



Islamabad POST

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Indonesian President pledges to increase UNRWA funding

Detailed News On Page-07

Hungary to allow NATO aid to flow to Ukraine

Detailed News On Page-07



Pakistan keen to expand ties with Belarus

Detailed News On Page-03



IMF bailout beats populism

Rs 18 trillion budget unveiled; relief for govt employees

Govt aims for 3.6% GDP growth; sets challenging tax revenue target of 13 trillion rupees to strengthen case for IMF deal; real estate sector comes under heavy taxation; non-filers to pay more; paper products to become costlier; cell phones prices likely to drop

Economists analyse strengths, weaknesses of federal budget

Traders' community will talk to the government regarding the budget proposals

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE/KARACHI: Business and industry leaders while expressing serious concerns over the federal budget 2024-25, have labelled the budget as anti-business and anti-economy. LCCI President Kashif Anwar giving his opinion on the budget claimed that this budget will increase inflation and create difficulties for the

economy and the industry as well. He said that the government cannot run the economy with this budget that was presented by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb. LCCI chief said that the traders' community will talk to the government regarding the budget proposals. He told the government that the construction industry has to be run otherwise the country's economy will not run. Kashif Anwar claimed that the government has imposed a capital gains tax on real estate while advance tax for traders and

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ANSAR BHATTI / FAISAL SHEIKH/DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Budget 2024-25 with a total outlay of 18877 billion rupees has been announced with focus on fiscal consolidation and relief measures for the common man. Presenting the budgetary proposals in the National Assembly [Wednesday], Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said the gross revenue receipts have been estimated at 17815 billion rupees. These include FBR's revenue collection of 12970 billion rupees and non-tax revenue 4845 billion rupees. The share of provinces in the federal receipts will be 7438 billion rupees. An additional one hundred billion rupees have been earmarked for the PSDP. He said the development budget will be at the historic level of 1500 billion rupees. He added that 2122 billion rupees will be provided for defence requirement. The Finance Minister said that 839 billion rupees have been reserved for the expenditure of civil administration, while 1,014 billion rupees have been set aside for pension expenditure and 1,363 billion rupees have been allocated as subsidy on electricity, gas and other sectors. Muhammad Aurangzeb said grants worth 1,777 billion rupees have been earmarked for Benazir Income Support Programme, AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan, merged districts, Higher Education Commission, Pakistan Railways and IT sector. The Finance Minister said the major volume of development budget manifests the government's resolve to develop infrastructure, transportation,

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ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb parented the Federal Budget 2024-2025 before the National Assembly of Pakistan. - DNA

Electoral transparency

Achakzai to lead talks with govt, political parties

Negotiations to include talks on constitutional boundaries of state institutions, release of workers and leaders

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Wednesday picked Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) Chairman Mahmood Khan Achakzai to lead the negotiations via opposition alliance's platform Tehreek-e-Tahafuz Ayeen (TTAP), a private news channel reposted citing sources. The development comes after the PTI leadership supported using the TTAP's platform for negotiating with the stakeholders, the sources added. Meanwhile, PkMAP chief Achakzai, who will be given full authority to lead the talks, will take further steps in this regard once the PTI finalises its decision. With the development of a consensus of all the stakeholders on a common charter serving as the basis of the talks, the negotiations will revolve around matters pertaining to the release of incarcerated leaders and workers, electoral transparency, and the constitutional boundaries of the

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PPP again invited to join federal cabinet

PML-N leadership has contacted Balochistan CM Sarfraz Bugti and Qamar Zaman Kaira regarding the matter

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has decided to expand the federal cabinet after the budget and has invited the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) to join the government formally. According to the report published today, senior political leaders from the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and allied parties will be included in the cabinet. The publication stated that the prime minister

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Briefs

MQM-P likely to get 2 more ministries

MQM-P and BAP will get 2, 2 ministries each

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has decided to expand the federal cabinet after the budget 2024-25 and has invited the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP), a key ally, to join the federal government, a private news channel reported on Wednesday citing sources. Sources said that senior political leaders from the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and allied parties will be included in the cabinet after budget. MQM-Pakistan (MQM-P) and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) will get 2, 2 ministries each, they said. Additionally, to woo PPP, Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal has been given an important task by the PML-N leadership.

Sindh likely to present budget on 14

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI: The Sindh government is set to present its budget for fiscal year 2024-2025 on June 14, sources told on Wednesday. According to the sources, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah will present the provincial budget for the upcoming financial year. At least 10% to 15% increase in the salary of Sindh's government employees will be proposed in the budget, said the sources. They added that no money will be allocated for new development schemes in Sindh's budget and that funds for development projects will be released for ongoing projects.

India defeat USA by 7 wickets in T20 World Cup

PM attends only 2 sittings First 100 days of NA 'slow-paced': Fafen

Fafen report says "parliamentary transparency and gender responsiveness" highlight of first 100 days

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The performance of Pakistan's 16th National Assembly, which concluded its first 100 days following the oath-taking of legislators on February 29, has been described as "slow-paced despite high attendance". According to a report published by the Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen), the assembly's focus on "parliamentary transparency and gender responsiveness" was described as a defining characteristic of NA's first 100 days. The report added that the House encouraged bipartisanship by allocating nearly 54% of the time used for points of order to the opposition. Following the February 8 general elections, the Pakistani government descended into instability as no political party secured a clear majority. However, several of the winning parties formed an alliance with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), forming a coalition government at the Centre. The PML-N, therefore, formed the federal government with the support of

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Omer accuses government's of destroying economy

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Opposition Leader in National Assembly Omer Ayub Wednesday fiercely criticized the government's economic policies during a conversation with the media in his chamber. He accused the government of destroying the economy, predicting a further decline in the growth rate in the next financial year. "The government has destroyed the economy," Ayub stated, highlighting that the country has seen the least investment in its history and

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Shehbaz welcomes Finland support

President Stubb had congratulated Pakistan on winning the UN Security Council's non-permanent membership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday lauded Finland's support to Pakistan in winning a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for 2025-26. In response to Finnish President Alexander Stubb's remarks on X, the prime minister appreciated their support to Pakistan and reiterated his country's resolve to work for upholding international law and the UN Charter. Earlier, President Stubb had congratulated Pakistan, Denmark, Greece, Panama, and Somalia on winning the UN Security Council's non-permanent membership. The Finnish president also extended best wishes to Pakistan, besides assuring collaboration in strengthening UN and international system.

UN probe condemns Israel over crimes against humanity

Victims were interrogated or abused while naked or partially dressed, blindfolded, and were made to kneel or keep their hands tied behind their backs, report found

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: An independent United Nations investigation has concluded that Israel has committed crimes against humanity, including the crime of "extermination," during its unremitting aerial and ground offensives against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. "The crimes against humanity of extermination; murder; gender persecution targeting Palestinian men and boys; forcible transfer; and torture and inhuman and cruel treatment were committed," the Commission of Inquiry said in a Wednesday report, due to be presented to the UN Human Rights Council next week. The siege of Gaza represents a "collective punishment against the civilian population," according to the UN report, which censured Israel for withholding water, food, electricity, fuel and humanitarian aid for "strategic and political gains." The report went on to detail cases of sexual violence by Israeli forces in both Gaza and

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US will try to bridge Israel-Hamas gaps on deal: Blinken

FOREIGN DESK

DOHA: Secretary of State Antony Blinken vowed Wednesday to strive for a Gaza ceasefire agreement, saying not all Hamas demands were acceptable but voicing hope gaps could be closed. Consulting with key mediator Qatar on the Hamas response to US President Joe Biden's plan, Blinken said the Palestinian group could have given a "clear and simple yes" but voiced guarded hope for moving forward. "We believe that some of the requested changes are workable and some are not," Blinken told reporters in Doha. "And so we have to see on an urgent basis over

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More than 1.5M Muslims arrive in Mecca for Hajj

One of the world's largest religious gatherings, the Hajj is one of the Five Pillars of Islam

AGENCIES

MECCA: Muslim pilgrims have been streaming into Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca ahead of the start of the Hajj later this week, as the annual pilgrimage returns to its monumental scale. Saudi officials say more than 1.5 million foreign pilgrims have arrived in the country by Tuesday, the vast majority by air, from across the world. More are expected, and hundreds of thousands of Saudis and others living in Saudi Arabia will also join them when the pilgrimage officially begins on Friday. Saudi officials have said they expect the number of pilgrims this year to exceed 2023, when more than 1.8 million people performed Hajj, approaching pre-pandemic levels. In 2019, more than

2.4 million Muslims made the pilgrimage. Saudi authorities control the flow of pilgrims through quotas, allowing each country one pilgrim for every thousand Muslim citizens. The pilgrims included 4,200 Palestinians from the occupied West Bank who arrived in Mecca earlier this month, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. Palestinians in Gaza were not able to travel to Saudi Arabia for Hajj this year, because of the Israeli brutal war on Gaza. "We are praying for Palestine to be free and (for Palestinians) to liberate their land and to be like other nations, to live in peace and not always to have war," said Ibrahim al-Hadhari, an Algerian pilgrim, as he was standing in the Grand Mosque court waiting for evening prayers. On Tuesday, pilgrims thronged the Grand Mosque in Mecca, performing a ritual circuit walking seven times around the Kaaba, the cube-shaped structure inside the mosque that is considered Islam's holiest site.

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Azerbaijan, Pak enhance defence and aviation ties

The Minister highlighted the importance of bilateral brotherly relations between two countries which are based on historical, cultural and religious commonalities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: E Mr. Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan called on Minister for Defence, Defence Production and Aviation, H.E. Mr. Khawaja Muhammad Asif in Islamabad today. Federal Minister welcomed the digni-

tary and stated that Pakistan views Azerbaijan as an important country due to its strategic location, immense resources, progressive outlook and fast growing economy. The Minister highlighted the importance of bilateral brotherly relations between two countries which are based on historical, cultural and religious commonalities. Min-

ister expressed the desire to enhance the relations in relevant fields, including defence, defence industry and aviation which have immense potential to grow to the benefit of both countries. He also impressed upon the need of continued interaction between higher military and defence level leadership of the two countries.



CDA to renovate Islamabad's commercial buildings

ISLAMABAD : Capital Development Authority has decided to improve/renovate buildings of marakiz and Blue Area of Islamabad. This decision was taken in a meeting chaired by Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa. The meeting was attended by officers of CDA. Chairman CDA said that a business-friendly incentive plan should be presented within a week to improve the condition of the buildings. He further said that incentives will be given to the owners of the old buildings of Aabpara Market, Blue Area, G-6, F-6 and other commercial centers in accordance with the new regulations. He further said that incentives should be given to the owners of buildings of these marakiz considering contemporary needs and for boosting business activities in the city. It was decided in the meeting that action will be taken after June 30, 2024 against the buildings constructed and under construction without the approval of CDA. Therefore, the owners should apply for the approval of the building plan before 30 June 2024.—APP

Indus Telemetry system revolutionizes KP irrigation monitoring

PESHAWAR : In a landmark development, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government with support from the USAID and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI)—deployed the Indus Telemetry System across 11 main irrigation canals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). This cutting-edge technology will revolutionize water management and reporting in the province's irrigation system. Minister of Irrigation for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Aqib Ullah Khan officially launched the Indus Telemetry System at a ceremony held here on Wednesday. "The deployment of the Indus Telemetry System marks a transformative step in our efforts to ensure sustainable water

management and equitable distribution. This technology will enhance our capacity to manage water resources efficiently and transparently," he stated during the ceremony. "Indus Telemetry utilizes advanced sensors to monitor flow depth and velocity for estimating actual flows at remote canal locations," explained Dr. Mohsin Hafeez, Director, Water, Food & Ecosystems and Country Representative of IWMI/Pakistan. "This flow data is transferred securely via GSM technology to a cloud server, where it is processed and archived. Real-time flow data is then displayed on live data screens accessible to key stakeholders, providing the KP Irrigation Department with instant

access to flow records and essential seasonal reports for the Indus River System Authority (IRSA)," Dr. Mohsin elaborates. The sensors have been strategically installed on the Upper Swat Canal, Tanda Irrigation Main Canal, Pehur High Level Canal, and others, ensuring comprehensive coverage. The Khanpur Dam Left Bank Canal, an inter provincial canal, is also monitored by Indus Telemetry to oversee water transfer between KP and Punjab. Dr. Azeem Ali Shah, Researcher at IWMI and the Chief of Party for USAID-funded Water Management for Enhanced Productivity said, "Indus Telemetry is a pivotal step towards bringing transparency, accountability.—APP

