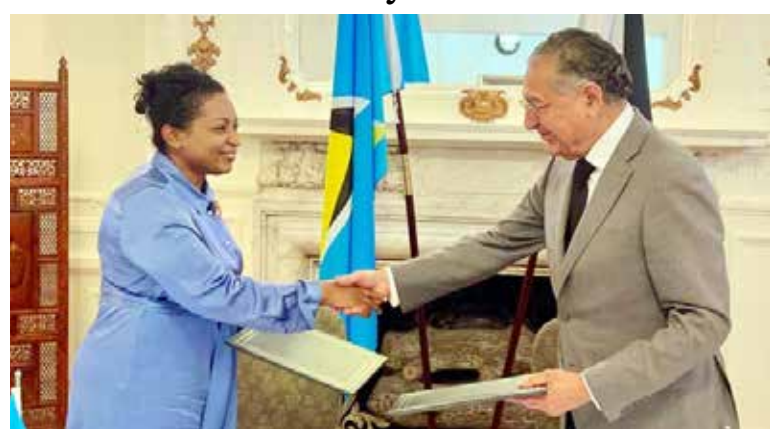
MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: In a dramatic turn of events, the sessions judge hearing the Iddat case sought its transfer to another court on Monday without announcing the reserved judgment many thought would overturn the

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan formalizes diplomatic relations with Saint Lucia

Ambassador Munir Akram says development will open up avenues for mutually-beneficial relationship in various realms



FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: Pakistan and Saint Lucia, a Caribbean Island country, have formalised their diplomatic relations during a simple ceremony held at the Pakistan Mission in New York on

Tuesday. Ambassador Munir Akram, Pakistan's permanent representative to the United Nations and his counterpart from Saint Lucia, Ambassador Menissa Rambally, signed the joint communiqué on behalf of their respective countries. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Akram said he was

happy to be part of the ceremony that formalised the diplomatic relations between the two friendly countries. In her remarks on the occasion, Ambassador Rambally expressed her delight at the start of a new but significant chapter in the bilateral relations between the two countries. She said that former West Indies cricketer, Darren Sammy, who belongs to St Lucia, was also an honorary Pakistani citizen, "who would always talk about Pakistan and the hospitality of its people." Ambassador Akram added that both Pakistan and St Lucia had been cooperating at multilateral forums including at the Commonwealth, stating that the establishment of formal relations would serve as the basis to expand the bilateral ties. The Pakistani envoy also mentioned the shared love for cricket between the people of Pakistan and St Lucia.

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Govt tackles production costs, industry issues

Jam Kamal Khan emphasised that the government's top priority was addressing challenges related to trade, export, import, manufacturing, and tariff competitiveness

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan has said that the government has devised a well-tailored, well-thought-out and doable strategy to overcome rising production cost issue for the sake of promotion of manufacturing sector in the country. "A conducive business environment would be ensured to cut unemployment and promote the SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises)," he said while talking to the business community here at Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) on Wednesday. He said that it was the responsibility of the Ministry of Commerce to maintain contact with the business community to understand and resolve their issues. He emphasised that the government's top priority was addressing challenges related to trade, export, import, manufacturing, and tariff competitiveness. Additionally, issues like circular debt, the IMF conditions, and the inefficiency of various institutions, which burden consumers, needed to be tackled. He promised that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had guaranteed the involvement of relevant stakeholders in addressing economic issues. LCCI President Kashif Anwar welcomed the Minister and highlighted the

challenges being faced by the business community including inflation, depreciating currency, rising costs of electricity, gas, fuel, high-interest rates, MDI charges, axle load laws, and increased cargo delivery charges. He pointed out that recent SROs (457, 350, 1842) have added to the tax burden on registered individuals, causing further distress. LCCI Senior Vice President Zafer Mahmood Chaudhry, former presidents Mian Misbah-ur-Rehman, Muhammad Ali Mian, Shahid Hassan Sheikh, Abdul Basit, and Tariq Misbah also addressed the occasion. Director General TDAP Fouzia Chaudhry, executive committee members of the Lahore Chamber, and representatives of the business community were also present. Kashif Anwar said that the use of import tariffs primarily for revenue generation negatively impacts industrial performance and export capabilities. He urged for changes in the tariff structure to support local industries and reduce smuggling. He suggested a revised tariff structure with zero percent duty on basic materials, 5-10 per cent on intermediate goods, and higher slabs for semi-finished and consumer goods to simplify the complex duty system. He also recommended reducing duties on machinery and intermediate goods to facilitate technological advancements and equalizing duty rates for commercial importers and manufacturers to

support SMEs. He emphasized the importance of accessing untapped markets such as Africa, Central Asia, and ASEAN countries to boost exports. Besides textiles, rice, and leather, he highlighted the potential of sectors like halal food, pharmaceuticals, IT and engineering to enhance exports. He called for resolving payment issues in the IT sector to increase its export potential and suggested creating a mechanism to ensure all remittances are brought to Pakistan rather than held in foreign banks. The president noted that the Ministry of Commerce was leveraging existing PTAs and FTAs with other countries. He suggested reassessing trade agreements with countries where Pakistan faces trade deficits despite these agreements. He mentioned the potential signing of an FTA between Pakistan and the GCC within the next three to four months and noted existing trade agreements with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. He also discussed the implementation of a barter trade mechanism with Iran, Afghanistan and Russia through SRO-642 in the coming months, expressing hope for improved trade with neighboring countries. Addressing sector-specific issues, he pointed out the restriction on jewelers to bring back 50 per cent gold and 50 per cent foreign exchange from their exports under SRO-760.



QUETTA: Vendors arranging and displaying mangoes to attract the customers.—App

Federal Ombudsman to Hold Open Court in Jand

ATTOCK : Advisor to the Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan, Haroon Sikandar Pasha will hold an open court on May 30th at the office of Assistant Commissioner to provide accessible justice to the people of Jand. According to AC office, This initiative, is part of the Federal Ombudsman's Outreach Complaint Resolution (OCR) program, aims to address public grievances against federal institutions directly and efficiently. The open court will see the participation of officers from various federal institutions including those responsible for electricity, gas, NADRA, Benazir Income Support Program and the Post Office. This direct engagement will allow citizens to voice their concerns and seek resolutions for their issues related to these institutions. "This open court is a testament to the Federal Ombudsman's commitment to providing justice at the people's doorstep," stated Advisor Haroon Sikandar Pasha. "We believe that every citizen deserves a fair and timely resolution to their grievances, and this initiative is a step towards achieving that goal." The Federal Ombudsman has urged the relevant authorities of the participating institutions to actively participate in the open court and work towards resolving the public's concerns promptly and effectively.—APP

RCCI urges favorable environment for investment in Pakistan

President Saqib Rafiq said that the raid has sent a negative message to the business community, especially the investors

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has emphasized on making the environment favorable for investment in the country, securing investors' confidence and promoting industrialization. Talking to the members of Private Housing Society (Bahria Town) at chamber house, President RCCI Saqib Rafiq and Group Leader Sohail Altaf expressed hope that the government will consider the Chamber proposals in the upcoming

budget 2024-25. He said that RCCI has recently organized All Pakistan Chambers Presidents' Conference, where it formulated the comprehensive budget proposals seeking government attention towards investor friendly policies including lowering interest rate to single digit, steps towards lowering cost of doing business, cut in prices for energy and raw material etc. The budget proposals have appreciated the role of SIFC in increasing foreign investment in the country,

he said. The members expressed concern over the raid on the offices of Bahria Town and said that the raid on the housing society is disturbing and created a panic environment among the investors. Talking to the members, Chamber President Saqib Rafiq said that the raid has sent a negative message to the business community, especially the investors. It is hoped that SIFC will take notice of the NAB raid on Bahria Town and will take immediate steps to ease.—APP

Court Notice

In the Court of Muhammad Naeem Wato Civil Judge Gujrat

Title: Saman Parvez etc. Versus District Excise Taxation officer etc.

Notice to: 1-District Excise & Taxation Officer Gujrat through Halqa Inspector Block# VI Jalalpur Jattan Tehsil & District Gujrat. 2-Tariq Mehmood S/o. Ghulam Nabi R/o. Mohallah Masjid Sadique Jalalpur Jattan Tehsil & District Gujrat.

Suit for Declaration with Consequential Relief Whereas in the above mentioned case it has been proved to the satisfaction of the court that the above mentioned defendants are not served in ordinary way. It is therefore proclaimed under order 5 rule 20 CPC that if the said defendants will not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8 AM on 03-06-2024, otherwise case will be decided ex parte.

In the Court of Medum Nabila Zaheer Civil Judge Gujrat

Title: Talat Maqsood etc. Versus Mukhtar Ahmad etc.

Notice to: 90- Imran Hussain S/o. Abdul Hameed, 91-Saqib Rasheed S/o. Rasheed Ahmad, 92-Asif ul Hassan S/o. Rasheed Ahmad R/o. Ballar Tehsil & District Gujrat.

Suit for Partition along with separate possession and permanent injunction Whereas in the above mentioned case it has been proved to the satisfaction of the court that the above mentioned defendants are not served in ordinary way. It is therefore proclaimed under order 5 rule 20 CPC that if the said defendants will not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8 AM on 03-06-2024, otherwise case will be decided ex parte.

PST terms passing away of Talat Hussain great loss

Chairperson of the PST, Parveen Qadir Agha while expressing her deep grief and shock over the death of Talat Hussain held that he was an acclaimed TV artist of Pakistan whose dialogue delivery gained international fame

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson and members of the Parveen Shakir Trust (PST) have offered condolences to the family of great Pakistani Radio, TV and stage artist, Talat Hussain who passed away recently on May 26, 2024. His death is a great loss not only to his family, the showbiz industry but also to the scores of fans spread across the world and with the passing away of Talat Hussain ended the golden era of the Pakistan Television. Chairperson of the PST, Parveen Qadir Agha while expressing her deep grief and

shock over the death of Talat Hussain held that he was an acclaimed TV artist of Pakistan whose dialogue delivery gained international fame. The Parveen Shakir Trust team is deeply saddened at the passing away of Talat Hussain as he was a friend of the trust and participated in a number of events organized by the trust. Despite being a great orator and a matchless artist, he was a humble, down-to-earth human being who was always ready to help. This quality alone made him a great lovable person and artist. She prayed that Allah Almighty might rest his soul in eternal peace and grant strength to his family members to bear the loss.

DC orders to take preemptive measures ahead of monsoon

He emphasized that any negligence in this regard would not be tolerated. The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has repeatedly issued alerts about thunderstorms and heavy rains, necessitating preparedness from all departments involved

HYDERABAD : Deputy Commissioner and Chairman of the District Disaster Management Authority Zain-ul-Abideen Memon has directed relevant officers to take all possible measures to handle the potential monsoon rains and flood situation. He emphasized that any negligence in this regard would not be tolerated. The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has repeatedly issued alerts about thunderstorms and heavy rains, necessitating preparedness from all departments involved. During a meeting with officials from various departments, he urged that all necessary arrangements should be made in advance to avoid any emergency situations. Officials from the local government and the irrigation department briefed him about ongoing efforts to clean drains, with an expectation to complete the work before the monsoon season begins. The officials assured that a contingency plan about the current status of pumping stations and the availability of essential equipment, including generators, would be submitted soon. The DC also directed the officers to identify areas where drain cleaning has not yet completed. He instructed the TMC personnel to finalize all the arrangements before the monsoon season. The health department officials were also directed to take all possible steps to handle any emergency. Moreover, Memon ordered the establishment of a 24-hour active control room with designated focal persons. He also instructed the HESCO officials to address technical issues and ensure the trimming of trees to prevent power disruptions. The education department officials were asked to provide details regarding relief camps for potential flood victims and to identify dilapidated and hazardous buildings. Memon stated that action would be taken against officers absent from the meeting. The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Shehzad Ahmed Sahi, Additional Deputy Commissioner II Mehwish Aijaz, Assistant Commissioner Rural Anees Ahmed Abbasi, Assistant Commissioner Latifabad Saud Ahmed Baloch, Assistant Commissioner Qasimabad Abdul Wahid Channa, Assistant Commissioner city Babar Saleh Rahnpo, Municipal Commissioner HMC Jam Zahoor Lakhani, MD WASA Zeeshan Malik and other officials from the Irrigation, HESCO, civil defense and related departments.—DNA

