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Global health has become 'geopolitical': French president

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No harm will come to Pak-China ties: Tarar

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Afridi rebuts pro-Israeli group's selfie claim

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Election Tribunal case

CJP Isa terms ordinance 'insult' to parliament

ECP has challenged constitution of election tribunals by LHC for hearing pleas regarding Punjab's constituencies

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa on Thursday called the presidential ordinance an insult to the parliament as the Supreme Court rejected the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) plea in the election tribunals case. "[Presidential] ordinance is an insult to the parliament when it has already made a law [on an issue]," the top judge said while hearing ECP's plea against the constitution of election tribunals by the Lahore High Court (LHC). The case, heard by a two-member bench comprising the CJP and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan, has been sent to the three-member SC committee for the constitution of a larger bench. The ECP had moved the apex court under Article 185(3) of the Constitution against the LHC's May 29 verdict wherein it had constituted eight election tribunals. The order of the court's single-member bench comprising LHC CJ Malik Shahzad Ahmad provisioned that Justice Shahid Karim, Justice Ch Muhammad Iqbal, Justice Anwaar Hussain, and Justice Sultan Tanvir Ahmad would hear the election petitions at the LHC principal seat in Lahore. Whereas Justice Asim Hafeez will hear the election petitions at the LHC Bahawalpur bench, Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfaraz Dogar and Justice Raheel Kamran will hear the election petitions at the LHC Multan bench, and Justice Mirza Viqas Rauf will hear the election petitions at the LHC Rawalpindi bench. The order, which came in response to petitions filed by Rao Hashim Omar Khan and others, had also ordered the ECP to appoint six more judges, nominated by the LHC chief justice, as election tribunals. It is pertinent to mention here that two out of the eight election

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Lawyers' killing a test case for government

The minister also highlights the significance of lawyers' freedom to speak against injustice

DNA

ATTOCK: Federal Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday spoke at the condolence reference of the murdered lawyers in Attock, where he assured the community of taking the killers to justice by declaring it a test case for the government. "It is really sad that we will not be able to meet our friends again but I assure you that justice will prevail and we will do everything for the consolation of the bereaved families of Israr and Zulfiqar," the minister said. He said this was a textbook case of terrorism. "Every case has its merits and job of a lawyer is to present the case before the court and verdict is then announced on merit. No one will be allowed to go scot-free as lawyers are an important pillar of society," he said. "Good human beings and

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DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Pakistan People's Party led by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. Both sides discussed budget and other issues. The PM formed committees to look into PPP grievances. - DNA

Chinese Minister Jianchao arrives

Minister Liu Jianchao will call on Prime Minister as well

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC), Mr. Liu Jianchao arrives in Islamabad on a three-day visit. He was received at the Islamabad International Airport by Additional Foreign Secretary (Asia & Pacific) Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui. Minister Liu Jianchao will call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and hold extensive bilateral talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Minister Liu will also co-chair third meeting of the Pakistan-China Joint Consultative Mechanism (JCM) of the political parties on CPEC.

PM visits revamped NEOC Shehbaz says NDMA to become a safety wall for Pakistan

"Due to climate change, Pakistan is in the red zone and among the top ten vulnerable countries. We should not lose our morale rather work hard

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday, lauding the revamped National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) equipped with multiple satellite feeds and artificial intelligence tools, expressed the hope that the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) would prove to be a safety wall for Pakistan against the impacts of the climate change. "Due to climate change, Pakistan is in the red zone and among the top ten vulnerable countries. We should not lose our morale rather work hard. After this achievement, I have no doubt that the NDMA, in coordination with provincial PDMA's, will become a safety wall for Pakistan," the prime minister said during his visit to the NEOC here along with the federal ministers and secretaries. This was the maiden visit of the prime minister since the revamped

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Tarar says no harm will come to Pak-China ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar says a high level delegation of China is arriving in Islamabad to participate in third meeting of the Pakistan-China Joint Consultative Mechanism being held tomorrow (Friday). Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, he said the visit of the Chinese delegation to Pakistan is a proof of trust between the two countries. The Minister urged all political parties to welcome the delegation and manifest the exemplary

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Briefs

Pakistan, Azerbaijan to enhance cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a telephone conversation on the occasion of Eid ul Adha with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov. They exchanged Eid greetings. The two Ministers discussed the state of bilateral relations and the tremendous potential for collaboration in areas such as trade, investment, energy, and connectivity. They agreed to further enhance mutually beneficial cooperation and advance high level engagement and dialogue.