PIAF nominates Shah Alam leader for LCCI polls

LAHORE The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has announced to nominate Shah Alam Market leader Rana Nisar as its new candidate for Lahore Chamber election 2024 from the Shah Alam Market Board during their visit to the PIAF Office. A trade delegation under the leadership of Khawaja Amir, President Central Shah Alam Market Board and Secretary General Rana Nisar, Shah Alam Market Board officials and members along with the Presidents General Secretaries of the main markets of Lahore arrived at the main office of PIAF. Patron PIAF Mian Anjum Nisar, Chairman PIAF Fahimur Rahman Sahigol, Former Chairman PIAF Muhammad Ali Mian, Mian Abuzar Shad, Senior Vice Chairman PIAF Nasrullah Mughal, Vice Chairman PIAF Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary, Senior Vice President Lahore Chamber Zafar Mehmood, other leaders of PIAF received them. Patron Chief PIAF Mian Anjum Nisar and Chairman PIAF Fahimur Rahman Sahigol, addressing the delegation, said that PIAF has an excellent record of 22 years of service to the business community because PIAF brings qualified and working people to Lahore to advocate for the business community. Fahimur Rahman Sahigol said that Rana Nisar from Shah Alam Market Board will prove to be a strong candidate due to his extensive experience in dealing with market problems and serving traders. Mian Anjum Nisar provisionally nominated Rana Nisar as a hopeful from the PIAF in the Associate Class which the House applauded and supported. He advocated for the policy rate to be reduced to a single-digit figure to alleviate the financial burden on the business community and stimulate economic activity. Anjum Nisar highlighted that the tight monetary policy, combined with the government's significant domestic borrowing, has left minimal room for business growth. He stressed the urgent need for the government to freeze both domestic and foreign borrowing and to devise a comprehensive strategy to showcase Pakistan's economic potential to international investors. He proposed a 300-500 basis points reduction in the policy rate, potentially bringing it down to 15 percent, a level last seen several years ago. This anticipated cut is supported by several favorable economic indicators, including a significant decline in inflation rates. Anjum Nisar also pointed out a decline in yields for government securities in both primary and secondary markets since the last monetary policy announcement in April 2024. In the primary market, yields across various tenors have decreased, with reductions of 0.6 percent in 3-month yields, 0.38 percent in 6-month yields, and 0.80 percent in 12-month yields. Similar trends have been observed in the secondary market. On this occasion, he condemned the central bank, stating the policy rate should be further reduced. In the budget, relief should be given to exports so that exports can be increased. In the last one month, only 3.5 billion dollars of remittances have come, which can be increased further. Issues of importers related to banking sector are still unresolved and State Bank should streamline the banking system, he added.—APP

Court Notice

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حکام عدالت ہجرت عدالت

NCRC launches state of children in Pakistan Portal

It will empower policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to make evidence-based decisions and interventions that directly impact the lives of children in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD : The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) commemorated the World Day Against Child Labour by launching the State of Children in Pakistan portal and presenting its annual report for 2023-24. This event marks a significant step forward in the fight against child labour and the promotion of children's rights in Pakistan. In her welcome remarks, Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq emphasized, "As we leave this room today, let us commit to becoming

advocates for change. Speak up against the silent exploitation happening in our midst. Let us not normalize young boys and girls working in our neighborhoods, sometimes in our own homes." Speaking as the chief guest, Minister of Law and Justice and Human Rights, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, affirmed the government's commitment, stating, "The Ministry of Human Rights is fully committed to supporting the efforts of the NCRC in their mission to end child labour and bring about legislative

reforms. I am pleased to announce that the comprehensive bill 'Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work 2024' drafted by the NCRC is being considered at the highest forum of the National Task Force on Human Rights." The event was participated by a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including international and national non-governmental organizations, embassies, high commissions, donor agencies, government representatives, civil society organizations and child

rights experts. At the event's conclusion, dignitaries, including the chief guest and Commission members, jointly launched the State of Children in Pakistan portal and the NCRC's annual report for April 2023 to March 2024. The report details the Commission's achievements, including the launch of a three-year strategic plan, partnerships with national and international organizations, research publications, policy briefs and significant advocacy efforts. The State



PESHAWAR: A skilled blacksmith repairs a meat mince machine near the Old GTS bus stop, ensuring seamless work for the Eid ul-Adha feasts ahead.—APP

IGP vows to solve problems of police officials, families

LAHORE : Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar is actively engaged in addressing the issues and problems of police personnel and their families. In this regard, the IG Punjab held a meeting with police officials and their families at the Central Police Office and issued directives regarding relief measures after hearing their requests. According to details, IG Punjab forwarded the request for the recruitment of the son of Inspector Ahmad Ali (late) from his widow to the Additional IG Punjab for necessary action. Dr. Usman Anwar directed DIG Establishment-2 to provide relief regarding the employment of the son of ASI Muhammad Akram (martyred) upon the request of his widow. Upon the request for granting the status of a Ghazi to Inspector Shakil Ahmed, IG Punjab instructed AIG Discipline for disciplinary action based on merit. On the request for departmental promotion by Inspector Syed Khawar Hussain, Dr. Usman Anwar directed Additional IG Punjab to provide relief. Furthermore, upon the request for a medical grant for the operation of Constable Saeed Ahmed form Rahim Yar Khan Police, DIG Welfare was directed to provide relief. IG Punjab also issued directives regarding other requests related to discipline, recruitment, and welfare matters. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar emphasized that the timely resolution of issues faced by police personnel and their families is a top priority, and every possible step will be taken to ensure their welfare.—APP

IIUI engineering students showcase talents in Open House

ISLAMABAD: The students of International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) showcased around 100 innovative projects at the Open House organised by the Faculty of Engineering and Technology (FET) on Wednesday. The event, held at the university's new campus, was inaugurated by Rector IIUI, Prof. Dr Samina Malik. She emphasized the importance of fostering interactions between technology and engineering students and the industry, asserting that a strong link between academia and industry can address numerous challenges. Prof. Dr Samina Malik praised the displayed projects and encouraged students to develop prototypes that could

be transformed into practical applications. She highlighted the potential of the country's talented engineers to tackle issues such as power shortages through innovative power generation solutions. The IIUI rector showed particular interest in AI-based and solar energy projects, emphasizing the need for collaboration between universities and industry to solve critical national problems. She noted the impressive efforts of both male and female students in presenting their talents. She said the event highlighted the university's commitment to producing graduates who are well-equipped to contribute to the nation's technological advancement. Students ex-

plained their projects to visitors, including investigators, industry representatives and the chief guest. The showcased projects featured solar power solutions for farming, automobiles, and hospitals, as well as AI-based vertical farming kits, health-related devices, smart energy meters, water distribution systems, grid-tie inverters, and various power generation initiatives. The IIUI Rector was accompanied by the Vice President Research and Enterprise, Prof. Dr Ahmed Shuja Syed, Dean FET, Dr Khan Zeb Jadoon, heads of departments within the faculty, deans of various faculties, and other relevant officials.

NAB probes sugar broker's mysterious disappearance

LAHORE: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore Director General Amjad Majeed Aulakh takes swift action against a mega sugar scam by authorizing an instant inquiry into the disappearance of a sugar broker named Sheikh Rashid, who absconded with billions of rupees in investments from traders and sugar stockists across Punjab. Keeping in view, a high-level investigation team has been constituted to probe the multibillion scam that has left countless investors of Punjab and several cities of Sindh, in distress. As per details, the NAB investigation team's initial raids uncover a web of deceit

by revealing warehouses and shops in Sadiqabad, being used to stock misappropriated commodities by accused Sheikh Rashid and his accomplices. Taking decisive action under Section 12 of NAO 1999, DG NAB freezes all properties and stocked commodities owned by the accused persons and appoints Assistant Commissioner (AC) Sadiqabad as "Receiver" for the frozen assets. It's pertinent to mention here that NAB Lahore is pursuing a robust investigation against prime accused Sheikh Raashid along with accomplices named Kashif Ali and Faisal Ali, under the National Accountability Ordinance, 1999

and Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2010 and investigating the misappropriation of public funds worth billions. Chairman NAB, Lt. Gen (r) Nazir Ahmed has issued clear instructions for employing priority to the cases pertaining to general public investments to ensure justice is served. In this regard, NAB Lahore urges all affected investors of the Sugar Scam to remain calm and cooperate with the ongoing investigations. However, all those affectees who have not contacted the Bureau, till date, are encouraged to submit their claims in NAB Lahore without any delay.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JUNE

June 02/Italy National/Independence Day

June 04/Finland Armed Forces Day

June 06/Sweden National Day

June 10/Portugal Portugal Day (National Day)

June 10/Jordan Arab Revolution & Army Day

June 11/United Kingdom Birthday of Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth

June 12/Philippines Independence Day

June 12/Russian Federation Day of Sovereignty of the Russian Federation (National Day)

June 13/Zambia Armed Forces day

June 17/Iceland National Day

June 18/Seychells National Day

June 25/Croatia National Day

June 25/Mozambique National Day

June 26/Azerbaijan Army Day

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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



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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
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Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Pakistan keen to expand relations with Belarus: Asif

Belarus is an important country and Pakistan attaches great importance to its bilateral relations with Belarus. Matters of mutual interest, particularly cooperation in the field of defence production came under discussion.



DNA

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Andrei Metelitsa Ambassador of Belarus called on Minister for Defence & Defence Production Khawaja Muhammad Asif at his office in Islamabad today. Federal Minister warmly welcomed the Ambassador and appreciated the existing mutual goodwill and bilateral cooperation. Belarus is an important country and Pakistan attaches great importance to its bilateral relations with Belarus. Matters of mutual interest, particularly cooperation in the field of defence production came under discussion. Defence Minister

expressed that the high-level visits between two countries have extensively contributed to strengthening the bilateral relations. Federal Minister also opined that Pakistan and Belarus share a cordial history of bilateral relations in economy, trade and defence. The Minister emphasized the need for furthering existing levels of cooperation between the two countries.

Government employees stage protest

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the eve of the federal budget unveiling, government employees, united under the All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA), staged a demonstration in front of the Pak Secretariat on Wednesday. The Federal Government College Teachers Association (FGCTA) being a component of AGEGA, also joined the protest, amplifying the call for reforms in allowances and pensions. The gates of the Pak Secretariat were locked early in the morn-

ing in anticipation of the protests. The demonstrators, carrying banners and placards, voiced their demands for pay raises and pension reforms. The key demands put forth by the protestors encompassed a spectrum of financial concerns. They called for a 200% increase in house rent allowance, medical allowance, and conveyance allowance. Additionally, they demanded a reduction in pay disparities between employees of ministries/divisions and those of attached departments, advocating for measures to bridge this disparity. Professor Farhan Azam, senior vice president of FGCTA, urged for the unfreezing of allowances by the government, linking their adjustment to inflation rates to ensure

they remain relevant and adequate. Professor Tahir Bhatti, the general secretary of the association emphasized the need for government policies to prioritize the welfare of less privileged employees over adherence to IMF directives, citing poverty reduction as a central concern. Mr. Rehman Bajwa, chief coordinator of AGEGA, staunchly demanded a 100% increase in pensions and voiced opposition to proposed amendments in pension rules. He asserted that any changes to pension regulations should not affect existing employees, but rather be implemented for new hires.

ing the bilateral relations. Federal Minister also opined that Pakistan and Belarus share a cordial history of bilateral relations in economy, trade and defence. The Minister emphasized the need for furthering existing levels of cooperation between the two countries.

PRCS empowers flood affected families

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Under the leadership of Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), in collaboration with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has successfully distributed 210 loader rickshaws to families affected by the monsoon floods of 2022. This initiative forms a crucial part of PRCS's Livelihood Assistance Program during the Recovery Phase. The loader rickshaws have been allocated to deserving families in five districts of Sindh province, including Dadu, Khairpur, Shikarpur, Larkana, and Qambar Shahdadkot, with each district receiving 35 rickshaws. Additionally, 35 loader rickshaws were distributed in Jaffarabad district of Balochistan. The dis-

tribution of loader rickshaws in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will take place after Eid-ul-Adha. This initiative aims to strengthen the affected communities by providing a source of income. It is part of PRCS's ongoing efforts to empower communities to regain their livelihoods and move towards a brighter future. The distribution ceremonies took place during the first and second weeks of June, attended by Secretary General PRCS, Muhammad Abaidullah Khan, Dr. Asfar Shams, Health Coordinator, IFRC Country Delegation Pakistan, officials from the provincial and district branches of PRCS and IFRC Country Delegation, volunteers, community members, and local notables. PRCS Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari praised the relentless dedication of PRCS staff and volunteers, who continue to provide crucial support to flood-affected communities. He emphasized

PRCS's steadfast commitment to restoring normalcy through multifaceted programs, including livelihood assistance, shelter construction, cash assistance, and health and hygiene initiatives. "We remain dedicated to our mission of serving humanity and stand ready to support communities in their journey towards recovery and resilience," Chairman Laghari stated. "Our efforts are ongoing, and with the support of our partners and the tireless work of our team, we are making significant strides in helping communities rebuild their lives." According to Pwfi Ophoff, Head of Country Delegation, IFRC Pakistan, "IFRC is supporting PRCS in the implementation of the Flood Recovery Programme, through which, as one of the livelihood activities, the distribution of loader carts among the flood-affected communities will help them recover from the impacts of the 2022.

Naqvi condemns firing on ANF men

Islamabad: June 12, 2024 Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has expressed deep grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of two Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) personnel and a civilian in firing by drug traffickers at Tarkai Toll Plaza in Jhelum. The Interior Minister paid rich tribute to the martyrs, including Head Constable Gulzar and Lance Naik Mazhar, and offered condolences to their families. He prayed that May Allah Almighty elevate the ranks of martyrs and grant patience and strength to their loved ones. Mohsin Naqvi said that the sacrifices of the ANF personnel who laid down their lives in the operation against drug traffickers will not go in vain. He further stated that those who gave their lives for the national mission to eradicate the menace of drugs are our true heroes.