ISSI Concludes MoU with Turkiye's Yunus Emre Enstitusu

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Further

strengthening its international collaboration, the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) con-

cluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Yunus Emre Enstitusu, Turkiye. The MoU signing

ceremony included the participation of the Turkish Ambassador in Islamabad, His Excellency Mehmet Pacaci; Dr. Halil Tokar, Coordinator of Yunus Emre Enstitusu; Turkiye, Dr. Yousaf Junaid, Ambassador of Pakistan in Ankara; Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI; Ms. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA; and Team CAMEA. While giving her introductory remarks, Ms. Amina Khan said that this MoU is a testament of the long-standing relationship between Pakistan and Turkiye which is built on mutual respect and shared history. Collaboration between ISSI and the Yunus Emre Enstitusu is a step towards further enhancing as well as opening new avenues for cultural and

academic cooperation between the two countries. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his remarks, welcomed the conclusion of the MoU stating that it will lead to further fortifying the relationship which goes back centuries and is underpinned by cultural and religious affinities as well as shared history. He added that Pakistan and Turkiye are two indispensable partners and that initiatives such as these further reinforce the efforts of the two governments to further deepen their multifaceted partnership. He concluded by saying that effective implementation of this MoU will provide a range of opportunities for collaboration in the research and academic fields.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

May

- May 03/Poland National Day
- May 06/Bulgaria Armed Forces Day
- May 06/UAE Armed Forces Day
- May 07/Kazakhstan Armed Forces Day
- May 08/Czech Republic National Day
- May 09/European Union National Day
- May 17/Norway Constitution Day
- May 21/Hungary Armed Forces Day
- May 22/Yemen Republic
- Re-unification Day(National Day)
- May 24/Eritrea National Day
- May 25/Lebanon Liberation and Resistance Day
- May 25/Argentina National Day
- May 25/Jordan Independence Day
- May 28 /Azerbaijan Republic Day
- May 28/Ethiopia National Day
- May 31/Brunei Armed Forces Day

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Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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



Enquiry

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



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Kistafin in a meeting with Salik Hussain, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony. – DNA

Pakistan all set to launch new satellite PakSat MM1

The satellite PakSat MM1, conceived keeping in sight the growing needs of the country in the broad spectrum of communication and connectivity, would be launched from Xichang Satellite Launch Center (XSLC), China

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) is all set to launch a new satellite PakSat MM1 on May 30 through the support of China, in accordance with the National Space Program 2047. The Project Management Team of PakSat MM1 has finalized all the arrangements for the launch of this new satellite through evaluating its performance. Project Director, PakSat MM1, M. Imran said "Our team is very excited for the upcoming launch of PakSat MM1 on May 30". The satellite PakSat MM1, conceived keeping in sight the growing needs of the country in the broad spectrum of communication and connectivity, would be launched from Xichang Satellite Launch Center (XSLC), China.

This satellite project is a hallmark of technological cooperation between the People's Republic of China and Pakistan and is expected to revolutionise communication in Pakistan and serve as a giant leap towards a digitally connected Pakistan. Based on advanced communication technologies, PakSat MM1 will play a pivotal role in the socio-economic uplift of the country and will prove to be a stepping stone in the transformation of the country into Digital Pakistan. The launch ceremony will be shown live for media from the Islamabad and Karachi establishments of Suparco. The satellite is expected to contribute to the establishment of a sophisticated communication network and help meet the growing demands of the telecom sector and its advanced capabilities will address the increasing demand for high-speed internet and seamless connectivity. SUPARCO says "This high-power multi-mission satellite will provide communication services in C, Ku, Ka Bands and SBAS services in L Band.

Based on advanced communication technologies, PakSat-MM1 will play a pivotal role in the socio-economic uplift of the country. It will prove to be a stepping stone in the transformation of the country into Digital Pakistan. It will provide various communication services like broadband internet, TV broadcasting, Mobile bank-hauling and VSAT connectivity". Project Manager MM1, SUPARCO, Usman Iftikhar, said that the primary objective behind the PAKSAT MM-1 satellite is to strengthen Pakistan's communication infrastructure would pave the way for broadening the horizons for connectivity, serving the unserved, Tele-education, E-health/Tele-medicine, E-governance and E-commerce while transforming Pakistan into a digital powerhouse. He said that communication infrastructure is the backbone of any country and plays an important role in the development of the country and this satellite will help provide connectivity to the remote areas of the country. This satellite is a communication satellite that will be sent in a Geostationary Orbit. Earlier, Pakistan's historic lunar mission (ICUBE-Q) was launched on May 3 on board China's Chang'E6 from Hainan, China. The satellite iCube-Qamar mission marked Pakistan's first lunar exploration effort which is a significant milestone for the country's space endeavours. The satellite iCube-Q was designed and developed by the Institute of Space Technology (IST) in collaboration with China's Shanghai University SJTU and Pakistan's national space agency SUPARCO. The satellite, weighing about 7kg, was developed by the Electrical Engineering Department of the Institute of Space Technology (IST) in Islamabad. The satellite successfully captured

and transmitted its inaugural images from lunar orbit, providing a unique perspective of the moon's surface. Regarding the benefits of satellites, Suparco said that satellites play a vital role in improving communication, enhancing navigation, monitoring the environment, advancing scientific knowledge, and supporting various aspects of daily life, making them indispensable for humanity's progress and well-being. Satellites are incredibly beneficial for humanity in communication, navigation, weather forecasting, earth observations, scientific research, disaster management, remote sensing, and telemedicine. Three types of satellites are required for any country, firstly for communication, secondly for remote sensing and reconnaissance, and thirdly for navigation.—Agencies

development of the country and this satellite will help provide connectivity to the remote areas of the country. This satellite is a communication satellite that will be sent in a Geostationary Orbit. Earlier, Pakistan's historic lunar mission (ICUBE-Q) was launched on May 3 on board China's Chang'E6 from Hainan, China. The satellite iCube-Qamar mission marked Pakistan's first lunar exploration effort which is a significant milestone for the country's space endeavours. The satellite iCube-Q was designed and developed by the Institute of Space Technology (IST) in collaboration with China's Shanghai University SJTU and Pakistan's national space agency SUPARCO. The satellite, weighing about 7kg, was developed by the Electrical Engineering Department of the Institute of Space Technology (IST) in Islamabad. The satellite successfully captured

and transmitted its inaugural images from lunar orbit, providing a unique perspective of the moon's surface. Regarding the benefits of satellites, Suparco said that satellites play a vital role in improving communication, enhancing navigation, monitoring the environment, advancing scientific knowledge, and supporting various aspects of daily life, making them indispensable for humanity's progress and well-being. Satellites are incredibly beneficial for humanity in communication, navigation, weather forecasting, earth observations, scientific research, disaster management, remote sensing, and telemedicine. Three types of satellites are required for any country, firstly for communication, secondly for remote sensing and reconnaissance, and thirdly for navigation.—Agencies

Ministry shows serious concerns over schools destruction

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has drawn the urgent attention of Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Peshawar regarding the destruction of schools by terrorists in newly merged districts and demanded prompt action against the menace of terrorism. In a letter written to the Chief Secretary KP, the Federal Secretary Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has expressed grave concern over the recent incidents of destruction of schools in the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "It is particularly disheartening to note that these heinous acts of terrorism are disproportionately targeting institutions dedicated to girls' education," the letter said. The federal government is deeply alarmed by these developments, which not only endanger the lives of our children but also threaten the progress we have made in promoting education and gender equality in these regions, it said adding that the education of girls is a cornerstone of our national development strategy, and any attack on this front is an attack on the future of our nation. "I want to reassure you that the federal government stands in solidarity with the provincial administration of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during this challenging time. We are fully committed to supporting all necessary measures to ensure the security of educational institutions and to swiftly rebuild the schools that have been destroyed. It is imperative that we work together to counter this menace of extremism and restore a sense of safety and normalcy for our students and educators" the letter added. To this end, the letter said, I propose the establishment of a joint task force comprising federal and provincial representatives to develop a comprehensive plan for the reconstruction of damaged schools and the enhancement of security measures across the region. The letter also added that this task force should focus on community engagement and resilience-building to prevent further extremist activities and to foster an environment where education can thrive without fear. "Please be assured of our unwavering support and cooperation. Together, we can and must ensure that the right to education, particularly for our girls, is protected and promoted, despite the challenges posed by extremist elements. I look forward to your prompt response.—APP

AIOU hold Int'l moot on "Ijtihad Bilmaqasid"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "To solve social problems, everyone must change their thinking so that we can promote a peaceful and civilized society free from intellectual chaos", said Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood on Wednesday. Speaking at the opening session of three-day international conference on "Ijtihad Bilmaqasid" Dr. Nasir said that the new problems are arising rapidly, and we have the way of Ijtihad for the solution in Islam, which explain the causes to the people with reason. Vice Chancellor emphasized that in these three days, the participants and speakers will come up with recommendations on

this topic for the guidance of institutions, scholars and researchers working on Ijtihad. Dean, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Prof. Dr. Mohyuddin Hashmi, highlighted the aims and objectives of the conference, stating that this is the first conference on this topic in Pakistan. Over 100 articles were submitted for the conference, and approximately 50 foreign and local scholars and teachers are participating. Naib Mohtamim and Shaikh Al-Hadith, Jamia Imdiyah, Faisalabad, Maulana Mufti Muhammad Zahid, explained that Ijtihad Bilmaqasid is essentially Ijtihad that yields results, allowing us to understand the outcomes required by Sharia and the intentions of Allah and the Holy Prophet (PBUH). He

congratulated VC, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, Dean, Faculty of Arabic and the other organizers for this three-day international conference. The speakers at the conference emphasized the importance of ijthad in Islam and highlighted that the religion has kept the door of ijthad open for addressing modern challenges. They urged scholars to engage in ijthad based on the Qur'an and Sunnah to address contemporary issues facing the Ummah. The conference was organized by the Department of Islamic Thought, History and Culture at AIOU in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Jamia Muhammad Sharif, Chinot.

CDA chief meets environmental expert

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Wednesday met with Environmental Expert Rizwan Mehboob. With extensive experience in forestry and environmental issues, Rizwan Mahboob will voluntarily offer his services to the CDA for managing and preventing forest fires, said a news release issued here. His expertise will also be utilized for forest protection, the press release added. Rizwan Mahboob will provide guidance on the conservation and enhancement of wildlife in Islamabad and advise CDA departments on water conservation strategies. Meanwhile, Director General Capital Emergency Services, Dr Abdul Rehman, has been directed to conduct an audit of forest fires.—DNA

PTA conducts quality of service survey

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has conducted an Independent Quality of Service (QoS) Survey in sixteen cities across Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to measure the performance of Cellular Mobile Operators (CMOs). Survey routes covered main roads, service roads, and various sectors, with 2,270 kilometers traveled per CMO over 60 days. Mobile handsets in auto-detect mode were used for voice calls, SMS, and mobile broadband/data sessions. The survey included 0.25 million mobile broadband tests, 45,000 calls and SMS tests, and 0.13 million Ookla speed tests using advanced QoS monitoring tools, ensuring compliance with NGMS licenses and the Cellular Mobile Network QoS Regulations 2021. CMOs were ranked based on compliance with key performance indicators (KPIs) in mobile network coverage and voice services, from 1st to 4th positions. In the mobile broadband speed segment, rankings were determined by data download/upload speeds, network latency, and webpage loading times. Jazz, Ufone, and Zong jointly secured 1st place in mobile network coverage, while Zong led in mobile broadband speed (Ookla). Jazz was ranked 1st in mobile broadband speed (auto-mode testing) and voice services.—DNA

ANF recovers 178 kg drugs in eight operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country managed to recover 178 kg drugs and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that 11 kg ice was recovered from a parcel sent to Australia from a courier office in Jhelum. In another operation, 3.4 kg ice was recovered from a parcel booked for Dubai at a courier office in Karachi. In the third operation, 950 grams ice was recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Multan Airport while 94 kg hashish was recovered near RCD Road Lasbela. 48 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused rounded up M-1 Islamabad. In the sixth operation, 15 kg hashish was recovered from the Panjgur area and 4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused netted in Dera Ismail Khan. In the 8th operation, 2 kg ice was recovered from a parcel rounded up in Lahore. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.—APP

Veteran TV actor Shakeel remembered

ISLAMABAD: Veteran television actor Yousuf Kamal, better known as Shakeel was remembered on the occasion of his birth anniversary. Born in Bhopal, India in May 29, 1945 Shakeel moved to Pakistan with his family in 1952 and started his career on the big screen with the 1966 film Honehar, where he shared the screen with Waheed Murad. However, he found his true calling on the television screen where he was a part of many hit PTV drama serials including Uncle Urfi (1972), Ankahi (1982) and Aangan Terha (1984). He also played the part of the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaqat Ali Khan, along with Christopher Lee, in a British biographical film about the life of founder of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah: Jamil Dehalvi's Jinnah (1998). He also appeared in the series Traffic for BBC Channel 4. He was also known for his philanthropic activities. In 2015, he was awarded him prestigious Sitara-i-Imtiaz. Shakeel died on June 29, 2023 in Karachi.—APP

Operation against illegal constructions

RAWALPINDI: An operation against illegal constructions was conducted here on Wednesday on Adiala Road under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner (AC) Cantt. According to a district administration spokesman, encroachment problems are arising due to illegal constructions. The owners of the plazas and other commercial markets have encroached the roads with concrete construction outside the shops. In the first phase, indiscriminate operation against illegal constructions would continue. Strict action would be taken against encroachments after ongoing drive against illegal constructions launched on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema.—APP

