



Islamabad POST

Friday, June 14, 2024

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Gaza strip faces unprecedented death, destruction

Detailed News On Page-07

Defamation bill will not affect journalists

Detailed News On Page-08

Messi expects Miami to be his final club

Detailed News On Page-06



Post-budget press meet

Elite class has to be taxed: FM

Aurangzeb says measures were being also taken to block the loopholes in Sales Tax system with a complete digitization adding sufficient data was available, indicating potential tax evaders. However, he added, the data would be thoroughly verified by a data analyst team

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Thursday that the elite class of the country has to be properly taxed in order to not only broaden the tax net but to ensure even-handed treatment to all. He expressed these views while speaking in the post budget media interaction. The Finance Minister, Chairman FBR and the state minister were flooded with the questions relating to agriculture tax and taxes on the rich class of Pakistan. The finance minister and the Chairman FBR had no clear answer when a journalist asked about action against those exposed in the Dubai leaks. The FBR chairman even did not deny the charge that certain powerful quarters had approached the FBR chairman and asked him to keep a mum about the Dubai leaks. Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb further said that the government was determined to plug the tax leakages and has initiated end-to-end digitization of the revenue collection system to minimize human intervention; end harassment and improve tax compliance culture in the country. He said measures were being also taken to block the loopholes in Sales Tax system with a complete digitization adding sufficient data was available, indicating potential tax evaders. However, he added, the data would be thoroughly verified by a data analyst team. He said that the verified data would be provided to the field formation for execution and bring tax evaders into the tax net. He said negotiations with the provincial government were also in progress to enhance revenue collection and rationalization of expenditures. Elaborating rationalizing measures, the minister said in the first phase, devolved ministries would be closed as some, such as PWD had already been closed. He said measures were afoot to shut down other ministries/departments during a

Continued on Page 06

Economic indicators showing improvement

Asserted that Pakistan will be one of the largest economy in the world



FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar asserted that inflation rate was decreasing gradually and all the economic indicators were indicating that economy was improving. Addressing a press conference, Atta Tarar stated that country's economic indicators were improving during their incumbent government. He insisted that last years were hard when Pakistan was near to default. Federal minister claimed that Pakistan will rank among the top economies of the world one day. He added that the developed countries were acknowledging the progress of Pakistan. He said there has been record reduction in inflation and the foreign exchange reserves were enough for two months' worth of imports. He stressed that provision of IT skills were crucial for young people as 68 pc of population comprised of youth. He acknowledged that youth workforce was in-demand in IT, minerals and other sectors.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meets Maulana Fazlur Rehman. - DNA

Petrol price 'likely' to be slashed

Final price will be based on global petroleum rates of June 13 and 14

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: In a positive development for inflation-hit masses, the federal government could likely reduce the petrol price by up to Rs9 per litre from June 16. The price of diesel is expected to be reduced by Rs4 per litre, whereas kerosene oil rates are likely to be dropped by Rs2 per litre, the oil marketing companies (OMCs) sources added. The final price will be calculated by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) and will be based on global petroleum rates on June 13 and 14.

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IHC sets 1-month deadline for Iddat case

Lawyer Salman expresses concerns over the abrupt transfer of the case

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday mandated a swift decision on appeal regarding the Iddat case involving Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi. On February 3, Imran and Bushra Bibi were sentenced in the Iddat Nikkah case. Twenty days later, the appeal against the verdict was filed in the sessions

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In meeting with Fazl PM Shehbaz proposes resolving political issues

PM Shehbaz acknowledges Maulana Fazl's role in promoting peaceful struggle to protect democratic values

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has proposed forming a committee for finding solutions political issues through collaboration in meeting with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman in Islamabad. The visit comes as the prime minister expedites his efforts to win back Maulana's trust, inviting him to join the ruling coalition. Fazl, on the other hand, continues to refute the results of the February 8 general elections after his party faced defeat, terming the polls "rigged". According to a statement released by the PM's Office on Thursday, the premier visited Maulana's residence to inquire about his well being. In his meeting with the JUI-F chief, PM Shehbaz acknowledged the veteran politician's role in promoting peaceful struggle to protect democratic values as well as appreciated his religious services for the nation. Addressing a presser in Multan last month, the politician,

Continued on Page 06

FIA challenges cipher case acquittal in SC

Agency says IHC's judgment does not reflect any ground of acquittal

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Thursday moved the Supreme Court against the acquittal of top PTI leaders Imran Khan and Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the cipher case. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) had on June 3 nixed the conviction of the jailed PTI founder and Qureshi in the infamous case containing

Continued on Page 06



Invigorating Corporate Retreats

Coming Soon

HUNZA SERENA HOTEL

Briefs

Shibli Faraz berates govt

Shibli criticises the government for presenting a budget which is against people's aspirations

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Opposition Leader in the Senate Shibli Faraz on Thursday lashed out at the federal government for presenting an anti-people budget. Speaking on the floor of Senate a day after the government announced its budget, Faraz emphasised that the PTI was the biggest of all political parties in the country and it deemed this an anti-people budget. He contended that there was a clear divide between the man in the street and the elite. During his speech, he took potshot at the PPP and the PML-N by describing them as representatives of the ruling elite.

2 missing climbers spotted in Pak north

Ryuseki Hiraoka and Atsushi Taguchi were attempting to summit Spantik mountain before going missing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Two missing Japanese climbers were spotted by helicopter on Thursday in Pakistan's mountainous north, home to some of the world's tallest peaks, but their condition remains unknown, a tour operator said. The Japanese climbers Ryuseki Hiraoka and Atsushi Taguchi were attempting to summit the 7,027-metre (23,054-foot) Spantik mountain in the Karakoram range before they went missing.

Call for accountability

Pak welcomes UN report on Palestine

"Pakistan believes the time has come to hold Israel accountable for its grave crimes... In this context, Pakistan notes positively the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2735 and expresses hope for a permanent and sustainable ceasefire and an end to the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday reiterated its call for holding Israel accountable for its grave crimes in Gaza and urged the global conscience to force Israel towards an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and bringing an end to the war on the Palestinian people. "Pakistan believes the time has come to hold Israel accountable for its grave crimes... In this context, Pakistan notes positively the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2735 and expresses hope for a permanent and sustainable ceasefire and an end to the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said at her weekly press briefing. She said that Pakistan welcomed the June 12 report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel.

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Hamas proposed no significant changes to ceasefire deal

NEWS DESK

CAIRO: The changes Palestinian Resistance movement Hamas requested to the US-proposed ceasefire deal to end the war on Gaza are "not significant", a senior Hamas leader told media on Thursday. The official underlined that the main demand of the Resistance movement is the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip,

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Punjab unveils 'tax-free budget' with Rs 5.4 trillion outlay

No new tax has been levied in budget for next fiscal year, says Punjab finance minister

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Punjab government on Thursday unveiled a budget with a total outlay of Rs5.4 trillion, terming it a first tax-free budget of the incumbent government. Punjab Finance Minister Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rehman presented the budgetary proposals, saying no new tax has been levied in budget for next fiscal year, reported Radio Pakistan. He said revenue collection will be increased by 50% through other means and the next Annual Development Programme will be of Rs842 billion. He said as many as 77 new mega projects will be part of the ADP, while the revenue target for next fiscal year set at Rs960 billion. The Punjab finance minister said minimum wages were enhanced from 32,000 to 37,000 in the budget and the salaries of government employees will be increased by up to 25%. He said Minority Development Fund has been increased by Rs1 billion for first time and Rs6 billion were earmarked for laptop scheme while Rs5 billion for the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Transplant Institute Endowment Fund. He said inflation rate has been brought down to 11.8% and significant reductions are being made in government expenditures.

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Opposition to reveal shadow budget soon

Not a single policy was formulated for masses in this budget: Opp. Leader

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Leader of the opposition in Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmad Khan Bhachar said that not a single policy was formulated for the masses in this budget. Talking to media outside the Punjab Assembly, he said that it is an incompetent government and therefore it failed to give relief to the people in budget. "Where are 300 free electricity units as the government announced earlier," he questioned. He added that the government only knows how to register cases against the PTI workers. "The law and order situation is alarming in the province. The government is launching fake cases against the PTI workers in

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KP Governor vows to defend provincial rights

Faisal Karim Kundi expressed gratitude to the party leadership for appointing him as governor and vowed to fight for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's case

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi Thursday affirmed his commitment to defending the rights of the province and its people, stating that no compromise would be made on these matters. He expressed gratitude to the party leadership for appointing him as governor and vowed to fight for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's case. He shared these views during a meeting with a PPP delegation led by District General Secretary, Khalid Achar. Other attendees included Provincial Finance and Coordination Secretary Fazal Ali Wazir, Divisional President Masbahuddin, and officials. Addressing the delegation, he encouraged political workers to remain steadfast and hardworking, assuring them that their efforts would not be in vain. He emphasized the importance of respecting party workers and seniors, promising to support them in solving provincial issues. The governor assured that issues related to WAPDA would be resolved and praised Director General of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), Zahra Aslam, for her dedication. He urged party workers to help deserving women benefit from the programme, noting that each tehsil president would serve as the focal person for the tehsil level office. Governor Kundi listened to the concerns of the workers and pledged his full support in addressing their prob-

lems. The PPP leaders, including Divisional President Masbahuddin and District General Secretary Khalid Achar and others thanked the governor for his time and commitment. Earlier on, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, emphasized the importance of equipping young people with skills that meet market demands to address the region's economic challenges.

He highlighted that a trained workforce is essential for solving economic issues, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and that self-employment is a viable solution for reducing unemployment. He expressed these views during a meeting with Irfan Aman Yusufzai, Director General of NewTech Regional Office Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, at the Governor's House Peshawar. He praised NewTech's efforts, especially in women's empowerment, and was briefed on the institution's training courses and overall performance. Director General Yusufzai explained that under the Prime Minister's Skills Development Program, NewTech has partnered with IT, Construction, and Agriculture-based departments, 29 government and private universities, and nearly 700 institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Various proposals for training programs for young men and women across the province were also discussed. The Governor further said that he was thankful to the Party for honoring him with governorship of the province and headship of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). To-

day, he said the minority delegations which came to the Governor House consisted of all the political parties and not only from PPP. The Governor maintained that half of the national cricket team comprised of players from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but sadly our historical cricket ground, Arbab Niaz Stadium was yet to be completed despite passage of 10 years. There is no First-Class Cricket in the province for a long time, he added. Kundi further assured the delegations that he would not let down the minorities and a special quota for them would be created in educational institutions adding that all other missing privileges would be provided to them. He assured that issues of minorities related to the NA-DRA offices would be addressed on priority besides fulfilling the demand of 'Shamshan Ghatt' at the earliest. About the Edwards College, the Governor said that the condition of other educational institutions in the province was not praiseworthy and we had to divert our attention towards these critical matters. The participants of the delegation told the Governor that his appointment as Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a matter of relief and pride for them. For the redress of issues of minorities, they will need guidance and help from the Governor's Office, they said. The heads of minority groups said such meetings will enhance religious cohesion adding that like the past, they would play every role for the development and prosperity of the motherland.