AIOU announces registration deadline

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced the course registration deadline until June 27, 2024 on the CMS portal. This extension applies to students who did not pass their matriculation or FA exams and received FER-1 or FER-2 results in the Autumn 2023 semester, said a press release issued on Wednesday. "FER1" signifies the first reappear chance in the final exam, while "FER2" indicates the second chance. Students can obtain more information about reappearing in exams from their nearest regional offices. The university has issued a new schedule for the postponed examinations on Yom e Takbeer across the country and in Azad Jammu and Kashmir due to law and order issues. The postponed exams on Yom e Takbeer will now be held on June 28 in exam centers across the country. In Azad Kashmir, the postponed exams that were scheduled for May 10, will be held on July 3, those for May 11 will be conducted on June 29, exams scheduled for May 13, will be held on July 1 and the postponed exams for May 14 will now be held on July 2. The new date sheet has been uploaded on the university's website. Previously issued roll number slips will be acceptable for the exams and there will be no change in the examination centers. Meanwhile, a webinar on "Early Childhood Education and Development" was organized by the Department of Early Childhood Education and Elementary Teacher Education, Faculty of Education, AIOU, Dean Faculty of Education, Prof. Dr. Fazal Ur Rehman presided over the seminar. The keynote speakers included Dr. Le Roux Gerturelda from the University of South Africa, Dr. Shaleena Bhamani from Aga Khan University and Pari Bano from the Rupani Foundation. —DNA

Coca-Cola appoints Volkan as new Vice President

ISLAMABAD: Coca-Cola Company has appointed Volkan Öngüç as new Vice President for Pakistan and Afghanistan of Eurasia & Middle East Operation Unit of the company. Volkan's professional experience in commercial management, business development, and sales spans over two decades. His expertise in revenue growth management, both in Turkey and internationally, have been a key asset for the Company since he joined in April 2021, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. Speaking about his vision for Coca-Cola Pakistan, Volkan Öngüç said, "I believe Pakistan is a country of immense potential with over \$1 billion invested in the country by the Coca-Cola System. This is truly a second home and has many similarities with my home country Türkiye, such as our love for music. I witnessed it with the launch of Coke Studio Season 15, the iconic musical platform showcasing the incredible talent and diversity of Pakistani music and culture. Coca-Cola Pakistan is as local as it gets; from Turkey-owned Coca-Cola İçecek's operations; to hiring locally, to local raw materials and working with the sugarcane farmers. Our community investments this year will focus on water - both replenishment and clean drinking water for the millions we serve across the country.—APP

Delay in Capital beautification plan irks minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has taken notice of the delay in Islamabad's beautification plan and ordered the immediate removal of the Member Environment of CDA. The Interior Minister stated that any further delay in the project will not be tolerated and those officers who didn't perform would not have a place in his team. He directed the Chairman CDA to appoint a hardworking and competent officer to the post of Member Environment, who can work round the clock to ensure the successful implementation of Islamabad's beautification plan.

Two-day travel, tourism symposium concludes

ISLAMABAD: The Travel and Tourism Symposium jointly organised by Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation and World Bank Pakistan at Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) concluded here the other day. During the concluding ceremony of the Symposium themed "Building National Economy through Tourism", Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan participated as a special guest. The two-day event was attended by various

tour operators including more than 400 national and international tourism experts, industry experts and decision-makers for the sustainable development of the tourism industry and development of a future roadmap. On the second day of the symposium, the provincial tourism departments informed the participants about the tourism destinations in their provinces and the investment opportunities. Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan said in his address that he will put all the

suggestions given by the participants and stakeholders of the conference before the prime minister so that the problems faced in the tourism sector can be solved urgently. He assured that the government of Pakistan will use all its resources to promote tourism and in this regard, in the coming days, the government is bringing two pilot projects for the promotion of tourism, including double-decker buses for Islamabad and setting up an eco-friendly village

in Shakar Pariyaan Islamabad. He especially thanked all the foreign delegates and investors who participated in the conference and congratulated MD PTDC and his team for organising such a successful conference. In his closing address, Managing Director of Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation, Aftab Ahmad Rana said that the tourism industry is a challenge. The purpose of the event was to bring together tourism stakeholders to benefit from each other's experiences.—APP

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Briefs

Chairman WAPDA reviews inspection of Neelum Jhelum Project

ISLAMABAD: Chairman WAPDA Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd) Wednesday visited Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project to review ongoing inspection of the Head Race Tunnel. He reached Dam (Weir) site of the Project located at Nauseri, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, said a press release issued here. The Chairman visited in detail the de-watered head race tunnel to inspect and review damages that might have occurred to the tunnel. He was accompanied by Project Manager, Neelum Jhelum Consultants James Stevenson. The Consultants, the Contractors and the Project Team briefed the Chairman about the progress achieved so far. It was briefed that de-watering of 48-Km long head race tunnel had been completed from the elevation of 1012 feet to 607 feet above mean sea level. Subsequently, inspection of the head race tunnel has commenced. The process for engaging International Experts had also been initiated, as directed by the Prime Minister during his visit to the Project last month. The International Experts would ascertain the causes of fault in the headrace tunnel and make recommendations for carrying out the remedial works. Speaking on the occasion, the Chairman directed the Project Management to chalk out a comprehensive rehabilitation strategy once the detailed inspection of the headrace tunnel was done and the recommendations were made by the International Experts. He emphasized upon the team to adhere to all precautionary measures while carrying out inspection of the headrace tunnel. —APP

UAE-based British Pakistani launches Trade Gate

ISLAMABAD: UAE-based British Pakistani Shakeel Ahmad Meer of the Meer Group launched the first Trade Gate branch in Dubai, aiming to innovate trading and joint ventures by integrating various business sectors. It offers scholarships, practical training, and diverse trading opportunities across sectors like EV, automotive, e-commerce, real estate, and luxury cars, said a press release issued here. Meer's vision is to democratise financial education and global investment opportunities, fostering a vibrant community through seminars and networking. The initiative plans global expansion, aiming to lead in trading education and business investment globally, starting with Dubai as a transformative milestone. Trade Gate goes beyond a conventional training center, becoming a dynamic hub that empowers individuals with the knowledge and tools for success in trading and joint ventures. Its holistic approach to wealth creation and management offers participants a broad platform to explore and invest in various sectors. Trade Gate offers diverse trading opportunities, allowing participants to explore sectors such as electric vehicles, automotive, e-commerce, real estate, and luxury car advisory services. With expert guidance and investment prospects, Trade Gate helps individuals capitalize on cutting-edge trends and market dynamics, paving the way for trading success. Shakeel Ahmad Meer's vision for Trade Gate is driven by his global market experience and deep business understanding. At the Dubai opening, Meer expressed excitement: "Trade Gate is a groundbreaking platform merging education, innovation, and diverse business opportunities. Launching in Dubai, a city of growth and opportunity, marks a significant step in our mission for financial empowerment. Trade Gate aims to democratize access to top-tier financial education and diverse investment opportunities. It blends theoretical knowledge with practical experience, equipping participants to navigate market complexities." —APP

PM Shehbaz orders building Health Tower in Islamabad

Highlighting the significant responsibilities of the health sector to save human lives, the prime minister expressed his concerns about the reported new polio cases in the country and resolved the elimination of the disease by utilising all-out-resources in collaboration with partners

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the authorities concerned to build a health tower of international standard in the federal capital to house hospitals, medical and nursing universities, modern laboratories, and diagnostics centers. The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the matters related to the Ministry of National Health Services, instructed to formulate a strategy to build the said tower through the public-private partnership. Highlighting the significant responsibilities of the health sector to save

human lives, the prime minister expressed his concerns about the reported new polio cases in the country and resolved the elimination of the disease by utilising all-out-resources in collaboration with partners. He also called for carrying out the third-party audit of the laboratories working under the purview of the Ministry of National Health Services, besides appointing well-qualified health professionals in the ministry and its allied departments. Vowing to personally monitor health-related matters, Prime Minister Shehbaz also ordered the third-party audit of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan and the formulation of a strategy to bifurcate the drug

processing from the Authority. Besides, he also instructed outsourcing the human resource of all government hospitals in Islamabad and their waste treatment plants, besides the audit of countrywide nursing schools and colleges. During the briefing, the prime minister was told that a National Blood Transfusion and Blood Products Policy would be introduced soon, and work on a nursing and midwifery policy framework was in the final stage. It was told that an evening shift was being introduced in the nursing colleges to increase the number of graduates. Moreover, work on a revised National Action Plan 2025-30 has been

started to control the population growth. As the prime minister was told about the installation of new health equipment worth Rs 711 million in Islamabad's hospitals, he instructed the third-party audit of the purchase of the said equipment. It was informed that a modern hospital management system would be installed in Islamabad's hospitals and that waste management plants were operating in the capital city's five public and four private sector hospitals. The participants of the meeting were told that a strategy for insulin manufacturing in the country was being formulated. The prime minister was

also apprised of the plans to produce different types of vaccines in the country, building plasma fractionation centers and pharma park, and provision of machinery and equipment to Quetta's tertiary care hospitals. It was told that a 50-bed hospital would be set up in Musakhel, a tertiary care and Teshil headquarters hospital in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and an Institute of Medical Sciences and Daanish Hospital in Gilgit Baltistan. Federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal and Ahsan Khan Cheema, PM's Coordinators Malik Mukhtar Ahmed and Rana Ehsan Afzal, and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: JUI chief Maulana Fazl ur Rehman and Federal Minister Mussadaq Malik exchange pleasantries while the Russian ambassador looks on. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the Day of Russia celebrations.— DNA

IRSA releases 293,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 293,600 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 199,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1448.80 feet and was 50.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 75,100 cusecs and 140,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1185.00 feet, which was 136.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 40,700 cusecs and 70,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 183,100, 149,700, 115,400 and 63,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 54,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 6,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala. —APP

A broad tax base is required to alleviate public suffering

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Wednesday that it is difficult to provide any relief to the masses and business community as taxes worth 4000 billion rupees are not being collected. He said the new budget is expected to set a revenue target of 12900 billion rupees, 3500 billion rupees more than the current target. The sales tax rate is also likely to increase. Mian Zahid Hussain said that if the difference between filers and non-filers is not removed in the new budget, the economy will not be fully digitized, and the tax base will not increase by five percent; then, the budget measures will affect the public, the salaried class, and the tax-paying business community. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the current tax

system relies on indirect taxes and targets the commoner while rewarding tax evaders. In the presence of skewed taxation, the country's development is impossible, he added. The business leader said that a series of measures have been initiated to manage the country's economy, and good results have come out. Inflation has come down; agricultural production has increased substantially, imports have decreased, and exports have increased slightly, bringing Pakistan's current account out of deficit. Despite the efforts, some sections are not ready to pay any tax, so the policy of transferring the entire burden to the taxpayers has been adopted, which has broken the backs of the people. On the other hand, non-tax-paying and tax-dodging sectors, including property, agricultural income, professionals, wholesalers, and retailers, are flourishing. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the poor and middle class are continuously targeted. At the same time,

those belonging to influential sectors benefit from all possible reliefs and tax concessions. They will try to continue this trend even after the budget. The government's priorities will remain the same in the next financial year as before the budget. If the landed elite, real estate tycoons, wholesalers, retailers, and professionals continue to pay negligible taxes and carry on cash transactions, the tax burden will fall on the existing taxpayers and the public, reducing tax payments and investment. He demanded that the government refrain from targeting the industrial sector to boost revenue. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that realizing the commoner's plight, the government must bring the undocumented economy into the tax net to broaden the tax base and distribute the tax burden fairly. It will help stop the continuous punishment of the common people and taxpayers. A fair and comprehensive tax system makes sustainable economic growth and prosperity possible.—APP

ANF recovers 1014 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in an operation managed to seize a large consignment weighing 1014 kg drugs concealed in Panni area for smuggling abroad. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, ANF in a successful intelligence-based operation against drug trafficking conducted a raid in the Chor Bandara area adjacent to Makran coastal line and recovered the drugs. The operation was carried out keeping in mind the activities of a group involved in drug trafficking. Raids are being conducted to arrest the ring leaders of the drug trafficking group namely Liaqat Baloch and Wahid Baloch. Members of the group are involved in drug smuggling abroad by sea. On receiving the intelligence information, the ANF team conducted a raid in the area and recovered the drugs which were stored in a secret location, he informed. During the operation, more than one ton drugs and 51,000 narcotic capsules were also recovered. The recovered drugs weighing 1014 kg drugs included 850 kg hashish and 164 kg ice. The spokesman said that ANF is making all-out efforts for a drug free society.—APP