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Briefs

Govt cracks down on smuggling

ISLAMABAD: In a significant crackdown on smuggling, hoarding, and power pilferage, the government has made substantial progress in its zero-tolerance policy, yielding impressive results. Since September last year, the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has been instrumental in facilitating the recovery of billions of rupees and scores of arrests, PTV reported. In a major anti-smuggling operation, authorities foiled the smuggling and illegal movement of 3,036 metric tons of fertilizer. Additionally, 281 metric tons of wheat and flour were seized from smugglers, preventing the smuggling of essential items. The government's efforts have also led to the seizure of 34,640 metric tons of sugar, putting an end to illegal profiteering. Furthermore, authorities recovered 2,503 metric tons of wheat, 56,948 metric tons of ghee, and 10,379 metric tons of sugar from market price manipulators. The government's commitment to upholding the rule of law and protecting Pakistan's economy is evident in the registration of 145,365 FIRs against individuals involved in power theft, resulting in the arrest of over 70,000 power thieves and the recovery of PKR 93 billion. These achievements demonstrate the government's resolve to combat smuggling, hoarding, and power pilferage, ensuring the availability of essential items to citizens and safeguarding the national economy.—APP

King Salman to host 2,322 global pilgrims for Hajj

ISLAMABAD: King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has ordered the hosting of 2,322 pilgrims comprising 1,300 pilgrims from 88 countries, 1,000 pilgrims representing families of martyrs, prisoners, and injured Palestinians, along with 22 pilgrims from families of conjoined twins who were separated in the Kingdom. They will participate in this year's Hajj as part of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Guests Program for Hajj, Umrah, and Visit, overseen and executed annually by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah, and Guidance, Saudi Press Agency reported. Sheikh Dr. Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Al-Sheikh, Minister of Islamic Affairs, Dawah, and Guidance, and General Supervisor of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Hajj Guests Program, thanked the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for their generous support of Hajj, highlighting their dedication to Muslim unity. Al-Sheikh highlighted that since the Royal order, the ministry has prepared to host pilgrims, developing a strategic plan with dedicated committees. This plan begins from the pilgrims' departure, ensuring smooth facilitation for Umrah, Hajj, and visits to Madinah's Prophet's Mosque. Over 60,000 pilgrims have been hosted under this program in its 26-year history.—APP

Pakistan, China friendship time-tested, say speakers

Arshad Ayub Khan, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Department, highlighted the significance of this historic friendship

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan-China Friendship Association (PCFA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province Pakistan organised an event at KP House Islamabad to celebrate the 73rd anniversary. Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani Secretary-General PCFA mentioned that understanding the dynamics of Chinese socio economic development is very important for us (Pakistan) being a close friend. In a testament to their enduring friendship, Pakistan and China celebrated the 73rd anniversary of their diplomatic relations this morning at KP House, Islamabad. The event, organized by the Pakistan China Friendship Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (PCFA KP), underscored the deep-rooted ties and mutual cooperation between the two nations. Mr. Arshad Ayub Khan, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Department, highlighted the significance of this historic friendship in his address. He emphasized the need to further enhance people-to-people relationships, drawing lessons from China's successful implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). "Pakistan and China are time-tested friends, and our friendship has stood the test of time. We must continue to strengthen our bonds by increasing cultural, trade, and business exchanges. The CPEC is a game-changer for Pakistan's economy, and with enhanced cooperation, we will see significant development across various sectors," stated Mr. Arshad Ayub Khan. He also praised the efforts of the Pakistan China Friendship Association KP and encouraged more initiatives that foster cultural understanding and economic collaboration. He specifically urged the learning of the Chinese language and deeper engagement with Chinese experts to benefit from their experience and expertise. Mr. Zhang Heqing, Chinese Cultural Counsellor, also spoke at the event, appreciating the role of PCFA KP in promoting bilateral relations. He highlighted the historical linkages between China and Pakistan and the cultural and economic benefits of their partnership. Mr. Zhang Heqing mentioned the successful implementation of CPEC and the ambitious plans underway, including over 40 projects aimed at constructing highways and motorways to boost Pakistan's prosperity and development. Mr. Yousaf Ayub Khan, President of PCFA KP, welcomed the distinguished guests and reflected on the successful history of Pakistan-China



relations. He noted that the 73rd anniversary is a testament to the enduring success of this partnership. The event saw participation from notable dignitaries, including Mr. Wang Heihua, President of the All Pakistan Chinese Enterprises Association, Mr. Saleem Khan, Secretary of the Local Government Board, and Mr. Shakeel Khan, Director of PESCO. Members of the Chinese Media Group

and other PCFA KP members were also in attendance. Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani, Secretary General PCFA, provided a brief overview of the association's contributions and future plans. The celebration of the 73rd anniversary of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations not only commemorates a rich past but also heralds a promising future of continued cooperation and mutual growth.

Pakistan eyes on ramped-up CPEC cooperation with China

ISLAMABAD: Chinese experts said that the continuously strengthened cooperation in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is poised to foster greater economic development momentum in Pakistan. It will also create new market potential for Chinese businesses. The remarks were made as China and Pakistan recently unveiled five new corridors under CPEC, while Pakistani officials have reportedly expressed hope to revitalize cooperation within the BRI framework to bolster the country's stagnating economy. The identified five new corridors for the second phase of the CPEC include the Growth Corridor, the Economic Development Projects Corridor, the Innovation Corridor, the Green Corridor, and the Regional Connectivity Corridor. At a high-level meeting, Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the revival of projects in Gwadar and the newly identified corridor programs were the latest

progress made under CPEC, which he hailed as a milestone in Pakistan-China friendship, laying a robust foundation for bilateral cooperation. China-Pakistan economic cooperation is being upgraded across a number of sectors. It is expected the next stage of bilateral ties will focus on agricultural technology, infrastructure upgrades, and quick-win projects, Liu Xiaoxue, an associate research fellow at the National Institute of International Strategy under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the Global Times. Amid intensifying global challenges, the importance of strengthening regional cooperation, especially between Pakistan and China's vast Western regions, is growing for both countries. Liu noted that long-standing technical exchanges and trade cooperation between the two sides are expected to deepen. The CPEC stands as a pivotal flagship project under the BRI framework. Established in 2013, CPEC has been instrumental

in addressing entrenched problems impeding Pakistan's development. It has significantly boosted Pakistan's infrastructure and industrialization, leading to sustainable economic and social development. Official data showed that as of the end of 2022, the program had cumulatively created 236,000 jobs for Pakistan and facilitated the addition of 510 kilometers of highways, 8,000 megawatts of electricity generation capacity, and 886 kilometers of core transmission network in Pakistan. The BRI has not only boosted economic cooperation between China and Pakistan but also attracted increased international attention and global business opportunities to Pakistan, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and new energies, Liu said. Iqbal revealed that Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who was elected to a second successive term in March and seeking to revive China-Pakistan economic cooperation in the past two years.—DNA

Pakistan's exports to China increase by 37%

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's export of goods and services to China witnessed an increase of 37.68 percent during the first ten months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported. The overall exports to China were recorded at US \$2.341 billion during July-April (2023-24) against exports of US \$1.700 billion during July-April (2022-23), SBP data revealed. On a year-to-year basis, the exports to China also surged by 13.56 percent from \$175.542 million in April 2023, against the exports of \$199.352 million in April 2024. Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to China decreased by 18.97 percent during April 2024 as compared to the exports of \$246.030 million in March 2024, the SBP data revealed. Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed an increase of 10.64 percent in the first ten months, from US \$23.199 billion to US \$25.669 billion, the SBP data revealed. On the other hand, the imports from China into the country during the months under review were recorded at US \$10.648 billion against US \$8.343 billion last year, showing an increase of 27.61 percent in July-April (2023-24). On a year-on-year basis, the imports from China witnessed an increase of 114.92 percent from US \$598.196 million in April 2023, against the imports of US \$1.285 billion in April 2024.

Pakistan strives to preserve Buddha heritage

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Nasir Hassan Jamy on Wednesday said that Pakistan was spearheading the efforts to preserve and protect the Buddha heritage and had also accelerated the efforts to spread the peaceful message of Buddha and Silk Road. The federal secretary, in his opening remarks at the third session of the two-day symposium titled "From Gandhara to the World: The Legacy of Gandharan Buddhism" held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here, said that Pakistan placed a great emphasis on tracing the roots of Buddhism in Pakistan and other countries. The two-day event brought together religious leaders and experts from Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, besides scholars, diplomats, historians and art enthusiasts to provide them a platform to exchange ideas and foster connections. He said the ancient Gandhara civilization left indelible footprints in the realm of art, architecture, culture and spirituality with Lord Buddha being its central figure having an odyssey of spreading knowledge, wisdom, peace and harmony. Jamy said that besides introducing Buddhism to China and the greater part of East Asia, Gandhara civilization also contributed to embellishing the rich cultural tapestry of modern Pakistan. He said that Gandhara civilization also led to the early linkages between Pakistan and China as many Chinese monks traveled along ancient Silk Roads to arrive at Buddhist seminaries. The federal secretary said that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had revived that spirit of openness, transparency, and discovery which in ancient times had brought about the fruitful exchange of goods, ideas and cultural influences between several countries and civilizations.—APP

National street children conference in Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Muslim Hands inaugurated the National Street Children Conference titled "I Am Somebody" today at a local hotel in the Federal Capital. The two-day

conference aims to create a platform for dialogue, action plans, and partnerships to improve the lives of street-connected children in Pakistan. Executive Director Muslim Hands, Javed Gillani, emphasized the need for collective action and strategic partnerships to transform

the lives of street children. He announced the launch of the nationwide campaign "I AM SOMEBODY," which pledges to facilitate the legal registration and school enrollment of half a million children across Pakistan over the next five years. This campaign aims to address urgent

issues of birth registration and education access, mobilizing support and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders to ensure every child's right to education and identity. During the Panel Discussion on Strengthening Legal Framework for Street Children experts discussed legal barriers faced by street children and proposed solutions for enhanced protection and rights. The discussion highlighted the need for legal aid, access to justice, and technological solutions for birth registration. In a presentation on Maidaan Project the Muslim Hands showcased its initiative that empowers street children through sports, emphasizing the transformative power of education and athletics in improving their lives. During the session on "Effective Interventions and Success Stories" successful interventions and inspiring stories of street children overcoming challenges were highlighted.



Acting president condoles over deaths in Washuk road accident

ISLAMABAD: Acting President Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani on Wednesday expressed grief over the loss of lives in a traffic accident that took place in Balochistan's Washuk area. He prayed to Allah Almighty for peace for the departed souls and strength for the bereaved families to bear the loss with fortitude. The acting president also prayed for the quick and complete recovery of those injured in the tragic incident.—APP

Raisani mourns tragic bus accident

ISLAMABAD: The leader of the Pakistan People's Party in Balochistan, MNA Nawabzada Jamal Khan Raisani, has expressed deep sorrow and regret over the loss of lives resulting from the Quetta-bound bus falling into a ditch near Washuk. In a statement, Nawabzada Jamal Khan Raisani said, "This tragic incident has claimed the lives of 24 people." He expressed deep grief and condolences to the affected families, urging the government to investigate the tragedy and hold those responsible accountable. Nawabzada Jamal Khan Raisani also wished the injured a speedy recovery.—APP

Excise dept offers civic facilities

ISLAMABAD: The Excise department is providing civic facilities to residents of the Federal capital to get their vehicle registration as well as access to various essential services at Rose & Jasmine Garden on Wednesday under the ICT doorstep initiative. According to the Spokesman of ICT, the excise staff would be stationed at the park's parking lot from 3.00 to 5.00 p.m.