ISLAMABAD : President Asif Ali Zardari administering the oath of office to Mumtaz Ali Shah as the Federal Insurance Ombudsman, during an oath-taking ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr.—DNA

Pakistan Army, Rescue 1122 extinguish forest fires in Murree

ISLAMABAD: In a concerted effort to combat the raging infernos engulfing the lush forests of Murree, Pakistan Army and Rescue 1122 joint forces, deploying over ten teams to extinguish the blaze at various locations. "We are pleased to announce that the combined efforts of armed forces and emergency responders have brought the fire under control in eighty percent of the affected area, a rescue spokesperson told PTV. With the remaining twenty percent of the area still under scrutiny, the fire-fighting teams remain vigilant, ensuring that every ember is extinguished and every corner of the forest is secured, he maintained. He said the relentless efforts not only subdued the flames but also shielded the neighboring communities from the encroaching threat. The spokesperson said the meticulous planning and unwavering dedication, the teams ensured the complete protection of the population adjacent to the forest zones. In response to a query, he mentioned that authorities closely monitoring the situation have reported significant progress in containing the wildfires.—APP

25 illegal LPG outlets sealed

BAHAWALPUR : Civil Defence Department Bahawalpur has sealed 25 illegal LPG gas outlets during a crackdown in the district. According to a press release issued here, on the directions of the senior officials of Civil Defence Department, Government of Punjab and the Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur, a team of Civil Defence Department headed by the senior officer, Tahir Abbas Bhutta and comprising other officers including Naveed Ahmad Mirani, Muhammad Adnan and others conducted raids at several outlets and shops dealing with business of illegal filling of LPG gas in the district. Eleven gasoline points were also sealed for filling LPG gas without permission. The team also conducted raids at restaurants.—APP

US-Pak energy program graduates third batch

The U.S.-Pakistan "Green Alliance" Framework bolsters bilateral collaborations in agriculture, clean energy, and water management

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The "Future of Women in Energy" Scholars Program, an initiative of the U.S. Pakistan Women's Council (USPWC) in support of the U.S. - Pakistan "Green Alliance" Framework concluded its third consecutive year this summer. This year, the program hosted a group of 18 brilliant and diverse young women pursuing bachelor's degrees in science or engineering in Pakistan. At Texas A&M University (TAMU) Qatar campus, these 18 scholars completed rigorous academic coursework on topics such as fossil energy, wind energy, solar energy, and nuclear energy, conducted laboratory experiments, and engaged in open dis-

ussion with leaders and alumnae in the energy sector. They also had the opportunity to experience rich cultural activities in Doha, Qatar. Supported by the U.S. Department of State, Texas A&M University in Qatar (TAMUQ), the Department of Energy, USAID, and U.S. Embassy Islamabad, the program aims to increase the number of women serving in Pakistan's vital energy sector. Upon returning to Pakistan, the energy scholars visited public and private sector energy companies at which they learned about Pakistan's energy infrastructure. To encourage the energy scholars to put their knowledge into action, they will undertake internships at some of Pakistan's leading energy firms. At the program's gradu-

ation ceremony, USAID Deputy Mission Director, Maura O'Brien congratulated the participants at the graduation ceremony stating, "You are exceptional individuals with a significant task ahead. You won't just benefit from a more inclusive and sustainable energy sector, you are also key emerging leaders in creating it." These graduates will now join a group of 54 prestigious program alumni. Previous participants have secured jobs in Pakistan's energy sector, received competitive scholarships for graduate level studies, and are pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. The U.S.-Pakistan "Green Alliance" Framework bolsters bilateral collaborations in agriculture, clean energy, and water management.

BISP payments continue smoothly in Sargodha

SARGODHA : Payments process to Benazir Income Support Programme beneficiaries under recent released tranche 2024 phase-I was successfully under way in Sargodha. BISP Sargodha district deputy director told APP on Thursday that 8,268 registered women had received Rs.10,500 each in Bhalwal, out of total 14,789 beneficiaries. In Sahiwal tehsil, 9,334 women received the said amount, out of total

13,426 registered women. He said total number of registered beneficiaries in Sargodha were 71,550, whereas 36,106 women received the amount. In Shahpur tehsil, 9,200 deserving women received the amount, out of total 16,613 beneficiaries, and in Sillanwal tehsil, 16,924 beneficiaries are registered with the BISP programme, and 10,242 of them received the amount. The official said that in

Kot Momin tehsil, 22,244 women are registered with the programme, and 11,826 of those received the amount. He said that total number of beneficiaries in Bhera were 8,617, out of which 4,814 women received the amount under the BISP programme. Mazhar Awan said that 18 site camps had been operational for the BISP payments and the process was continuing in a transparent way.—APP

Digital advertisement preserve Islamabad's natural beauty

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Chairman Capital Development Authority Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Thursday said that special attention would be given on preserving the Islamabad's natural beauty during the digital advertising in the capital. While chairing a meeting on digital advertising project in the federal capital, he said the implementation of various tools for digital advertising is planned, including digital screens, signage, billboards and LED screens. The meeting was attended by Administrator of the Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) and other senior officials, said a press release. CDA chief said a groundbreaking step is being taken in Islamabad with the introduction of 3-D advertising, heralding a new era in the city's development and advertising strategies. To ensure the project's success, Muhammad Ali said a technical committee has been established, and consultations with experts are ongoing. Additionally, he said a comparative analysis of the project costs and revenues will be conducted.

Over 9000 rescuers to remain alert on Eid-ul-Adha

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Emergency Services Department (ESD) Secretary Dr. Rizwan Naseer reviewed the arrangements to ensure prompt response to emergencies in Punjab during holidays of Eid-ul-Adha. Chairing an online zoom meeting with all District Emergency Officers (DEOs) here on Thursday, he directed the all District Emergency Officers (DEOs) to ensure provision of timely emergency ambulance, rescue, and fire services to all citizens without any discrimination across Punjab. The meeting was also attended by Heads of Wings of Emergency Services Department & Academy, Dr. Rizwan Naseer also directed all DEOs that close coordination must be maintained with districts/

tehsils headquarters hospitals for better management of victims of emergencies in case of any untoward incident. The Provincial Monitoring Officer (PMO) briefed the Secretary ESD that over 9000 rescuers will be deployed during Eid to provide timely and professional care in case of emergency in Punjab. These rescuers along with 531 ambulances, 795 Rescue Motorbikes, 32 Rescue Vehicles, 121 Fire Vehicles will be available at 1479 key points whereas, 496 Rescue posts will also be established to provide optimum emergency cover to the citizens across Punjab. The Provincial Monitoring Cell (PMC) and Patient Transfer Services (PTS) Cell at Emergency Services Headquarters will remain operational round-the-clock for timely shifting of patients from tertiary care hospitals to spe-

cialized healthcare hospitals. The DEOs briefed the Secretary that Emergency plans for Eid-ul-Adha have also been finalized in consultation with their respective Deputy Commissioners (DCs). On this occasion, Dr. Rizwan Naseer urged all the citizens to drive carefully while going to their hometowns and avoid over eating to save themselves from choking, food poisoning and gastroenteritis emergencies. He also asked the citizens to be very careful while going to forest & water recreational sites in this hot weather. He advised to avoid unnecessary exposure of sunlight to prevent from heat stroke. He suggested staying hydrated, wearing lightweight, loose-fitting clothes and taking frequent breaks in shaded or cool areas in case of hot weather to ensure health.

RWMC to observe anti-dengue day

RAWALPINDI : Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC), on the instructions of the Chief Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, will observe the anti-dengue day on Friday to create awareness about the hazards of the dengue virus. According to RWMC spokesman, the seminars and walks would be organized to mark the day while communication and social mobilization teams of RWMC will visit city areas and apprise the residents about the preventive measures to avoid the deadly virus. RWMC was making all-out efforts to free Rawalpindi from the dengue. To eradicate dengue larvae, he said, comprehensive Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) and an action plan were being followed, and weekly reports were being submitted to the city district government and the government of Punjab. Furthermore, he urged the residents to keep an eye on junkyards, schools, and under-construction buildings, which led to the spread of dengue larvae, and not to leave any place wet or with stagnant water. In case of any complaint, citizens were asked to register their complaints on helpline number 1139, which would be rectified immediately, he added.—APP

Romina urges collective action for climate-resilient

Romina Khurshid said that between 1992 and 2021 climate- and weather-related disasters in Pakistan causes economic losses to the tune of US \$29.3 billion

ISLAMABAD : Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, MNA Romina Khurshid Alam, on Thursday said that while Pakistan is struggling to cope with exacerbating impacts of climate change particularly heatwaves and floods, the present government is taking all-out policy measures to overcome the impacts, which have already caused irreparable economic losses worth billions of rupees. While addressing a national seminar 'Disaster-Resilient Pakistan held here at the National University of Technology and organized by the National Disaster Management Authority, PM's aide noted that frequent disruptions in normal weather patterns overall last one decade has severely impacted the country's agricultural productivity, posing risk to national food water, energy securities, livelihoods of millions, deepening hunger and malnutrition woes. The country's geographical location, coupled with its heightened socio-economic vulnerabilities, intensifies the risks posed by the climate crisis, she highlighted. Evidence from the various reports international financial institutions including World Bank and Asian Development

Bank suggest the country would continue to experience more adverse effects of climate change in future, including more erratic weather patterns, heightened glacial melting, paced sea-level rise and unleashing of more intense weather events such as floods and droughts. These impacts not only threaten human lives and infrastructure but also exacerbate existing socio-economic disparities, the reports highlight. Quoting from a World Bank study 'Pakistan: Country Climate and Development Report', the PPPM's aide Romina Khurshid said that between 1992 and 2021 climate- and weather-related disasters in Pakistan causes economic losses to the tune of US \$29.3 billion from damage to property, crops, and livestock, equivalent to 11.1% of the 2020 GDP. The devastating riverine floods in 2022 alone resulted in more than \$30 billion in economic losses and damages, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive action, she added. Appraising the event participants of the the present PM Shehbaz Sharif-led government's climate risk mitigation measures, Romina Khurshid Alam said, "The present PM Shehbaz Sharif-led government

is taking all-out policy initiatives and implementing various adaptations and mitigation coping measures to address the country's worsening climate-vulnerability." The PM's Coordinator Romina Khurshid noted that as a part of climate change adaptation and mitigation policy measures, enhanced investments in resilient infrastructure, sustainable agriculture practices, efficient water management and renewable energy are imperative to build resilience against climate change-induced risks and protect the country's vulnerable socio-economic sectors and lives and livelihoods of the climate-susceptible communities, particularly in coastal and mountain areas. The present government has already prioritised climate action to protect the lives and livelihoods of the people and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come, she added. Spelling out various policy initiatives, the PM's aide said further that as a part of climate action, the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination was already implementing a robust policies and implementation frameworks to cope with climate and environmental challenges including

the National Environment Policy, National Climate Change Policy, National Forest Policy, the Pakistan Climate Change Act (2017), Green Building Codes. Moreover, the various projects have also been implemented under these policies and implementation frameworks such as the Scaling up of Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) Risk Reduction project, the Living Indus Initiative, Recharge Pakistan and the Green Pakistan Programme, under which 2.1 billion tree saplings have already been planted across the country, Romina Khurshid added. She also told the seminar participants that National Adaptation Plan of Pakistan, rolled out by the ministry in consultation with relevant provincial, national and international stakeholders, is being implemented to enhance resilience, address vulnerabilities, and mobilise climate finance, manage disaster risks by investing in early warning systems, strengthening climate governance and enhancing preparedness for effective response. Arranging adequate funding for implementation of the various policies and implementation frameworks for coping with climate change impacts.—APP

The Smooth Moving Connection

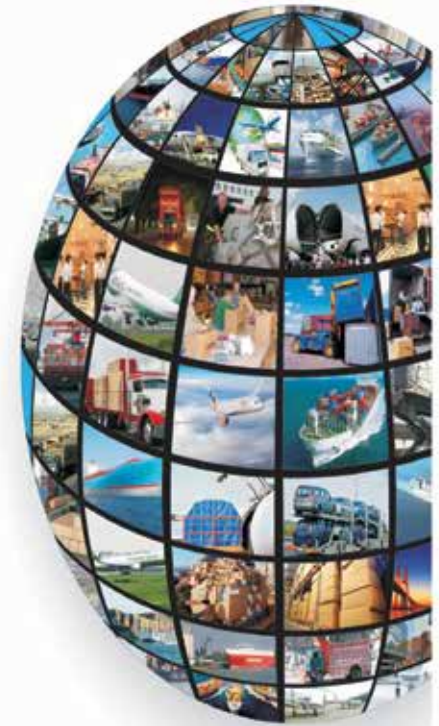
freeline MOVERS

PACKING, SHIPPING & FREIGHT FORWARDING

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- Freight Forwarding
- Land, Sea & Air Freight
- Custom Clearance
- Relocations
- Office Removals
- Fine Art Handling
- Project Management
- Pet Relocation
- Warehousing
- Storage



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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

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Cultural show on the occasion of National Day of the Philippines



Speakers discuss Gender based violence in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD : The speakers on Thursday said that the level of discrimination and marginalisation prevalent in the society was more owing to the adverse impact of culture, and the medieval mores of patriarchy that spike up gender-based violence in the contexts of sexual, psychological and physical realms with no legislation and good governance that can control it. A Roundtable Conference on "Gender-Based Violence and its Legislation in Pakistan," was conducted by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) in Collaboration with Chief Commissioner Office Islamabad, on Wednesday, and was participated by Additional Commissioner and Director Women Development Islamabad Administration, Nishaa Ishrak; Valeria Khan of ASF;

DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Mustafa Tanveer; Nabeela Malick, chairperson INGAD; and Hafiz Ahsan Khokhar, lawyer, a news release said. President IPRI Dr Ambassador Raza Muhammad opened the debate by highlighting the importance that Islam has laid on gender equality, and the values that Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) preached in terms of women empowerment. It was underscored that there are a plethora of laws to deal with any of the eventualities in terms of violence in the gender proximity, but either they lack implementation mechanisms or the will of the concerned administrations. It was pointed out that laws are free from gender contextualisation, and anyone either it is a woman or a man can be a victim of abuse and violence, and the law is equally applicable. The roundtable

delegates agreed that violence exists in our society, and cannot be denied under any assumptions. The scale of domestic violence, it was noted, is mostly under reported, and women at times shy away from standing out to be recognised fearing reprisal. This phenomenon can only be checked by educating the society and creating more awareness in strata across the board. The role of power dynamics in gender sex was also highlighted, and it was agreed that it is one of the main reasons behind abuse as the perpetrator can get away with any wrongdoing. The need of the hour is also to shun the assumptions that empowering the women and talking about the taboos of sex, violence and diseases related to women such as Fistula are part of so-called western conspiracy. The need for ensuring

the culture sensitivity of law was also noted, in an attempt to do away with marginalization and discrimination of women in cases such as inheritance.