PSX hits all-time high of 78,801 points

PSX's benchmark KSE-100 index gains 2094.76 points

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) extended its post-budget rally to scale another unprecedented peak on Thursday, buoyed by optimism stemming from Fitch Ratings' upbeat assessment of Islamabad's chances of pulling off a bailout deal from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The market reopened on Thursday after remaining closed for three days this week (June 17-19, 2024) owing to Eid ul Adha. PSX's benchmark KSE-100 shares index gained 2,094.76 points or 2.73% to trade at 78,801.53 points, up from the previous close of 76,706.77 points - the fourth-largest single-day increase in KSE-100 history.

Assails 'economic terrorism'

Budget against 'nation, country's interest': Omar

"The pot calling the kettle black," says Omar Ayub over PM Shehbaz's announcement to eliminate corruption

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has termed the budget 2024-25 presented by the federal government in the National Assembly last week against the interests of the country and nation. "This budget was made by an economic hitman," said Opposition Leader Omar Ayub Khan while addressing on floor of the National Assembly on Thursday. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)-led coalition government has set a challenging tax revenue target of 13 trillion rupees (\$46.66 billion) for the year starting July 1, a near 40% jump from the current year, in the budget that looked to strengthen the case for a new bailout deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The ambitious revenue targets for the fiscal year through June 2025, presented by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb in parliament on June 12, were in line with analyst expectations. Total spending was 18.87 trillion rupees (\$68 billion). Speaking about the ambitious targets set in the federal budget, Ayub said the investors do not

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CM Punjab okays restricting ministries

Punjab CM constitutes 14-member high-powered committee

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif Thursday greenlighted the formation of a committee to restructure ministries and departments, in a bid to improve the province's governance system. The chief minister, as per a statement from the CM's House, has constituted a 14-member special high-powered committee, which has been tasked to prepare the recommendations within 60 days in this regard. Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb is the convener of the restructuring committee. Finance Minister Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rehman and

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'35 Pakistani pilgrims died during Hajj'

Official says due to temperature of 50°C, this was a "tough" Hajj; over 1000 pilgrims have lost their lives this year

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: At least 35 Pakistanis have lost their lives while performing Hajj this year due to extreme weather conditions, the Ministry of Religious Affairs confirmed on Thursday. According to a report, over 1000 pilgrims died during Hajj, with scorching temperatures and

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Gaza genocide continues as Israel strikes Rafah

A group of United Nations experts on Thursday warned arms and ammunitions manufacturers against taking part in the transfer of weapons to Israel, saying it could make them complicit in human rights abuses and violations of international law

NEWS DESK

GAZA: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 258 on Thursday, aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and target different areas and massacre more civilians. Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to bomb homes and attack citizens in different areas of Gaza during the past 24 hours. According to media sources, a citizen was killed in an Israeli airstrike on Abu Halawa area in eastern Rafah. Another citizen was shot dead by an Israeli quadcopter during his presence near the Na-joum venue in az-Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City. Earlier at dawn, casualties, including martyrs, were reported following an Israeli airstrike on a house in an-Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza. According to the health ministry in Gaza, the Israeli occupation army committed four massacres in different areas of the Gaza Strip during the

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Rifts seem to appear between Israel's political and military leadership

FOREIGN DESK

JERUSALEM: The Israeli army's chief spokesman on Wednesday appeared to question the stated goal of destroying the Hamas militant group in Gaza in a rare public rift between the country's political and military leadership. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted Israel will pursue the fight against Hamas, the group running the besieged Gaza Strip, until its military and governing capabilities in the Palestinian territory are eliminated. But with the war now in

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Invigorating Corporate Retreats

Coming Soon

HUNZA SERENA HOTEL

President boosts LEA capacity to counter Balochistan terror

President was briefed about the overall security situation of the province as well as the role of LEAs in successfully countering terrorist attacks

DNA

GWADAR : President Asif Ali Zardari has called for enhancing the capacity of the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), posting competent officers in Balochistan, and improving the prosecution mechanism to effectively counter terrorist elements in Balochistan. The President expressed these views while chairing a meeting on the security/law and order situation in Balochistan, in Gwadar, on Thursday. Minister for Interior, Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, MNA Malik Shah Gorgaji, Home Minister, Mir Ziaullah Langov, MPA Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, senior civil and military officials attended the meeting. The President was briefed about the overall security situation of the province as well as the role of LEAs in successfully countering terrorist attacks in various districts of Balochistan. It was informed that the provincial government had adopted a targeted approach to improve the security and law-and-order situation in Balochistan. It was further apprised that the initiatives taken by the LEAs had resulted in improving the security situation in the province.