Citizens hailing from nearby areas of Rose & Jasmine Garden can get civic facilities through a dedicated van, he said. He said that whether you need a fuel permit for domestic or commercial use, or looking to register your motor vehicle seamlessly, the on-ground service will ensure a swift and straightforward process. This initiative aims to streamline processes and provide ease to the public regarding vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax procedures, he added. In addition to the vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax services, the Facilitation Center Doorstep ICT Vehicle will also be offering the following services: Domicile certificate.—APP

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Walking the Precipice

DIVERSE European voices are desperately warning that with the Ukraine project spiralling towards debacle, a humiliated West is left with little choice but to escalate drastically, and bring NATO – in some form, whether limited or not – into the fight. The former British (Conservative) MP Andrew Bridgen states that this strategic shift (whose speed caught the Europeans unawares), is forcing Europe to face war with Russia. In fact, Bridgen warns: ‘We (Britain), are ‘already at war’ with Russia. This is the real reason, he explains, why Rishi Sunak has called an early election – he refuses to be a ‘war time president’. He is effectively handing over ‘the baton’ to Keir Starmer (probably to fly away to California after 4 July – voting day). ‘The Generals’ have warned Sunak that the order ‘had come down’ for war with Russia. And Sunak does not wish to be part of it. Whether Bridgen is right or not on the specifics, there is undoubtedly a chorus out there saying the same thing. Is this cacophony of sudden war warnings merely that which (Matt Taibbi calls) an example of the ‘Elephant Erasure Project’? By which we are constantly being instructed not to see the elephants in the room. And there are a lot of them: Open borders; plunging standards of living; higher prices; runaway debt and dropping ratings for Biden. Add to that, the White House is continuing to arm the Israelis and green-light the Rafah military operation – at the very moment that the ICJ has ordered destruction of lives stopped. A plain oxymoron. Of course, Team Biden is ‘not for turning’ on its ‘ironclad’ support for the Israelis, yet the only thing that is clear is that the war-warning is not necessarily literally true – except in wanting to truly scare and divert us from the ‘Elephants’. ‘The ‘informing class’ now no longer even has the decency to tell us who, or what they are’. When one reads ‘news’, we have no idea whether it is an off-grid White House ‘briefing’, or one of those aggressive releases of intelligence, telling us yet again that truly Russia is on the ropes, and about to collapse. So which is it? Is the narrative of being on the precipice of real war with Russia ‘deception’ designed to divert us from the herd of elephants grazing quietly for now, though with their presence likely to loom large as the election campaign reaches full-spate? On the one hand, the very idea that Europe is equipped or capable to fight a real war is absurd. But equally, there are enough idiots around, hyped on delusions of long-past grandeur, to do something stupid. Interestingly, former British MP Andrew Bridgen implicitly acknowledges this risk, but adds that thank goodness it is Putin who stands on the other bank! While on the other hand, everything in the West today revolves around the manipulation of narratives, and crafting the winning meme. The ‘other’ narrative to ‘coming war’ (according to Reuters) is that President Putin wants a Ukraine ceasefire ASAP – and on current contact line frontlines – because he is terrified at the prospect of having to launch a further mobilisation to finish the Special Operation. What this war narrative isn’t is news. ‘The information it imparts, if one bothers to sift through it,’ Taibbi quotes Walter Kirn saying, “is information about itself; about the purposes, beliefs, and loyalties of those who produce it: the informing class.” Two questions arise: First, is Sullivan about stopping WW3, or starting it?

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- Image battle -



China-Russia alliance

CHINA and Russia cemented their 75th year of bilateral relations recently when Russian President Vladimir Putin met President Xi Jinping in Beijing. As Putin said, visiting China for his first foreign trip since being re-elected president was certainly symbolic. There is more to it. Both leaders signed several agreements to enhance cooperation in trade and technology, and they issued a joint statement on deepening their comprehensive strategic partnership. Putin's visit highlights the continuing improvement of Sino-Russian ties since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1992. Cooperation on security and the economy was institutionalised through the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The formulation of the Belt and Road Initiative, Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and 2022 and subsequent sanctions by the United States and other countries against Russia have brought the two sides closer together. This relationship is driven by three factors. First, China needs a reliable supply of energy to sustain its economic growth. Russia is one of the world's major exporters of oil and gas and an energy supplier to China. Its need to diversify its export markets makes each side important to the other. Second, the two countries have mutual geopolitical interests. While Russia is concerned about Nato's expansion especially in Eastern Europe and near Russian borders, China casts a wary eye to US-led initiatives such as Nato's bid to expand into Asia. Accordingly, both countries share the vision of challenging American hegemony and establishing a new world order. Third, the Ukraine crisis has brought Moscow and Beijing closer. Russia launched its military operation against Ukraine shortly after Putin's visit to China in 2022, which was perceived as China implicitly recognising the offensive. Xi and Putin's vision is clear. They are deepening their strategic cooperation to foster a friendship with “no limits” and cooperation without any forbidden areas. Both countries are targeting the United States and its partners for interfering in the internal affairs of other countries and criticising the US for turning outer space into an arena of conflict. They advocate for a multipolar world that could significantly alter global power dynamics. However, it is also clear that the Sino-Russian alliance faces some friction and might not achieve its objectives. For example, it is imperative for China that Russia emerges victorious in Ukraine as, if it was to lose, it would deprive China of a stable partner – an outcome Beijing does not look forward to. This alone could undercut the shared goal of challenging the US' position in the global order. Also, despite China and Russia attempting to woo countries in the Global South, as seen in their actions within the SCO and the Brics bloc, developing nations are unlikely to disengage from the US whatever problems they might have with Washington. This is because they want to keep their options open and will always welcome the status implications of balancing between the US-led West on the one hand and the China-Russia alliance on the other. Finally, both China and Russia have their own internal issues to deal with. Russia's financial resources are growing increasingly strained amid sanctions imposed by the US and other countries, leading to a heavy reliance on China for trade. Meanwhile, China is dealing with a sluggish economic recovery and needs to ensure that no major challenges arise internationally.

Freedom of speech and thought: A historical perspective

Qamar Bashir



In Hinduism, principles like Satya (truth) and Ahimsa (non-violence) guide honest and open communication, with respect for teachers and elders being paramount. Buddhism promotes right speech (Samma Vacha), advocating for truthful, kind, and beneficial communication, while avoiding negativity and hurtful speech. In the post-medieval period, the first formal act to control, censor, and abridge freedom of speech, thought, and expression was England's Licensing Act of 1662. This act required all printing presses and publications to obtain a license and controlled what could be printed and distributed...

THE freedom of speech, expression, thought, and assembly does not have direct references in ancient history, but various rudimentary signs of encoding them exist. In Draco's Code (c. 620 BCE) and Solon's Reforms (c. 594 BCE) in Ancient Greece, there was an emphasis on public debate. The establishment of the Assembly (Ekklesia) allowed for more open political discourse among citizens, particularly in legal and political matters. The Law of the Twelve Tables (c. 449 BCE) in Ancient Rome encoded slander and defamation with penalties for false accusations and insults. Hammurabi's Code (c. 1754 BCE) in Ancient Babylon emphasized retributive justice, where false accusations and bearing false witness were punishable, highlighting the importance of truthfulness and protection of one's reputation. During the medieval period, laws regarding freedom of speech, expression, and assembly were significantly influenced by religious doctrines and sociopolitical structures of the time. The concept of individual rights as understood today was not fully developed, and speech and assembly were often tightly controlled by religious and secular authorities. These were encoded in Canon Law, Islamic Law (Sharia), and Common Law. Judaism's perspective on freedom of speech and expression is complex and nuanced, influenced by both religious texts and historical experiences. While free speech is valued, it emphasizes responsible speech that avoids falsehood, slander, and inciting hatred. Throughout history, Jewish communities have faced persecution and censorship, instilling in them a strong value for the freedom to speak and practice their religion openly. Christianity emphasizes the ability to follow one's conscience and call upon the disciples to spread Christianity despite facing persecution. Canon Laws were heavily based on Christian teachings and ecclesiastical authority, limiting freedom of speech and expression, particularly in matters of faith and doctrine. Heresy, blasphemy, and criticism of the Church were severely punished, with the Church controlling the dissemination of information and ideas. Assemblies were often subject to Church approval, and unauthorized gatherings, especially those related to heretical movements, were suppressed. Amongst the monolithic religions, the injunctions on freedom of speech, thought, expression, and assembly are enunciated in the most com-

prehensive manner. The Holy Qur'an calls upon humankind and says, “There shall be no compulsion in (acceptance of) the religion.” “And speak gently to the People,” “Avoid false statements.” “O you people of faith, fear from Allah and always say the right words.” “So what would you love after clearing the truth except for error?” “And don't mix the truth with falsehood.” “And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and justice.” Invite all the people to your Lord with wisdom and best preaching, and only argue with them most graciously. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said, “To tell a word of truth to a tyrant king is the best form of Jihad.” In Islam, “Freedom of Speech and Expression” is regulated by Sharia, the Quran, Hadith, and the consensus of Islamic scholars (ijma), where intellectual freedom, particularly in scientific and philosophical debates, is protected and emphasizes social harmony and the maintenance of public order. In Hinduism, principles like Satya (truth) and Ahimsa (non-violence) guide honest and open communication, with respect for teachers and elders being paramount. Buddhism promotes right speech (Samma Vacha), advocating for truthful, kind, and beneficial communication, while avoiding negativity and hurtful speech. In the post-medieval period, the first formal act to control, censor, and abridge freedom of speech, thought, and expression was England's Licensing Act of 1662. This act required all printing presses and publications to obtain a license and controlled what could be printed and distributed, aimed at restricting seditious, treasonous, heretical, and offensive materials. The act authorized the government to search homes and businesses for unlicensed presses and printed materials, imposing heavy penalties on violators, including fines, imprisonment, and confiscation of printing equipment. This act effectively suppressed dissenting voices, both religious and political, but also fueled the growth of an underground press. The law lapsed in 1695, paving the way for a freer press in England but was reimposed in various forms in the Kingdom's colonies, including India. In India, the Censorship of Press Act (1799) required prior government approval for certain publications. Subsequent laws like the Licensing Regulations (1823), Licensing Act (1857), and Registration Act (1867) required printers and publishers to obtain licenses before operating, giving the government gatekeeping powers. The

Vernacular Press Act (1878) and the Press Act (1910) punished publications that printed seditious material critical of the government or content deemed a threat to public order. These laws allowed the government to seize printing presses and publications, arrest and imprison publishers and editors, and impose heavy fines. The evolution of media laws in Pakistan bears a notable resemblance to the restrictive laws imposed by the British in India and earlier in England. Though Section 19 of the Constitution grants freedom of speech, expression, and freedom of the press, these rights have been largely ignored by successive governments since the inception of Pakistan. Instead, these governments have focused more on the reasonable restrictions imposed by law. As a result, there are over 52 laws, rules, regulations, and codes of conduct primarily designed to empower the government to discipline the press and media rather than promoting a free, professional, and responsible press. Consequently, Pakistan's media environment mirrors the conditions that existed in England before 1695 and in British India. The England's Licensing Act of 1662 was copied almost entirely by the “Press and Publications Ordinance of 1963” reflecting the same ethos of control, requiring newspapers to obtain government permission to publish. Subsequent regimes, especially military dictatorships, continued this legacy with stringent laws and censorship practices. General Zia-ul-Haq's era (1977-1988) saw the imposition of martial law regulations that severely restricted media freedom, akin to the oppressive British laws. More recent laws, like the “Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act of 2016,” have continued this trend by extending state control into the digital realm, echoing the colonial strategy of stifling dissent and controlling public discourse. This continuity underscores the enduring impact of colonial legal frameworks on contemporary media governance in Pakistan, highlighting the persistent struggle for genuine freedom of thought, speech, and expression in the country. Despite periods of relative liberalization, the legacy of colonial control mechanisms remains evident in the regulatory environment governing Pakistani media today. – **Former Press Secretary to the President**
Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former MD, SRBC

US trade policy towards China is dangerously incoherent

Stephen Roach

Blaming others for this problem is a cop-out. Without a shortfall of domestic savings, there would be no trade deficit. That shortfall is largely made at home – the result of outside federal budget deficits which are counted as negative savings in the national income accounts. After ballooning during the Covid-19 pandemic to more than 14 per cent of GDP, the budget deficit remained stuck...

