



Islamabad POST

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President Biden hints Netanyahu prolonging Gaza war

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Swiss envoy praises PRCS role

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Swiatek roars into French Open semis

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Shehbaz historic China visit

PM terms CPEC integral to Pak economic growth

Expressing gratitude to the Chinese President Xi Jinping over the enormous investment in Pakistan under the banner of CPEC, he said that now the project is being entered into a new phase and Business to Business will be its essential component

DNA

SHENZHEN: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif today met with Party Secretary of Shenzhen Municipal Committee and Deputy Party Secretary of Guangdong Provincial Committee Mr. Meng Fanli in Shenzhen China. The Prime Minister noted that the deep-rooted ties between Pakistan and China were characterized by frequent engagement and dialogue at the leadership level, people-to-people contacts, cultural and educational exchanges. He lauded the impressive economic growth and exemplary innovative spirit of Guangdong province. He also termed Shenzhen as a trade gateway for China's business linkages with Pakistan. Reaffirming the time-honoured All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership between Pakistan and China, the two sides agreed on the need to explore opportunities for increased cooperation between Pakistan and Guangdong province particularly under CPEC. Shehbaz Sharif and Party Secretary Meng Fanli underlined the importance of robust linkages and exchanges between scientists, innovators and businessmen to harness the true potential for enhanced partnership in science and technology, innovation and trade and economic cooperation. They also agreed that Pakistan-China Business Conference to be held tomorrow can make an important contribution in this regard. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says Pakistan has witnessed an immense progress and several projects were started under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

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PM Shehbaz Sharif lands in China's Shenzhen

Premier was invited by China's Prime Minister Li Qiang

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday arrived in Shenzhen on the first leg of his five-day official visit to China from June 4 to 8, to meet the Chinese leadership and the business community. As the prime minister landed at the Shenzhen Airport, he was warmly received by Vice Mayor of Shenzhen city of China Luo Huanghao, Chinese Ambassador in Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, Pakistan's Ambassador in Beijing Khalil Hashmi and senior diplomatic officials. Shenzhen is the first stop during the prime minister's official visit to China. The premier will meet with Secretary of Communist Party of China in Shenzhen

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SHENZHEN: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meeting with Mr. Meng Fanli, Party Secretary of Shenzhen Municipal Committee, and Deputy Party Secretary of Guangdong Provincial Committee, Shenzhen. - DNA

Opp urges govt to open trade with Afghanistan

Mahmood Achakzai said: "We want the rule of law in Pakistan"

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Opposition parties' grand alliance has urged the federal government to open trade with Afghanistan and fulfil its commitment to newly-merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Opposition Parties Grand Alliance named "Tehreek Tahafuzz-e-Ain" leader Asad Qaiser addressing a press conference with other opposition leaders Mahmood Khan Achakzai and Allama Nasir Abbas said that right now Chaman Border was closed and trade with Afghanistan has come to stand still.

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Pakistan Navy seizes large consignment of drugs at sea

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency have seized a large consignment of drugs at sea. According to ISPR, in a joint anti-narcotics operation, PMSS Zhub seized a large quantity of narcotics in the North Arabian Sea, worth thousands of dollars in the international market. This is the third major operation of Pakistan Navy against drug smuggling in the last ten days. Pakistan Navy and PMSA maintain constant presence to closely

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Behind series of mistakes Depriving a party of symbol main reason: SC Judge

'All issues would've been resolved if intra-party polls were held', says CJP on SIC's reserved seats plea

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Hearing the Sunni Ittehad Council's appeal for allotment of reserved seats, the Supreme Court on Tuesday observed that depriving a political party of election symbol became the root cause of a series of mistakes. The proceedings were broadcast live on the SC's website and its YouTube channel. Advocate Faisal Siddiqui, representing SIC's women candidates who were denied the reserved seats, resumed his arguments in the case. The hearing was adjourned to 9:30am, with Justice Shah stating that the counsel for both sides would have two days to sum up their arguments in the case. During the proceedings, Justice Munib Akhtar observed that

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'Justice will sound the death knell for oppressors'

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Information Secretary Raouf Hasan hailed the Islamabad High Court's (IHC) landmark decisions to exonerate PTI Founding Chairman Imran Khan and Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi in the fabricated cipher case and to reopen the party's central secretariat as a resounding

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Briefs

Iddat case fixed for June 7

Bushra Bibi had requested court to fix appeals against conviction in case for hearing this week

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Bushra Bibi, the wife of PTI founder Imran Khan, Tuesday moved a district and sessions court in the federal capital, seeking an early hearing of her appeals filed against her conviction in the iddat case. In her petition, the former first lady argued that the appeals against conviction are scheduled for hearing in the local court, requesting it to fix the appeals for hearing this week. Following her appeal, the court fixed the hearing of the appeals on June 7, seeking arguments on the case.