Pak to host global conference on girls' education

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with Rabta Alaam Islami (Muslim World League), is set to host a landmark Global Conference on Girls' Education this September 2024. This prestigious event aims to bring together a diverse group of international and national dignitaries, including education ministers from numerous Islamic countries, to address and find solutions to the numerous challenges faced by girls in the education sector, according to a press release issued here yesterday. The primary objective of the three-day conference is to explore and formulate effective strategies to enable institutional responses and ensure better resource allocation for promoting girls' education on a global scale. The conference will see the participation of eminent scholars, education experts, policymakers, and various stakeholders who will share their expertise, experiences, and best practices in the field of girls' education. Prime Minister has established a dedicated committee to ensure the event is organized in a befitting and efficient manner. This committee is headed by Mohyuddin Wani, Secretary of Education, and includes Ms Nausheen Iftikhar MNA, Ms Dr Tanveer Anjum representatives from the Foreign Office, the Federal Directorate of Education, and the Capital Development Authority. Their collective efforts aim to ensure the seamless execution of this high-profile event.—APP

"Capacity charges" are an inexcusable atrocity

TANVEER HUSSAIN



Currently, our country is suffering from electricity crisis. Exorbitant electricity bills and unannounced load shedding have made people's lives miserable. People are worried about load shedding in extreme heat. Factories are shutting down due to lack of electricity and the industry is also on the verge of collapse. Due to the same problem of electricity, garment factories in Faisalabad were

closed; capitalists were forced to shift their capital to India and Bangladesh. The cruel thing is that the price of electricity in Pakistan is higher than all the countries in the continent of Asia. No one has understood the government's policy till date. People's pockets are being robbed in the name of surcharge, additional surcharge and capacity charges (Rupee-dollar rate, coal prices, RLNG cost major factors that determine capacity payments). A major injustice is that the government is not generating electricity according to the demand. What is more cruel is that they are paying the "IPPs" billions of rupees per month for the electricity which was never even generated. According to The "Express Tribune" the government paid Rs 1.3 trillion to "IPPs" as

"capacity charges" in 2022-23. these charges got received from common people in the electric bills. Hardly any civilized country in the world has such a law. The number of dams in the country is limited, so instead of relying on water, the government is generating expensive electricity from petrol, gas and furnace oil. The cost of this fuel is also charged separately from the consumers. Nature has given Pakistan a vast area and wonderful weather. The sun shines with its full brightness for 12 to 14 hours every day in our land. Solar systems can be a great source of electricity. If the government is serious on plight of the public, it should provide solar systems to electricity consumers on installments throughout the country. The government is paying trillions of rupees to the

IPPs in the name of "capacity charges" but does not want to provide even a small amount to the people. With just two years of capacity charges, the government can provide free solar and inverters to all consumers in the country. Which will not only provide free or cheap electricity in the country but also protect the nation from blackmailing by IPP. Political and religious parties and their leaders organize "dharnas" and "riots" in the country every year for their own interests. If those people go beyond their own interests and guide the people on this issue, then their problems will end. The way the people of Azad Kashmir forced the government to reduce the price of electricity through peaceful public protest is a beacon for the people of the entire country.

Tamasha, SIMOSA earn accolades at Pakistan digital awards

ISLAMABAD: Tamasha and SIMOSA, two premier digital platforms from Jazz, Pakistan's leading digital operator, have been recognized at the prestigious Pakistan Digital Awards 2024. According to a press release, these awards earned in excellence in websites, apps, and digital creators, underscoring the dynamic digital landscape spanning public, private, and third-sector organizations. Tamasha, Pakistan's foremost digital entertainment platform, was honored with the Best Online Streaming Platform award for the second consecutive year with the accolade highlighting its crucial role in the nation's digital entertainment evolution. Renowned for hosting major sporting events — e.g. the Asia Cup 2023, ICC World Cup 2023, and the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup 2024 — Tamasha has solidified its status as the preferred digital streaming service for millions of viewers. SIMOSA, formerly known as Jazz World, has been honored with the Best Consumer Mobile Service award, reflecting its status as the region's highest-engaging app. With its transition to an operator-agnostic model, SIMOSA now serves a wider audience, enhancing its appeal and usability across various networks, positioned as a cornerstone of growth and strategic acquisitions within the digital ecosystem. "We are profoundly honored to receive these prestigious awards for our leading digital platforms. This recognition at the Pakistan Digital Awards is a testament to our unwavering commitment to innovation and excellence, as embodied in our DO1440 strategy. By continuously enhancing digital connectivity and transforming digital lifestyles, we strive to empower our users, enrich their daily lives, and drive the digital evolution of Pakistan," said Aamer Ejaz, Chief Digital Officer, Jazz.—APP

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Human rights violations in US

It takeschutzpah to attack others for human rights violations when you are guilty of breaching those of your own population. That's why it's both infuriating and amusing to listen to Washington's lectures and sanctions against other countries, including China. When you were the biggest dog in the neighbourhood, your barks could bite. But that habit needs to change when your place at the top is starting to crumble. Consider poverty. The January census shows 11.6 per cent of Americans, or almost 38 million, live below the poverty line in the world's wealthiest country. How does that compute? The only explanation is that society's riches generated by the economy have gone disproportionately to the richest, while the poor just get poorer. Poverty is, of course, closely linked to homelessness, drug abuse, and lack of healthcare. These are structural chronic problems that cannot be addressed by some politician or party just by voting the current ones out of office. Poverty is a human rights violation according to the United Nations. Its Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ranks freedom from poverty on par with "civil and political rights, such as the right to a fair trial, political participation and security of the person". "No social phenomenon," it said, "is as comprehensive in its assault on human rights as poverty. Poverty erodes economic and social rights such as the right to health, adequate housing, food and safe water, and the right to education." Worsening poverty makes the United States a rights violator. Now, consider forced labour, which the US has accused China of committing and against which it has imposed unilateral sanctions. According to the US Department of Labour, the youngest age for employment in the US is 14 for non-agricultural jobs. But with agricultural jobs, the minimum age can be much lower. The federal guidelines advise 16 years of age for work during school hours, 14 for outside school hours and 12 if a written consent has been obtained by one parent. Hawaii allows 10-year-olds to work in coffee harvesting. Oregon lets nine-year-olds to be employed picking berries or beans. In some states, a child may be offered less than minimum wage for some jobs. It's reasonable to assume that many, even if not all cases, would have breached the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a universal human rights code. But since Washington has consistently refused to cooperate with UN inspectors, we have no way of knowing the true scope of the problem. Meanwhile, Amazon, Kroger, Dollar General, Walmart and McDonald's are among the largest employers in the US. According to a 2020 study by the Government Accountability Office, they don't pay many frontline workers a living wage, so they end up seeking federal aid programmes such as Medicaid and food stamps. Effectively, their low corporate taxes and wages – and high profits – are subsidised by taxpayers. As for prison labour, according to a 2022 study by the American Civil Liberties Union and the University of Chicago, about 800,000 incarcerated workers across the US perform roughly US\$10 billion worth of work a year, more than US\$2 billion of it for clients outside the prison system.



World scrambled to legitimize Palestinian state

DESPIITE experiencing a humanitarian crisis reminiscent of the Great War, Palestine is steadily gaining international recognition as a sovereign state, and even the European Union (EU) is under pressure to grant Palestine legitimacy. The global student Intifada and the most recent EU reawakening have far-reaching geopolitical implications for the region and have shocked the Zionist regime, drifting fast into diplomatic isolation following over eight months of bloodshed in Palestine. The cruel crimes committed by the Zionist regime in Gaza and now Rafah have deeply disturbed many nations that had previously supported "Israel". There have been tragic accounts of devastating fatalities caused by Tel Aviv's indiscriminate violence and disregard for the safety of innocent civilians, including women and children. There has been a recent increase in fighting in Rafah as "Israel" continues its offensive in southern Gaza City, where the occupation forces have played havoc with human dignity. "Israel" now controls the entire length of Gaza's border with Egypt, which unfortunately makes aid delivery to Gaza impossible. "Israel's" escalating offensive has forced a significant number of Palestinians to leave Rafah over the past several weeks. Residents are struggling to find shelter and sustenance. The ongoing closure of the Rafah crossing is denying medical aid to Gaza's wounded children. The UN has issued an order for "Israel" to cease its military offensive in Rafah and allow aid to enter through the border, as part of a collective effort to exert pressure on "Israel". However, "Israel" put the order of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) under the carpet, and within a week of UN instructions, Tel Aviv launched a ghastly attack on civilians in Tal as-Sultan, threatening that the war would persist until 2025. US intelligence's annual threat assessment underscores the mounting international pressure "Israel" is likely to encounter due to the challenging humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. The intelligence chiefs testified about the report in late February, leading to its declassification in March. The assessment brought attention to the domestic pressures faced by Benjamin Netanyahu, suggesting that his government's future may be uncertain. "There is a growing lack of public confidence in Netanyahu's leadership that has intensified since the war began. As a result, we anticipate significant protests calling for his resignation and new elections," it says. The assessment stated that there is a possibility of a different, more moderate government. In recent months, there have been indications that Malta and Belgium may recognize Palestine. Nevertheless, it seems that Belgium's government postponed the decision in light of the country's upcoming elections. Several EU nations, such as Sweden, Cyprus, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Ireland, Norway, and Spain have already recognized the Palestinian state. The latest in a series of nations giving legitimacy to Palestine is Slovenia, where the parliament, with a majority vote on Tuesday, June 4, gave assent to the recognition of a Palestinian independent state, rejecting a demand from the main opposition party for a referendum on the matter.

How lithium is powering China, Afghanistan bonhomie

Ata Sahit

Blessed with rich lithium resources, it is estimated that Afghan lithium resources will soon be able to compete with those in Bolivia. A study conducted by the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) estimated the value of unexploited lithium mines in Afghanistan at approximately one trillion dollars. The lithium mines in Afghanistan are reported to stretch from Herat province to Nuristan province, covering a length of 850 to 900 kilometres and a width of 150 to 200 kilometres. It is estimated that the lifespan of these lithium mines is approximately seventy years. Lithium resources in Afghanistan were first discovered in the 1980s by Soviet mining experts

THE rising interest in various autonomous machines in recent years, particularly electric vehicles, has spurred a growing focus on lithium as the essential material for the energy storage units these machines require. Consequently, lithium, often dubbed the oil and natural gas of the future, is progressively becoming a strategic commodity on the international stage. Nations are advancing their initiatives concerning lithium, the foremost raw material of the future, predominantly highlighting sustainability and the circular economy. Nevertheless, China stands as the pivotal nation in the processing of lithium as a raw material. Indeed, China is acquiring lithium companies in South America, which possesses half of the world's reserves, while simultaneously solidifying its market position by forming the Mining Companies Association with firms in lithium-rich countries. Within this framework, an analysis of China's relationships with Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries reveals the significant role of the lithium trade. Among these countries is Afghanistan, endowed with abundant lithium deposits. Often referred to as the "second Saudi Arabia of lithium" amid the global powers' lithium competition, Afghanistan is gaining increasing prominence. According to published reports, approximately 100,000 tonnes of lithium carbonate are traded globally today. Chile, Argentina, Belgium, Germany, China, and the US export 98.3 percent of this total. The importing countries, which account for 86.3 percent of this trade, include South Korea, Japan, the US, China, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Türkiye, Russia, Thailand, France, India, and Italy. This has led to significant competition over lithium among various countries. According to estimates, the added value of this sector will exceed \$400 billion by 2030. In this context, Australia, Chile, and Argentina are the three primary actors at the initial stages of the mineral processing chain, whereas China is the dominant actor from the middle to the final stages of the value chain. As leading electronics producers, Japan, South Korea, and the US participate in this value chain's final stage. Among these actors, China controls 60 percent of global lithium production and refining, dominating the electric vehicle markets. Furthermore, China holds a dominant position in the electric battery market, with a capacity ranging from 80 to 90 percent worldwide. Notably, six of the world's top 10 electric vehicle battery manufacturers are based in China. China's leadership role in the vital

minerals chain is not accidental but rather the result of deliberate and strategic planning. Lessons learned from China's position in the global steel chain are shaping its industrial strategies in the transition to clean energy, particularly regarding electric vehicles and lithium batteries. In the steel industry, most of the profits go to mining companies such as Rio Tinto and FMG and downstream sectors like automotive. In contrast, despite producing over 50 percent of the world's steel, China retains only a small share of the profits relative to the energy and labour it engages. This experience has driven China's efforts to secure access to lithium mines worldwide, reflecting its strategic goal of controlling the entire lithium chain to avoid a similar predicament as in the steel industry. Considering China's prowess in this domain, the US and the European Union are engaging in rigorous negotiations to enhance collaboration with suppliers in lithium-abundant nations. Concurrently, they persist in exerting pressure against China's dominance in this sector. Blessed with rich lithium resources, it is estimated that Afghan lithium resources will soon be able to compete with those in Bolivia. A study conducted by the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) estimated the value of unexploited lithium mines in Afghanistan at approximately one trillion dollars. The lithium mines in Afghanistan are reported to stretch from Herat province to Nuristan province, covering a length of 850 to 900 kilometres and a width of 150 to 200 kilometres. It is estimated that the lifespan of these lithium mines is approximately seventy years. Lithium resources in Afghanistan were first discovered in the 1980s by Soviet mining experts. However, they kept this information well-hidden until 2004. However, it came to light when a team of American geologists stumbled upon old maps and data in the Afghanistan Geological Survey Library in Kabul. Utilising old Russian maps, the United States Geological Survey commenced aerial surveys of Afghanistan's mineral resources using P-3 Orion surveillance aircraft equipped with advanced gravity measuring instruments and magnetic equipment. In 2007, they employed a well-equipped British bomber, which provided a three-dimensional profile of the underground mineral reserves. Afghanistan's rich lithium deposits have, more than anything else in recent years, spurred China's growing interest in Afghanistan's lithium and concrete steps in this direction. Following the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, the Chinese government officially emphasised