THE United States does not have a coherent trade policy. It has a political strategy masquerading as trade policy that has taken aim at China, and China has responded in kind. With the two superpowers drawing on their allies for support, economic decoupling is the least of our problems. It is easy to blame US presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden for this unfortunate turn of events – Trump for firing the first shot in the Sino-American trade war and Biden for doubling down on protectionism, yet the problems predate both presidents. They stem largely from a decades-long misunderstanding of the role foreign trade plays in open economies. Politicians tend to see trade balances in black and white: surpluses are good, deficits are bad. For the US, trade is viewed as bad – a source of leakage in an otherwise strong economy that puts pressure on jobs, companies, communities and incomes. From this perspective, the US sees itself as the victim of others' transgressions. Japan was the culprit in the 1980s. Now it's China. US leaders also blame the World Trade Organization, which they have effectively neutered by blocking appointments to its Appellate Body for the past five years. Blame is about politics, not economics. Students of economics are taught almost immediately to respect a basic premise of national income accounting: that a country's trade balance is equal to the difference between investment and saving. It follows that any savings-short economy wanting to invest and grow must borrow surplus savings from abroad, which requires balance-of-payments and trade deficits with the rest of the world. This conceptual framework fits the US economy to a tee. In 2023, the US net domestic savings rate – the combined depreciation-adjusted savings of individuals, businesses and

the government sector – was negative, at minus 0.3 per cent of national income. This has happened across multiple quarters only once before: during and immediately after the global financial crisis of 2008-09. This leads to a politically uncomfortable verdict on trade: in keeping with national income identities, a savings-short US runs massive external deficits. In 2023, the current-account deficit was equivalent to about 3 per cent of GDP, and the merchandise trade deficit was 3.9 per cent of GDP. Blaming others for this problem is a cop-out. Without a shortfall of domestic savings, there would be no trade deficit. That shortfall is largely made at home – the result of outside federal budget deficits which are counted as negative savings in the national income accounts. After ballooning during the Covid-19 pandemic to more than 14 per cent of GDP, the budget deficit remained stuck at more than 5 per cent of GDP in 2022-23, nearly double the average from 1962 to 2019. Moreover, the Congressional Budget Office's baseline projections suggest that the deficit share will remain around its current level for the next decade. This outcome is not China's fault. It is a result of conscious decisions by US politicians. Yet Trump pinned the blame for the widening US merchandise trade deficit squarely on China during the 2016 presidential campaign, seizing on the point that China's share of the deficit had soared from 20 per cent to nearly 50 per cent between 1999 and 2015. Tariffs quickly followed Trump's victory. On one level, this strategy appeared to work. The tariffs shrunk China's share of the US merchandise trade deficit by US\$138.8 billion from 2018 to 2023. However, over the same period, the overall deficit grew by US\$181 billion – precisely what one would expect from a country with a

falling savings rate. Excluding China, the US merchandise trade deficit widened by US\$319 billion from 2018 to 2023. In other words, notwithstanding US leaders' efforts to convince voters that they are fixing the country's trade problems, the notion of a “China fix” rings hollow. By targeting China, all the US is doing is diverting trade away from a low-cost producer to higher-cost countries. That is the equivalent of a tax increase on American consumers that exacerbates the added costs of Chinese tariffs. At the same time, Washington is perfectly content to run massive budget deficits that will depress domestic savings even further, leading to increased trade diversion. If only the story stopped there. The trade conflict has allowed Washington to launch a full-throttle political campaign against China. Not only have national security concerns given rise to a tech war, the US has announced another round of Section 301 tariffs on Chinese goods, targeting electric vehicles, solar panels and batteries, all sectors where the US has little comparative advantage. This will compromise US green-energy objectives at a time when the effects of climate change are increasingly apparent. Meanwhile, US complaints about China's unfair subsidisation of its alternative energy initiatives overlook the generous US subsidies that have long benefited companies such as Tesla. Free trade and globalisation have made the world a better place. That conclusion, which became accepted wisdom in the post-war period, is now considered heresy. The resulting incoherence of US trade policy – flailing at savings-driven trade deficits and steeped in national security fears – risks making the world a worse place. Global stewardship is in tatters, and the dangers of superpower conflict are now painfully reminiscent of the 1930s.

Briefs

IHC bars telcos from recording...

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the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) why they had not submitted their response. The lawyer replied that they were unable to submit their response due to the holiday. Later, Additional Attorney General Munawar Iqbal Duggal appeared alone on the roster. Justice Sattar inquired about the law under which citizens' calls were being recorded. In response, the additional attorney general stated that under Section 54, the PTA had the authority to record calls. The court inquired which law authorised the PTA to conduct surveillance. The AAG said the legal framework allowed it.

Pakistan formalizes diplomatic...

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He believed that the formalisation of diplomatic relations would open up avenues for mutually beneficial relationship in the realms of trade, commerce, political cooperation, and tourism. "We look forward to the stronger people-to-people bond. There is immense tourism potential in both the countries that can be explored through visits by the tourists," said Ambassador Akram. Ambassador Rabbally thanked her Pakistani counterpart for hosting the ceremony and stated that she personally "learnt a lot from him". The Caribbean envoy said that she was humbled by the remarks of the Pakistan UN envoy for her country and the people.

Shehbaz highlights Pakistan...

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the birth, enlightenment and passing away of Lord Buddha. The Prime Minister highlighted that Pakistan was proud of its ancient Buddhist heritage, which flourished in the northwest Pakistan in the shape of Gandhara art and culture, over two thousand years ago. He underscored the importance that his government attached to interfaith harmony. He also acknowledged the valuable contributions of the Buddhist scholars and monks to the promotion of interfaith harmony and understanding.

PML-N huddle decides...

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President Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in the chair to finalise the budget proposals in the wake of prevailing inflation in the country. The party leadership was briefed over the three-point agenda during the meeting. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Foreign Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Petroleum Minister Dr Musadiq Malik, Energy Minister Sardar Awas Laghari, Industries Minister Rana Tanveer and Information Minister Attaullah Tarar.

Establishment piling...

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the Iddat case. However, District and Sessions Judge Shahrukh Arjumand sought his recusal from the case because it would not be appropriate for him to announce the verdict owing to repeated expression of no-confidence by Khawar Maneka, Bushra's ex-husband and the petitioner in the case. In the presser today, the PTI spokesperson said the party has been witnessing "murder of justice" for the last two years and expressed fears that the former prime minister would have to spend more time in jail. Khan, the deposed premier, has been behind bars since August last year after he was convicted in the Toshakhana case. Although, the PTI founder was granted bail in the case, he remains incarcerated owing to his conviction in other cases including un-Islamic marriage and cipher.

All eyes on Rafah

Footballers condemn Israel's Rafah massacres in Gaza

Marcus Thuram, a French national footballer who plays as a forward for Serie A club Inter Milan, was one of the first big names in world football to express solidarity with the people in Gaza

LONDON: The carnage in the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip has awakened the conscience of people around the world, prompting even prominent world footballers to break their silence. In the wake of the series of massacres perpetrated by the Israeli regime in the southern-most city of the besieged Palestinian territory, killing over 60 people, many people are saying 'Enough is enough'.

Marcus Thuram, a French national footballer who plays as a forward for Serie A club Inter Milan, was one of the first big names in world football to express solidarity with the people in Gaza. Thuram shared a viral image in his Instagram page stories captioned 'All eyes on Rafah'.

Marcus Thuram's Instagram
Reiss Nelson, an English professional footballer who plays as a winger for Arsenal, was another high-profile world footballer to share the image that has been trending globally in recent days. **Reiss Nelson's Instagram**
Malick Theaw, a German professional footballer who plays as a defender for Serie A club AC Milan and the German national team,



also shared the image in solidarity with the people of southern Gaza.

Malick Theaw's Instagram
William Saliba, a French professional footballer who plays as a center-back for Arsenal and the French national side, also took to his Instagram page to share the page in solidarity with people in Rafah. **William Saliba's Instagram**
David Beckham, the former Eng-

land football team captain who played for a number of top-rung clubs, shared a post by UNICEF in which the UN agency expressed grave concern over the Israeli bombings in the southern Gaza city and called for an immediate ceasefire.

David Beckham's Instagram
Yunus Musah, an American professional footballer who plays as

a midfielder for Serie A club AC Milan, joined other footballers to share the pro-Gaza image on his Instagram page.

Yunus Musah's Instagram
Rafael Leão, a Portuguese professional footballer who plays as a left winger for Serie A club AC Milan and the Portugal national team, also shared the same image on his Instagram page.

Rafael Leão's Instagram

Ibrahima Konate, a French professional footballer who plays as a center-back for Liverpool and the France national team, also shared the image to express his solidarity with Gazans in Rafah.

Ibrahima Konate's Instagram
Ousmane Dembele, a French professional footballer who plays as a winger for Ligue 1 club Paris Saint-Germain and the France national team, shared the same image on his social media to express solidarity.

Ousmane Dembele's Instagram
Jules Kounde, a French professional footballer who plays as a center-back for Barcelona and the France national team, also took to his social media pages to share a post by a Palestinian resistance Hossam Shabat in which he wrote about the latest massacres in the southern Gaza City.

Jules Kounde's Instagram
Paul Pogba, a French footballer who plays for Serie A club Juventus, shared a poignant post on his Instagram page, expressing solidarity with the children of Gaza.

"Please wake up. Let's do something. Imagine your child crying and shaking like that." - Agencies

Djokovic shrugs off troubles in winning start at FO

World number one beats French wildcard 6-4, 7-6 (7/3), 6-4

PARIS: Defending champion Novak Djokovic shrugged off his recent troubles to sweep to his 93rd career win at the French Open on Tuesday, extending his run of first round Roland Garros victories to a perfect 20. Djokovic, chasing a fourth title in Paris and record 25th Grand Slam triumph, came through against 142nd-ranked French wildcard Pierre-Hugues Herbert 6-4, 7-6 (7/3), 6-4. The 37-year-old, who saw career-long rival and 14-time champion Rafael Nadal exit the tournament on Monday, had arrived under a cloud. For the first time since 2018, he is without a title and has yet to reach a final this season. He has also endured recent misfortunes being accidentally hit on the head by a metal water bottle in Rome and then suffering stomach problems in Geneva.

"It was a solid performance," said Djokovic. "I could have done better, especially on the return, but bravo to him for serving well. It's a victory in three sets, that's what matters at this moment. I felt better compared to the last few weeks. I was focused. I encouraged myself, I am satisfied with my state of mind." Djokovic, who has advanced to the French Open quarter-finals or better every year since 2010, will face Spain's 63rd-ranked Roberto Carballes Baena for a place in the last 32. Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka, a semi-finalist in 2023, over-powered Russian teenager Erika Andreeva 6-1, 6-2 in just 68 minutes under the roof of Court Philippe Chatrier as heavy rain caused a five-hour delay to action around the grounds.

World number two Sabalenka fired 27 winners past the 100th-ranked Andreeva and broke serve five times in a dominant display. "I'm trying to do well on clay, it is tough conditions here but I enjoy playing here and I'm just trying to bring my best tennis every time - whatever the sur-

face," said Sabalenka. The Belarusian has made at least the last-four at her past six Grand Slams and is expected to be Iga Swiatek's toughest rival in the Pole's bid for a fourth French Open title. There was better luck for Andreeva's younger sister Mirra, who went to the fourth round as a 16-year-old in 2023. She swept past Emina Bektas of the United States in straight sets. Two-time runner-up Casper Ruud, who won clay-court titles in Barcelona and Geneva in the build-up to Roland Garros, cruised to a 6-3, 6-4, 6-3 victory over Brazilian qualifier Felipe Meligeni Alves. "It's great to be back here at Roland Garros," he said. "Hopefully I can make it another good year here." Ruud was beaten in straight sets by Djokovic in last year's final following a one-sided loss to Nadal in the 2022 showpiece. Frenchwoman Alize Cornet's career ended with a straight-sets defeat by Zheng Qinwen in her record-extending 69th consecutive Grand Slam appearance. Cornet was no match for China's Australian Open runner-up Zheng, losing 6-2, 6-1. She made her debut at Roland Garros as a 15-year-old in 2005 and had not missed a Grand Slam tournament since the 2006 US Open. Cornet reached a career-high ranking of 11th in 2009 and enjoyed a surprise run to the 2022 Australian Open quarter-finals. "I already cried yesterday watching Rafa," said a tearful Cornet after seeing Nadal lose what was likely his last match at the French Open. Over on Court Suzanne Lenglen, former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina powered into the second round with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over Belgian Greet Minnen. Kazakh world number four Rybakina is the only player to defeat Swiatek on clay this season, in the Stuttgart semi-finals in April. - Agencies

Top court comes down heavily on British HC Jane

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were held throughout Pakistan on 8 February 2024," the registrar said. Previously, it mentioned, that many wanting to contest elections in Pakistan faced a lifetime ban because they were not considered honest and trustworthy (Sadiq and Ameen) by the Supreme Court. However, a larger seven-member bench overruled the earlier decision, it said, holding that it did not conform to the Constitution and the law. The registrar said that the law enacted by Parliament (Elections Act, 2017) requires democracy within political parties via the holding of periodical intra-party elections; to forestall autocracy or even dictatorship within them. To ensure compliance with this democratic principle the law stipulates, it said, that if a political party does not hold intra-party elections, then it would not be eligible for an election symbol.

"A political party (which had itself voted in this law) did not hold the mandated intra-party elections. The Supreme Court reiterated what the law stipulated," the letter said. Therefore, the registrar said: "...your Excellency's

criticism with regard to this decision, with utmost respect, was unjustified".

Updating Britain regarding a recent ruling, it stated: "It was gratifying that your Excellency had repeatedly stressed the importance of open societies' which you stated are necessary for vibrant democracies. You will be pleased to learn that the Supreme Court has recognised the right to information and vigorously applied it to itself; a copy of its decision is attached as 'D'". "Persisting in the violent undemocratic mistakes of the past condemns present and future generations, and perpetuates cycles of violence. Let us embrace truth, which sets us free," it added.

Raising some questions, the top court's letter read: "Should the overthrow of the elected democratic government of Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953, to capture Iranian oil, not be revealed after over seven decades of cover-up? Will this not prove therapeutic for the perpetrator and the victim? Will it not engender trust, possibly friendship, and peace?"