The President was informed that the provincial government was taking steps to provide fool-proof security to Chinese and foreign nationals. The President appreciated the efforts of the provincial government as well as the sacrifices of the LEAs in combatting terrorism. Speaking on the occasion, the President said that the prosecution system needed to be improved so that the terrorist elements could not escape justice. He said that compensation for the families of martyrs of LEAs in Balochistan should be enhanced bringing it at par with the rest of the provinces. The President said that competent and brave police officials needed to be posted in Balochistan that would help improve the law-and-order situation of the province. He also called for taking effective measures to ensure the safety and security of Zaireen. Underlining the need to improve the socio-economic condition of Balochistan, the President called for focusing on the skill development of its people and producing more skilled professionals. He said that the capacity of training institutions should be enhanced to produce more trained human resources and equip them with foreign language skills that would also help them find jobs in foreign countries. The Pres-

ident also called for promoting the fishing industry of Balochistan by providing financing and equipment to local fishermen, apart from promoting sustainable fishing practices and checking the production of illegal fishing nets. During the meeting, the President said that political dialogue was the way forward to bring prosperity, development and peace to Balochistan. Chief Minister Balochistan thanked the President for visiting Gwadar, saying that it would give the people of Balochistan a sense of ownership as well as strengthen the resolve of the LEAs to eliminate terrorism. He informed that the provincial government was according top-priority to the capacity building of police and levies. He underlined the importance of equipping people residing in border areas of Balochistan with marketable skills to help them find employment in the country and abroad. He highlighted that all stakeholders needed to make collective efforts to stamp out terrorism, besides evolving a national consensus for the development of Balochistan. The meeting also urged the need for completing the Kachhi Canal project to fulfil the food requirements of the province.



ISLAMABAD : Deputy Resident Representative for United Nations Development Programme in Pakistan, Van Nguyen calling on Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam at her office.—DNA

GDA plans Wildlife Safari Park in capital

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority has decided to develop a Wildlife Safari Park in Islamabad. This decision was taken in a meeting headed by Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Thursday. The meeting was attended by the Senior officers of CDA. According to the details, the Wildlife Safari Park will be developed on a jungle theme. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa said alongside other features the wild life safari park should tree houses, arrangements for close experience of animals and rehabilitation and rescue center for animals. A technical committee has been constituted to review financial and technical aspects regarding development of Wildlife Safari Park. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa further said that the experiences of national and international safari parks should be utilized to develop a state-of-the-art wildlife safari park in Islamabad. The meeting also decided to launch Pakistan Street. Outlets of cuisines from all over the world will be built in Pakistan Street. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa said that after detailed working on both the projects, the work on these projects will be started in the next financial year.

ICCI hosts APCPC for economic revival discussions

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) is organizing an "All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conclave" (APCPC) on June 25, 26, 2024, which will hopefully be attended by Federal Ministers of government's economic team and Presidents of over 70 Chambers of Commerce & Industry. In a statement issued here on Thursday, President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that it is at the credit of the ICCI that it took the initiative to organize first APCPC in 2020 to bring Presidents of

all Chambers of Commerce & Industry at one platform to discuss the key issues of business community and put forward proposals to the government for resolving them and now it is once again all set to convene the second APCPC on June 25, 26, 2024. He said the event aims to discuss important issues, share ideas and collaborate on initiatives that promote economic growth and development. The Conclave will feature keynote speeches, panel discussions, and networking opportunities, providing a platform for business leaders to engage with each other and with policymakers. He said that at the moment, the economy of the country is facing multiple challenges, which have slowed down the business activities, therefore, the ICCI felt the need to bring the leadership of the entire business community at one place and give comprehensive as well as workable proposals to the government for the revival of business and economic activities. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari added that on the occasion, the concerned federal ministers would also take the business community into confidence about the government's measures to promote ease of doing business in the country.