that the agreements with the previous Afghan governments would continue. Indeed, more than 20 Chinese companies are currently active in Afghanistan, and over 100 Chinese companies have registered with the Afghan Ministry of Mines to operate mines in the country. After the Taliban's return to power, approximately 500 Chinese business people travelled to Afghanistan to closely examine the nation's natural resources. The majority of Chinese companies and their investments are focused on mining and mineral development, with lithium mines appearing to hold particular significance in this context. According to reports in the Afghan press, this interest stems from the rich lithium deposits in Afghanistan's Ghazni province and the ease of transportation to China through the Wakhan border. In fact, according to a report published in the Afghan press in April 2023, China's Gochin company announced its intention to invest \$10 billion in Afghanistan's lithium mines in the initial phase. Afghanistan's abundant lithium resources have also been a focal point for US officials. In 2010, US media, citing Pentagon officials, claimed that Afghanistan would become the "Saudi Arabia of lithium" due to the size of its lithium reserves. In general, when examining China-Afghanistan relations, mutual economic interests appear to be predominant. After the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan, China became one of the few countries to maintain relations with the Taliban government. Mutual political and economic interests are bringing the two sides closer, with China attempting to leverage the opportunity presented by the US withdrawal to expand its influence in Afghanistan. For China, the security provided by the Taliban presents a favourable opportunity to implement commercial and economic projects in Afghanistan, through which Beijing aims to achieve its strategic interests. Conversely, the Taliban have shown significant interest in Chinese projects, viewing them as a viable opportunity to alleviate their economic crisis. Upon scrutinising China's economic projects and investments in Afghanistan, it becomes evident that Afghanistan's abundant lithium resources are one of the significant factors fostering this interest-driven rapprochement between the two nations. In essence, lithium, gradually evolving into a strategic commodity on the international stage, is assuming a strategic position in China-Afghanistan relations.

Is China Readjusting Belt and Road Vision?

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a colossal global infrastructure development strategy spearheaded by China, aiming to enhance connectivity and cooperation between Asia, Europe and Africa. Launched in 2013 by President Xi Jinping, BRI encompasses a network of roads, railways, ports, pipelines and digital infrastructure spanning over 100 countries, aiming to revive ancient trade

THE Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) proposed by China in 2013 is a comprehensive development strategy aimed at enhancing connectivity and cooperation across the Eurasian continent and beyond. This ambitious initiative encompasses both the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, focusing on infrastructure development, trade, investment and cultural exchange. The BRI seeks to revive ancient trade routes and foster economic integration among participating countries through the construction of roads, railways, ports and energy infrastructure. It spans over 100 countries, involving diverse regions from Asia to Europe, Africa and even Latin America, with China providing financing and technical expertise. While hailed by some as a transformative force for global development and connectivity, the BRI has faced criticism and scrutiny, including concerns over debt sustainability, environmental impact and geopolitical implications. Despite these challenges, the BRI continues to shape regional and global economic dynamics, reflecting China's growing influence on the world stage. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a colossal global infrastructure development strategy spearheaded by China, aiming to enhance connectivity and cooperation between Asia, Europe and Africa. Launched in 2013 by President Xi Jinping, BRI encompasses a network of roads, railways, ports, pipelines and digital infrastructure spanning over 100 countries, aiming to revive ancient trade routes and foster economic integration. China's ambitions behind BRI are multifold. Primarily, it seeks to address domestic economic challenges by exporting excess industrial capacity, creating new markets for Chinese goods and services and facilitating the internationalization of the Chinese currency the yuan. Additionally, BRI enables China to assert its geopolitical influence, particularly in regions where it has strategic interests, by forging stronger diplomatic ties, securing access

to key resources and markets and enhancing its soft power through cultural and educational exchanges. However, BRI has drawn criticism for its opaque financing mechanisms, environmental concerns, debt sustainability issues and accusations of fostering dependency among participating countries. Despite these challenges, China remains steadfast in its commitment to BRI, viewing it as a centerpiece of its foreign policy and a vehicle for shaping the global order in the 21st century. Corruption presents a significant challenge to the success and integrity of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This expansive project, aimed at fostering economic development and connectivity across Asia, Africa, and Europe, is susceptible to corruption due to its vast scale, complex infrastructure projects and involvement of multiple stakeholders. Corruption within the BRI manifests in various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and kickbacks, among others. Such illicit practices undermine the transparency and fairness of project procurement processes, leading to inflated costs, substandard infrastructure and delays in implementation. Moreover, corruption erodes public trust in the initiative, discourages foreign investment and hampers sustainable development efforts in partner countries. Addressing corruption within the BRI requires robust governance mechanisms, enhanced transparency, accountability measures, and effective enforcement of anti-corruption laws. Without decisive action to combat corruption, the BRI risks failing to achieve its objectives of promoting regional cooperation and economic growth, ultimately hindering the prospects of shared prosperity among participating nations. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has experienced shifts in its trajectory, leading to discussions about the scale and focus of its ambitions. While the BRI was initially conceived as a vast infrastructure development project spanning continents, recent trends indicate a more nuanced

approach. China seems to be recalibrating its BRI strategy, focusing more on quality over quantity and addressing concerns about debt sustainability and environmental impact. This shift reflects both internal factors, such as economic restructuring and domestic priorities and external pressures, including criticism from recipient countries and geopolitical challenges. While some argue that China's BRI ambitions are shrinking, it may be more accurate to describe them as evolving, with a greater emphasis on sustainability, efficiency, and cooperation with international partners. This recalibration suggests a maturing of China's global engagement strategy rather than a retreat from its ambitious vision. China's scaling back of its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) holds significant consequences, both domestically and internationally. Domestically, this shift reflects recalibration in China's economic strategy, prioritizing sustainability and risk management. By reducing the scale of BRI projects, China aims to mitigate financial risks associated with debt-trap diplomacy and address concerns over environmental degradation. However, this downsizing may also lead to a slowdown in economic growth as BRI projects have been instrumental in driving infrastructure development and fostering trade opportunities. Internationally, the contraction of China's BRI ambitions could reshape global geopolitics and economic dynamics. Countries heavily reliant on Chinese investment may face economic challenges while those wary of Beijing's influence may see this as an opportunity to diversify their partnerships. Moreover, the recalibration of the BRI may alter perceptions of China's global leadership ambitions, potentially prompting other major powers to fill the void left by China's retreat. Overall, the consequences of China's shrinking BRI ambitions are multifaceted, with implications spanning economic, geopolitical and environmental domains.

Briefs

Economists
analyse
strengths...

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retailers was increased to 2.25 percent. He told the government that if it makes taxation difficult, then tax evasion will increase. He said that the government has increased the tax rates which was not pro-economy. Kashif Anwar demanded that the government bring zero ratings to the standard rate but also noticed that businessmen were in trouble. He demanded that in order to bring the business community into documentation, simplify the tax system and no one will be afraid of paying taxes. Meanwhile, FPCCI President Atif Akram Sheikh has also raised objections on the budget. FPCCI rejected the increase in levy on petroleum products. He said the construction sector has already suffered a lot and increasing the tax burden on the sector will further increase the difficulties. He demanded that relief should be given in power sector in the budget. He said the industry cannot run on 16 to 17 cents per unit.

UN probe
condemns
Israel over...

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the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Victims were interrogated or abused while naked or partially dressed, blindfolded, and were made to kneel or keep their hands tied behind their backs, the report found. Many were forced to strip in public and walk while being sexually harassed, with their family members forced to watch. While both men and women were victims of sexual violence, men and boys were targeted in particular. The report also highlighted the inflammatory rhetoric used by senior Israeli officials, including president Isaac Herzog and prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which the UN commission said amounted to incitement and "may constitute other serious international crimes."

US will try
to bridge...

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the course of the coming days whether those gaps are bridgeable," he said. But he said the onus was on Hamas, describing the rest of the world as united in seeking an end to the eight-month war. "We're determined to try to bridge the gaps. And I believe those gaps are bridgeable," Blinken said. "That doesn't mean they will be bridged because, ultimately, Hamas has to decide," he said. "The longer this goes on, the more people will suffer, and it's time for the haggling to stop." Hamas proposed amendments late Tuesday including a ceasefire timeline and the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, according to a source familiar with the talks. The plan Biden laid out on May 31 calls for an Israeli withdrawal from "major population centers" and a ceasefire for six weeks, which could then be extended if negotiators need more time to seek a permanent deal. Blinken declined to elaborate on the Hamas demands.

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energy and IT sectors as well as address the challenges in the management of water resources. Muhammad Aurangzeb said that completion of ongoing projects will be given priority in the PSDP 2024-25. He pointed out that eighty-one percent resources have been allocated for the ongoing projects and nineteen percent for the new projects. He said development of basic infrastructure is the basic responsibility of the government and for this purpose it has been proposed to allocate fifty-nine percent of the amount. For the social sector, it is proposed to spend twenty percent of the development budget. The Finance Minister said ensuring balanced regional development is a constitutional responsibility. Hence, ten percent resources have been earmarked for AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan and the Tribal districts about eleven point two percent resources have been set aside for other sectors such as IT and telecom, Science and Technology, Governance and production. Announcing three pronged strategy to reduce pension bill, Muhammad Aurangzeb said reforms will be introduced in the existing pension scheme as per international best practices that would considerably decrease pension liability for the next three decades. He said contributory pension scheme has been introduced for new employees which will be supported by monthly government contribution to ensure fully funded pension for fu-

T20 WC: Australia humble
Namibia to qualify for Super 8

Australia have secured their place in the Super 8 phase of the T20 World Cup with a third successive victory in the group stages

SPORTS DESK

SYDNEY: In a superb display of the game, Australia outclassed Namibia after chasing the target of 73 runs in just 5.4 overs at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, North Sound, Antigua, on Wednesday. With the win, Australia also qualified for the Super 8 stage of the cricket event. Namibian bowlers could only claim the wicket of David Warner, who scored 20 off 8 balls before being dismissed. Travis Head and Mitchell Marsh remained unbeaten with 34 and 18 runs respectively. Travis hit 5 fours and 2 sixes. Earlier, Australia won the toss and invited the rivals to bat first who were all out after scoring only 72 runs in 17 overs. Achieving the milestone, Australia's Leg-spinner Adam Zampa became the first Australian male cricketer to claim 100 wickets in T20I cricket. He achieved this feat



with 4-12 figures in four overs. Australian bowlers overpowered the batters throughout Namibia's innings. Pacer Josh Hazlewood took two wickets for 18 runs in four overs. Marcus Stoinis also contributed with two wickets as Namibia was dismissed in 17 overs. Namibia captain Gerhard

Erasmus played 17 balls to score his first runs. However, he was the highest run-getter with 36 runs in 43 balls with the help of four fours and a six.

Apart from Erasmus, Michael van Lingen was the only batter who got into double figures with 10 runs. This was the first competitive T20I between Australia and Namibia. But they played each other in a warm-up game before this tournament, with Australia registering a convincing seven-wicket win.

Teams: Namibia: Nikolaas Davin, Michael van Lingen, Jan Frylinck, Gerhard Erasmus(c), JJ Smit, Zane Green(w), David Wiese, Ruben Truppelmann, Bernard Scholtz, Jack Brasell, Ben Shikongo. **Australia:** Travis Head, David Warner, Mitchell Marsh(c), Glenn Maxwell, Marcus Stoinis, Tim David, Matthew Wade(w), Pat Cummins, Nathan Ellis, Adam Zampa, Josh Hazlewood.

Mohsin Naqvi opens up about
changes in Pakistan cricket

PCB Chairman said that the team is still playing in the World Cup, the nation has to be patient with them

DNA

LAHORE: Interior Minister and Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi had an exclusive discussion with Geo News on Wednesday. During the interview, the Chairman was asked about the team's current performance and if the board has made any decisions regarding the team. "The team is still playing in the World Cup, the nation has to be patient with them. There are still matches left to play and we should wait for the outcome of the tournament," said Naqvi. The Pakistan cricket team has been on a poor stint with a 2-2 draw against New Zealand in a five-match T20I series at home, meanwhile the three-match T20I series against Ire-

land in Ireland ended in a 2-1 win for Pakistan despite tragically losing against the hosts in a T20I for the first time. It was followed by a 2-0 loss against England in a four-match T20I series with two games abandoned due to rain. Then the team started their T20 World Cup journey against the USA which could have been an easy win for Pakistan but ended in a one-sided super over win for the USA. They then met arch-rivals India on June 9 at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium and bowled magnificently but the batters failed to achieve a total of 120 runs. They finally found a win against Canada on June 11 but their overall performance in the T20 World Cup 2024 including the win against Canada has been below average. Naqvi stated that

regardless of the team's performance in the first two games of the T20 World Cup 2024, these are the players who are going to play the rest of the tournament and represent Pakistan. "Whatever their performance, they are to play the rest of the tournament. For that, they require all the support." The chairman also assured that the internal matters of the team are being discussed in the PCB at large. However, he also stated that anything revealed about it in public right now is not suitable. "We are discussing matters regarding the team and for now, to talk about it is not suitable." The Pakistan cricket team is on the edge of disqualification in the T20 World Cup 2024 but they still have one more game to go on June 16 against Ireland.