A separate prosecution wing for women was also proposed at all administrative levels to help empower the women to report abuse, and speak up against it. Empowering the conventional Dispute Resolution Committee (DSR) or the Jirga system is indispensable to address GBV issues in tribal and rural areas, it was noted. The speakers agreed that many of the policies are not formulated on research and ground realities, but on whims and wishes, which leads to its negative impact sooner than later. They also called for capacity building to implement laws, to address the violence enigma in the society.

Govt must start dialogue with business community: ICCI

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has said that the budget 2024-25 will not at all be supportive for ease of doing business in the country, stressing a simplified tax system by arguing that excessive tax rates will definitely disprove the potential benefits. In a statement issued here on Thursday he said that the government still has the time to initiate serious consultations with all the stakeholders before the finalization of the budget document if it really wants to pull the country out of the existing economic mess and to enable the poor masses to have a sign of relief. He warned that imposition of fed-



eral excise duty on cement and immovable property will hinder business operations and questioned how construction sector would grow in the country when capital gain tax has been imposed on real estate and property. He warned that increasing tax rates in this manner itself invites tax evasion. He expressed his astonishment over the fact that there was no mention of the measures vis-vis export promotion, im-

port reduction, privatization policy and most importantly the IPPs, the key factor behind the high power tariff. He also apprehended that the budget will aggravate inflation and create hurdles in the way of industrialization and economic activity in the country adding that it would badly hamper exports, because of the inclusion of the export sector in the normal tax regime. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari concluded his statement by saying that the business community is the real locomotive force for the economy of the country but the Government has totally ignored the proposals floated by the Chambers including the ICCI to tailor a business friendly budget to help revive the corporate activities in the country.

Facilities at One Window urged

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Thursday directed the officials to ensure all necessary assistance and facilities to the visitors at One Window operation during the summer season. During his surprise visit to CDA's One Window, Muhammad Ali also issued directives for proper seating arrangements for visitors at the center, said a press release. He instructed all officers and employees to maintain punctuality at the One Window and said that the objective of the center is to provide comprehensive services to citizens under a single roof. Highlighting the importance of citizens receiving all required services efficiently at One Window, he said that ongoing digitization efforts will further enhance its effectiveness.—APP

Irfan Siddiqui urges opposition to give constructive suggestions

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Parliamentary Leader Senator Irfan Siddiqui on Thursday urged opposition parties to refrain from criticism and instead suggests constructive recommendations for the federal budget 2024-25. Participating in the budget

debate in the Senate, Siddiqui said, "The opposition should give positive suggestions and recommendations for the budget 2024-25, as political statements will not benefit the people of the country." He recalled that when PML-N left the government in 2018, inflation was at 3 percent and

GDP growth exceeded 6 percent. In contrast, he said that the PTI government left the country with 39 percent inflation. He highlighted that overseas Pakistanis have sent \$34 billion in remittances, reflecting confidence in the current government. He accused the PTI government of accumulating loans in four years equal to the amount borrowed over the previous 75 years. He also defended PML-N's economic policies, stating that the party, led by Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, had said goodbye to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Briefs

President for prompt relief to aggrieved insurance policyholders

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has directed the Federal Insurance Ombudsman (FIO) to provide speedy and cost-free justice to aggrieved insurance policyholders against the maladministration of insurance companies. He said that FIO needed to enhance its outreach and ensure quick disposal of complaints so that a maximum number of citizens could be provided monetary relief. The President expressed these views while talking to the newly-appointed Federal Insurance Ombudsman (FIO), Mr Mumtaz Ali Shah, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. During the meeting, the President highlighted the need to create awareness about the role of FIO in providing justice to aggrieved policyholders in the settlement of insurance claims. He also advised the FIO to use modern technology and ICT tools to increase the disposal of complaints. Earlier, the President administered the oath of office to Mr Mumtaz Ali Shah as the Federal Insurance Ombudsman (FIO), during an oath-taking ceremony, held at Aiwan-e-Sadr, on Thursday. Mumtaz Ali Shah is a retired Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) officer and previously served in various positions throughout his career. He retired from PAS in March 2022 as Sindh Chief Secretary.

Entrepreneurs, employees hail Federal Budget 2024-25

RAWALPINDI: Entrepreneurs and government employees have lauded the proposed Federal Budget FY 2024-25. The entrepreneurs from IT sectors expressed satisfaction with the funds boost in IT sectors. They said products and services in the IT industry demand more encouragement to involve young IT professionals contribute to national exchequer. The medium and small-scale businessmen in the Sadaar area believed that the competitive IT sector would become a leading entrepreneur domain in the national economy. Talking to APP, a businessman dealing in computer hardware accessories, Amir Saeed said the federal government has made a major increase in funds for the IT and Telecom Division in its Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) which is a positive indicator for the growth of IT industry. The IT division will get Rs.29.0bn for FY 2024-25 against Rs.6.0bn in the current year. A group of students noted that the increase in development funds for the Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) was the right decision by the government. The government has allocated Rs.35.6bn for SUPARCO for FY 2024-25, as compared to the current year's allocation of only Rs.7.0bn. The students said that after the successful launch of a space satellite recently in collaboration with China, the space technology sectors demanded a significant raise in development funds for continued research and development. Government employees observed a sigh of relief in hard economic times, by getting a salary rise as announced in the Federal Budget on Thursday. Shaban said a salaried person has a fixed income resource that declines by increased inflation. She said that a raise in her salary would help her meet variant expenditures. A private school owner and President All Pakistan Private Schools Management Association (APPSMA), Amjad Zeb said that the education sector needed considerable development funds. He suggested that young graduates should be bridged up with industrial demand. He said the government's decision to provide vocational training is also an encouraging step by the government. He offered the government for private institutions' cooperation for improvement in the education sector.—APP



ISLAMABAD: NDMA held a Seminar on 'Disaster Resilient Pakistan' at NUTECH, Islamabad. Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change Ms Romina Khursheed attended the opening session.—DNA

Legislators urge govt to provide relief to masses

Senator Saifullah Abro while participating in the budget debate said that all issues should be resolved in Parliament, the representative and proper forum for the masses

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The lawmakers in the Senate Thursday urged the government to provide maximum relief to the downtrodden segments of society in the federal budget 2024-25 and called for reducing taxes and increasing allocations for the education and health sectors. Senator Saifullah Abro while participating in the budget debate said that all issues should be resolved in Parliament, the representative and proper forum for the masses. He held the

caretaker government responsible for halting development projects in Sindh, Punjab, and other provinces. Saifullah also stressed the need for basic health facilities in Sindh. He criticized the policy that prevents non-filers from traveling abroad. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Bushra Anjum Butt praised the government for presenting a balanced and comprehensive budget addressing various issues. She called for expanding the tax net for the welfare of the masses and appreciated the significant allocations for health and education.

Bushra Butt accused Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of politically victimizing educational and other projects in Punjab during its tenure, harming the future of school-going children. She supported public-private partnerships to enhance the capacity of state-owned entities and reduce the government's burden. President of the Awami National Party (ANP), Aimal Wali Khan, criticized the numerous taxes imposed on the masses and called for their review to provide relief in the federal budget. He noted that previous budgets, including

this one, failed to offer any relief to the downtrodden. He urged the government to enhance allocation for education and health sector. Senior PPP leader Senator Taj Haider claimed that the government did not consult party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on the federal budget. He opposed the privatization of government entities, which he argued creates unemployment. Taj Haider advocated for running inefficient institutions and promoting policies to reduce dependence on foreign loans. He also suggested the government

for providing cheap fertilizer to the farmers. Parliamentary Leader of the National Party (NP), Jan Muhammad Buledi, urged the government not to withdraw subsidies given to farmers and other sectors, warning that such steps would bring hardship to common people. He welcomed the announcement of insurance coverage for the journalist community and urged its rapid extension to more media personnel. Jan Buledi also appreciated the increased funds allocated to the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

Formation of NA standing committees

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Secretariat issued a circular on Thursday announced the formation of 40 standing committees including the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). The Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq approved the membership for these committees during the session held on May 17. The standing committees included Aviation, Cabinet Division, Climate Change, Environmental Coordination, Commerce, Communications, Defense, Defense Production, Economic Affairs Division, Energy and Petroleum Division, Federal Education Professional Training National Heritage and Culture, Finance and Revenue, Foreign Affairs, Government Assurances, Housing and Works, Human Rights, Industries and Production, Information and Broadcasting, Information Technology and Telecommunication, Interior, Inter-Provincial Coordination, Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Law and Justice, Maritime Affairs, Narcotics Control, Food Security and Research, National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources, parliamentary Affairs, Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division, Energy Power Division, privatization, Railways, Interfaith Harmony, Rules of procedure and Privileges, Science and Technology, States and Frontier Regions, Water Resources, House and Library, and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).—APP

AIOU ranked 1st in quality education

ISLAMABAD: The Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has been ranked first among 89 Pakistani universities and 7th among 2175 international universities in the recent Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2024 for quality education (SDG-4). Additionally, AIOU has secured the first position among Pakistani universities for SDG 8 (Decent Employment and Economic Growth) and ranked third for SDG 10 (Reduction of Inequality) and SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals). Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Dr. Nasir Mahmood congratulated the entire faculty and staff on this proud moment and stated that Allama Iqbal Open University is in no way inferior to the best universities in the world. "Our curriculum, laboratories, and teachers adhere to international standards, and we make every effort to achieve the benchmarks of quality education".—APP

Misguided priorities make reforms useless

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Muhammad Hanif Mughal, Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Shahbad, said on Thursday that increasing government expenditure and wrong policies are making the process of reforms meaningless. He added that it is shameful to raise taxes on the salaried class in the budget, which will accelerate the brain drain. In a statement issued here today, Dr. Hanif Mughal said that the budget shows that the policymakers are neither ready to do anything themselves nor want to burden the elite to improve matters. He said that the announcements made by economic managers before the budget could not be implemented for obvious reasons. Expenditures have been increased in some unnecessary sectors which would increase the economic burden, and no other purpose will be achieved. He said that in the budget, people with an income of 50 thousand rupees per month have been exempted from income tax, while the income tax of those earning 6 lakhs to 12 lakhs per year has been increased

to five percent. The government is well aware that even those earning around Rs 125,000 per month are barely making ends meet, but still increasing the tax on them is cruel. He demanded that those earning up to one and a half lakh per month should be exempted from income tax, so this proposal should be reconsidered. Raising taxes on the salaried class is proof that FBR has failed miserably to find new taxpayers and widen the tax net; its target is always the salaried class. Dr. Hanif Mughal said that eight billion rupees are collected from the whole country as property tax. In comparison, one hundred and fifty billion rupees are collected from only Mumbai, a city in India. If this sector is brought under the federal government, at least Rs 500 billion could be collected, but those calling the shots are bent on saving this mafia in the way the landlords are being saved. He noted that the budget clearly shows that the drama in the name of reforms will continue, and people with low incomes will be further squeezed to reward the elites.—DNA

Over 400 Pakistani youth obtain technical training under CPEC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In connection with China's endeavors to groom indigenous community with job-oriented training programs under CPEC, more than 400 local students have received modern training in Huaneng Pakistan Vocational & Technical College in Sahiwal, Punjab. Huaneng Pakistan Vocational & Technical College is operated by

Huaneng Shandong Ruyi (Pakistan) Energy (Private) Limited (HSRE), the owner of Sahiwal Power Plant. The one-month-long vocational training, ended on June 1, equipped local youth with practical employment skills in areas such as computer applications, electrical technician skills, and welding. Another stunning feature of the program is that all enrolled students receive hands-on professional training free

of cost. This is a blessing for the cash-strapped and downtrodden sections of the society. Gao Guangxin, Director, Operation Department, Huaneng Shandong Ruyi (Pakistan) Energy (Private) Limited (HSRE), told Gwadar Pro that providing training to local youth will help realize localization management. He expressed his pride in witnessing Sahiwal Power Plant's journey from inception to becoming a flagship project under CPEC. In August 2019, the Huaneng Pakistan Vocational & Technical College was established on site to provide free vocational technical training to local youth.