S&P Global Pakistan marks 19th anniversary milestone

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, [20 June 2024] — S&P Global, a provider of credit ratings, benchmarks, analytics and workflow solutions in the global capital, commodity and automotive markets is proud to celebrate its 19th anniversary of operations in Pakistan this month. Since its establishment in 2005, S&P Global Pakistan has been at the forefront of providing essential intelligence that enables governments, businesses, and individuals to unlock new opportunities, solve challenges and accelerate progress for the world. Over the past 19 years, S&P Global Pakistan has built a strong reputation in "Powering Global Markets" and delivering impact for its people, customers, and communities. On this momentous occasion, Mujeeb Zahur, Managing Director of S&P Global Pakistan, said, "S&P Global Pakistan's continuous growth is a testament to our shared commitment to Accelerate Progress and live by our values of Discovery, Partnership and Integrity. On this special day, we celebrate every team member in Pakistan who strives to bring our purpose and values to life and helps us build a more diverse, equitable and inclusive organization." As S&P Global Pakistan enters its 20th year, the company will continue to focus on its five strategic pillars: Customer at the Core; Grow and innovate; Expand the potential of data & technology; Lead, Inspire, execute and deliver. These pillars will continue to guide the company in helping the world's leading organizations plan for tomorrow, today.

Romina Khurshid praises UNDP's climate support

ISLAMABAD : Deputy Resident Representative for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Pakistan, Van Nguyen called on Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change MNA Romina Khurshid Alam here on Thursday whereas the Coordinator lauded the Programme's financial and technical support to the country for tackling climate crisis. During the meeting held here at the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, both sides discussed at length the matters related to the climate risk mitigation, climate finance for adaptation and mitigation measures, agriculture insurance, urban flood resilience, a news release said. The senior UNDP-Pakistan official Van Nguyen also briefed the PM's aide about the Global Shield against Climate Risks initiative, saying the new global funding mechanism aimed to close protection gaps in climate-vulnerable countries like Pakistan,

using pre-arranged finance. Sharing details, she apprised the PM's aide Romina Khurshid further said that the Vulnerable Twenty Group (V20) together with the Group of Seven (G7) and other supporting countries launched the Global Shield against Climate Risks initiative to provide and facilitate more and better pre-arranged protection against climate and disaster related risks for vulnerable people in the highly climate risk-prone countries. "Basically, the Global Shield against Climate Risks initiative is more and better pre-arranged and trigger-based financial resource, which is immediately-available fund in response to disasters, in the most efficient, effective and fastest way for the economy, businesses, and communities in the most climate-vulnerable countries," UNDP-Pakistan's Van Nguyen elaborated during the meeting with Romina Khurshid Alam. "More importantly, provid-

ing countries with comprehensive support in further understanding the climate risks and impacts and the innovative solutions and support to plug the protection gap and effectively address losses and damages caused and exacerbated by climate change is an overarching purpose of the initiative," the UNDP-Pakistan's senior official informed the PM's aide. "Another key objective of the initiative is provision of grant-based financial and technical assistance to climate-vulnerable countries like Pakistan so as to develop and implement solutions for financial protection of the vulnerable communities linked with climate change and adaptation efforts," she added. Meanwhile, the UNDP-Pakistan official also assured the PM's aide Romina Khurshid Alam of her organisation's all-out support to access the financial and technical support provided by the initiative to build the country's climate resilience.—APP

PTCL & Huawei Conduct First Symmetric 50G-PON Trial

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL), country's largest telecom and ICT services provider, proudly announces Pakistan's inaugural trial of Symmetric 50G-PON technology, marking a significant stride towards ushering in next-generation fiber-optic broadband services in the country. This achievement is the culmination of PTCL's strategic collaboration with Huawei, a global leader in information and communication technology. Symmetric 50G-PON can provide 50 Gbps connectivity in downstream as well as upstream transmission simultaneously. Symmetric 50G-PON provides an edge over the Asymmetric 50 G-PON which supports 50 Gbps in downstream transmission only. PTCL also inaugurated Asymmetric 50G-PON for the very first time in Pakistan at the beginning of the year. 50 GPON is recognized by ITUT as the next frontier in Passive Optical Network-based broadband technology, which is poised to revolutionize Pakistan's digital landscape. With substantially enhanced capabilities surpassing those of existing GPON and XG(S)-GPON technologies, 50G-PON delivers an impressive 50 Gbps per PON port. This advancement holds the promise of reshaping future demands across industries, enterprises, businesses, campuses, and residential settings, unlocking the boundless potential for bandwidth-intensive and low-latency next-generation services. Key applications and services enabled by this technology include innovations like Holographic Technologies, integration of XR-based Metaverses in both domestic and professional domains, Smart Manufacturing leveraging 3D Machine Vision, Remote Surgery and Medical Clinics, and High-Performance Gaming, amongst others. Additionally, it serves as a valuable asset for business and enterprise services, effectively catering to Smart Campuses, Video Production Studios, Edge Data Centers, Cloud-Centric SMEs, and Small Offices/Home Offices (SoHos). A notable feature of 50G-PON technology is its seamless coexistence with GPON and XG(S)-PON over the same physical and passive optical network infrastructure. This capability shall empower PTCL to offer significantly enhanced broadband speeds to its customers through on-demand service upgrade requests. Group Chief Technology and Information Officer (GCTIO) at PTCL & Ufone 4G, Jafar Khalid expressed his enthusiasm for this milestone, stating, "PTCL has achieved yet another remarkable milestone with the successful trial of 50G-PON Symmetric technology in Pakistan. This initiative represents a significant stride towards the future evolution of fiber broadband connectivity in Pakistan, and signifies PTCL's sustained commitment to enhance connectivity, and digital lifestyles of its customers."—DNA