Carlos Alcaraz, Rafael
Nadal to be Olympic
doubles partners

PARIS: Spaniards Carlos Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal will team up to be doubles partners at next month's Olympic Games in Paris. The tennis will be played on clay at Roland Garros - home of the French Open - where 21-year-old Alcaraz was victorious last week, securing his third Grand Slam title. Nadal, 38, is a 22-time major winner, with a record 14 championships coming at Roland Garros. The Games begin on 26 July with the tennis tournaments starting a day later. "One pair, which I think everyone knows and was hoping for, is Carlos Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal," said Spain's national team coach, David Ferrer. "Rafa and Carlos will be playing together in Paris." Nadal won an Olympic gold at Beijing in 2008, but Alcaraz will be making his Games debut. Nadal's participation at the Games was uncertain after a series of injuries this year, but he returned to action for the clay court season in April. The Paris Games are likely to be his last, with the Spaniard considering retirement this season. - Agencies

Pakistan players on
the rise in ICC Men's
T20I Rankings

Veteran M Nabi is the big winner in the latest rankings update, with the 39-year-old rising to the No.1 spot on the list for all-rounders following his recent two-wicket haul against NZ in Guyana."

DUBAI: Pakistan players including white-ball captain Babar Azam excelled in ICC Men's T20I Rankings, updated Wednesday. Pakistan captain Babar Azam, who scored a run-a-ball 33 in a tense run chase against Canada on Tuesday, jumped a spot to claim the third spot in the T20I batting rankings. Whereas, wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Rizwan slipped to fourth. Returning pacer Mohammad Amir registered a significant rise in the bowling rankings by jumping up 65 spots to 82nd while Naseem Shah moved up 21 spots to joint 43rd. Furthermore, left-arm spinner Imad Wasim, jumped five places to claim the 34th rank. Imad also jumped one spot to 11th in the T20I all-rounder's rankings whereas Shadab slipped three places to 14th. On the contrary, Pakistan's ace pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi, who has been far from his best, has slipped a spot to 12th in the ICC Men's T20I Bowling Rankings. Whereas, right-arm speedster Haris Rauf slipped two places to 26th. According to the apex cricketing body, Afghanistan's veteran all-rounder Mohammad Nabi was the "big winner" in the latest rankings update as he claimed the top spot in the T20I all-rounders rankings, following his two wicket-haul against New Zealand. "Veteran Mohammad Nabi is the big winner in the latest rankings update, with the 39-year-old rising to the No.1 spot on the list for all-rounders following his recent two-wicket haul against New Zealand in Guyana," stated ICC in a press release. "Nabi jumps up two places to first on the updated T20I rankings for all-rounders, with Australia's Marcus Stoinis rising three places to claim second spot and previous No.1-ranked player Shakib Al Hasan drooping four rungs to fifth as a result of major shake-up at the top. -Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Government employees hold a protest in favor of their demands at Pak-Secretariat in the Federal Capital. - Online

Rain threat looms
over Pakistan's
T20 WC hopes

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's hopes of reaching the Super 8 stage of the T20 World Cup 2024 hangs by a thread as heavy rainfall is predicted in Florida, where their crucial final group match against Ireland is scheduled on June 16. The Babar Azam-led side has managed just one win from three matches so far, beating Canada after losses to the United States and India. The national team now need to beat Ireland and have other results go their way to advance. However, the weather in Lauderdale, Florida could play spoilsport. The Sri Lanka vs Nepal match on June 11 was washed out without a ball bowled due to heavy rain.

More thunderstorms are forecast over the next week, with a 91% chance of rain during the USA vs Ireland match on June 14. If that game is abandoned, the USA would earn a point and secure qualification, eliminating Pakistan. There is also a 47% chance of rain for the Pakistan vs Ireland clash two days later. Pakistan's path to the Super 8 requires the following outcomes:

June 12: USA to lose to India

June 14: Ireland to beat USA

June 15: India to beat Canada

June 16: Pakistan to beat Ireland

Even then, Pakistan and USA could be tied on four points, making net run rate the deciding factor. Pakistan would likely need to beat Ireland by a huge margin while hoping the USA loses heavily to India and Ireland. After shock losses to the USA and India, Pakistan kept their campaign alive by beating Canada on June 11. But the weather in Florida threatens to halt their progress, in what would be a major disappointment for the 2009 champions. - DNA



Tuesday June 13

West Indies vs
New Zealand
Brian Lara
Stadium (5.30am)

Bangladesh vs
Netherlands
Arnos Vale
Stadium (7.30pm)

England vs Oman
Sir Vivian Richards
Stadium (12am)

Omer
accuses...

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alleging that the government has artificially inflated many statistics. He condemned the government's agricultural claims, noting the destruction of the wheat crop and the inability of farmers to sell it. "Bumper crops are not benefiting the government or farmers," Ayub said, forecasting an impending crisis for rice due to petrol smuggling from Iran. Ayub also addressed the issue of inflation, arguing that despite global oil price drops, the local population has not seen any benefits. "Inflation has not decreased; it has increased," he asserted, accusing the government of artificially maintaining the dollar rate at 275, which he claims will make essential goods more expensive. He attributed the ongoing electricity crisis to import restrictions and non-generation of electricity rather than theft, describing the government as "the pharaoh of time, talking to the sky." Furthermore, Ayub condemned the new defamation law in Punjab, calling it a "poison killer for freedom of the press," and criticized the installation of social media firewalls as an attack on press freedom.

Achakzai to
lead talks
with govt...

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judiciary, parliament and other state institutions. Furthermore, the PTI's political leadership will also be part of the negotiations, the sources said. The development comes a day after PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar said that the party's incarcerated founder, Imran Khan, had given his approval for talks with the government and said that the party would initiate negotiations after talking to Achakzai. "We told the PTI founder that dialogue is necessary, as the distance is widening. He agreed with us [on this]," said Gohar, when speaking with journalists outside the Adiala jail. The PTI chairman noted that the former prime minister wanted the avenues of dialogue to be opened. He told journalists that Khan is ready to forgive what has happened to him for reconciliation. "PTI founder has said many times that 'I am ready to forgive what happened to me,'" said the PTI chairman. When asked if the negotiations will take place at the behest of the Supreme Court's advice, Barrister Gohar said: "The option given by the SC is also under consideration."

Rs18 trillion budget unveiled...

employees since the very beginning of their service. He said a pension fund will be established to manage pension liability. Regarding agriculture sector, the Finance Minister announced that five billion rupees have been proposed for the Markup and Risk Sharing Scheme for Farm Mechanization under the Kissan Package announced by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in 2022. He said under the scheme, financing will be available to procure planters, tractors, threshers, harvesters, and mobile grain dryers. The Finance Minister said 206 billion rupees have been earmarked for water resources in which 45 billion rupees have been set aside for Mohmand dam, 40 billion for Diamer Bhasha dam, 18 billion rupees for Chashma Right Bank Canal and 10 billion rupees for Pat Feeder Canal. Unveiling the allocations for the energy sector, the Finance Minister said 253 billion rupees have been set aside in this regard. For IT sector, he said 79 billion rupees have been earmarked under which seven billion rupees will be for digitalization and reforms in the FBR. This amount will help expand tax base and address loopholes by using state of the art IT system. An IT park will be established in Karachi at a cost of 8 billion rupees while 11 billion rupees will be set aside for Technology Park Development Project in Islamabad. Highlighting the importance of remittances

sent by overseas Pakistanis to their families, the Finance Minister said over 86.9 billion rupees have been proposed in the budget to facilitate the Pakistani diaspora. This amount will be spent on re-imbursing of TT charges.

He said immigration landscape will be digitized to simplify the immigration procedure for facilitation of overseas Pakistanis. Muhammad Aurangzeb said Mohsin-e-Pakistan award is being introduced for overseas Pakistanis to recognize their extraordinary services for the country. Highlighting the importance of human development, Muhammad Aurangzeb said a substantial amount has been proposed to improve infrastructure and educational facilities in 167 government schools in the federal capital. He said government is going to introduce a school meal program for physical and mental nourishment of students under which balanced and nutritious food will be provided to students of 200 primary schools of Islamabad. He said pink buses will be plied from rural to urban areas for female students. Besides, Danish schools are being expanded to Islamabad, Balochistan, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan as per directions of the Prime Minister. The Minister said the government is implementing the principles of equality and justice in tax laws. He said the exemptions and concessions in taxes not only lessens government's

revenue, but also affect socio-economic development. The Minister said after reviewing the concessions and exemptions in the Sales Tax, the government has proposed waiving off certain concessions and exemptions. He said some of the goods would be taxed on reduced rate while other would be taxed on standard rate. The government has also proposed to increase GST rate on Tier-1 Retailers of textile and leather products from fifteen to eighteen percent. It has also been proposed to impose standard rate of eighteen percent tax on Mobile Phones. It has also been suggested in the budget to impose withholding tax on scrape of copper, coal, paper and plastic, while exemption from sales tax on iron and steel scrap has also been proposed in the budget to discourage tendency of fake or flying invoices.

The Minister said that exemption in taxes for five years was given to newly merged districts, erstwhile FATA and PATA, in 2018. This exemption was ended in 2023, which was later extended for one more year. However, now this exemption is being withdrawn gradually to bring these areas into national mainstream. Similarly, the exemption in income tax given to residents of erstwhile FATA and PATA has been extended for one more year. The Minister said a fixed tax of 12 percent annually is currently enforced on unpaid sales taxes and FED, which is being increased by KIBOR+3

percent in order to harmonize it according to policy rate of the State Bank of Pakistan. The Finance Minister said the government is undertaking several steps to give impetus to climate mitigation efforts. For this purpose, he said that Pakistan Climate Change Authority will be made functional. He said that national Climate Finance strategy will be prepared by October this year with the aim to bring global climate finance to Pakistan which will help implement projects to reduce carbon emission. He said that National Digital Climate Finance Monitoring dashboard will be established to maintain data of the foreign assistance. He said that Gender and climate budget tagging has been done in the budgeting and accounting of the government. Muhammad Aurangzeb said the government is allocating four billion rupees for E-bikes and two billion rupees for energy efficient fans. Unveiling relief measures, the Finance Minister announced 25 percent increase in the salaries of government employees from Grade-1 to 16 and 20 percent from Grade-17 to 22. He also proposed 15 percent raise in the pension of retired government employees. The minimum wages are being increased from 32,000 to 37,000 rupees. The Minister said taxes on vehicles' registration and purchase up to 2000 CC were taken on the basis of engine capacity. However, it has been proposed in the budget that tax on all the vehicles would be taken on prices of vehicles instead of its engine capacity as it was enforced earlier.