Budget unsatisfactory for most people, businessmen

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Thursday that the overall budget is disappointing and has not met the expectations of the common person and the business community. He added that the budget had done nothing to improve the economy, and many important reforms had been ignored. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that getting tough on non-filers will affect the economy while eliminating tax exemptions on indus-

tries in FATA will save fifty billion rupees. The business leader said that in the current situation, a 3.6 percent growth rate and a 38 percent increase in revenue seem impossible. He added that the budget will not be able to cure the economic problems, and the country will continue to be run on debt. He observed that the budget has done nothing to control inflation, revive investment, or bring the underground economy into the mainstream. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that exports have not been encouraged much, to the dismay of exporters. However,

removing tax concessions for the erstwhile FATA and PATA industries is a positive step in reducing smuggling. Hundreds of factories in the rest of the country will start running, and the revenue will increase by at least fifty billion rupees, but exemptions to the tune of 3.9 trillion rupees are still intact. The 2.25 percent advance tax on wholesalers and retailers will only affect registered manufacturers and will increase the prices the public will bear. Registered businesses will find it difficult to compete with those selling smuggled and unregistered products.—APP

HITEC University showcases innovative student projects

WAH CANTT: HITEC (Heavy Industries Taxila Education City) University held its 10th Open House on Thursday, showcasing the impressive final-year projects of students from various engineering disciplines. The event was graced by the presence of the Chief Guest, Professor Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum, the Executive Director of the Higher Education Commission. The Open House and Job Fair featured a total of 150 Final Year Design Projects (FYDPs) across different engineering fields. This included 44 projects from the Mechanical Engineering department, covering areas such as robotics, automotive, defense systems, human aid systems and solar technology. The Electrical Engineering department presented 18 projects focused on the efficient integration of renewable energy into power systems. The Software Engineering and Computer Science departments exhibited 64 projects emphasizing robotics, machine learning, artificial intelligence, surveillance systems and human aid systems. The Civil Engineering department showcased 14 projects related to construction technologies and the Computer Engineering department presented 10 projects centered on artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things (IoT). In his address, Professor Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum underscored the importance of academia-industry linkages, highlighting the invaluable opportunities HITEC University students have through its close ties with Heavy Industries Taxila. He praised the accomplishments of Pakistani students on the international stage, attributing their success to their hard work, talent, and dedication. Encouraging the students, he urged them to prepare not only for the local job market but also for global opportunities. He expressed his belief that Pakistan's future lies in the hands of its youth and called on the graduates to contribute to the country's prosperity by being innovative and proactive in their respective fields.—APP

IRSA releases

292,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 292,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 225,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1446.34 feet and was 48.34 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 88,500 cusecs and 125,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1183.90 feet, which was 135.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 39,300 cusecs and 70,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 187,200, 153,200, 115,400 and 57,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 64,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 8,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Malala.—APP

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Rohingya people facing extinction

The Rohingya people, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group from Myanmar's Rakhine State, have faced decades of systemic oppression and violence. This persecution has escalated to such an extent that, within one or two generations, there is a very real possibility that the Rohingya identity could vanish from their native land entirely. Recent waves of violence have driven the majority of the Rohingya population out of Myanmar, making them one of the most persecuted and displaced groups in the world. If the current trends continue, the Rohingya may soon become an exiled people with no physical or cultural ties to their homeland, much like the Native Americans who lost their lands and way of life. The exodus of the Rohingya from Myanmar has reached a critical point. According to estimates, there are now more Rohingya living in refugee camps and diaspora communities than in Myanmar itself. As of 2021, more than a million Rohingya had fled to Bangladesh alone, with significant numbers also in Malaysia, India and other countries. This mass displacement not only signifies a humanitarian crisis but also threatens the very survival of the Rohingya as a distinct ethnic and cultural group. If the Rohingya population in Myanmar falls below 5 percent of the total Rohingya population worldwide, the chances of them being able to reconstitute themselves as a viable community within the country diminish drastically. This threshold is crucial; below it, their political, social and cultural influence within their homeland would be negligible. The Myanmar government's policy of expelling the Rohingya and redistributing their lands to other ethnic groups, including Rakhine Buddhists, further complicates any potential return. The physical and demographic landscape of Rakhine State is being irreversibly altered, leaving no place for the Rohingya to return to, even if repatriation were ever to be agreed upon. The destruction of Rohingya villages and the redistribution of their land mean that the facts on the ground are changing rapidly. With each passing day, the likelihood of the Rohingya returning to their ancestral homes decreases. The Myanmar government's actions can be seen as an attempt to erase the Rohingya presence and history from the country altogether. This form of ethnic cleansing ensures that, even if international pressure mounts for the return of the Rohingya, there will be no land for them to return to, no homes to reclaim and no community structures to rebuild. In refugee camps, the Rohingya are struggling to maintain their cultural and social practices. The harsh conditions, lack of resources and prolonged displacement are diluting their way of life. The camps are often overcrowded, lacking in basic amenities and rife with poverty and disease. Education is limited and opportunities to practice cultural traditions are sparse. As generations grow up in these camps, far removed from their homeland, the distinct elements of Rohingya identity – language, traditions and social norms – are at risk of fading away. The situation of the Rohingya bears a tragic resemblance to the plight of Native Americans. The Native American experience in the US involved displacement, cultural suppression and a systematic attempt to erase their identity. Today, many Native American communities continue to struggle with the long-term impacts of this historical trauma.



Lebanon needs an opposition

Does Lebanon need a president? Let me reformulate, what can an elected Lebanese president achieve when the country is controlled by Hezbollah? And for that matter, what can a prime minister, a member of parliament or any public official do? Lebanon is stuck between the south being burned to the ground and instability in Syria from the north, with a sprinkle of a political vacuum. Surprisingly or not, the last of these is the least of Lebanon's problems, as life can go on without the politicians. At least for now, no sovereign voice is covering up or tacitly endorsing Hezbollah's policies in front of the Lebanese or the international community. So I ask, why give Hezbollah this endorsement and firewall protection once again? What will the Lebanese gain from it? This is why, on the current debate in Lebanon, I agree with Samir Geagea's stance regarding the election of a president, which states that there is no need for consultations. There is a parliament, let it play its role, quorum after quorum, until a president is elected. At least, in this manner, we will see who the ruling force is and who the opposition is. Any other solution gives a full political guarantee to Hezbollah to do whatever pleases the militia and its patrons in Tehran, while blaming any ills on the Lebanese state. This is also why, today, Walid Jumblatt should not take a centrist, weakened position but join forces in an opposition front and not be part of another cover-up of Hezbollah's role and status. Consensus and the "no winner, no loser" formula have brought devastating results in the country. Consensus is what permitted the cover-up of the Lebanese banking system's Ponzi scheme or, as the Egyptian saying goes, "Shayyeni w' ashayyelaq," which translates to "you load (stuff) on me, I load (stuff) on you," or "you scratch my back and I scratch yours." Today, for non-Arabic speakers, this saying is often used to denote corruption and backroom deals. It is the definition of the Lebanese political scene. Moreover, the formula has brought a unique winner and that is Hezbollah. The other communities have lost and these "consultations" are nothing but a Band-Aid on a bullet wound. Opposition to Hezbollah – no matter how weak, even if it cannot do anything, even if it is nothing but a whisper – is a necessity. Western powers should put more effort into letting an opposition live, rather than pushing for a president that will yield to Hezbollah's wishes. Even if not much can be done, the lines between the opposition and the ruling party cannot stay blurred any longer. This is the least that can be done. Lebanon needs a real opposition force. Even if it cannot stop Hezbollah from moving forward, it can voice its disagreement. Finally, a real opposition would also offer a much-needed message to France and the US that, through their current initiatives and their choice of support packages, they bear responsibility for pushing solutions that give Hezbollah even more power and control. This comes with risks if pushed too far, yet this is a sad situation for any free voice in Lebanon. Lebanon needs consultations, but not between members of parliament to choose a president of consensus. It needs consultations with the people of the country. Real town hall meetings, in which alternatives to the current political system are discussed. Lawyers, business owners, workers and mothers need to be included and this should be a roadmap for a new Lebanon.

Punjab defamation act: Protecting reputations, or...

Qamar Bashir



One question that dominated the discussion on all the shows was why it was so important and special for PML(N) and Punjab, compared to the Federation and other provinces, that this bill—termed draconian and authoritarian by media analysts and legal experts—was bulldozed through the Punjab Assembly, even without the consent of one of its biggest coalition partners, the PPP. The second and most important point discussed was the jurisdictional limitations and enforceability of the Act within Pakistan

The entire primetime talk shows overwhelmingly discussed the Punjab government's recently notified Punjab Defamation Act 2024, with the print media generating articles and editorials on the aggressive nature of this law. Social media is rife with criticism of the legislation, which has already been challenged in the Lahore High Court and admitted for hearing. One question that dominated the discussion on all the shows was why it was so important and special for PML(N) and Punjab, compared to the Federation and other provinces, that this bill—termed draconian and authoritarian by media analysts and legal experts—was bulldozed through the Punjab Assembly, even without the consent of one of its biggest coalition partners, the PPP. The second and most important point discussed was the jurisdictional limitations and enforceability of the Act within Pakistan. Both questions are difficult to answer. However, while attempting to brainstorm the first question, let us examine the stated objectives, which are to provide legal protection from false, misleading, and defamatory claims made via print, electronic, and social media against public officials and private citizens. These claims violate people's privacy and damage the reputation and image of public figures or the government by defaming, slandering, and libeling them. The bill is necessary to contain such unwarranted criticism and dislike for a person or authority. However, analysts view, albeit without any evidence, this Act as an attempt by the PML(N) to consolidate their control and influence in the province by curbing dissent and opposition within their stronghold to ensure smoother governance and political dominance. It might be aimed at centralizing power, streamlining decision-making, and implementing policies, albeit at the cost of democratic processes and coalition dynamics. It may also be an attempt to restrict the activities of rival political groups, curb protests, and control media narratives more tightly. They also purported again without any conclusive evidence that within the coalition, there could be power struggles and disagreements that have led the PML(N) to act unilaterally. The exclusion of the PPP's consent indicates possible rifts and a desire by PML(N) to assert its dominance over the coalition and provincial governance. There might be underlying economic interests, such as investment projects, land reforms, or industrial policies that the PML(N) government aims to push through with minimal opposition. The reply to the other question is even trickier. If alleged defamation occurs outside the province of Punjab, it would face challenges in bringing the alleged defamer to task. It