Poet Farhad's bail plea rejected

Kashmiri poet, who was missing for several days, is in the police's custody

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: An anti-terrorism court in Muzaffarabad has rejected the bail petition of poet Ahmed Farhad. The development comes a day after the court reserved its verdict after hearing arguments from both sides. Speaking with journalists about the court's orders, the poet's wife Urooj Zainab said she will challenge the decision. "Details of why the bail was rejected were not disclosed," she said addressing the press. Just two days before the hearing of his bail plea, the ATC had ordered a medical examination of the poet amid concerns of slow poisoning.

IHC stays execution of 5 court-martialled former Navy officials

It directed that "given that the fundamental question of protection of right to life and due process is in question, the petitioners shall not be executed till the disposal of the petition"

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has stayed the execution of five ex-Navy officers who were previously sentenced to death through a general court martial decree, it emerged on Tuesday. IHC's Justice Babar Sattar issued a written order for Monday's hearing on the request of Navy officers who said they were not provided legal assistance during the general court martial order. The court ordered the counsels for the petitioners argued that the documents permissible to be shared with their clients, such as the abstract of evidence and court of inquiry, were also not shared with them. The lawyers asserted that an appeal was filed against the death sentence without access to these documents and was dismissed, adding that the reasons for the appeal court

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Vawda refuses to apologise over his anti-judiciary outburst

Mustafa Kamal tenders unconditional apology to SC over anti-judiciary tirade

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Senator Faisal Vawda on Tuesday refused to say sorry over his anti-judiciary rant in the contempt of court case. In the contempt of court case, Senator Vawda submitted

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Shock for Narendra Modi as Opp set to slash majority

India's BfP concedes defeat in Ayodhya, where Modi opened grand Ram temple

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's alliance was headed for a narrow majority as vote-counting in the general election neared completion on Tuesday, with the tally well short of a widely expected landslide. Modi's own Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was falling short of a majority of its own in the 543-member parliament, the trends showed. Having to depend on allies to form the government could introduce some uncertainty in policy-making as Modi has ruled with an authoritative hold in the last decade. The Hindu nationalist BJP won a majority of its own when it won power in 2014, ending India's era of unstable coalition governments, and repeated the feat in 2019. The prospect of Modi having to rely on allies spooked markets with stocks falling steeply. The blue-chip NIFTY 50 (.NSEI), opens new tab sank 5.9% and the S&P BSE Sensex (.BSESN), opens new tab tumbled 5.7%, posting their steepest decline on an election outcome day since 2004. The rupee also fell sharply against the dollar and benchmark bond yields were up. Markets had soared on Monday after exit polls on

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India unanimously decided it doesn't want Modi': Rahul

Top Congress leader says they had fought the election against entire state machinery

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI: As the counting of votes for the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections moves towards culmination, India's main opposition leader and Congress member Rahul Gandhi has said that the Indians unanimously decided that they don't want the ruling

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Punjab, Qatar forge stronger economic ties

Maryam Nawaz Sharif took the opportunity to apprise the Qatari ambassador of the business-friendly policies implemented by the Punjab government

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: In a significant move towards bolstering economic relations, Punjab and Qatar on Tuesday made a fundamental decision to enhance their

economic partnership. During a meeting between the Chief Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, and the Ambassador of Qatar, Ali bin Mubarak Al-Khater, held to discuss mutual interests, several key points were deliberated upon.

Discussions centered around exploring potential investment opportunities in Punjab and facilitating the provision of labor force. Both parties emphasized the importance of promoting economic cooperation and fostering mutual growth. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif took the opportunity to apprise the Qatari ambassador of the business-friendly policies implemented by the Punjab government.



Federal Ombudsman team inspect facilities at AIA

LAHORE: On the direction of Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, a team of Federal Ombudsman Regional Office Lahore inspected facilities for passengers here at AIA on Tuesday.

2,795 new dengue cases reported in country

ISLAMABAD: There has been a significant increase in dengue cases, with 2,795 fresh cases reported in the past week across the country.

Public Notice

برجہ عمومات اس کو مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ میں سیاب علی امین سید سب رول، چنگواڑی (شاخہ نمبر 1516921/374046) رقبہ قدرتی پانچ گھر نمبر (1906)، کیوٹ نمبر (746-749)، کنوٹی نمبر (1343-1347) نمبر مالک زمین ڈاکٹر محمد امین سے مکان خرید رہا ہوں۔ اگر کسی کو اعتراض ہو تو ہر کے سامت ایام کے اندر انوریزوہ تحصیل سے رابطہ کریں۔ بدوش کسی قسم کا کوئی حذر اعتراض قبول نہ کیا جائے گا

World Environment Day 20 organizations honored for outstanding ecological practices

FAISAL SEIKH

ISLAMABAD: In celebration of World Environment Day, twenty organizations from around the country have been recognized for their exemplary efforts in promoting sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices.

ceremony was overwhelmingly attended by a diverse audience including environmental activists, industry leaders, policy makers, and members of the public. The event was a testament to the collective commitment towards achieving a greener, more sustainable world.

Director General Ayub Jalmi. Speaking on the occasion, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said Today, as we celebrate World Environment Day 2024, I am reminded of the immense beauty and richness of our natural heritage here in Pakistan.