Briefs

1 dead as
mpox
outbreak
hits SA

JOHANNESBURG: An outbreak of mpox has killed one person and infected four more in South Africa, the government said on Wednesday, adding it was trying to secure more treatment drugs as a precaution. The five cases, reported between May 8 and June 7, were the first recorded in the country since 2022. Health Minister Joe Phaahla told reporters. "One death is too many, especially from a preventable and manageable disease," Phaahla said, urging those with suspected symptoms to seek medical attention and help trace contacts. Previously known as monkeypox, mpox is a viral illness transmitted through close contact with infected humans or animals, as well as via materials such as contaminated sheets. The disease causes painful and scarring lesions, principally to the face, anus and genitals. Common symptoms include a skin rash, fever, headache, muscle aches and swollen lymph nodes, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Mpox was first discovered in humans in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with the spread since then mainly limited to certain West and Central African nations. But in May 2022, infections surged worldwide, mostly among men who have sex with men, leading the WHO to declare it a global health emergency.—APP

Greece shuts
schools,
Acropolis as
heatwave hits

ATHENS: Greece shut the ancient Acropolis tourist site, suspended schools and stationed medics across Athens on Wednesday as it faced the first heatwave of the summer. Temperatures were expected to hit 43 degrees Celsius (109 degrees Fahrenheit) on Wednesday and Thursday in parts of the Mediterranean country, driven by southerly winds bringing hot air and dust from North Africa. The Acropolis hill, home to one of the world's most famous archaeological sites that includes the Parthenon temple, was closed from noon to 5 p.m. (0900-1400 GMT) and Red Cross staff handed out bottles of water to tourists. Many primary schools and nurseries across the country will shut for two days. Greece is one of the most climate-impacted countries in Europe. Last year, rising temperatures fueled deadly wildfires and erratic rains caused some of the worst flooding on record, both of which damaged crops and livelihoods. Last winter was the hottest on record and rainfall was low, creating the conditions for more fires, scientists say. Similar conditions were seen last year across much of southern Europe, including Portugal, France, Spain and Italy where fires caused dozens of deaths.—APP

Rwanda
accuses UN
refugee
agency of
lying

KIGALI: Rwanda said the UN refugee agency had lied when the organization told a British court this week that asylum seekers sent to the East African country could be moved on again to states where they risked torture or death. Lawyers representing the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) told the court on Monday that Rwanda's asylum system was inadequate, as part of a challenge to the British government's policy to deport asylum seekers there. The lawyers said removing asylum seekers to Rwanda put them at risk of being transferred again in a banned process known as refoulement — building on past evidence which formed an important part of the UK Supreme Court's reasoning when it ruled last year that the British plan was unlawful. "UNHCR is lying," Rwanda's government spokesperson said in a statement late on Tuesday. "The organization seems intent on presenting fabricated allegations to UK courts about Rwanda's treatment of asylum seekers, while still partnering with us to bring African migrants from Libya to safety in Rwanda," the spokesperson added.—APP

Hungary to allow NATO
aid to flow to Ukraine

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg says that he and Orban had agreed modalities for Hungary's non-participation in NATO's support for Ukraine

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: Hungary has agreed not to block NATO from giving support to Ukraine but it will not provide any personnel or funds to help the war-ravaged country, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday. At a summit in Washington next month, US President Joe Biden and his NATO counterparts are expected to agree on a new system for providing more predictable and long-term security assistance and military training to Ukraine's beleaguered armed forces. "Hungary will not participate in these NATO efforts and I accept this position," Stoltenberg told reporters in Bu-

dapest, after talks with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. Stoltenberg said that he and Orban had "agreed modalities for Hungary's non-participation in NATO's support for Ukraine." NATO's top civilian official did not elaborate on how that would work. "No Hungarian personnel will take part in these activities and no Hungarian funds will be used to support them," Stoltenberg said. "At the same time, the prime minister has assured me that Hungary will not oppose these efforts, enabling other allies to move forward, and he has confirmed that Hungary will continue to meet its NATO commitments in full," Stoltenberg added. NATO takes all its decisions by consensus, effectively giving any one of the 32



allies a veto. Hungary's stridently nationalist government has increasingly become a thorn in the side of NATO — and the European Union — by undermining their efforts to help Ukraine. All other allies agree that Russia's war on Ukraine poses an existential threat to European

security. Orban, seen as one of the friendliest European leaders toward Russian President Vladimir Putin, styles himself as a peace-maker, and has labelled his EU and NATO partners assisting Ukraine as being "pro-war." He has also advocated for former US President Donald Trump's victory in the November election. Since Russia's full-fledged invasion in February 2022, Ukraine's Western backers have routinely met as part of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, run by the Pentagon, to drum up weapons and ammunition for Kyiv. Stoltenberg has spearheaded an effort to have NATO coordinate that process. As an organization, the military alliance does not send weapons to Ukraine and has no plans to do so but many of its mem-

bers give help on a bilateral basis. NATO allies provide more than 90 percent of the military support that Ukraine receives. Plans are afoot for NATO's leaders to commit on July 9-11 to maintain the level of military support they have provided Ukraine since the invasion began. The world's biggest security organization estimates the amounts to around \$40 billion worth of equipment each year. At their summit in Lithuania last year, Biden and his counterparts promised that they would "be in a position to extend an invitation to Ukraine to join the alliance when allies agree and conditions are met." The consensus among members now is that it should not happen while war rages on.

Indonesia pledges to
increase UNRWA funding

FM Retno Marsudi said Indonesia was going to triple its contributions to UNRWA. The Southeast Asian nation has also sent several aid shipments to Gaza

WEB DESK

JAKARTA: Indonesia's President-elect Prabowo Subianto has pledged to increase contributions to the UN's Palestine agency and send more medical teams to Gaza, his office said on Wednesday. Subianto, who is still serving as Indonesia's defense minister before he takes the top office in October, on Tuesday attended an international aid conference on Gaza in Jordan, where he said the "humanitarian catastrophe" in the besieged strip must be addressed immediately. "Indonesia is willing and ready to contribute to all efforts to lessen the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Palestine and we are hoping to work together with countries in the region," he was quoted as saying in a Ministry of Defense statement. During the con-

ference, co-hosted by King Abdullah II, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Subianto said that "stronger support for an independent and sovereign Palestine" was the real solution to Israel's war on Gaza, in which more than 37,000 Palestinians have been killed since October. "We will significantly increase our contributions to UNRWA and other immediate humanitarian assistance. We are ready to deploy more medical teams and a field hospital to operate in Gaza," Subianto said, adding that Indonesia was also ready to deploy its hospital ship and assist in humanitarian air-drops. In December, Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said Indonesia was going to triple its contributions to UNRWA. The Southeast Asian nation has also sent several aid shipments to Gaza. Jakarta

does not have diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv and has been one of the most vocal supporters of Palestine since the beginning of Israel's onslaught on Gaza. It sees Palestinian statehood as mandated by its constitution, which calls for the abolition of colonialism. Subianto also said Indonesia was willing to evacuate 1,000 patients to be treated in Indonesian hospitals, as well as children and orphans for post-trauma treatment and schooling, and return them all to Gaza once it was safe to do so. "Although we are willing to support and contribute to all these efforts, the... final solution to this problem is a two-state solution," he told the conference. In a meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Subianto said Indonesia was "ready to contribute" on all efforts to achieve an immediate ceasefire. Last week, US President

Joe Biden laid out what he called a "three-phase" Israeli proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza, which would include negotiations for a permanent ceasefire in the Palestinian enclave and also an exchange of some Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners. Qatar and Egypt are now leading mediation efforts for the plan, which has since been adopted as a resolution by the UN Security Council. "Indonesia is ready to work with the US, Egypt and Qatar to ensure that negotiations continue to achieve a permanent ceasefire and a just and lasting peace in Palestine," Subianto told Blinken. "An immediate, full and comprehensive ceasefire is essential to revive the peace process." Following his meetings in Jordan, Subianto traveled to Jeddah, where he is scheduled to meet Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

EU threatens tariff
hike on Chinese
electric vehicles

BEIJING: The European Union will hike tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) on July 4, unless Beijing fail to agree a "solution" to subsidies that the bloc says are distorting its markets. The European Commission said on Wednesday that it would raise tariffs on Chinese carmakers to 38 percent, up from the current level of 10 percent, on July 4, unless talks with China can resolve the subsidies issue. The argument over EVs is the latest in a series of trade spats between the EU and Beijing, especially focusing on green technologies. In a press release, the EU executive said it has reached out to Chinese authorities to discuss the findings of its investigation into the subsidies and "explore possible ways to resolve the issues". The new import duties will apply from July 4 "should discussions with Chinese authorities not lead to an effective solution", it said. The EU's action was widely expected amid an investigation into China's state support for its automakers, who have taken advantage of the 10 percent tariff, which is significantly lower than that imposed by the likes of the US or India. The commission believes Chinese-built EVs are 20 percent cheaper than their European counterparts and that has helped imports — including vehicles from Western brands like Tesla and BMW that have car plants in China — into the EU skyrocket in recent years, rising from 57,000 units in 2020 to more than 437,000 in 2023, according to the EU's statistics body Eurostat. The EU says Chinese brands, including BYD and SAIC, are also increasing market share as Beijing's massive subsidies help them undercut European brands on price. The spat over EVs is just the latest in a broader trade dispute over what the EU says is China's unfair state support for green tech exports that also include solar panels, batteries and wind turbines. Reflecting that ongoing discussion, and the wide expectation regarding the probe, some took the commission's announcement in their stride.—APP

Greece, Jordan
assist in tackling
Cyprus wildfire

NICOSIA: Aircraft from Greece and Jordan were helping Cypriot authorities battle a large wildfire in the southwestern Paphos region believed to have been started by an illegal landfill, officials said Wednesday. The fire broke out Tuesday east of the village of Giolou, triggering a national emergency plan that saw civil defense evacuate five mountain villages at risk. Officials said two air tractors from the Royal Jordanian Air Force and two planes from Greece were deployed Wednesday to tackle the blaze in the rugged terrain. Nicosia activated the European Union fire assistance protocol to seek help in containing the fire. Fire service chief Nicos Logginos told state radio Wednesday that seven aircraft, including two Canadair planes from Greece, are operating over the active fronts. He said that due to harsh terrain, ground forces are unable to reach the area. Over 300 people, including fire crews, supported by bulldozers, are working to secure the perimeter of the fire. Logginos said police have evidence the fire started from an illegal landfill site. Around 48 people evacuated from the fire zone were taken to hotels, said local daily Kathimerini Cyprus. The scale of the fire prompted President Nikos Christodoulides to return early from a Gaza aid summit in Jordan on Tuesday to visit the crisis control center. During a meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan, he requested additional aerial support to combat the fire in Paphos. Fire service spokesman Andreas Kettis said a number of homes suffered extensive damage or were destroyed, but the scale of the destruction has yet to be determined. Residents have complained that homes were destroyed because of the slow response to the fire's outbreak. The community leader in the village of Lemona, Kyriakos Charalambous, told the Cyprus News Agency it took "too long" for aerial firefighting units to arrive. Wildfires often erupt in Cyprus during the sweltering summer months on the island which suffers from a severe lack of rainfall. The Department of Meteorology issued a yellow alert for Wednesday for extreme heat, with maximum temperatures expected to reach 41 degrees Celsius.—APP



Islamabad: Vice CEO Huawei Pakistan, Ray Yu called on the Federal Minister for Science and Technology Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui.—DNA

S.Asia grapples with scorching heat wave

ANKARA: Several Southeast Asian countries are in the grip of a scorching heat wave, with temperatures shooting up to 43 degrees Celsius (109.4 Fahrenheit). A searing heat wave continued to wreak havoc in the central and northern swaths of China on Wednesday with temperatures in Hebei and Henan provinces touching 43C or above, English daily Global Times reported. The heat wave is also intensifying drought in Henan, one of the country's major crop-producing provinces. The Hebei Meteorological Service maintained its red alert, the highest level for high temperatures on Wednesday. The weather forecast said that the searing heat wave will intensify impact in Hebei on Wednesday and Thursday with a large part of the province to be affected. Cities such as Baoding and Langfang in the province, as well as places to the south will bake under blistering heat where the mercury is expected to soar to 37C (98.6 F) - 43 C. On Thursday, the middle and southern parts of the province will continue to suffer from high temperatures of 38C to 40C, with some places expected to reach a stifling 41C (105.8 F) to 44C (111.2 F). Japan on Wednesday experienced its first "extremely hot day" as the temperature hit 35C (95F) in Fukushima prefecture and shot above 30C (86F) in parts of Tokyo, local English daily Japan Times reported citing the country's meteorological agency.—APP

Kim hails Russia ties ahead of likely Putin visit

Seoul and Washington subsequently claiming Pyongyang was shipping weapons to Moscow for use in Ukraine

WEB DESK

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Wednesday hailed his country's ties with Russia, saying the two nations were "invincible comrades-in-arms," amid reports President Vladimir Putin will visit Pyongyang imminently. Kim made a rare overseas trip to meet Putin in Russia's far east last year, with Seoul and Washington subsequently claiming Pyongyang was shipping weapons to Moscow for use in Ukraine, violating UN sanctions, in return for technical help with its satellite program. Putin was expected to pay a re-

turn visit to North Korea in the coming days, after the Kremlin told Russian media in May that the trip was "being prepared." South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported the visit could take place "as early as next week," as part of a tour that would also include a stop in Vietnam. Ties between North Korea and Russia have "developed into an unbreakable relationship of comrades-in-arms," leader Kim wrote in a message to Putin carried in the official Korean Central News Agency Wednesday. Their "meaningful" ties will "further consolidate the eternal milestone" in the new era, Kim added, according to KCNA.

Yonhap said that satellite images showed possible signs of a "large structure" being installed in Pyongyang's Kim Il Sung Square. Such activity has previously been observed when North Korea was preparing for large-scale events in the capital, such as military parades or visits by high-ranking foreign figures, according to Yonhap. When he visited Putin last year, Kim said the North's ties with Moscow were his country's "number one priority." Analysts have also warned that ramped-up testing and production of artillery and cruise missiles by the nuclear-armed North could be in preparation for shipments to Russia for

use in Ukraine. North Korea is barred by UN sanctions from any tests using ballistic technology, but Moscow used its UN Security Council veto in March to effectively end UN monitoring of violations, for which Pyongyang has specifically thanked Russia. North Korea has denied the allegations that it is shipping weapons to Russia, calling the claim "absurd." However, a pentagon report last month said Russia is using North Korean ballistic missiles in Ukraine, citing debris analysis. Experts said that during Putin's visit to Pyongyang, North Korea would likely push to export more war materials to be used in

the Ukraine war, in exchange for importing food and energy from Russia. There is a "disparity in the threat perception between what's happening in Ukraine — an actual, visible conflict — and what's happening in North Korea — the possibility of a crisis, which may seem distant when compared to the realities of the Russia-Ukraine war," Soo Kim, a former CIA analyst, said. "This plays to both Putin and Kim's advantage, obviously, as Putin, who's currently embroiled in the war and is pressed to receive help in his war efforts, and Kim is keen to build out his weapons program further," she added.