would require coordination with federal authorities or the respective provincial government, through complex legal processes. However, when alleged defamation occurs outside Pakistan, the complexities increase further. The Punjab government lacks the authority to unilaterally enforce its defamation laws internationally. Thus, prosecuting or penalizing individuals residing outside the province and outside Pakistan becomes highly impractical. Having said this, let us dive deep into the most controversial provisions of the said Act, which are making headlines in print, electronic, and digital media. Let us start with Section 3 of the said Act, which provides a speedy remedy to the person defamed by empowering them to initiate an action under this Act without proof of actual damage or loss. Where defamation is proved, general damages shall be presumed to have been suffered by the person defamed. The onus to prove that defamation has occurred also does not rest with the claimant, as the Act does not require the claimant to establish their reputation. It shall be sufficient if they prove any damage, over and above the general damages to their reputation, against the defendant. The general damages, as defined under Section 2, are damages to be granted by the Tribunal at the time of granting a preliminary decree if the defendant fails to obtain leave to defend in terms of Section 13 of this Act, with a minimum of Rs. 3,000,000/- (Rupees Three Million). In this definition, the phrase "obtain the leave to defend" is key to understanding the full implication of this law. This means that the defendant cannot automatically defend against the claim but must apply to the tribunal to get permission to present their defense. In case of their failure to obtain leave to defend, the allegations in the claim are deemed to be admitted. The tribunal will then pass a preliminary decree of general damages in favor of the person defamed, which, according to Section 2 of the said Act, is a minimum of Rs. 3,000,000/-. The story does not end here; there is another layer of deterrent to protect the defamed person. The preliminary decree passed under Section 15(1) cannot be stayed either by the Tribunal or the Lahore High Court. Let's move further and ask ourselves another question: if the defendant is granted leave to defend, then what? Section 13(13) provides that if the claimant seeks to pursue the case beyond the preliminary decree of general damages, they are empowered to press the charges further. The tribunal may impose special damages, defined in Section 2 as damages granted after the final conclusion of the proceedings. If the claimant proceeds further after

the preliminary decree and establishes their claim for such damages, these will be in addition to the general damages granted by the tribunal. Under Section 21, if defamation is established, the tribunal, in addition to general damages, may direct the defendant to tender an unconditional apology, published in the same manner and with the same prominence as the defamatory statement. The defendant must also pay damages in terms of this Act. Furthermore, the tribunal may direct the relevant regulatory authority to suspend or block the defendant's social media account or any other medium through which the defamatory content was disseminated. In a scenario where the defendant chooses not to appear before the tribunal to present their defense, Section 18 of the said Act empowers the tribunal to pass an ex-parte order. This order will attain finality and will not be appealable, unless the defendant files for leave to defend within 30 days with the tribunal. Even more interestingly, the Qanun-e-Shahadat 1984, which lays down the rules and principles for admitting and evaluating evidence in judicial proceedings, does not apply to the proceedings under this Act. This implies that the tribunal or court handling cases under this Act can adopt a more flexible and informal approach to evaluating evidence. The tribunal will have greater discretion in deciding what evidence to consider and how to evaluate it. They can even admit evidence that might not meet the stringent criteria of the Qanun-e-Shahadat. This is fraught with risks of inconsistency in how evidence is treated in different cases, depending on the discretion of individual tribunals or judges. The strength of this provision is that it strongly protects individuals' reputations by allowing them to seek redress without the burden of proving actual damage, which can be challenging. Besides, the presumption of general damages serves as a deterrent against defamatory statements, encouraging individuals and entities to be more cautious about what they communicate. The weakness could be that the lack of requirement to prove actual damage might lead to frivolous or vexatious lawsuits, potentially stifling free speech and legitimate criticism. Additionally, the imposition of general damages without clear guidelines might result in inconsistent or disproportionate awards, creating legal uncertainty.

The writer is Former Press Secretary to the President
Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former MD, SR

Mossad and its network of little helpers, the Sayanim

David Miller

Gilad Erdan, was involved in the surveilling of Palestinian human rights organizations that were submitting reports to the ICC. It is reported that "a large whiteboard in an Israeli intelligence department contained the names of about 60 people under surveillance – half of them Palestinians and half from other countries, including UN officials and ICC personnel." Mossad, the foreign intelligence agency of the Zionist colony was involved in attempting to recruit senior ICC officials. The former head of the Mossad, Yossi Cohen

Zionist intelligence agencies launched a war on the International Criminal Court in January 2015. This was when it was confirmed that Palestine would join the court after it was recognised as a state by the UN general assembly. "Israel's" intelligence agencies routinely surveilled the ICC's current chief prosecutor Karim Khan, his predecessor Fatou Bensouda, and dozens of other ICC and UN officials. Israeli intelligence also monitored materials that the Palestinian Authority submitted to the prosecutor's office, and surveilled employees at four Palestinian human rights organizations whose submissions are central to the probe. Multiple agencies including the Mossad, Shin Bet, and "National Security Council" were involved, in addition to the occupation military. "Israel's" Ministry of Strategic Affairs, under Gilad Erdan, was involved in the surveilling of Palestinian human rights organizations that were submitting reports to the ICC. It is reported that "a large whiteboard in an Israeli intelligence department contained the names of about 60 people under surveillance – half of them Palestinians and half from other countries, including UN officials and ICC personnel." Mossad, the foreign intelligence agency of the Zionist colony was involved in attempting to recruit senior ICC officials. The former head of the Mossad, Yossi Cohen, allegedly threatened the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in a series of secret meetings in which he tried to pressure her into abandoning a war crimes investigation. Cohen's covert contacts with the ICC's then prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, took place in the period leading up to her decision to open a formal investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Palestine. Cohen,

is alleged to have told her: "You should help us and let us take care of you. You don't want to be getting into things that could compromise your security or that of your family." Mossad also took a keen interest in Bensouda's family members and obtained transcripts of secret recordings of her husband. Regime officials then attempted to use the material to discredit the prosecutor. Cohen met with Bensouda on a number of occasions, including "ambushing" her during a meeting with Joseph Kabila, the then president of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It appears he was a Mossad agent of influence. Mossad also targeted Bensouda's successor, the current chief prosecutor Karim Khan. The ICC confirmed there had been "several forms of threats and communications that could be viewed as attempts to unduly influence its activities". Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is said to have taken a keen interest in the operation, even sending intelligence teams "instructions" and "areas of interest" regarding their monitoring of ICC officials. One source stressed that Netanyahu was "obsessed, obsessed, obsessed" with finding out what materials the ICC was receiving. Mossad has carried out a wide range of operations all over the world. They have involved deception, theft, extortion and blackmail, torture, assassinations, and even false flag bombings. The role of Mossad is often overlooked when the role of the so-called Israel lobby is discussed, but it is an integral part of the strategy of the Zionist movement. Mossad officers, referred to as "Katsas", operate with the aid of a worldwide network of helpers called "Sayanim". Even the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) admits that the Sayanim exist. Rebecca Federman, an "antisemitism"

analyst at the ADL says, "There is a system of sayanim. That's a reality. There are people who help Israeli intelligence assets around the world." Former Mossad operative Victor Ostrovsky has claimed that there are several thousand Sayanim in the UK alone. Perhaps the most famous Sayan was the media tycoon Robert Maxwell who worked for Mossad for years, and was buried with full state honours on the Mount of Olives [Jabal al-Zaytoun]. Observers might be forgiven for thinking that the whole Maxwell family has been Mossad adjacent, given the role of many of his nine children. His sons Ian and Kevin Maxwell set up a very spooky looking, relentlessly Zionist, yet obscure think tank in London, Combating Jihadist Terrorism and Extremism (CoJiT). Isabel, writes Alan Macleod, "another of the nine Maxwell siblings, [was] described by investigative journalist Whitney Webb as 'Israel's back door into Silicon Valley; Isabel used Robert's connections to strike deals with some of the tech world's biggest players, including Microsoft co-founders Bill Gates and Paul Allen. She told Israeli newspaper Haaretz that she saw her work in tech as an opportunity to 'continue her father's commitment to the country'. In 2001, Isabel vowed to 'work only on things involving Israel.' In a more overtly political move, she also accepted a position as the governor of the Peres Centre for Peace." Another daughter, Ghislaine, of course worked very closely with Jeffery Epstein in his promiscuous gathering and sex trafficking operation, widely regarded as run on behalf of the Mossad. Make no mistake, the Mossad is active today in the UK and elsewhere, aiming to subvert democracy and ensure that the political culture of the West is wholly colonised by Zionists or their little helpers.

Briefs

Elite class has to be taxed: FM

FROM PAGE 01
couple of months. Regarding the privatization programme of the current government, the minister categorically cleared that all the stakeholders were on-board and the government was taking the process forward in consultation with the allied political parties to complete it within the stipulated time-frame. He said that the privatization of loss-making entities was essential for the economic recovery and social development of the country, adding the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines would be completed by 15 August and after its divestment, under the direction of Prime Minister, work on the out-sourcing of Islamabad Airport would be initiated.

Economic indicators showing...

FROM PAGE 01
Atta Tarar affirmed that government has been taking effective measure to provide resources to youth. Federal minister insisted that government's main focus was education. He also highlighted the performance of PM Shehbaz, provision of laptops to students during his tenure as Punjab chief minister. Information minister also underscored the importance of PM's recent visit to China. He disclosed that a framework agreement was signed with notable tech company of China which will provide IT training to 0.2 million children every year. Atta Tarar added that agreements with the world's top firms were also being initiated. He revealed that smart board will be installed in the schools of Islamabad and IT trainings will be provided in schools.

Punjab unveils 'tax-free...

FROM PAGE 01
The provincial minister said revolutionary measures were being taken in the health sector in Punjab, and free Wi-Fi facilities have been provided at several locations in Punjab. The Punjab finance minister said that solar panels will be provided to electricity consumers using hundred units and easy loans will be provided to those building houses up to five marlas. Earlier, Punjab cabinet approved the tax-free budget for next fiscal year at a meeting presided over by CM Maryam Nawaz in Lahore today. Addressing the meeting, the CM said all out efforts will be made for fulfillment of our promises made with the people.

Opposition to reveal shadow...

FROM PAGE 01
Mianwali, Gujranwala and Muzaffargarh," said the opposition leader. According to Ahmad Khan Bhachar, the budget was prepared by the bureaucrats and therefore a common man failed to get any relief. "We'll give a shadow budget soon," announced the opposition leader while rejecting the Punjab budget presented by Finance Minister Mian-MujtabaShujaarRehman on Thursday. The opposition leader said that the civil martial law is imposed in the country where the fundamental rights of people are being suppressed.

PM Shehbaz proposes...

FROM PAGE 01
whose party has remained a traditional ally of the PML-N but didn't join the government this time around, said that the country would constantly move towards "slavery" if the nation didn't protect the votes. Since his defeat in the polls, the JUI-F chief has also softened his stance towards Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), stating that he doesn't have any personal enmity with the Imran Khan-founded party. MaulanaFazl has also spoke about negotiations with the PTI and encouraged an environment for talks.

WI advance to Super 8s with thrilling victory over NZ

Sherfane Rutherford's heroics, Alzarri Joseph's brilliant bowling secure West IndiesPlace in Super Eights

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

TAROUBA: Sherfane Rutherford played a blistering innings, followed by Alzarri Joseph's four-wicket haul to help West Indies secure a narrow victory over New Zealand in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 on Thursday. Chasing a 150-run target, New Zealand were restricted to 136/9 in their allocated 20 overs. The Kiwi side failed to get the desired start as they lost two wickets for 34 on the board in 5.4 overs. Finn Allen scored a 23-ball 26. Gudakesh Motie then came to bowl and spun the web around the New Zealand batting line-up, taking three wickets in three consecutive overs to reduce the Kiwi team to 63-5. Glenn Phillips and James Neesham (10) then stiched a 22-run partnership to pull the team out of the trouble but Joseph broke their momentum. Phillips topped scored for New Zealand with a 40-run knock from 33 balls with the help of three boundaries and



two sixes. New Zealand kept losing wickets and ultimately required 33 runs in the last over with one wicket in hand. However, Mitchell Santner managed to hit only 19 runs with three

sixes. For West Indies, Joseph returned with figures of 4-19, while Motie claimed three wickets. Zealand invited the West Indies to bat and reduced them to 22-4 inside the power play, with

Tim Southee taking two wickets. Nicholas Pooran was the only notable contributor from West Indies' top order as he scored 17 off 12. Rutherford came down to bat at number six and was soon

joined by Akeal Hosein with the scoreboard reading 30-5 in 6.3 overs. Together they helped the West Indies recover with an anchoring partnership of 28 off 27 before Mitchell Santner struck to remove Hosein (15). Rutherford then added 27 runs for the eighth wicket stand with Romario Shepherd (13) but New Zealand bowlers halted West Indies' progress with two quick wickets. The last man Gudakesh Motie came out to bat and witnessed Rutherford turn the game on its head with belligerent hitting from the other end. Motie faced only one ball, while Rutherford played the next two overs by himself and scored 37 runs to push West Indies' total to 149-9 in their allotted 20 overs. Rutherford scored an unbeaten 68 off 39 which featured two boundaries and six sixes. For New Zealand, Trent Boult topped the bowling charts with figures of 3-16, whereas South-ee and Lockie Ferguson managed two wickets each.