HYDERABAD: Lady Health worker administering polio drops to a child during anti polio campaign "Polio Free Pakistan" in the city.--APP

Massive cleaning campaign kicks off in Kalam Forests

ISLAMABAD: The Green Pakistan Tourism has launched a comprehensive cleaning campaign in the forests of Kalam with the aim to restore and promote tourism in the picturesque region.

UNICEF country representative calls on Chairperson BISP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from United Nations' Children Fund (UNICEF), led by Country Representative Abdullah Fadi, called on Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme, Mrs. Rubina Khalid, at the BISP headquarters.

nutrition, particularly for vulnerable populations.

"My focus will be on raising awareness of the Nashonuma Programme," stated Mrs. Khalid. "By doing so, we can address many issues, especially those affecting women and children. BISP and UNICEF need to collaborate closely on this front to ensure the well-being of our communities."

"We need to work together to find practical solutions for the malnourished community, especially women and children," Mr. Fadi remarked. "BISP's efforts in better targeting and financial literacy are commendable, and I look forward to our continued collaboration to further these goals."

Sahiwal Hospital introduces lab auto machine system

SAHIWAL: Sahiwal Teaching Hospital has introduced a new facility for patient care with the launch of the Lab Auto Machine System in the Pathology Department on Tuesday.

Additional Commissioner Coordination Shafiq Ahmad Dogar, Principal of Sahiwal Medical College Dr. Muhammad Imran Hassan Khan, Medical Superintendent Dr. Akhtar Mehboob, Head of Pathology Dr. Raiyas Abbas Leel, and various department heads including Dr. Muhammad Saleem, Dr. Nisar Ahmad Saeedi, Dr. Zahid Sattar, Dr. Haroon Gilani, and Dr. Azhar Naqvi were also present.

the briefing, Dr. Raiyas Abbas Leel explained that the Pathology Department conducts medical tests for over 1.4 million patients annually, providing all necessary test facilities. He noted that due to better management and patient confidence in test results, the number of tests conducted increased from 600,000 in 2020 to over 1.4 million from July 2023 to May 2024, surpassing figures from some of Punjab's major hospitals.

SCCI asks govt to conduct forensic audit of IPPs

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Fuad Ishaq has urged the government to conduct a forensic audit of the IPPs to pull the country out from the hovering net of circular debts.

ment to pay serious attention to the uplift of the solar energy sector. Fuad Ishaq demanded disbursement of loans under KP government interest-free Youth loan scheme worth Rs 10 Billion through the Bank of Khyber and demanded the revival of IDBP.

Wend Energy Prof Subhan Qureshi, Chief Technical Officer Saad Rashid, Dr Ahmad Khattak, Haider Ali, Prof Amanullah, researchers, experts, universities faculty members, business community attached with solar energy sector, universities students, members of business community were present in a large number on the occasion.

Fuad Ishaq addressing the participants said that proposals today presented by GreenWend Energy, were mostly as per SCCI vision and thoughts. He assured the chamber will take initiatives in light of these recommendations for promotion of solar energy sector and other relevant hurdles/issues.

Health Advocates applaud SIFC, IMF for tobacco tax hike boosting economy

Health activists are hopeful that SIFU will advocate for an increase in cigarettes taxes by 26% in upcoming budget of year 2024-25

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a press release, Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), appreciated Special Investment Facilitation Council's (SIFC) previous work on investing in better economic decisions.

in revenue and after this tax increase, there is huge potential for long-term savings in health cost recovery by 19.8%. Malik Imran Ahmad country head Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK) said that, higher taxes on tobacco products can lead to increased revenue for the government.

take action to protect our future generations from addiction and death. Revenue from this proposed tax increase will generate billions of rupees for the national exchequer and can then be allocated to various sectors like healthcare, education or infrastructure, which can indirectly contribute to economic growth.

itude towards the SIFU, mentioning the urgent need to make sustainable decisions right now for strengthening economy in the long run and saving Pakistani children. Which is possible if the proposed 26% tax increase on cigarettes secures a place in the upcoming federal budget 2024-25.

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Briefs

Five drug peddlers netted with five kg charras

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district police in an action against suspected drug peddlers on Tuesday arrested five accused besides recovering five kg charras and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Taxila police held an accused named Asad Mehmood for having 1500 grams charras and Farhad with 1420 grams charras. Saddar Wah police rounded up Sadaqat on recovery of 1400 grams charras. Saddar Baroni police netted Saad Ali for possessing 700 grams charras while Rattamal police nabbed an accused named Yousaf and recovered 550 grams charras from his possession. Separate cases have been registered against all the accused while further investigations are underway. He said, Rawalpindi district police on the directives of the City Police Officer had accelerated ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers.—APP

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Tarar grieved over demise of senior journalist mother

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of the mother of senior journalist Amir Sajjad Syed. In a condolence message, he expressed his heartfelt condolence and sympathy to the family of the deceased. The minister said he was really sad to hear about the death of Aamir Sajjad Syed's mother and he shared the grief of the bereaved family. He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude.—APP