ISSI-MEMO host Webinar on Palestinian refugees

DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood stressed the need to acknowledge the unwavering spirit of refugees the world over

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD : The Centre for Afghanistan Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with the Middle East Monitor (MEMO), hosted a webinar to mark World Refugee Day, titled, "The Future of Palestinian Refugees." The webinar was moderated by Ms. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA. The speakers at the webinar included Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI; Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG, ISSI; Dr. Daud Abdullah, Director Middle East Monitor (MEMO); Dr. Salman Abu Sitta, Founder and President Palestine Land Society; Dr. Nader Al-Turk, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of the State of Palestine; and Prof. Nur Masalha, Palestinian historian. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood stressed the need to acknowledge

the unwavering spirit of refugees the world over. He highlighted how Pakistan has been hosting Afghan refugees since 1979, and remains a major refugee-hosting country despite economic challenges. He noted that according to UNHCR global displacement, driven by conflicts in Gaza, Sudan, and Myanmar, reached 117.3 million people in 2023, including 1.7 million Palestinians displaced in Gaza due to Israel's war. He described Palestinian refugee crisis, rooted in illegal occupation and dehumanizing treatment by Israel, as one of the longest-standing humanitarian issues. Despite formidable challenges, Palestinian refugees had shown remarkable resilience over the decades. On World Refugee Day, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood called for solidarity with Palestinian refugees and other refugees worldwide, urging the international community to address displacement's root causes, ensure refugees' fundamental rights, and


help refugees rebuild their lives, emphasizing the need for Palestinians to reclaim what is rightfully theirs. Ms. Amina Khan highlighted the Palestinian refugee crisis due to Israel's systematic occupation and oppression since 1948. She said that the ongoing reign of terror that has been unleashed on Palestine amounts to what can only be characterized as genocide has led to further displacement putting into question the right of return for refugees. She said despite Israel's ongoing atrocities, Palestinians have demonstrated their steadfast determination and resilience. Ms. Khan added that systematic oppression leads to resistance and called for Palestinians' rightful return to an independent homeland with Jerusalem as its capital. Dr. Salman Abu Sitta lamented that the issue of Palestinian refugees was being ignored by certain countries while focusing on Israeli hostages, asserting the refugees' legal right to return



despite Israeli usurpation. He added that the international law was on the side of the Palestinian refugees and supported their right to return. He highlighted the UNHCR's failure to recognize all refugees and called for a future plan with refugees' voices central. Dr. Sitta urged leveraging global university protests and civil society support for the Palestinian cause, increasing contributions to South Africa's case against Israel, and more efforts by the Muslim and Arab countries. Prof. Nur Masalha emphasized understanding the history of the Palestinian issue, highlighting the 1948 Nakba and ongoing expulsions. Noting that Palestinians never voluntarily left their land and were forcibly evicted through systematic actions of the occupying power. He added that international law supports the right of return and stressed empowering refugees. He pointed out that Israel's refusal nullifies the concept of voluntary repatriation.

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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

Turkish Airlines.....8494949

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Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Bulgaria to Pakistan Ms. Irena Gancheva visited a school being run on charity and remained with the students for a while. The ambassador appreciated the gesture of the school caretakers and assured her full support.— DNA

PM lauds CDA, ICT admin

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday appreciated the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Islamabad Capital Territory Administration for effectively carrying out the cleanliness drive during Eid-ul-Azha. On his X timeline, the prime minister also appreciated CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner of Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa over the commendable operations during the three days of Eid. "I deeply appreciate Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Chairman CDA/Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Islamabad Capital Territory administration for effectively executing a commendable cleanliness drive during Eid-ul-Azha. Shabash (Well Done)," he remarked.