FIA challenges cipher case acquittal...

FROM PAGE 01
charges of misusing and misplacing the classified diplomatic document. The former prime minister and foreign minister were sentenced to 10 years each in prison in the cipher case in January this year, just days before the February 8 elections. The diplomatic cable controversy first emerged on March 27, 2022, when Khan while addressing a public rally waved a letter before the crowd, claiming that it was a cipher from a foreign nation that had conspired with his political rivals to have PTI government overthrown. He did not reveal the contents of the letter nor did he mention the name of the nation it came from. But a few days later, he accused the United States of conspiring against him and alleged that Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Affairs Donald Lu had sought his removal.

Pakistan welcomes...

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"The findings of the commission of inquiry have confirmed reports of Israeli war crimes, including starvation as a method of warfare, murder or willful killing, intentionally directing attacks against civilians, forcible transfer, torture, and inhuman and cruel punishment," she remarked. The report called the Israeli authorities responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the military operations and attacks in Gaza since 7 October 2023. Based on the interviews with victims and witnesses, hundreds of submissions, satellite imagery and forensic medical reports, the report calls for holding Israel accountable.

Hamis proposed...

FROM PAGE 01
which they have been voicing since the start of the Israeli invasion of Gaza. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that Hamas had suggested numerous amendments, some of which he described as "unworkable". Blinken affirmed that mediators remain committed to bridging the gaps between the invading Israeli forces and the Resistance groups. One of the central demands from Hamas involves the release of Palestinian prisoners. The senior Hamas leader specified that Hamas seeks the release of 100 Palestinians serving long-term sentences in Israeli jails, which would be chosen by the Resistance.

Petrol price 'likely' to...

FROM PAGE 01
The country fixes fuel prices on a fortnightly basis after evaluating fluctuating international energy market costs and the rupee-dollar parity to transfer the impact on domestic consumers. About 85% of Pakistan's oil needs are imported, and the country has been struggling with a balance of payments problem and skyrocketing inflation. If approved, the price of petrol would come down to Rs259.36 per litre from the current rate of Rs268.36 per litre. Meanwhile, high-speed diesel will be sold at Rs266.22 compared to the existing price of Rs270.22 per litre.

IHC sets 1-month...

FROM PAGE 01
court. Judge Arjumand heard the appeal and was expected to announce his ruling on May 29, when he requested the IHC to send the case to another judge. Later, the IHC transferred the case to Additional District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Majuka. Imran and Bibi challenged the transfer of the appeal in the IHC through lawyer Salman Akram Raja. However, the registrar office raised the objection that the appeal was pending before the session court. Justice Mian Gul Hassan Aurangzeb, presiding over the hearing today, instructed the session court to resolve Bushra Bibi's plea for suspension of the sentence within 10 days and ordered a decision on the appeal within a month.

Messi expects Inter Miami to be his final club

MIAMI: Argentine football superstar Lionel Messi says he expects Inter Miami to be the club where he closes his legendary playing career, but he is not intending to depart right away. Messi, who has a contract with the MLS squad until the end of the 2025 campaign, made his comments to ESPN in an interview to be broadcast on Wednesday. "Yes, as of today, I think it's going to be my last club," Messi told ESPN. But Messi, who turns 37 on June 24, also added, "I'm not ready to leave football either." The record eight-

time Ballon d'Or winner became a legend with Barcelona, helping capture four Champions League crowns and 10 La Liga titles. Messi sparked Argentina victories in the 2021 Copa America and 2022 World Cup and is set to play for Argentina in this month's Copa America, to be staged in the United States. After playing for Barca from 2004-2021, Messi joined Paris Saint-Germain from 2021-2023 and then moved to Inter Miami last year, helping the club win the Leagues Cup crown in his early days

with the squad. "It was a difficult step to leave Europe to come here," Messi said. "The fact of having been world champion helped a lot to see things differently also." Messi's star turn raised the profile for MLS in the United States, matches selling out wherever he plays and his shirt by far the most popular among MLS jersey purchasers. Messi now ponders playing for his homeland in the 2026 World Cup, to be co-hosted by the USA with Mexico and Canada, and is contemplating the end of his incredible career.

"My whole life I did this. I love playing ball. I enjoy the training, the day every day, of the matches. A little afraid that everything will end," Messi said. "I try to enjoy. That's why I enjoy everything much more, because I'm aware that there's less and less to go and I have a good time at the club. "How lucky I am to have colleagues and friends by my side. I had a good time in the selection, where I have teammates and friends too, and many of them, and I enjoy the little details that I know I'm going to miss when I don't play anymore."—APP

England coach opens up on Hazlewood's comments

LONDON : England head coach Matthew Mott has reacted to the comments made by Australian pacer Josh Hazlewood recently. Hazlewood, after Australia's nine-wicket victory over Namibia, hinted at the possibility of exploiting England's difficulty in the tournament in the post-match press conference. England are in a tough situation, pertaining to their qualification to the Super 8s stage of the T20 World Cup 2024 as they are fourth in Group B with just one point in two matches. "We've had some real struggles against them [England] in T20 cricket, so if we can get them out of the tournament, that's in our best interest as well as probably everyone else's I think," stated Hazlewood. However, the English coach stated that Australians have a mindset to win every game and expressed hope that Hazlewood was just 'having fun.' "I am very much hoping it was an off-hand remark by a really good bloke who is having fun. Having grown up in Australia and the will to win every game, I am sure they will come to the fore," Matthew Mott said. "Knowing Josh, he has got a pretty dry sense of humour. I am hoping it was very much tongue in cheek." Notably, Australia will face Scotland in their last group-stage fixture which could decide England's fate in the T20 World Cup 2024 even if they manage to beat Oman and Namibia in their remaining group matches.—APP

'No excuses' from Williamson after back-to-back losses

AUCKLAND : The New Zealand cricket team has lost two back-to-back games against Afghanistan and West Indies in the ongoing T20 World Cup 2024. The Kiwis lost their T20 World Cup opener against Afghanistan by 75 runs as they failed to achieve a total of 160 runs and bundled out in the 15.2 overs. They then failed to achieve a total of 150 runs against West Indies on Wednesday and fell 13 runs short. New Zealand skipper, Kane Williamson, talking after the loss stated that the "equation is looking tough" as they face nearly impossible circumstances to qualify for the Super 8s. Yeah, frustrating, absolutely, to start the way we have. The conditions are the same for everybody, so it's trying to learn. We've got a game again [vs Uganda] quite quickly and so we need to get better for the experience, we need to put out improved performances and gain that knowledge but like you mentioned the equation is looking tough," the skipper stated after the match. He also accepted that the playing conditions are what they are and not excuses so the team needs to bounce back. "Conditions here are what they are and we can't make excuses. We need to keep getting better and keep finding a way, 10-15 runs that can make a big difference. We need to bounce back quickly, we are back in two days, we need to be smarter. The learnings are important and we need to pick ourselves up and go again." The New Zealander also revealed that Rutherford was the star of the match and he needed to be dismissed quickly to turn the result in New Zealand's favour.—APP

Nadal to miss Wimbledon to focus on Olympics

PARIS : Two-time champion Rafael Nadal will not play at Wimbledon this year in order to focus on the Olympics in Paris. The 38-year-old Spaniard said he will compete in a clay-court event in Bastad, Sweden, as preparation for the Olympic tennis tournament which begins on 27 July. Wimbledon, where Nadal won in 2008 and 2010, starts on 1 July. Nadal, a 22-time Grand Slam champion, said he was "saddened" to be missing the "great atmosphere" of Wimbledon, which "will always be in my heart". Following his first-round exit at the French Open last month, Nadal said returning to the clay at Roland Garros at the Olympics was now

his main target. "With this goal, we believe that the best for my body is not to change surface and keep playing on clay until then," he said. Nadal, who is ranked 264th in the world, will play doubles with Carlos Alcaraz at the Olympics. Nadal has previously said that he expected to retire later this year, but said before the French Open that he could not say "100%" if that would be the last time he played in the tournament. Meanwhile, Britain's Emma Raducanu continued her Wimbledon preparations by cruising into the quarter-finals of the Nottingham Open with a straight-set win over Ukraine's Daria Snigur. Raducanu - playing only

her second match since April after deciding to skip the French Open to focus on her fitness - made light work of the world number 127 to win 6-2 6-2. The 21-year-old made a shaky start to the second-round match as Snigur, 22, broke her serve in the opening game. Both players then held serve before former US Open champion Raducanu reeled off six games in a row - including a double break - to win the first set. A confident Raducanu then secured two breaks of serve in the second set to advance to the last eight, where she will face compatriot Fran Jones or American Ashlyn Krueger. After ceding the first game, Raducanu's serve was par-

ticularly impressive. She sent down 11 aces thanks to a new-look action she has adopted since reuniting with childhood coach Nick Cavaday. Snigur also found it difficult to cope with the power Raducanu produced from her groundstrokes, most notably her forehand. Raducanu had been unhappy with a number of line calls during her first-round win over Japan's Ena Shibahara, and she was seen questioning umpire Thomas Sweeney during the win over Snigur. But the world number 209 put her frustration aside to make it back-to-back wins for the third time this year as she builds up to Wimbledon, which starts on 1 July.—Agencies

Pakistan advances to Squash quarter-finals after crushing China

The Men in Green beat Taipei 3-0 and Korea 2-1 Wednesday commencing the tournament with high spirits

SPORTS DESK

DALIAN: In yet another victory in the squash, Pakistan cruise to victory over China by 3-0 Thursday, qualifying for the quarter-finals of the Asian Team Squash Championship in Dalian, China. The victory was secured in the participants' final pool stage match, marking the three consecutive successes. Pakistan were undefeated in Pool C of the event where they were at par with South Korea, Chinese Taipei, and China. The Men in Green beat Taipei 3-0 and Korea 2-1 Wednesday commencing the tournament with high spirits. Noor Zaman, Farhan Mehboob and Nasir Iqbal won their matches against Chinese players Thursday. Nasir Iqbal, Asim Khan and Noor Zaman won their matches against Taipei. Meanwhile, Nasir Iqbal and Noor Zaman won against Korea with Asim Khan the only Pakistan player to lose a match. The quarter-finals of the event will be played tomorrow. Pakistan's opponent in the last-eight clash is arch-rivals India. The Pakistan team is being coached by the experienced Fahim Gul, who is eager to ensure that the national side wins the gold medal. Pakistan are the most successful team in the Asian Men's Team Squash Championship's history with 15 gold medals.



However, their last win in the event came in 2016. India are the defending men's champions

after winning the title in 2022 in South Korea. Asian Team Squash Championships 2024

men's pools Pool A: Malaysia, Iran, Iraq Pool B: Hong Kong China, Sri Lanka, Singapore

Pool C: Pakistan, South Korea, Chinese Taipei, China Pool D: India, Japan, Kuwait, Mongolia.

Briefs

Ukraine's FM welcomes US sanctions on Russia

KYIV: Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Thursday he welcomed a sweeping new set of US sanctions imposed on Russia and praised the measures taken against its defence industrial base. "We particularly applaud tough measures against Russia's defense-industrial base and its access to technology and resources abroad," he wrote on X. NATO chief expects France to remain 'staunch' ally "Any entity assisting Russia in the production of weapons must be subjected to the most intense pressure."—APP

SA reports second mpox death this week

CAPE TOWN: More than 97,000 cases and 186 deaths were reported across 117 countries in the first four months of 2024. A second person has died in South Africa this week from the viral infection mpox, says the health minister, less than 24 hours after it announced the first death. 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. In July 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global health emergency, which lasted for 10 months. On Thursday, South Africa's government said the second person who died was a 38-year-old man. He was admitted to a hospital in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province with extensive lesions, headache, fatigue, oral ulcers, muscle pain and a sore throat. He tested positive for mpox on Wednesday. "The patient has unfortunately demised in KZN the same day his test results came back positive," spokesperson for the national health department Foster Mohale said.