Billions invested in petroleum, gas sector will be wasted

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) on Tuesday opposed the plan to sell diesel on roads through Doorstep Delivery Tankers (DDTs) across the country and termed it against the national interests. It said the decision would further increase smuggling and cause the government to lose billions in revenue. It added that this decision will endanger the lives and property of the people while sinking the billions of dollars invested by oil and gas companies and their dealers. At an emergency meeting of petroleum dealers, Hassan Shah, a member of the Central Executive Committee of the PPDA, warned that such a move would result in the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs and the bankruptcy of thousands of businesses. He said that dealers make a profit of a few rupees on the sale of a liter of diesel, while the smuggled oil sellers make a profit of Rs 70 to Rs 80 per liter. However, he said, most petrol pump owners cannot sell the smuggled oil because doing so risks their investment of Rs 300 to Rs 400 million. However, it will be easier for smugglers to sell fuel through benami tankers. He informed that the decision would facilitate smugglers and the mafia under the pretext of providing convenience to the people. He questioned the decision's rationale, given the widespread presence of petrol pumps across the country and its lack of practice globally. He said that the government should refrain from implementing this project; otherwise, after Shell, other companies will also leave the country, affecting Pakistan's image. According to Hassan Shah, the legalization of smuggled diesel will shrink the size of the documented economy and increase the size of the black economy. Smugglers are already installing nozzles on tankers similar to those installed on filling stations to discharge fuel wherever they please, which will raise concerns about public safety, he underlined. He stated that when smuggled Iranian oil is available at their doorstep, consumers will never purchase pricey fuel. Selling fuel on roads via tankers will become the most profitable business in Pakistan, at the expense of energy companies and dealers. Smugglers will recover their entire investment on tankers within a few days due to unbelievable profits. According to Hassan Shah, the PPDA has met Chairman OGRA, DG of the Explosives Department, and sent letters to the Ministry of Petroleum to inform them of their concerns. However, the project's rapid progress raises concerns and suggests the mafia's influence, he said, adding that an influential petroleum company involved in large-scale smuggling is lobbying hard to achieve the goal. He stated that petroleum dealers would not allow anyone to play with the future of the nation in order to benefit a few influential people, as it is obvious that after the sale of diesel on roads, the sale of petrol and gas will also be allowed.—DNA

CPEC phase-II to grow business links between Pak-China: Minister

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal Tuesday said that the economic and cultural connections between the people of China and Pakistan are strong and focused. In a video message ahead of Prime Minister

Chinese consumers show enthusiasm in Pak gemstones

Chinese consumers showed consistent enthusiasm for gold, jade, pearls, and other precious items. Notably, there was a marked interest in colored gemstones, with a significant crowd around the booths of exhibitors from Pakistan and Sri Lanka

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese consumers showed consistent enthusiasm in Pakistan's coloured Gemstones, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. According to the report, the 2024 Beijing International Gold, Jewelry, and Gemstone Exhibition concluded on June 3 at the Beijing Exhibition Center.

The event featured exhibitors not only from major Chinese cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou but also from various international jewelers. Chinese consumers showed consistent enthusiasm for gold, jade, pearls, and other precious items. Notably, there was a marked interest in colored gemstones, with a significant crowd around the booths of exhibitors from Pakistan and Sri Lanka. "The quality of colored gemstones from Pakistan and Sri Lanka caught my eye, so I stopped to ask about the prices. I might find something good to buy," a consumer shared with the reporter. In 2023, the total import and export value of China's jewelry industry reached a record high of \$145.334 billion, an increase of 8.62% year-on-year. Chinese consumers show a

strong interest in gold and silver jewelry products for both their aesthetic and investment value. Additionally, Pakistan's exports of gems and precious stones to China saw a 47 percent increase in 2023, indicating growing recognition of the quality of Pakistani gemstones among Chinese buyers. Muhammad Amjad, the owner of PIEDRA, a Pakistani colored gemstone company, brought emeralds, aquamarines, and other gems from Peshawar to the exhibition. "I came to China in 2006 and have been in the colored gemstone business ever since. The reason for choosing to do business in China is simple: the good relationship between the two countries and the strong purchasing power of Chinese consumers. My partners here have never deceived me, which I value highly. Although sales have fluctuated in the past few years due to various factors, the market is now recovering, and I am very confident," Muhammad Amjad told the reporter. Since 2023, demand for colored gemstones in China has been steadily expanding, supplementing the traditional safe-haven asset of gold. According to market research by the China Gems and Jade Association (Beijing) Fund Management