"Ceding to what it described as 'Jewish Zionist aspirations', the British government wrote to an individual, its own citizen, on 2 November 1917 conveying its decision to establish a settler-colonial state. This

Islamabad, Wapda, PAF triumph in basketball tournament

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Wapda, Islamabad and Pakistan Air Force (PAF) won their respective matches in the second round of on going All-Pakistan Muhammad Majid and Abdul Nasir Memorial Basketball Tournament here at Siddique Memon Sports Complex Karachi organized under the umbrella of Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF).

Karachi Basketball Association (KBBA) President Muhammad Yaqoob was the chief guest on the second of the memorial tournament who along with other officials witnessed the matches. Islamabad outclassed the strong Police team by 87 points against 62 points in the second round of the tournament. Some brilliant game ware also witnessed during the match as Gibran Asif scored 26, Ali Kazmi scored 15 and, Momin Javed scored 14 points played a vital role in the Islamabad team victory, while Ali Raza scored 34 points for the police side.

In the second match, Wapda defeated Balochistan in a one-sided match with the difference of 69 points with the help of 22 points of Zainul Hasan and 20 points of Aalee Jah. The match concluded with 108-39 points. In the earlier matches, Police beat Sindh Yellow by 62-32 points while Punjab Rangers beat Balochistan by 74-40 points. Late Muhammad Majid and late Abdul Nasir represented Pakistan as well as in national events for a long time and the purpose toorganise the memorial tournament for the recognition of their great love and services to the game of basketball.

decision was not voted upon by the people of the area who were impacted by it, nor even by your own. The British government, and not Parliament, unilaterally decided it. The Balfour Declaration became the foundation on which an ethnic state was established. Those who had always lived there were excluded from that ethnic state; contained in ghettos, humiliated, deprived, brutalised, maimed and killed."

Let us step back from the precipice of settler-ethnic superiority. Deaths of thousands of children and many thousands more innocents may unjustifiably come to define a people, which would be an abomination. Let us all stand up and be counted for equality, peace and humanity, the apex court stressed.

"Let us be honest and acknowledge past mistakes in the spirit of openness, advocated by your Excellency. And, jettison the unholy concept of ethnic superiority, and its concomitant humanity - an inferior humanity." "The Supreme Court of Pakistan has acknowledged the mistakes made in its past, addressed them in detail, and taken steps to ensure that they are not repeated. Since the Government of His Majesty King Charles III has stressed the need for open societies and democracy, and offered criticism on the decisions of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, reciprocity would presumably be acceptable."

"This letter is written on instructions of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, who extends to you and the people of your country his yearning for openness and democracy, and his best regards," it concluded.

ICC Rankings: Shaheen, Fakhar shine in T20I rankings rise

Left-hander Fakhar Zaman has risen six spots to 51th on the batting list

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan cricketers have improved their ICC rankings during the ongoing T20I series against England. Left-hander Fakhar Zaman has risen six spots to 51th on the batting list. Meanwhile, Shaheen rises three spots to joint 11th on the bowling chart. In the all-rounders rankings, Imad Wasim has jumped four spots to 12th. Imad and Shadab Khan are joint 12th in all-rounders rankings with the latter falling one spot. Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam stay at third and fourth place, respectively, in the T20I batting rankings. "While portions of England's home series against Pakistan have been hampered by inclement weather, that has not stopped players from both sides from making inroads on the latest rankings update just days out from the start of the T20 World Cup in the West Indies and USA," the ICC said in a press release.

"England captain Jos Buttler rises one place to seventh on the updated rankings for T20I batters on the back of his superb

innings of 84 in Birmingham, while teammate Jonny Bairstow jumps eight places to 36th on the same list following his knock of 21 during the same contest." West In-

dies players also improved rankings after their series whitewash against South Africa. "There is also a trio of players from the West Indies on the rise following their

recent series sweep over South Africa, with Brandon King (up five spots to eighth), Johnson Charles (up 17 places to 20th) and Kyle Mayers (up 12 rungs to 31st) all making giant inroads on the rankings for T20I batters following some impressive performances," the ICC added.

"Teammate Gudakesh Motie was adjudged Player of the Series for his eight wickets during that series against the Proteas and the left-arm spinner is the big winner on the updated rankings for T20I bowlers as he rises from outside the top 100 to 27th overall." The bowling list in T20Is is topped by England's Adil Rashid followed by Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga and India's Axar Patel in second and third places, respectively. Meanwhile, India's Suryakumar Yadav is ranked as the number one T20 batter followed by England's Phil Salt in second place. The all-rounder category is topped by Sri Lanka's Hasaranga with a rating of 228 followed by Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan who fell one place and is ranked second. - Agencies



No verdict in Iddat case as...

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incarcerated premier Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi's conviction. Judge Shahrukh Arjumand left the courtroom after complainant Khawar Maneka expressed no confidence in him. The complainant made emotional arguments after asking the court to grant him 10 minutes to speak. Shortly after, the judge wrote to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) requesting it to fix the case for hearing in some other court. Judge Arjumand wrote in the letter "Though earlier application of complainants has already been dismissed in this regard on April 30, 2024, but I think it will not be appropriate to decide the lis when specific objection has been raised on the Presiding Officer." It added "As arguments at length were heard in the matter, therefore, it is humbly submitted to transfer the appeals to any other court of competent jurisdiction." "It is further submitted that complainant and his counsel always tried to frustrate and delay the proceedings on one pretext or other, therefore, time frame may be fixed for disposal of appeals," the judge wrote. As the hearing commenced, an hour later than scheduled, Maneka appeared before the court along with his counsel Rizwan Abbasi.

PTI moves LHC to reclaim 'bat'

FROM PAGE 01

They contend that since the 2002 general elections, PTI has contested using the cricket bat symbol, which has become emblematic of the party's identity for over two decades. "In the 2024 general elections, every attempt was made to exclude and handicap PTI's participation," the petition states. "This included the snatching of nomination papers, exclusion of candidates and their proposers and seconders from attending scrutiny proceedings, police raids, and heavy-handed actions denying rallies and gatherings. Thousands of PTI workers were also incarcerated." PTI founder Imran Khan was disqualified, convicted, and incarcerated in a series of controversial trials, which are currently pending adjudication in appeal and subject to challenge before higher courts. "His name and picture became the subject of a de facto ban on television and electronic media," the petition adds. "These are all matters of record, and if required, the necessary documents can be filed." The petition criticises the ECP for allegedly singling out PTI to prevent its participation in the general elections. "The ECP, which is constitutionally obligated to conduct elections impartially, singled out PTI and its candidates to prevent their participation in the 2024 general elections."

ECP gets powers to appoint...

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It means, the sources added, the ECP is going to set up new tribunals comprising retired high court judges, as the latest ordinance issued to amend the Election Act 2017 has restored its Section 140 in the original shape. Hence, the ECP can appoint retired judges to the election tribunals without consulting the high court chief justices. Before August 2023, the ECP enjoyed the powers under Section 140 to also appoint retired judges besides the serving ones and it was required to consult the relevant high court's chief justice only in the case of serving judges. However, parliament had snatched these powers from the ECP. As far as the current state of affairs are concerned, a deadlock has developed between the ECP and the Lahore High Court (LHC) over the establishment of election tribunals. The ECP is of the opinion that a high court chief justice only proposes a panel and it can select any of the judges out of the list. Now the changes in the Election Act means the ECP will neither be required to ask a high court to forward a panel nor hold consultations with the relevant chief justice.

Briefs

Islamabad centers to be upgraded

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, called for a plan on Wednesday to upgrade all centers in Islamabad, including Jinnah Super. During his visit to Jinnah Super Market, the chairman assessed the various facilities at Jinnah Super Market, F-7, Muhammad Ali inspected the underground parking plazas at the market. "Built with million of rupees, these parking plazas should be made fully operational immediately," he added. He emphasized the need to utilize the parking plazas by ensuring the availability of necessary facilities. Muhammad Ali directed that lighting and security arrangements in the parking plazas be made immediately. He also ordered that the condition of the parking plazas be improved without delay. The Chairman instructed the removal of encroachments around the parking plazas and throughout the F-7 center. Muhammad Ali announced that he will soon visit all markets and centers in Islamabad.—APP

PM lauds Blue Helmets' contributions to peace

ISLAMABAD: As the world community observed the International Day of UN Peacekeepers on Wednesday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to their services saying that the UN missions had been critical in maintaining peace and protecting civilians in conflict zones.

According to the United Nations, since 1948, more than two million uniformed and civilian personnel have helped countries in transition from war to peace. Today, more than 70,000 peacekeepers serve in 11 missions deployed in hot-spots around the world. Besides paying tribute to the service and sacrifice of peacekeepers, the Day also honours more than 4,000 peacekeepers who have lost their lives serving for peace. Prime Minister Shehbaz expressed special gratitude for the Pakistani peacekeepers who had made significant contributions. "230,000 military personnel, including our brave Pakistani female peacekeepers, have made the nation proud for 64 years of our commitment to the UN peacekeeping. Among these were 181 martyrs who sacrificed their lives for global peace, we also pay tribute to them. Their selfless act of courage and sacrifice will forever be etched in our hearts," he wrote on his X timeline.—DNA

Ahsan Iqbal honoured by Asian Productivity Organization

ISLAMABAD, May 29 (AP-P): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiative Prof Ahsan Iqbal received an award from the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) Kuala Lumpur for his outstanding contribution to socio-economic development efforts through policy, strategic thinking, effective leadership and management. He received the award at the 66th meeting of the Governing Body of the Asian Productivity Organization in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia as the organization includes 21 countries, including Pakistan, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives. He was awarded for his achievements during all his tenures as federal minister, implementing innovative projects to increase productivity in Pakistan through international networks. Ahsan Iqbal formulated progressive policies and regulations that contributed significantly to Pakistan's productive agenda and overall development. The award recognizes individuals who have made exemplary contributions to improving national or regional socio-economic productivity through their work, inspiring ideas, and influence, it added.—APP

Malaysia-Pak possess potential of \$12b trade

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Malaysian High Commissioner Mohammad Azhar Bin Mazlan has said that Pakistan and Malaysia enjoy the potential of \$12 billion bilateral trade for which both have to work hard and pool efforts. He said that the current trade volume between Pakistan and Malaysia is \$1.8 billion, which is less than the mutual trade potential and that Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry can play a significant role in its advancement. The High Commissioner Mohammad Azhar Bin Mazlan said this while addressing a meeting of Business community in Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) along with Senior Businessmen Zafar Bakhtawri and Zubair Malik. Azhar Bin Mazlan said that there are many opportunities for development in the halal industry in Malaysia and Pakistan, in which the private sector of both the countries should play their full role by taking tangible steps and that his country is ready for full cooperation with Pakistan to become a regional hub of halal industry. He said that the number of Pakistani students in Malaysian universities is 5000 and that Islamic environment is available for Pakistani students in Malaysia, especially the female students who can continue their education there with full religious



freedom. He said that Pakistan is one of the first countries to recognize Malaysia after independence and Malaysia always prioritizes its diplomatic and economic relations with Pakistan. He said that the constitution of Malaysia was written by a Pakistani jurist and from this we can estimate the closeness of the two countries. The Ambassador said that Pakistan and Malaysia are strategic partners and this partnership is very important in the development and economic prosperity

of both the countries. He further said that Malaysia always welcomes foreign labor and the laborers who have come legally from Pakistan are playing their full role in the economy of Malaysia whose number is 200,000 and they have ample opportunities there. The Malaysian ambassador said that Malaysia has been working in the telecom sector in Pakistan for a long time and Malaysian companies are investing here. He said that Pakistan is a potential

market of 240 million which can become a major economic and trading power along with ASEAN countries. He said that Malaysia can give Pakistan rich trade opportunities in ASEAN countries so that the Pakistani economy can move forward. Senior businessman and former President FPCCI Zubair Ahmed Malik highlighted the historical economic and trade relations between Pakistan and Malaysia by underscoring the need for frequent exchange of

think tanks of both the countries for further the existing relationship. Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawri said that hearts of Pakistani and Malaysian people beat together. Highlighting the significance of ASEAN States he underlined the need for grant of the status of a full dialogue partner to Pakistan, asserting that direct air links between Pakistan and the ASEAN States will make a big difference in strengthen mutual trade ties.

Philippines calls new China coast guard rules 'worrisome'

Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos said that the new policy of threatening to detain our own citizens, that is different. That is an escalation of the situation.