The total number of laboratory-confirmed mpox cases stands at six in the country, with two deaths since the first case was recorded five weeks ago. On Wednesday, Health Minister Joe Phaahla had announced the first death, and four more infections. "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. The six cases were the first recorded in the country since 2022. Mpox spreads through close physical contact. Most cases are mild but it can kill. 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 WHO. Mpox was first discovered in humans in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the spread since then mainly limited to certain West and Central African nations.—DNA

Boat accident in DRC leaves dozens dead

KINSHASA: A boat carrying more than 270 passengers has capsized on a river near the Democratic Republic of Congo's capital Kinshasa, leaving more than 80 dead, President Felix Tshisekedi has said. It was the latest deadly boat accident in the central African country where overloading is often blamed, including in February when dozens lost their lives after an overloaded boat sank. The statement quoting Tshisekedi on Wednesday says the locally made boat capsized late Monday in Mai-Ndombe province along the Kwa River. The boat was carrying 271 passengers to Kinshasa when it broke down due to an engine failure, according to the UN-backed Radio Okapi, citing Ren Maker, the water commissioner in the Mushi district where the accident happened. Eighty-six of the passengers died while 185 managed to swim ashore, some 70 kilometres near the closest city of Mushie, Maker said.—APP



Islamabad: Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb addressed the media persons at the Post Budget 2024-25 Press Conference along with Minister of State for Finance & Revenue Ali Pervaiz Malik.—DNA

Prabowo meets KSA PM to discuss bilateral ties

Prabowo Subianto said that Saudi Arabian 'main partner' in resolving global issues

JAKARTA: Prabowo Subianto, Indonesia's president-elect, sees Saudi Arabia as a main partner in resolving global issues, his office said on Thursday following a meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Subianto, who is still serving as Indonesia's defense minister before he takes the top office in October, visited Jeddah on Wednesday after attending an international aid conference on Gaza in Jordan. In his first meeting with the Saudi crown prince since winning the general vote in February, Subianto highlighted the importance of cooperation between Jakarta and Riyadh to support international peace efforts, including in Palestine. "For Indonesia, Saudi Arabia is a main partner in dialogue and in resolving regional and global issues," Subianto said, as quoted in a Ministry of Defense statement. I have witnessed (the crown prince's) steadfastness in affirming Saudi leadership in



the region, including to promote peace and stability for our brothers and sisters in Palestine. The issue of Palestine is very close to our hearts." Subianto pledged to

increase contributions to the UN's agency for Palestinian refugees and send more medical teams to Gaza during the conference in Jordan, where he also called for

a two-state solution for Palestine. Indonesia has long been a staunch supporter of Palestine and one of the most vocal countries since the beginning of Israel's onslaught on

Gaza last October. It sees Palestinian statehood as mandated by its constitution, which calls for the abolition of colonialism. Indonesia and Saudi Arabia are part of a ministerial committee formed during the joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit last November, which has been working to rally international support for an immediate end to Israel's war on Gaza. "I rely on your leadership to defend peace, justice and humanity for Palestine," Subianto told the crown prince during their meeting. The Indonesian president-elect has been urging Israel to obey the orders of the International Court of Justice and stop its military offensive in the southern Gaza city of Rafah and has called for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in the besieged strip, where over 37,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 80 percent of people have been displaced from their homes.—Agencies

NATO chief expects France to remain 'staunch' ally

The decision – which saw NATO move its headquarters from Paris to Brussels – was only reversed by former president Nicolas Sarkozy in 2009

BRUSSELS: NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said Thursday he expects France to stay a key member of the western military alliance, even if a far-right government comes to power after upcoming elections. "Regardless of the different parties elected and the different majorities in the parliaments, we have always seen that NATO allies have remained committed to the alliance because this is in the security interest of each and every ally," Stoltenberg said at a meeting of NATO defence ministers in Brussels. "So I expect France to remain a staunch and important ally also in the future." French President Emmanuel Macron sent shockwaves across Europe on Sunday by dissolving parliament and calling a snap vote after his liberal party was trounced by the far-right National Rally (RN) at EU polls. NATO's Stoltenberg meets Hungary's Orban amid tensions Macron on Wednesday accused the RN, led by rival Marine Le Pen, of being "ambiguous" about Russia and aims to "leave NATO". Le Pen's party has previously advocated to leave NATO's US-led military command structure, but not to quit the alliance as a whole. More recently, RN leaders have suggested they would not change France's status in NATO while Russia's war on Ukraine is ongoing. French leader Charles de Gaulle previously withdrew France from NATO's military command in 1966 due to complaints over US domination. The decision – which saw NATO move its headquarters from Paris to Brussels – was only reversed by former president Nicolas Sarkozy in 2009.—Agencies

Erdogan hails Spanish Premier Sanchez's stance on Gaza

'I congratulate my dear friend, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, for his stance on Gaza, on behalf of myself and my nation,' Erdogan says in Madrid

WEB DESK

ANKARA: Addressing a Spanish-Turkish business forum in Madrid on Thursday, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan heaped praise on Spain for its stance in support of Palestinians in the face of Israel's massacres in Gaza. Erdo an singled out Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who won "a special place in the Turkish public's heart" on the matter. Erdo an reiterated his criticism of Israel's massacres in Palestine, which he described as genocide and said it "gives pain to everyone with a conscience." Erdo an also said they appreciated Spain's sincere support to Turkey's European Union accession process. The Turkish president arrived in Spain on Wednesday for a two-day visit where he first met King Felipe VI. Ankara enjoys close relations with Spain under Erdo an, who co-initiated the Alliance

of Civilizations platform with the European country years ago. In his speech at the event, Erdo an said they would mark the 20th anniversary of the alliance in 2025, adding that they hoped to enhance it further together. "The need for alliance is higher today, during wars and massacres," he said. "In particular, genocide continuing in occupied Palestinian lands, in Gaza hurts everyone with a conscience. More than 37,000 people, including 16,000 children, were blatantly killed in Gaza and 85,000 civilians were injured. Churches, mosques, schools and refugee camps were bombed; members of the press were murdered. Humanitarian aid workers were shot. Doctors, academics and innocent civilians were targeted. We are facing arrogance in responding to calls for a cease-fire by shedding more blood. No country with a conscience can accept it,"

Erdo an said. Erdo an said he appreciated the stance of Sanchez personally and on behalf of the Turkish nation. "The reckless acts of Israel despite calls (for a cease-fire) fuels anti-Semitism in the world as well. I want to emphasize that we appreciate Spain's stance against Israel's oppression. Mr. Sanchez won a special place in the hearts of the people of Spain, Türkiye and our Palestinian brothers and sisters with his principled, consistent policies on this matter since day one," he said. Türkiye and Spain trace their relations back to the golden era of the Ottoman Empire. A power struggle in the Mediterranean ceased in the 16th century. The two sides appointed ambassadors in that century and since then, Turkish-Spanish ties have flourished. In 2005, Erdo an and then Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero co-sponsored the

Alliance of Civilizations in a bid to bridge the divide between the Western world and Islamic countries. Erdo an was among the first leaders to congratulate Sanchez on Spain's decision to recognize the State of Palestine on May 28. Under Erdo an's leadership, Türkiye became the most prominent voice in the world, championing the Palestinian cause. Türkiye advocates that recognition of Palestine may pave the way for ultimately resolving the longstanding Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Sanchez had been outspoken in his criticism of Israel long before the recognition of the State of Palestine over brutal killings of thousands of people in the Gaza Strip since last October. Last week, Spain announced that it would join South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), where Israel stands accused of genocide against Palestinians.

Gaza strip faces unprecedented death, destruction: Antonio

Guterres said that providing assistance to the Gaza population faced immense challenges due to ongoing conflict and Israeli blockade

FOREIGN DESK

GENEVA: United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres says a "unique level" of death and destruction is unfolding before the eyes of the world in the besieged Gaza Strip, stressing that supporting the whole population of Palestinians in the territory is "extremely difficult" when it is continuously "under fire." Guterres made the remarks on the sidelines of a forum at the UN headquarters in the Swiss city of Geneva on Wednesday, saying that the war in the Palestinian coastal siver was unlike anything he had experienced as the head of the world body. "We have witnessed ... a unique level of destruction and ... unique level of casualties in the Palestinian population during these months of war that has no precedent in any other situation that

UK show concerned over insufficient aid flow into Gaza

LONDON: Britain remains "very concerned" about the current insufficient aid flow into the Gaza Strip and believes Israel should be pushed "very hard" to allow more aid deliveries, said the UK foreign secretary on Thursday. In response to Anadolu's question about continuing arms sales to Israel, David Cameron said that the UK has "a very detailed process" to examine the commitment a country has to international law. "We go through that detailed legal process and then we have to make a decision based on that legal advice that is consistent with that legal advice, and we are going through that process (on) each occasion," Cameron said at an event organized by Foreign Press Association London. Reiterating that Britain is responsible for less than 1% of Israel's arms imports, he said that overriding that process would be "quite a political decision." "And I don't think it would be the right political decision," he said, citing Iran's retaliatory attacks on Israel in April. On the ongoing situation in the Gaza Strip, Cameron said they continue to monitor the situation "very closely." "What I said and I will continue to say that of course we monitor very closely what is happening and we have been particularly concerned about the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza," he stated.—APP

I've lived as Secretary General of the United Nations," the UN chief said. Israel waged the atrocious onslaught against the Gaza Strip, targeting hospitals, residences, and houses of worship after Palestinian resistance movements launched a surprise attack, dubbed Operation al-Aqsa Storm, against the usurping regime on October 7, 2023. At least 37,202 Palestinians have been killed, most of them women and children, and another 84,932 individuals have sustained injuries. More than 1.7 million people have been internally displaced during the war as well. Guterres further said that providing assistance to the Gaza population faced immense challenges due to ongoing conflict and Israeli blockade, which prevents the delivery of essential humanitarian supplies like food, fuel, medicine, and clean water. "It's extremely difficult to support the

population when there are so many restrictions to the entry of the necessary supplies for humanitarian aid," he said. Meanwhile, the UN children agency (UNICEF) said in a statement that some 3,000 children are at risk of dying before the eyes of their families as they have been cut off from treatment for severe acute malnutrition in southern Gaza. "Horrific images continue to emerge from Gaza of children dying before their families' eyes due to the continued lack of food, nutrition supplies, and the destruction of healthcare services," said UNICEF Regional Director for West Asia and North Africa Adele Khodr. Children suffering from malnutrition face an increased susceptibility to diseases and other health complications, exacerbated by restricted access to safe water, sewage overflow, infrastructure damage, and inadequate hygiene resources.