Co., the average price increase for colored gemstones across all categories in China during the first half of 2023 ranged between 30% and 50%. Prices for larger or relatively rare gems surged by as much as 100% to 150%. "Although the demand for precious-colored gemstones hasn't surged as dramatically as that for gold, it has remained relatively stable, with a consistent customer base. In recent years, with the rise of e-commerce and social media platforms, younger consumers have become increasingly accepting of colored gemstones," said Ma Xiaozhong, a jeweler from China. Ma owns Muny Asia Jewellery, a colored gemstone company in Beijing, and has been in the business for over 20 years. "We source raw gemstones from around the world, process them domestically, and sell them both locally and in Western markets. Unfortunately, we haven't established stable cooperation with Pakistan." When asked why, Ma provided a cautious response: "Pakistan's gemstone industry has a longer history than China's. In Peshawar's gemstone market, you can find family businesses that have been around for a century. It's difficult for outsiders to enter the market, and it's not easy for foreigners to do business there. Pakistan's gem cer-

tification institutions aren't aligned with international standards, and some certification documents are not recognized." Ma's story highlights a missed opportunity. Various indicators suggest that China, as Pakistan's all-weather strategic partner, boasts a thriving and growing market for colored gemstones. Pakistan, with its diverse geological conditions, is rich in high-quality natural-colored gemstones. However, the two countries have not fully leveraged their friendly relations to explore the potential of this industry. Currently, a few Pakistani companies with stable cash flow, gemstone resources, and professional design teams have the necessary conditions to enter the Chinese market. In contrast, Peshawar-based traders, who rely on bulk sales, face numerous challenges in establishing deeper cooperation with China. From the perspective of a brand jeweler, Muhammad Amjad shared some insights with us: "One problem is that Pakistan lacks effective advertising methods. Chinese businessmen are smart; they use short video platforms like TikTok and Kuaishou to promote their brands or unique national gemstones, leaving a lasting impression on consumers and even driving up product prices. In contrast,

we can only wait in Peshawar for buyers from other countries." Indeed, lacking product visibility hampers sales, especially for goods with financial attributes, but visibility must be predicated on quality. Muhammad added, "Secondly, we urgently need to establish a gem certification institution that meets international standards. Our laboratories don't meet these standards, and traders from around the world label our gems with other countries' tags and sell them to high-end jewelry brands like Cartier. This harms us." Recently, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasized in a statement from his office, "Efforts should be made to obtain international certifications for precious stones and the products made from them, and to ensure Pakistani representation in global exhibitions." Furthermore, Pakistan's gemstone export industry faces significant hurdles due to a lack of financial infrastructure. In Azad Market Namak Mandi, gem trader Abdul Ahaad highlighted key issues: "One major issue is payment; many of our clients prefer PayPal, which is not available in Pakistan. Another issue is the lack of DHL branches, leading to slow shipping times of 15-20 days, despite using DHL's name."



ISLAMABAD: Chairman CDA listening to the complaints of people during an open kutchery on Tuesday.—DNA

Services exports increase by 1.18 pc in 10 months

ISLAMABAD: The exports of services during the first ten months of the current financial year increased by 1.18 percent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year. During July-April 2023-24, exports of services were recorded at \$6.441 billion as against the exports of \$6.366 billion during the same period of last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). During the period under review, the services imports into

the country grew by 20.77 percent and it was registered at \$8.347 billion as compared to the import of \$6.912 billion in the same period last year. On a year-on-year basis, the services exports from the country grew by 16.59 percent in April 2024 as compared to the exports of the same month of last year. In April 2024, services valued at \$646.03 million were exported as compared to exports of \$554.10 million in the same month of last year. The imports of services into the country also

surged by 14.85 percent during the period under review as it was recorded at \$833.03 million against \$725.34. On month on month basis, the services exports decreased by 7.57 percent and imports by 2.22 percent respectively in April 2024 as compared to the exports of the previous month, whereas imports were registered at \$833.03 million as compared to the imports

of \$851.90 billion of last month.—APP

AIU faculty board approves programs of social sciences

ISLAMABAD: Faculty Board meeting of Social Sciences and Humanities, functioning under Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) held here. Dean, Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir presided over the meeting. Different scheme of studies of postgraduates, BS, MPhil and PhD level programs and other academic related matters were discussed in the meeting. All the teachers of the faculty and external member Dr. Salman Basit participated in the meeting. Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir said that in the light of the instructions of the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, special attention is being paid on quality education and all the programs would be aligned with the contemporary requirements as per the instructions of higher education commission (HEC).

He said that following the directives of the Government of Pakistan, Fahm ul-Quran and Seerat-i-Taiba have been included in all teaching programs. He added that Constitution and Ideology of Pakistan will also be included in next phase. He also instructed to finalize the BS Political Science and International Relations programs as soon as possible to offer in the next admissions. All the decisions of the Faculty Board's approval would be given in the next meeting of the Academic Council and the Executive Council. Meanwhile, one-day international seminar on "Islamic Thought on Global Peace for the Sustainable Future of Humanity" was held here at AIU campus. President, International Quran Research Association (IQRA), USA, Dr. Safi Kaskas was the keynote speaker, while Dean, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Prof. Dr. Shah Mohyuddin Hashmi presided over the seminar.—DNA