NEWS DESK

MANILA: Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said on Wednesday new rules outlined by China's coast guard that could result in the detention of foreigners in the South China Sea were an escalation and "worrisome". China, which has maritime sovereignty disputes with the Philippines and other countries, issued new rules effective June 15 that would enforce a 2021 coast guard law and allow detention of foreigners suspected of trespassing. "The new policy of threatening to detain our

own citizens, that is different. That is an escalation of the situation," Marcos told reporters during a state visit to Brunei. The Philippines "will use any point of contact with China to stop aggressive actions" and allow Filipino fishermen to fish in the South China Sea, Marcos said. If aggressive actions are managed, Marcos said, "then we can all go about our business in a peaceful way". China routinely accuses vessels of trespassing in areas of the South China Sea that fall inside the exclusive economic zones of its neighbors and has clashed repeatedly

with the Philippines in the past year. The rules aim to standardise law enforcement and better uphold maritime order, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Wednesday. "There is no need for any individual or entity to worry as long as there is no illegal behaviour," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said in a regular press conference. It was the Philippines' side "that frequently provokes the escalation of the situation" in the South China Sea, Mao said, adding that the door to dialogue was open. Marcos has taken a tough-

er line than his predecessor over China's actions in the South China Sea, emboldened by support from defence ally the United States, as well as Japan and Australia. Beijing claims jurisdiction over much of the South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion in annual ship-borne trade. In 2016, an international arbitral tribunal said China's vast claims had no basis under international law, a decision Beijing has rejected. China insists historic records and old maps make clear it has sovereignty over most of the sea and many islands there.

DR Congo ends impasse to appoint new govt

KINSHASA: The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has unveiled a new government, ending more than five months of deep uncertainty. Wednesday's announcement about the new cabinet's appointment signalled the end of the long impasse that followed President Felix Tshisekedi's re-election in December. The formation of the government comes 10 days after an attempted coup was foiled. Government spokesperson Tina Salama announced the formation of the new 54-member cabinet on state broadcaster RTNC. Guy Kabombo Muadiamvita's appointment as defence minister is seen as key. He will play a pivotal role given the coup attempt less than two weeks ago and the conflict that is raging between the Congolese army and Rwanda-backed M23 (March 23 Movement) rebels in the mineral-rich east of the country. Delays Tshisekedi, the son of veteran opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, came to power in 2019, promising to turn DRC into "the Germany of Africa". He was re-elected in the first round of presidential elections in December, with more than 70 percent of the vote, but his "Sacred Union of the Nation" platform was still unable to form a government immediately. The president's communications director, Erik Nyindu, said the formation of the government had been delayed because it took time for the different parties in the ruling coalition to find a compromise.—Agencies

Volcano in Iceland erupts again

COPENHAGEN: A volcano in southwestern Iceland erupted on Wednesday, live video from the area showed, making it the fifth outbreak since December. The new outburst happened as another eruption on the Reykjanes peninsula recently ended after spewing fountains of molten rock for almost eight weeks. Authorities had warned of the risk of renewed volcanic activity in the area just south of the capital Reykjavik as studies showed magma accumulated underground. The fiery spectacle underlines the challenges the island nation of almost 400,000 people face as scientists have warned eruptions could happen over and over in Reykjavik for decades or even centuries. The eruption was the eighth on the peninsula, home to some 30,000 people, since 2021 when geological systems that were dormant for some 800 years again became active. Previous incidents had disrupted district heating, closed key roads and even razed several houses in the Grindavik fishing town, where only a few residents have since returned. In an attempt to prevent further damage man-made barriers have been built to steer lava away from infrastructure including the Svartsengi geothermal power plant, the Blue Lagoon outdoor spa and Grindavik.—APP

Rawalpindi Sports Festival 2024 Kicks Off May 31

The opening ceremony will be held on May 31 at 8 pm at the Shahnaz Sheikh Hockey Stadium, Said pur Road, Rawalpindi. The ceremony will begin with a hockey match, gymnastics, and a pentathlon demonstration.

RAWALPINDI: The District Sports Department, in collaboration with the Rawalpindi Municipal Corporation, is organizing the Rawalpindi Sports Festival 2024, which will take place from May 31 to June 12. The festival will feature hockey, football, kung fu, gymnastics, MMA (International Event), taekwondo, badminton, and a demonstration of pentathlon. The opening ceremony will be held on May 31 at 8 pm at the Shahnaz Sheikh Hockey Stadium, Said pur Road, Rawalpindi. The ceremony will begin with a hockey match, gymnastics, and a pentathlon demonstration. The chief guests at the ceremony will be Engineer Amer Khattak, Commissioner of Rawalpindi Division, and Dr. Hassan Waqar Cheema, Deputy Commissioner of Rawalpindi. Other guests will include Ali Imran, CO (MC) Rawalpindi Division, Wahid Ahmed, District Sports Officer, Shams Tahir Abbasi, General Secretary of Rawalpindi Hockey Association, Raja Yasin, international and national players, and a large number of civil society representatives are expected to participate.—DNA

Nikki signs off on Israeli bomb with phrase "Finish Them"

WEB DESK

ISTANBUL: Former Israeli Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon shared some photos on his social media account regarding former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley's visit to sites in Israel, near the northern border with Lebanon. Haley, also a former Republican candidate for the 2024 US presidential race, signed an Israeli shell by writing "finish them" on it during her visit on Monday, noting her support for Tel Aviv. Haley had previously withdrawn from the presidential race due to insufficient support against former US President Donald Trump. Israel has continued its brutal offensive on the Gaza Strip since Oct. 7, 2023, following a Hamas attack despite a UN Security Council resolution demanding an



immediate cease-fire in the enclave. Nearly 36,100 Palestinians have since been killed in Gaza, the vast majority being women and children, and vast swathes of Gaza lay in ruins amid a crippling blockade of food, clean water, and medicine. The country stands accused of "genocide" at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which in its latest ruling or-

dered Tel Aviv to immediately halt its operation in Rafah. Despite international outcry, along with a plea from the ICJ on May 24 to halt attacks on the southern Gaza city of Rafah, Israel continues its attacks on the city, where over a million Palestinians had sought refuge from the war before it was invaded on May 6. It bombed the tents of displaced Palestinians in a Ra-

fah camp on Sunday, killing at least 45 Palestinians, including 23 women, children, and the elderly, and injuring 249. Tensions have escalated along Lebanon's border with Israel amid cross-border attacks between the Lebanese group Hezbollah and Israeli forces as Tel Aviv pressed ahead with its deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip.

New Delhi records highest-ever temperature at 49.9C

NEW DELHI: Temperatures in India's capital soared to a record-high 49.9° Celsius on Tuesday, the government's weather bureau said. The India Meteorological Department (IMD), which reported "severe heat-wave conditions," recorded the temperatures at two Delhi suburbs stations at Narela and Mungeshpur. Forecasters predict similar temperatures on Wednesday. In May 2022, parts of Delhi hit 49.2° Celsius, Indian media reported at the time. India is no stranger to searing summer temperatures. But years of scientific research have found climate change is causing heatwaves to become longer, more frequent and more intense. New Delhi authorities have also warned of the risk of water shortages as the capital swelters in an intense heatwave — cutting supplies to some areas. Water Minister Atishi Marlena has called for "collective responsibility" to stop wasteful water use, the Times of India newspaper reported Wednesday. "To address the problem of water scarcity.—APP

Algeria proposes UN resolution to stop Rafah killings

The draft resolution also expresses "grave concern" over the catastrophic humanitarian situation with a famine spreading throughout the Gaza Strip

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: Algeria is circulating a draft UN Security Council resolution to "stop the killing" in Gaza's southern city of Rafah as Israel intensifies its attacks in the densely populated area. "Algeria will circulate this afternoon a draft resolution on Rafah. It will be a short text, a decisive text, to stop the killing in Rafah," Algeria's Ambassador to the UN, Amar Bendjama, told reporters after a Security Council meeting. It is not immediately clear when the voting on the draft resolution will take place. The draft resolution seen by Anadolu calls on Israel to "immediately halt its military offensive and any other action in Rafah." It demands an immediate cease-fire respected by all parties and the "immediate and uncon-

Thousands gather in London to protest against Israel

LONDON: Thousands of demonstrators gathered on Tuesday outside Downing Street in London to protest the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza, condemning the British government's complicity in the tragedy. The protest, which swelled beyond initial expectations, was organized by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and other activist groups. The Palestine Solidarity Campaign said: "10,000+ people at Downing Street now for Palestine as Israel continues its brutal attack on Rafah. Our gov't and the Labour leadership have provided support for Israel as it commits genocide. They have blood on their hands. They must call for a ceasefire now and stop arming Israel." Due to the unexpectedly large turnout, the Metropolitan Police closed Whitehall to traffic to accommodate the demonstrators. The police have directed protesters to disperse by 8 p.m. local time, after which Whitehall will be reopened. Tension arose between activists staging a sit-in protest in support of Palestine and the police in front of the Prime Minister's Office at Number 10. A brief scuffle broke out between the protesters and the police, who threatened them with detention. The demonstrators linked arms to form a human barrier.—Agencies

ditional" release of all hostages while demanding that the parties "comply with their obligations under international law in relation to all persons they detain." The draft resolution also demands the "full implementation" of previous UN Security Council resolutions, such as a Nov. 1, 2023 resolution calling for "extended humanitarian pauses and corridors" in Gaza, a Dec. 22, 2023 resolution calling for "safe, unhindered and expanded" humanitarian access to Gaza and a March 25, 2024 resolution demanding an immediate cease-fire during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. All three UN Security Council resolutions also demanded the release of hostages held by the Palestinian group Hamas. The draft resolution also expresses "grave concern" over the catastrophic humanitarian situation with a famine spreading

throughout the Gaza Strip and condemns the "indiscriminate targeting" of civilians and civilian infrastructure. The US has vetoed three previous UN Security Council resolutions calling for a cease-fire in Gaza since Oct. 7 and called the March 25 cease-fire resolution, which was adopted with the US abstaining, "non-binding." Algeria's move comes after at least 45 people were killed, mostly women and children, and nearly 250 injured in an Israeli strike on a displaced persons camp in the southern Gaza city of Rafah on Sunday. It occurred near the logistics base of the UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) in Tal al-Sultan, said the Gaza-based Government Media Office. Israel has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip since a cross-border attack by Hamas on Oct. 7 last year.

WB approves \$700m to address Rohingya crisis

DHAKA: The World Bank approved on Wednesday \$700 million to help address the protracted humanitarian crisis facing Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh as international aid drops. Bangladesh hosts more than 1.2 million Rohingya Muslims who over decades escaped death and persecution in neighboring Myanmar, especially during a military crackdown in 2017. Most of them live in Cox's Bazar district, a coastal region in eastern Bangladesh, which with their arrival became the world's largest refugee settlement. Humanitarian conditions in the camps have been deteriorating over the years and Bangladeshi authorities have warned they were reaching crisis levels as global aid for the oppressed stateless minority has sharply declined. The World Bank funding is "to provide basic services and build disaster and social resilience for both the host communities and displaced Rohingya population." The financing will be partly a loan, Hasan Sarwar, additional secretary at the Bangladeshi Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, told Arab News. "Around half of the amount, which is approved for the well-being of the Rohingyas, will come here as a grant, and the rest of the amount which is for the host community people will be received as a loan," he said.—APP

Briefs

Four heatstroke deaths reported in Sindh

DNA

HYDERABAD: Four people have died due to exposure to heatwave in Hyderabad and Jamshoro in Sindh. In Hyderabad, two policemen passed away within three days due to extreme heat. Rizwan Sheikh, an official deputed at a local court, and an ASI from Qasimabad police station died due to heatstroke. A police spokesperson claimed that Rizwan's death was not due to heatstroke. In Jamshoro, two brothers, 10-year-old Rashid Gabol and 12-year-old Ali Shair Gabol, from Goth Dad Muhammad Khoso, died due to exposure to heatwave while playing in the open. Hospital officials said both deaths were due to exposure to heatwave and possible dehydration.