UK's Labour pledges to recognize Palestinian state

MANCHESTER: Britain's opposition Labour Party, which is far ahead in polls before a July 4 election, pledged on Thursday to recognize a Palestinian state as a contribution to a renewed peace process. "Palestinian statehood is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people," said Labour's election manifesto – the collection of policies it would enact if it forms the next government. "We are committed to recognizing a Palestinian state as a contribution to a renewed peace process which results in a two-state solution with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state." The current Conservative-led government has previously said Britain could formally recognize a Palestinian state before the end of a peace process, and that Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip must be given "the political perspective of a credible route to a Palestinian state and a new future." In May, Spain, Ireland and Norway officially recognized a Palestinian state, prompting an angry reaction from Israel, which has found itself increasingly isolated after more than seven months of conflict in Gaza. Meanwhile, Labour has been consistently some 20 points ahead of Rishi Sunak's Conservatives for nearly two years, making its leader Keir Starmer a virtual shoo-in as the country's next prime minister if polls are correct. But Starmer, 61, still has work to do before polling day on July 4 to overcome persistent Tory claims about Labour profligacy with public finances and warnings that it will increase personal taxes. The manifesto launch comes two days after the Tories promised voters more tax cuts, in a campaign where the affordability of the main parties' spending plans have come under close scrutiny. In details trailed in advance by the party, Starmer will describe Labour's blueprint for government as a "manifesto for wealth creation" and call it "our number one priority."—APP

Turkiye 'neutralized' 30 terrorists over past week

ANKARA: Türkiye "neutralized" 30 terrorists in the past week, including those hiding across the border in Iraq and northern Syria, the National Defense Ministry said Thursday. A total of 1,181 terrorists have been "neutralized," with 531 in Iraq and 650 in northern Syria since Jan. 1, ministry spokesman Zeki Aktürk told reporters in Ankara. Turkish authorities use the term "neutralize" to imply the terrorists in question surrendered, were killed or captured. Regarding illegal border crossings into Türkiye, the spokesman said 210 people were apprehended while attempting to cross in the last week alone. Another, 1,344 people were prevented from crossing in the past week. "During the past week alone, 210 individuals and a total of 5,215 individuals attempting illegal crossings since Jan. 1 have been apprehended at our borders. Together with 1,344 individuals prevented from crossing in the past week, the total number of individuals prevented from crossing this year amounts to 59,636," he said.—APP

Tokyo shares open higher

TOKYO: Tokyo stocks opened higher on Thursday as investors cheered the strength of US shares while the Federal Reserve kept its key interest rate unchanged. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index started strongly but trimmed gains in early trade, adding 0.39 percent, or 152.40 points, to 39,029.11. The broader Topix index also began the day in positive territory but then lost 0.37 percent, or 10.27 points, to 2,746.17. Japanese shares' upbeat start reflected the momentum overnight in New York, where the S&P 500 and Nasdaq closed at record highs for the third straight day. Meanwhile, the Fed left its key lending rate unchanged with policy officials expecting just one rate cut this year, down from the three expected in March. "The Tokyo market is trending higher in early trade on the back of gains of tech shares in the New York market."—APP

Briefs

EU court slaps \$ 216 million fine on Hungary

BRUSSELS: The European Union's top court has slapped Hungary with a 200-million-euro (\$216m) fine and imposed a daily one-million-euro (\$1.08m) penalty for failing to follow the bloc's asylum laws and for illegally deporting migrants. Hungary's anti-immigrant government has taken a hard line on people entering the country since well over one million refugees and asylum seekers entered Europe in 2015, most of them fleeing conflict in Syria. It erected border fences and forcefully tried to stop many from entering. In its verdict issued on Thursday, the European Court of Justice said Hungary had failed to take measures "to comply with the 2020 judgment as regards the right of applicants for international protection to remain in Hungary pending a final decision on their appeal against the rejection of their application and the removal of illegally staying third-country nationals". "That failure, which consists in deliberately avoiding the application of a common EU policy as a whole, constitutes an unprecedented and extremely serious infringement of EU law," Thursday's ECJ verdict added. A Hungarian government spokesman did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment on the ECJ ruling. The government has previously argued that the 2020 ruling was moot as it had already closed so-called "transit zones" while also hardening rules to bar future asylum applicants. - Agencies

Defamation bill will not affect journalists

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari said that the defamation bill would not affect the working journalists. "Only those social media influencers are disturbed with this legislation who are involved in insulting someone and earn dollars," said the provincial information minister. She was talking to media outside the Punjab Assembly on Thursday. "We have allocated a hefty amount of 1 billion for the healthcare of journalists' community," Azma said. She added that protest is the right of journalists but the defamation bill has been challenged in court and therefore we should wait for its verdict. Talking about the provincial budget that was presented in Punjab Assembly on Thursday, she said that 77 new schemes would be initiated in this budget. She added that the OPD of new cancer hospital would be functional within one year. "The government is establishing an authority to control inflation," she said.

Airport outsourcing aimed at improving service standards

The IFC team presented a progress report on the outsourcing of Islamabad International airport and informed that a healthy competition between various consortiums, comprising local and foreign investors, is expected on 15 July 2024, which is also the bid closing date



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The 10th Meeting of the Steering Committee on outsourcing of Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore airports was held under chairmanship of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on 13 June 2024. The meeting was inter-alia attended by the Minister for Defence & Aviation, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister for Law & Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarar, Secretary Aviation, Saif Anjum, officials from Board of Investment, Civil Aviation Authority and a team from International Finance Corporation (IFC). The IFC team presented a progress report on the outsourcing of Islamabad International airport and informed that a healthy competition between various consortiums, comprising local and foreign investors, is expected on 15 July 2024, which is also the bid closing date. The Steering Committee also reviewed progress on outsourcing of Lahore and Karachi airports and was satisfied with the work done so far. As per plan, the concession structure for the two airports will be ready by mid-August this year. The meeting ended with the expectations that outsourcing of Islamabad International airport would eventually result in improved and world class service standards along with enhanced customer experience.

Forcibly displaced population doubles to 120 mln

NEW YORK: At least 117.3 million people, or one in 69 individuals worldwide, remain forcibly displaced, according to a report released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) today. Forced displacement as a result of conflict and violence, persecution and human rights violations, has continued to rise in the first four months of 2024 and is likely to have surpassed 120 million by the end of April 2024. Filippo Grandi, the UN high commissioner for refugees said, "Behind these stark and rising numbers lie countless human tragedies. That suffering must galvanise the international community to act urgently to tackle the root causes of forced displacement." Of the 117.3 million forcibly displaced, 68.3 million are internally displaced within their own countries due to conflict or other crises, such as Gaza where the UN estimates about 75 percent of the population, or more than 1.7 million people have been displaced by Israel's continuing assault. The number of refugees who crossed international borders, in 2023 rose by seven percent to 43.4 million. The increase is driven by displacement in Sudan and ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and other regions. The number of asylum seekers - people seeking protection in another country due to persecution or fear of harm in their home country - waiting for a decision stood at 6.9 million, an increase of 26 percent from the previous year. - Agencies

Israeli forces thrust deeper into Rafah as diplomacy falters

CAIRO: Israeli tanks advanced deeper into the western area of Rafah, amid one of the worst nights of bombardment from air, ground, and sea, forcing many families to flee their homes and tents under darkness, residents said on Thursday. Residents said the Israeli forces thrust toward the Al-Mawasi area of Rafah near the beach, which is designated as a humanitarian area in all announcements and maps published by the Israeli army since it began its Rafah offensive in May. The Israeli military denied in a statement it had launched any strikes inside the Al-Mawasi humanitarian zone. Israel said its assault aimed to wipe out Hamas' last intact combat units in Rafah, a city which had sheltered more than a million people before the latest advance began. Most of those people have now moved north toward Khan Younis and Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza Strip. The Israeli military said in a statement it was continuing "intelligence-based, targeted operations" on Rafah, saying forces in the past day had located weapons, and killed Palestinian gunmen in close-range combat. Over the past day, the military said it had struck 45 targets across the Gaza Strip from the air, including military structures, militant cells, rocket launchers, and tunnel shafts. Israel has ruled out peace until Hamas is eradicated, and much of Gaza lies in ruins. But Hamas has proven resilient, with militants

resurfacing to fight in areas where Israeli forces had previously declared to have defeated them and pulled back. Ceasefire proposal US President Joe Biden will urge fellow leaders of Group of Seven nations to support ceasefire negotiations and encourage Hamas to accept a proposal backed by Israel, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Thursday. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a meeting of G7 leaders in southern Italy, Sullivan said the world should encourage the Palestinian militant group to accept the proposal and avoid stalemate. Sullivan said Israel is standing behind a ceasefire proposal for the eight-month-old war in the Gaza Strip, and the goal is to bridge gaps with Hamas and get to a deal soon. Hamas has welcomed the ceasefire proposal, but insists any agreement must secure an end to the war, a demand Israel still rejects. Israel described Hamas's response to the new US peace proposal as total rejection. Since a brief weeklong truce in November, repeated attempts to arrange a ceasefire have failed, with Hamas insisting on a permanent end to the war and full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Sullivan said Hamas had submitted an amended proposal with some minor changes that could be worked out, as well as others that were not in line with what Biden had laid out or that had been embraced by the UN Security Council. - Agencies

Buenos Aires rocked by clashes over Milei reforms

Milei's "shock" measures are opposed by leftist political parties, labour unions and social organisations. But the motion, which was initially tied 36-36 in the Senate, was preliminarily passed on Wednesday after the head of the chamber, Vice-President Victoria Villarruel, broke the tie

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's Senate has narrowly approved President Javier Milei's controversial economic reform package, with the vote taking place as violent clashes raged between protesters and riot police outside Congress. Demonstrators in Buenos Aires - who say the measures will hurt millions of Argentines - threw petrol bombs and stones, setting cars alight. A number of people were reported injured, with local media describing the scene on Wednesday as a "battlefield". The reforms, aimed at reviving the country's flagging economy, include declaring a state of economic emergency, cutting pensions and watering down labour rights. Mr Milei, a right-wing economist, was elected in the midst of a deep economic crisis which he is still struggling to stem after six months in office. Annual inflation is currently close to 300%, while more than half of Argentines are now living in poverty. Mr Milei's "shock" measures are opposed by leftist political parties, labour unions and social organisations. But the motion, which was initially tied 36-36 in the Senate, was preliminarily passed on Wednesday after the head of the chamber, Vice-President Victoria Villarruel, broke the tie.

"For those Argentines who suffer, who wait, who do not want to see their children leave the country... my vote is affirmative," Ms Villarruel said after breaking the tie. The 328-article bill will now be surveyed point by point before its expected full approval on Thursday. It will then return to the lower house for the final go-ahead. Ahead of the bill's passing in the Senate, protesters chanted: "The country is not for sale, the country is defended," while one banner read: "how can a head of state hate the state?" Scuffles broke out when protesters tried to make their way towards Congress through fences, with demonstrators throwing rocks at officers who pepper sprayed them. Observers and opposition MPs said dozens of demonstrators and a handful of MPs received medical attention. At least five opposition MPs in the crowd were hospitalised, legislator Cecilia Moreau told AFP news agency. At least 20 police officers were also injured, officials said. Security forces said they arrested 15 people. "We cannot believe that in Argentina we are discussing a law that will put us back 100 years," Fabio Nunez, a 55-year-old protesting lawyer, was quoted by AFP as saying. President Milei's office issued a statement thanking the security forces for repressing what it described as "terrorists" attempting to carry out a coup d'état. - Agencies

Hezbollah launches massive strikes on Israel

BEIRUT: The Lebanese Hezbollah resistance forces conducted a series of strikes against Israeli military positions in the northern side of the 1948 occupied territories in response to the ongoing Israeli onslaught against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Hezbollah announced in a statement on Thursday that it had struck Israeli soldiers at the al-Raheeb outpost with heavy machine guns and artillery shells, stressing that the designated targets were precisely hit. It further noted that the operation came in solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and in support of brave and heroic Palestinian resistance factions. The military media bureau of Hezbollah also published video footages of the Lebanese resistance fighters' earlier attacks on the Israeli al-Raheeb and Ramia outposts as well as the Zarit barracks. It also published scenes of retaliatory operations against Meron Air Base and the headquarters of the Northern Command of the Israeli military in the northern part of the occupied lands. - Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei along with his staff visited the Norwegian embassy and met with Ambassador of Norway Per Albert Isaas to thank the Norwegian government for recognizing Palestine state. - DNA

APNS rejects 10 % GST on newsprint import

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The APNS strongly rejects imposition of 10% GST on import of newsprint and urges upon the Federal Government to continue exemption of GST to the print media. Mrs Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani President and Sarmad Ali Secretary General of All Pakistan News-

papers Society in a joint statement have stated that the imposition of the GST on newsprint imported by newspaper industry would be disastrous for the survival of the already crisis ridden print media. They stated that the newsprint and other inputs used by newspapers are all imported and due to unprecedented depreciation of Pak rupee the costs of newspapers have enormously increased. This has consequently resulted in the increase of cover price of newspapers which has badly affected their circulations. The financial crunch has been further exacerbated by the non payment of long outstanding dues of print media by the Federal and provincial governments. The APNS office bearers stated that the newspaper industry was expecting measures to provide relief including 35% increase in the long overdue government advertisement rates but instead GST has been levied in the financial bill announced by the Finance Minister. The APNS stated that print media is the fourth pillar of the state and serves the nation by protecting peoples right to know and expression. It is therefore obligatory on government to support the access of the people to information especially in a time of misinformation and disinformation. The APNS requests the Prime Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif to instruct the Finance Minister to withdraw the GST on newsprint.



Sarmad Ali Secretary General of All Pakistan Newspapers Society

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