Pak PWD abolition a step in right direction

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday reiterating zero tolerance for corruption, inefficiency and incompetence, said that his decision to abolish Pakistan Public Works Department (Pak PWD) was a step towards removing the rot that was eating the system like a cancer from within. He was referring to his government's decision to abolish Pakistan Public Works Department (Pak PWD) due to years' long poor performance and corruption, as well as the department's failure to achieve its objectives. "I am fully committed to building a more honest, dedicated and efficient bureaucracy that will deliver high-quality public service and raise standards of governance," the prime minister wrote on his X timeline, a day after he issued the directives in a high-level meeting on Monday. In the meeting, the prime minister was apprised of a report compiled by a committee headed by Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Jahanzeb Khan which recommended the abolition of certain government entities and the merger of others. The prime minister directed the committee for finalization of further recommendations.—APP

IESCO to launch modern mobile app

ISLAMABAD: Spokesperson Islamabad Electric Supply Company Asim Nazir Raja Tuesday disclosed that to ensure zero electricity management IESCO has decided to introduce modern-tech Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project to facilitate million consumers and a mobile app which would be functional within month for filing consumer complaints. Talking to PTV news channel, he said that with this mobile app consumers will get meter reading done automatically and a message will also be sent via email to the consumers regarding the bills and they will be able to verify it physically and through the app. He said that the objective for the launch of the App is to facilitate the consumers without visiting the offices concerned and avoiding the long queues. He said this technology-based system will also allow consumers to get an idea about their electricity use and the expected bill through monitoring of electricity usage. It will automatically register complaints to the power company in case.—DNA

General Practice

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US tariffs on China

MAY 14 was a sad day for the multilateral trading system. The United States has dealt another heavy blow to the World Trade Organization. In a sweeping decision on China tariffs, the Biden administration decided to keep intact all the duties former president Donald Trump slapped on some US\$300 billion of Chinese goods. Furthermore, it has imposed new, hefty tariffs on products such as semiconductors, ship-to-shore cranes, advanced batteries, solar cells, steel and aluminium – including a quadrupling of the tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs). The decision is the culmination of a four-year review of Section 301 tariffs introduced under Trump in 2018. Some of these duties were judged by a WTO expert panel in September 2020 to be violating the organisation's rules. The Biden administration could have shown its professed commitment to the world trade body by ditching the duties. Instead, it chose to defy the WTO ruling and has gone further by expanding the tariffs. It claims it is a defence against China's "unfair" trade, which results from what it claims is the country's technology thefts and intellectual property infringements. Back in 2020, the US accused Huawei Technologies in a court case of stealing a long list of American technologies and trade secrets, which Huawei, already the leader in 5G technologies, denied. There is also no capacity whatsoever in the United States to manufacture the kind of cranes the tariff targets. And its EV and solar power industries lag behind their Chinese counterparts. In these and other sectors, Chinese companies enjoy a technological edge over their American competitors. Clearly, US President Joe Biden's justification is nothing short of a myth. The tariffs largely represent Washington's efforts to reverse its fortune in sectors where the US is losing ground. Struggling to compete against China, it appears to increasingly find it necessary to upend the international rules. WTO principles and rules are thus seemingly sacrificed to "outcompete China". The US, the most conspicuous self-styled champion of the so-called rules-based international order, is in effect breaking the very rules it called to write decades ago. I dare Biden to take his case to the WTO, if he genuinely thinks international law is on his side. Taking matters into one's own hands only calls into question the White House's accusations and arouses suspicion that Washington does not have a good chance of winning the case at the WTO. Indeed, Biden's latest tariffs, invoking the same legislation and based on the same rationale as Trump's, are almost certain to receive the same unfavourable WTO ruling should China sue. But the Biden administration does not seem – or need – to be concerned. Thanks to Washington's singular efforts, the WTO's appellate body has been dysfunctional since 2019 after the US stopped appointing judges to it, despite calls from WTO members to restore its functions. When the WTO ruled against the Trump administration tariffs on China, the US appealed – to an appellate body it had single-handedly paralysed. The Biden administration is likely to do the same and appeal to the void. The big tariffs certainly measure up to the promised high fence but when duties cover over two-thirds of Chinese imports, no amount of term-twisting can describe the area covered as a "small yard". The US' criteria for what it considers a national security concern is also unique.