New Delhi records highest-ever temperature

NEW DELHI: Temperatures in India's capital soared to a national record-high of 52.3 degrees Celsius on Wednesday, the government's weather bureau said. The India Meteorological Department (IMD), which reported "severe heat-wave conditions", recorded the temperatures in the Delhi suburb of Mungeshpur on Wednesday afternoon, smashing the previous national record in the desert of Rajasthan by one degree Celsius. The weather bureau said the temperatures were 12 degrees higher than expected. Forecasters predict similar temperatures on Wednesday for the city with an estimated population of more than 30 million people, issuing a red alert warning notice for people to take care. The IMD's red alert is a warning there is a "very high likelihood of developing heat illness and heat stroke in all ages", with "extreme care needed for vulnerable people". Heat remains high even during the night, it added. The IMD said the heat wave in northwest and central India was "likely to reduce gradually" from Thursday. In May 2022, parts of Delhi hit 49.2 degrees Celsius (120.5 Fahrenheit), Indian media reported at the time. India is no stranger to searing summer temperatures. But years of scientific research have found climate change is causing heatwaves to become longer, more frequent and more intense. - Agencies

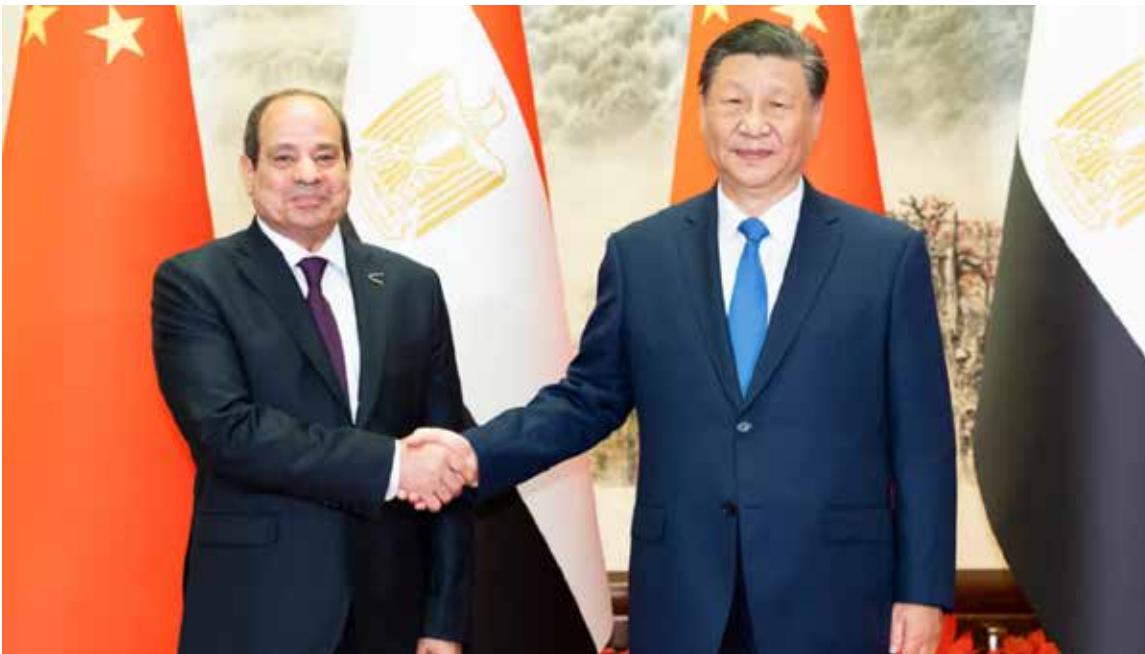
PTI leaders label Nawaz as 'stuntman'

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders have labelled the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz president as a 'political stuntman'. Nawaz Sharif is a political stuntman, Ejaz Ahmad Chaudhry and Umar Sarfaraz Cheema said while talking to the media outside an anti-terrorism court on Wednesday. They stressed that the way May 28 was celebrated after 26 years was a political stunt. Ex-PM Nawaz is still in the darkness of the past, they said, adding that the former premier has no programme for the country's youth. They questioned how a person who struck a deal twice to flee from the country could compete with the PTI founder Had Nawaz Sharif had moral courage, he would have expressed his regret over the Form 47 victory and taken over his political group, they said adding that the PML-N would have to give an account of every single penny of this country. They claimed they had been unjustly imprisoned for more than a year. The PTI leaders have been made to serve a sentence for a crime we have not committed, they added.

China 'deeply pained' by 'severe' Gaza situation: Xi

"The top priority task now is an immediate ceasefire, in order to avoid spillover of conflict, impact on regional peace and stability, and so as to prevent a more serious humanitarian crisis," Xi said



NEWS DESK

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping told his Egyptian counterpart on Wednesday that China was "deeply pained" by the "extremely severe" situation in Gaza, as Beijing hosts Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and several other Arab leaders. The talks between Xi, Sisi and other Arab dignitaries in China this week are aimed at building consensus between

Beijing and the Arab nations, as well as presenting a "common voice" on the conflict between Israel and Hamas. China has good relations with Israel but has supported the Palestinian cause for decades and has campaigned for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "The current round of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has caused a large number of innocent Palestinian civilian casualties and the humanitarian situation in Gaza is extremely severe. China is deeply pained," Xi told Sisi in

Beijing, according to state broadcaster CCTV. "The top priority task now is an immediate ceasefire, in order to avoid spillover of conflict, impact on regional peace and stability, and so as to prevent a more serious humanitarian crisis," Xi said. Egypt, along with Qatar and the United States, have been engaged for months in talks aimed at securing a lasting truce between Israel and Hamas, accompanied by the release of hostages kidnapped by the Palestinian militant group. "China appreciates the important role played by Egypt in cooling down the situation and delivering humanitarian relief," Xi said. He said China was ready to work with Egypt to continue to assist the people of Gaza "and push for an early, comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian issue". Xi met Sisi in a grand ceremony outside Beijing's Great Hall of People on Wednesday afternoon, state media footage showed, with the national anthems of both countries blaring out. The Egyptian presidency has said discussions would "tackle ways to forge closer bilateral relations and to unlock broader prospects for cooperation in an array of fields". Beijing has sought to build closer ties with Arab states in recent years and brokered a detente between Tehran and its long-time foe Saudi Arabia last year. Beijing also hosted rival Palestinian groups Hamas and Fatah last month for "in-depth and candid talks on promoting intra-Palestinian reconciliation". United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan is among the delegates attending the forum, as well as a host of other regional leaders and diplomats. Xi is set to deliver a keynote speech at the opening ceremony on Thursday, Beijing has said, aimed at building "common consensus" between China and Arab states. Top of the agenda will be the war between Israel and Hamas, for which Xi has sought an "international peace conference".

US statements prompt Israel to kill more Gazans: Resistance

FOREIGN DESK

GAZA: The Palestinian resistance groups have condemned the recent statements made by the White House spokesman regarding Rafah carnage, saying the remarks prompt the Israeli regime to continue its aggression and acts of genocide in Gaza. The resistance groups made the remarks in a statement on Wednesday, a day after John Kirby said the regime's deadly strikes targeting displaced Palestinians in Rafah did not cross a "red line" and would not lead to a change in Washington's policy towards Tel Aviv. "The statements of the pillars of crime and terrorism in the American administration serve as motivation and encouragement for the leaders of the Nazi Zionist entity to continue killing and exterminating women and children and to practice all types of crime with complete freedom." The resistance groups went on to say that the international silence over the massacres and slaughters committed against displaced women and children encourages the Israeli regime to continue to defy justice, calling on the free people of the world to rise up in order to stop the Israeli crimes. They also stressed

that the massacres and slaughters committed by the occupying regime in Rafah, Jabalia, and elsewhere in Gaza will not break the will of Palestinians and their resistance, "nor will they push the resistance into submission." Israel's three-week-old Rafah offensive stirred renewed outrage after an airstrike on Sunday set ablaze a tent camp in the west of the city. The strike killed some 50 people, including many children, prompting global condemnations and calls for the implementation of a World Court order to halt Israel's assault on Gaza. The attack came two days after the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to stop its US-backed aggression on Gaza that has killed more than 36,000 people since it started in October last year. Meanwhile, Israel has intensified its attacks on Rafah despite international condemnation. Israeli forces targeted a tent camp in a designated "safe zone" west of Rafah and killed at least 21 people. The invading forces pushed through Rafah on Wednesday as tanks were reported rolling into the centre of the city. Gaza's Health Ministry said that at least 36,171 Palestinians have been killed and 81,420 wounded in Israeli attacks since October 7. The ministry added that 75 people were killed in the latest 24-hour reporting period.

28 dead after bus overturns in Balochistan's Washuk

WASHUK: At least 28 people, including women and children, were killed after a passenger bus turned turtle and plunged into a ditch in Balochistan's Washuk district on Wednesday morning. According to rescue and Levies officials, about 22 people sustained injuries in the accident and have been moved to the Civil Hospital in Basima. The accident took place after the tyre of the passenger bus burst, said the rescue officials. The bus was travelling from Gwadar to Quetta. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed his condolences over the incident, praying for the departed souls. The premier also directed the authorities concerned to provide assistance to the injured. Balochistan's Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti offered his condolences over the loss of lives in the horrific accident and prayed for those who were wounded. In two similar incidents in May, 13 people belonging to the same family were killed and nine others got wounded as a truck plunged into a ditch in Punjab's Khushab district. The accident occurred because of a brake failure on PanjPirManawan Road in Khushab, consequently, the truck driver lost control of the vehicle and it fell into the ditch. The deceased of the ill-fated crash included women, too, and the family was going to Khushab. Meanwhile, 20 people lost their lives while 21 sustained injuries after a passenger bus veered off a narrow mountain road and plummeted into a ravine in a remote area of Diamer district, Gilgit Baltistan. - Agencies

Azerbaijan foreign minister arrives in Islamabad



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov arrives in Islamabad on a two-day official visit. He was received at the Islamabad International Airport by Additional Foreign Secretary (Afghanistan and West Asia) Ahmed Naseem Warraich and accorded a warm welcome. Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov will call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and hold extensive discussions with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. - DNA

Economy to gain momentum as signs of moderate recovery evident

GDP growth elevating while inflation rates are on a decline, as per monthly outlook report

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Finance has painted a positive picture of the economy, highlighting that key indicators demonstrating stability in the real, fiscal, and external sectors. In its Monthly Economic Update and Outlook report for May 2024, the finance ministry's Economic Adviser's Wing noted that signs of economic stability were becoming more evident as the country approached the end of the outgoing fiscal year. "As the fiscal year is about to end, the economic indicators demonstrate the strengthening of stability in the real, fiscal and external sectors," according to the report released on Wednesday. According to the report, GDP growth is elevating while inflation rates are on a decline with a positive primary balance, reflecting the effectiveness of recent fiscal consolidation efforts. The economic performance also indicates that agriculture has been a major contributor to this fiscal year's economic upswing, registering a growth of 6.25%. The agriculture sector's recovery is mainly attributed to government initiatives through improved input supply and increased credit disbursement to farmers. Large Scale Manufacturing (LSM) growth in 2024 Quarter 3, became positive and is expected to remain moderately positive on average throughout the second half of the

current fiscal year. It witnessed a minor decline of 0.1% during July-March FY 2024 against the contraction of 7.0% same period last year. During this period, 11 to 22 sectors witnessed positive growth. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation stood at 17.3% on a year-on-year basis in April 2024 as compared to 36.4% in April 2023. The major drivers include housing, water, electricity, gas & fuel, perishable food items, furnishing & household equipment maintenance, clothing, footwear and transport. On the fiscal front, during July to March FY24, the revenue growth outpaced the growth in expenditures. Within revenues, both tax and non-tax collection grew significantly by 29.3% and 90.7%, respectively. Moreover, measures to control non-mark-up spending helped in improving the primary surplus to Rs1615.4 billion (1.5% of GDP) from Rs503.8 billion (0.6% of GDP) last year. While, the overall fiscal deficit remained at 3.7% of GDP, the same as recorded last year. On the external front, the current account for FY2024 (July-April) narrowed down significantly, recording a deficit of \$0.2 billion compared to last year's \$3.9 billion, primarily due to an improved trade balance. In April 2024, the current account surplus was recorded at \$491 million, an increase from \$434 million in March 2024. Year-on-year, exports in April 2024 increased by 23.4% to \$2.6 billion, fueled by eased import restrictions that enhanced the supply chain for export industries. In the same period, imports also rose by 22.8% to \$4.4 billion. The trade deficit for April 2024 was recorded at \$1.8 billion. Furthermore, the FDI witnessed an increase of 39.1% and reached \$358.8 million in April 2024, as against an inflow of \$258.0 million last month.

Naik demands withdrawal of NAB amends

DNA

ISLAMABAD: People's Party leader Farooq H. Naik has demanded withdrawal of recent amendments in the NAB law made by an ordinance. He called the NAB (Amendment) Ordinance 2024 a draconian law. He said the PDM had made three amendments in the NAB law. "Now this new ordinance has come to fore, which was not taken before the parliament. This practice should not be followed," he stressed. He said more than 14 days remand period negates the law. "Why the officer involved in registering fake cases should not be convicted," he questioned while commenting on the amended NAB law. "While the NAB accused getting 14-14 years sentences from courts," he said. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) can now detain the individuals accused in cases under the anti-graft watchdog for 40 days after acting President Yousaf Raza Gilani signed the NAB (Amendment) Ordinance 2024 into law. The new ordinance has extended the period of remanding accused in NAB cases from 14 days to 40 days.

SIC to get PAC chairmanship

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided to give the chairmanship of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), the new home for PTI lawmakers, ARY News reported on Wednesday, citing sources. Citing sources, a private TV channel that the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) will get 12 chairmanships of standing committees in National Assembly, while the SIC will get nine chairmanships, including the PAC one's. Meanwhile, PPP will get chairmanship of 7 standing committees, sources added. It is pertinent to mention here that SIC had formally nominated Sheikh Waqas Akram for the chairmanship of the National Assembly's PAC. The slot became a bone of contention and triggered a tug-of-war between senior PTI members as Sher Afzal Marwat, who was earlier named by the party, openly criticised the party leadership.

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