First 100 days
of NA 'slow-
paced': Fafen

FROM PAGE 01

eight parties, including the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan Muslim League Quaid (PML-Q), Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), Pakistan Muslim League Zia (PML-Z), Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) and the National Party (NP). The House, however, still remains short of 26 members. According to Fafen, at least 23 sessions have been conducted in the lower house of the Parliament up until now, spanning over 66 hours and 33 minutes. The speaker and deputy speaker chaired 84% of the proceedings. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has, so far, attended only two sessions, which makes up 10% of his attendance as compared to former premier and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's 29% in the first 100 days of his ousted government. Fafen added that the assembly elected its standing committee on May 17 after a month-long delay. In the first 100 days, only a money bill has been approved by the House. The Fafen report highlights that at least 159 members, or 51%, actively participated by sponsoring agenda items or participating in discussions out of the 310 members, 61% of which were females and 49% males. On average, 230 members were present in one session, with a maximum attendance of 302 and a minimum of 176. The House addressed 76% of its business, including 20 legislative bills, 93 questions, 28 calling attention notices (CANs), and 11 resolutions. In his maiden speech, PM Shehbaz outlined his government's plans for foreign relations, agriculture, economic affairs, tax reforms, energy, human development, and law and order, the Fafen report maintained.

PPP again
invited to
join federal
cabinet

FROM PAGE 01

has started working for the inclusion of new cabinet members and has once again invited the PPP to be a part of the cabinet with talks going on in this regard. After the decision of the leadership, this matter will be kept before the top decision-making body of the party — the Central Executive Committee (CEC) — which will make the final call. The report said that Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal has been given an important task by the PML-N leadership following which he has contacted Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti and Qamar Zaman Kaira on the issue. It is important to note that after the elections, the PPP decided against joining the PML-N alliance in the Centre and Punjab but voted for Shehbaz Sharif as prime minister. The PPP had initially decided not to take any ministries and had limited itself to only constitutional and parliamentary posts as per a formula agreed with the PML-N. However, the party changed its mind recently and expressed its desire to join the Punjab government if offered "a proper share". Senior PPP leader and Senate Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani made the announcement last month while speaking with journalists in Multan at his residence. The party leadership could consider joining the cabinet of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif if provided with a proper space in the province, he had said.

More
than 1.5M
Muslims
arrive in...

FROM PAGE 01

They wore ihrams, two unstitched sheets of white cloth that resemble a shroud. Many were seen carrying umbrellas against the sun, in temperatures reaching 42 degrees Celsius (107 Fahrenheit) during the day on Tuesday. "I was relieved when I arrived at the Al-Masjid Al-Haram and saw the Kaaba," said Rabeia al-Ragabi, a Moroccan woman who came to Mecca for Hajj along with her husband and their daughter. "I am very happy."

Briefs

Three ANF personnel martyred

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: At least three Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) personnel were martyred on Wednesday in a shootout with suspected drug traffickers near Turkey toll plaza, Jhelum. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, the suspects were traveling on GT Road when they were signaled to stop at the toll plaza. The smugglers tried to escape from the scene. The ANF team after a brief chase managed to intercept them when the suspects opened fire on the ANF team, resulting in the martyrdom of three personnel, including Head Constable Gulzar, Lance Naik Mazhar and a civilian. A jawan and the civilian lost their lives on the spot while another jawan was shifted to District Headquarters Hospital, Jhelum where he succumbed to his injuries.

Fire in Kuwaiti building kills 41

KUWAIT CITY: A fire that erupted in a building housing workers in the Kuwaiti city of Mangaf early on Wednesday has killed at least 41 people, the country's deputy prime minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah said during a visit to the site. The deputy prime minister accused real estate owners of violations and greed, saying those factors contributed towards the incident. "Unfortunately, the greed of real estate owners is what leads to these matters," said Sheikh Fahad, who also runs the interior and defence ministries. Major General EidRashed Hamad said the fire was reported to authorities at 6am local time. "The building in which the fire occurred was used to house workers, and there was a large number of workers there. Dozens were rescued, but unfortunately, there were many deaths as a result of inhaling smoke from the fire," another senior police commander told state TV. "We always alert and warn against" cramming too many workers into housing accommodation, he said, without providing details on the workers' type of employment or place of origin. The fire was contained and authorities were investigating its cause, officials said. - Agencies

Maneka's arrest warrant issued

SAHIWAL: A special judge of anti-corruption has issued arrest warrant for Former first lady Bushra Bibi's ex-husband KhawarManeka and his son Musa Maneka. As per details, special judge anti-corruption Asif Bashir also ordered the authorities to arrest KhawarManeka and his son and present them before court. On August 11, 2023, anti-corruption Okara booked Maneka and his sons in a case pertaining to constructing a market after grabbing the land. The Anti-corruption stated that the market construction has costed millions of losses to the national kitty. On September 25 2023, the Punjab Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) arrested Khawar Farid Maneka, ex-husband of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi, on illegal construction charges in Lahore. An ACE spokesperson confirmed the arrest of Maneka saying that he was apprehended on charges of illegally constructing a marriage hall on the cemetery land. Later, in another case the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) commenced inquiry against Bushra Bibi's ex-husband, over complaints of financial irregularities. KhawarManeka and his family are accused of taking huge financial benefits during the tenure of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government. The NAB has begun collecting the record of the assets owned by KhawarManeka and his family members. - Agencies

NATIONAL DAY OF THE PHILIPPINES



ISLAMABAD: Former Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Managing Director Pakistan Sweet Homes Zamurrah Khan, Ambassador of the Philippines Maria Agnes Cervantes, Heads of Missions of the ASEAN countries cutting cake to celebrate the National Day of the Philippines. - DNA

Taliban participation in Doha conference crucial

"We are hopeful that this time around, Islamic Emirate will send its representatives (to Doha) to be able to engage with international community in a constructive and effective manner, UN diplomat said

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamic Emirate is doing a fairly notable job to achieve an inclusive system of governance in Afghanistan. However, a socially cohesive Afghanistan requires it to increase so that every Afghan citizen feels that they equally belong to the country and the government equally belongs to them. UNAMA is also engaging with all Afghans to help them achieve a broad-based governance system that includes everybody. These remarks were made by the head of the Pakistan-based liaison office for the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Malik Ceesay, during the 4th round of Pak-Afghan Religious Scholars Dialogue, organized by the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS). In his interaction with the participating religious scholars from the two countries, Ceesay noted that the Taliban have allowed Afghan females to work in some public offices related to passport, immigration, healthcare, and agriculture, but these concessions have been overshadowed due to bans on the remaining women's access to employment and girls' education beyond grade six. He emphasized the importance of the easing of restrictions on women's access to education and employment and an inclusive system of governance in the



country to pay the way for its recognition. "Islam never says that women should not go to school, and Islam never says that women should not go to work. Which (version of) Islam and which Quran says that? It's not found in there," he added. Ceesay encouraged the Taliban to attend a conference on Afghanistan later this month, stating that it would help return much-needed global attention to the crisis-ridden country, as Ukraine war and Gaza hostilities had dramatically shifted the international attention from Afghanistan and that's a concern for the United Nations. "We don't want Afghanistan to be forgotten," he said. "We are hopeful that this time around, the Islamic

Emirate will send its representatives (to Doha) to be able to engage with the international community in a constructive and effective manner, the U.N. diplomat said. While moderating the two-day dialogue, the former chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), Dr. Qibla Ayaz highlighted the potential of religious diplomacy to serve as an unofficial communication channel between two countries' leadership and people and help address the issues of bilateral, regional, and international concern. He urged both sides to let go of the bitter baggage of history and foster vision-oriented engagement at different levels of the relationship in the interest of the two coun-

tries' connected future. Speaking about the role of media in shaping perceptions, especially of the public on both sides, Dr. Ayaz cautioned about negative propaganda in the cyber-space and the need to critically perceive the information available in the online medium. Discussing the girls' education in Afghanistan, he urged Taliban leadership to consider the international community's offer - like the ones made by Turkey and Indonesia - to improve the country's educational landscape and cultivate an environment conducive to girls and women empowerment. Founding chairman of the UK-based Forum for International Relations Development (FIRD), Toaha Qureshi moderated one of the sessions during the gathering and shared the UK's counter-terrorism experience and how community-led approaches - that onboard community stakeholders as part of the solution and not view them as part of the problem - serve as an inclusive model to tackle the security threats. During the discussions spanning two days, the participating religious scholars from both sides deliberated several proposals concerning different areas of relationship between the two sides and the stability of the region at large. They urged the Afghan government to address the barriers to girls' education related to curriculum and infrastructure and launch teachers' capacity-building programs with the support of international donor bodies and institutions.

Hezbollah rains rockets on Israel after top commander killed

BEIRUT: The Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement has conducted a massive rocket attack against the northern side of the 1948 Israeli-occupied territories after a high-ranking field commander of the group was killed in Israeli attacks. The Israeli military said in a statement that the group launched over 100 rockets from southern Lebanon towards the Galilee region on Wednesday, stressing it marks one of the largest barrages carried out by Hezbollah. The statement added that the barrage saw the city of Tiberias targeted for the first time. It went on to assert that several rockets were intercepted by the regime's so-called Iron Dome systems, while others impacted at several locations. As a result of the rocket impacts, several fires were sparked, the Israeli army said. Meanwhile, Israeli media outlets reported that some rockets had slammed into a factory at Sassa kibbutz in the Upper Galilee area, causing damage. There were also reports of power outage in Safed city in the northern sector of the 1948 occupied territories as a result of the Hezbollah rocket strike. - Agencies

Russian peacekeepers withdraw from Karabakh

FOREIGN DESK

BAKU: Russian peacekeepers on Wednesday completed their withdrawal from Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region, which Baku recaptured last year from Armenian separatists, officials in Baku said. Azerbaijan and Armenia had fought two wars - in 2020 and in the 1990s - for control of the then-breakaway enclave. "The process of the full withdrawal of the manpower, weapons, and equipment of Russia's peacekeeping contingent (in Karabakh) from Azerbaijan was completed on June 12," the defense ministry in Baku said in a statement. The withdrawal, which began in April, has been agreed between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev.

Macron urges France to unite and say no to extremes

President Macron has been widely criticised for an apparently spontaneous decision to call elections, an hour after his party polled below 15% while National Rally scored almost 31.5% in the European vote

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron has defended his shock decision to dissolve parliament and call elections, urging French voters to come together and "say no to the extremes". Three days after his bombshell announcement in response to the far-right National Rally's dramatic victory in European elections, Mr Macron denied he wanted to hand them the keys to power. He said calling elections was the only republican option. He said that a broad range of political groups who "cannot identify with this extremist fever" should unite against it. His decision to call two rounds of elections on 30 June and 7 July has prompted four parties on the left to agree a pact to work together, but the conservative Republicans have been left deeply divided. Hardline Republicans leader Eric Ciotti is facing calls to resign after he called for an alliance with the Na-

tional Rally, led by Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella. Although an estimated half of grassroots Republicans back such an alliance, the vast majority of party leaders have rejected it out of hand. Mr Ciotti said the party's Paris HQ was being shut for security reasons, hours before an emergency meeting to decide whether to depose him was due to take place there. He denied any such meeting had been planned. President Macron has been widely criticised for an apparently spontaneous decision to call elections, an hour after his party polled below 15% while National Rally scored almost 31.5% in the European vote. Two years into his second term as president, his party is without a majority in the National Assembly, so every piece of legislation requires support from political allies. He said the system had become jammed, leaving the government unable to act. Mr Macron said that as president, he would not get involved in campaigning and would leave that to Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, although his speech on Wednesday sounded very much like the launch of his party's campaign. Asked by a reporter whether he had handed the keys of France to the far right, Mr Macron said that doing nothing was not an option and asking the people to decide was a principle of democracy. Voters who had backed National Rally on Sunday had expressed their anger, he said: "Message received." Mr Macron turned his fire on both the left and right, arguing that the masks of both had slipped and the battle for values had burst into the daylight. - Agencies

General Sahir Shamshad Mirza awarded Turkey's 'Legion of Merit'

RAWALPINDI: General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, who is on an official visit to Turkey, called on General (R) Yasar GULER, Minister of Defence, General Metin Gurak, Commander Turkish General Staff,



General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu, Commander Turkish Land Forces, Admiral Erçument Tatlioglu, Commander Turkish Naval Forces, General Ziya Cemal Kadioglu, Commander of Turkish Air Force and Haluk Gorgün, President SSB, a government agency dealing with defence production. During the meetings, both sides deliberated upon various areas of mutual interest, bilateral defense cooperation including security, counter-terrorism, and the prevailing regional environment. The military leadership shared commitments to enhance defense engagements between both countries and reaffirmed their resolve to further fortify the fraternal relationship. In recognition of meritorious services and contributions, General Sahir Shamshad Mirza was also awarded the 'Legion of Merit'. - DNA

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