How resistance ensures Israeli capitulation

THE Israeli occupation's heinous crimes and massacres in Gaza will not go unanswered, and nothing can relent the Palestinian resistance. The latter fired a large barrage of rockets toward Tel Aviv and has since cut through occupation defenses in northern Gaza. The resistance's highly coordinated operations also make it abundantly clear that all occupation soldier positions are well within sight and fully exposed. Rafah as the launchpad of resistance attacks says it all: the site where scores of brave Palestinians are clustered together in defiance of Israeli illegal occupation and continuing onslaught. The resistance reaction out of Rafah thus captures the spectacular symbolism of the Palestinian cause, its deep roots, and its unwillingness to cede an inch to genocidal forces that prey on innocent Gazan lives. "[Continuation of the Israeli aggression] means more Israeli captives in the hands of the Palestinian resistance in the Gaza Strip," said senior resistance official Bassem Naim in a recent interview. The Israeli occupation deserves to be put on the back foot for its unspeakable atrocities against Palestinian civilians in Rafah. Scores of innocent faces were burned to death in unwarranted airstrikes, and the genocidal regime thinks it can proceed with such murders upon will. This is a recipe for occupation destruction. The resistance has shown that "Israel's" deliberate bombardment will warrant swift, high-precision attacks that expose occupation vulnerabilities. These retaliatory attacks are also geared towards settling Palestinian blood with firm defiance. Such were the scenes when resistance operations continued to push up IOF casualties on various fronts, and confronted occupation troops in the Tel al-Hawa neighborhood of southwestern Gaza city. It is the undeniable right of Palestinian resistance forces to respond to "Israel's" murderous campaign against civilians. The occupation was repeatedly warned but never listened. Palestinians will not blink twice in putting their principled resolve into action for all times to come. Interestingly, the Israeli occupation is feeling the heat and should prepare for continued pushback if genocidal massacres do not cease. The resistance has shown it can strike Israeli personnel carriers, muster a powerful response to invading Israeli helicopters, target soldier coordinates, occupation troop positions, and any so-called "defense" that the genocidal regime insists on. This is important because war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu is leading a campaign of assassinating all Palestinians, and is banking on an unwarranted occupation status-quo to justify this slaughter worldwide. But make no mistake. Resistance forces continue to halt IOF attempts to penetrate the Gaza Strip on all fronts, and enjoy asymmetrical leverage in ambush tactics. Occupation forces appear to capitulate against these tactical strengths and have no response to the resistance's complex counteroffensive operations across the Strip. Invading forces have been compelled to retreat, a significant example of the on-ground effectiveness and strategic prowess of the resistance. From occupation tanks to bulldozers, none of the Israeli assets are outside of the resistance's attack radar.

Punjab: Banking on IT & education sector reforms for development

Abdul Rashid Shakir



The Government of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif fully understands the need of a quality school education system to better reap the fruits of higher education outcomes, because 'GIGO (Garbage in Garbage Out)' is a proven maxim. Therefore, it has started a comprehensive program of school education reforms. It includes outsourcing of some 13000 non-performing or under-performing schools out of the total 49000 public sector schools in Punjab. The Government is focused on complete overhaul of the education system in the province, for which it is not only categorizing...

THE 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) of the 21st century, characterized by rapid advances in the cutting edge technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Robotics, Augmented and Virtual Realities has resulted in a paradigm shift in the ways we produce, consume, think and even interact with others. The very fascinating memories of the Digital Revolution of the 1990s have lost steam. Things like ChatGPT, Self-driving cars, Face and Speech Recognition softwares, Virtual Personal Assistants and Internet of Things (IoT) were unheard-of not a very long time ago. Freelancing, remote work, flexi office hours and the 'fatal' intrusion of social media in our lives are corollaries of these changing tech trends that have shook our work ethics and social interaction values to the core. Working knowledge of high-tech devices like smartphones, tablets, PCs, smart watches and digital cameras have become central to digital literacy in modern times. World Economic Forum's 'Future of Jobs Report 2023' explores how tech trends will shape our workplace in future. It finds that analytical and creative thinking, AI and big data will be the top in-demand skills by 2027. 06 in 10 workers will require training before 2027, signifying the importance of life-long learning by the modern workforce in order to keep them relevant in the ever-changing job market. In a right desire to keep pace with these changing job market trends, Punjab Government under the progressive leadership of its Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is all set to exploit wonders of the modern technology by laying focus on market-driven technical skills and education sector reforms. The start of Pakistan's first IT City: Nawaz Sharif IT City is a right step in the right direction. Nawaz Sharif IT City features in IT & Tech District, an Education City and a Film City. The Government of Punjab has declared the

project tax-free for 10 years in order to lure in huge investments both local and foreign. Major tech giants of the world including 16 Chinese tech companies have not only given their consent to work with Pakistan's first IT City, but 08 of them are immediately ready to establish their business offices here. Well-reputed international educational institutions are being convinced to set up their campuses in Nawaz Sharif IT City, so that our youth could get rewarding international degrees in their own beloved homeland, Pakistan. To fulfill the need of quality human resource, ably-trained in the modern highly-tech skills and vocational trades, the Government has also started restructuring of Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) in order to enable it run market-driven advanced training courses in the fields like artificial intelligence, robotics, machine learning, augmented and virtual realities etc instead of the old conventional trades like plumbing, refrigeration and motor winding. It has also started imparting advanced training to 4000 young boys and girls under Chief Minister's Skill Development Programme. In order to promote a culture of research and higher education in youth, Government of Punjab has announced multiple programs including foreign undergrad scholarship program for the talented but deserving students across Punjab, besides augmenting the existing undergrad scholarship Programs in the local universities under Punjab Education Endowment Fund (PEEF). It has also announced the grant of iPads and laptops to the talented students, besides providing them 20,000 bikes (E-bikes and petrol bikes) on interest free easy monthly installments. The Government of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif fully understands the need of a quality school education system to better reap the fruits of higher education outcomes, because 'GIGO (Garbage in Garbage Out)' is

a proven maxim. Therefore, it has started a comprehensive program of school education reforms. It includes outsourcing of some 13000 non-performing or under-performing schools out of the total 49000 public sector schools in Punjab. The Government is focused on complete overhaul of the education system in the province, for which it is not only categorizing schools on the basis of their performance but is also devising workable model to engage private sector in the quality uplift of overall teaching-learning exercise in public sector schools of the Province. Moreover, it has also launched teachers' training program in the province. Another sore point of the school education sector in Punjab is reflected in a recent report of Pakistan Institute of Education, prepared in collaboration with UNESCO, that Punjab has 10.11 million Out-of-School children (OSC). In order to fix this issue, Punjab has started a school enrolment Programme. Another major speed trap in the development of kids' cognitive abilities is the prevalence of stunting and malnutrition in a greater number of kids across the province. Therefore, the Government has planned to start giving nutritious milk packs to the students of primary classes in public sector schools. This valuable intervention of Punjab Government would not only spur creative thinking and analytical abilities of the students but would also equip them with the courage and stamina needed to undertake challenging assignments in life. To wrap up the discourse, we can rightly claim that these quality interventions in the education sector, besides shifting focus of skill training from conventional to high-end technical trades, would no doubt go a long way in raising a productive human resource that would be instrumental in the socio-economic development of the province, acting as its real asset instead of being a precarious liability.

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Recognizing Palestine marks new era in diplomacy

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The decisions by Ireland, Spain and Norway's involvement (though not an EU member) are significant for breaking the EU's diplomatic unity rather than for their legal impact. Most of the few EU members that recognized Palestinian statehood did so in 1988 before joining the EU and were mainly former Warsaw Pact countries

IRELAND, Spain and Norway recently decided to recognize Palestinian statehood. This move could potentially help revive the idea of a two-state solution which is a long-supported international goal that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu strongly opposes. Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez clarified that this decision should not be seen as an action against Israel. Despite Netanyahu labeling it a "reward for terrorism" Sanchez views it as a step towards peace. Other European countries might follow suit adding to the over 140 nations that already recognize Palestinian statehood. However, the situation remains complex and tense. Rafah, a city in the Gaza Strip is under the heavy attack despite international calls for restraint. This includes appeals from the International Court of Justice, the United States and the European Union. This makes it challenging to see these diplomatic recognitions as anything more than symbolic gestures, highlighting internal divisions within Europe and its struggle to apply coordinated pressure on Israel. The actions by Ireland, Spain and Norway might reflect growing frustration in Europe over stalled peace efforts and the Israeli government's perceived stubbornness. Yet, without a unified European approach, these individual recognitions may not significantly change the situation. The ongoing violence in Rafah emphasizes the gap between diplomatic actions and on the ground realities. Even though more countries recognizing Palestinian statehood could be a symbolic win for Palestinians, it is uncertain if this will lead to real progress towards

peace especially with strong opposition from key players like Israel and the United States. For these recognitions to be effective, Europe needs to present a unified and strong front which is difficult given current geopolitical dynamics. The decision by Ireland, Spain and Norway was expected due to their national debates and growing public support for action supporting Palestine. Politically, this is notable because other European countries, such as Malta, Slovenia and Belgium have hesitated to take similar steps. Belgium has been vocal about Palestinian rights during its presidency of the Council of the European Union however national elections and other factors have made it cautious. National election cycles and the upcoming election of a new European Parliament have influenced how European governments handle the sensitive Middle East issue, depending on their domestic politics and the views of their ruling parties. The decisions by Ireland, Spain and Norway's involvement (though not an EU member) are significant for breaking the EU's diplomatic unity rather than for their legal impact. Most of the few EU members that recognized Palestinian statehood did so in 1988 before joining the EU and were mainly former Warsaw Pact countries. Before the recent declarations only Sweden had departed from the EU's general stance on Palestine, doing so in 2014. The current Swedish government's different stance compared to the previous one shows how volatile this issue can be. There is still no consistent, unified approach among all 27 EU member states that goes beyond national political

cycles and short-term agendas. Even though there has been some agreement within the EU since the conflict started, reaching a comprehensive EU-wide consensus is still far off. It would be too cynical to dismiss the entire EU diplomatic effort after the October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist attack as futile. The EU High Representative Josep Borrell has worked hard to coordinate a common European position during critical moments of the conflict, sometimes with success. The Spanish and Belgian EU presidencies have tried to convince Israel that resuming peace talks is a key to defeating Hamas politically not just militarily. Despite Israel's ongoing military campaign which has killed tens of thousands, EU leaders like Germany and France have become more critical of Israeli policy. French President Emmanuel Macron even said in February that recognizing Palestinian statehood is no longer a taboo for Paris. However, the EU has not yet united around measures that would apply real pressure especially in trade and economic relations. The EU is the largest provider of aid to Palestinians and Israel's biggest trade partner. Recently, sanctions were seriously discussed for the first time at an EU foreign ministers' meeting but no agreement was reached. It's important for the EU to stay involved in resolving the conflict by engaging with Arab countries, but its effectiveness is limited by internal differences and political cycles. With pro-Israel Hungary taking over the EU Council presidency in July, achieving a common and meaningful EU position will remain a challenge.