Exports increase by 28.75% to Rs 7.9 trillion in 11 months

ISLAMABAD: The exports from the country in the rupee term witnessed an increase of 28.75 percent during the first eleven months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. Exports during July-May (2023-2024) totaled Rs. 7,962,082 million as against Rs. 6,183,949 million during the corresponding period of last year, according to PBS provisional figures. Exports from Pakistan during May, 2024 increased by 25.99 percent to Rs. 790,199 million compared to exports of Rs. 627,199 million in May 2023. On month-on-month basis, the exports from the country increased by 20.83 percent in May 2024 when compared to exports of Rs. 653,957 million in April 2024. The main commodities of exports during May 2024 included knitwear (Rs. 115,022 million), readymade garments (Rs. 97,564 million), bed wear (Rs. 77,184 million), rice others (Rs. 75,311 million), cotton cloth (Rs. 48,117 million), towels (Rs. 28,768 million), petroleum products, excluding top Naptha (Rs. 25,393 million), rice Basmati (Rs. 20,807 million), madeup articles, excluding towels & bedwear (Rs. 18,558 million) and cotton yarn (Rs. 17,883 million). On the other hand, imports during July-May (FY2023-24) totaled Rs. 14,109,047 million as against Rs. 12,272,596 million during the corresponding period of last year, showing an increase of 14.96% Imports into Pakistan during May, 2024 amounted to Rs. 1,376,815 million (provisional) as against Rs. 1,347,817 million in April, 2024 and Rs. 1,228,739 million during May, 2023 showing an increase of 2.15% over April, 2024 and an increase of 12.05% over May, 2023.—APP

Refugees: UNHCR stresses countries to resolve conflicts

World Refugee Day is a time to recognize the generosity of host countries that have kept their borders and hearts open to people in need of protection

DNA

ISLAMABAD: UNHCR Pakistan Spokesperson, Qaiser Khan Afridi Thursday on 'World Refugee Day' said that over 75 percent of refugees were being hosted by middle-income countries where we urged nations to resolve political conflicts and share the responsibilities of displace refugees. Speaking to the news channel, he said, "These refugee nations are facing rising challenges such as political conflicts, climatic factors, disasters, and growing external debt, hindering their ability to address specific national needs and achieve sustainable development goals and development aspirations." "World Refugee Day is a time to recognize the generosity of host countries that have kept their borders and hearts open to people in need of protection, he added. The "Pakistani nation and government are very proud of our hospitality for millions of refugees and will continue to support every initiative for the establishment of peace, prosperity, and the development of these people," Afridi said. World Refugee Day is being observed today to honor the courage, strength, and determination of refugees who are forced to flee their homeland under threat of persecution, conflict, and violence. This year's theme of the day is 'Solidarity with Refugees.' "Pakistan continues to be one of the world's largest refugee hosting countries, providing safety to millions of people forced to flee their countries," Afridi lauded. "UNHCR is playing an important role in the restoration and protection of refugees, and these people also need global solidarity to rebuild their lives with dignity," he continued. "Let us pledge to reaffirm the world's collective responsibility in assisting and welcoming refugees, upholding their human rights, and helping resolve the conflicts that are uprooting so many," Afridi vowed. He said, "There is urgent global collaboration that is required to put agreed protection principles into practice." Replying to a question, he emphasized the need to address the root causes of displacement and ensure the safety of millions affected by conflict, violence, and climate change, noting that the forcibly displaced were among the world's most vulnerable communities.

Commissioner lauds sanitary staff

Round the clock monitoring of the cleanliness operation was being conducted and it was ensured that offal and solid waste were picked up from the temporary transfer stations and shifted immediately to the landfill site, he added

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner of Rawalpindi Division Engineer Aamir Khattak here on Thursday lauded the sanitary staff and officers for keeping all city areas clean during Eid ul Azha holidays. Chairing a meeting, the Commissioner appreciated the staff who made earnest efforts to clean Rawalpindi city by spending their Eid in the field. "On the days of Eid-ul-Azha, cleanliness arrangements were ensured across the division, which is also being appreciated in public circles," he shared. "All the staff and officers who spent their Eid in the field are commendable," the Commissioner said. "We have been able to make Rawalpindi Waste Free only by being alert and performing our duties in the best possible way during Eid." "We have to continue working with the same dedication even beyond Eid because by working together, we can do even greater work for public relief," he added. Deputy Commissioner of Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema, Additional Commissioner Coordination, Syed Nizarat Ali, Chief Executive Officer, Rawalpindi Waste Management Company, Rana Sajid, Chief Officer Municipal Corporation, Imran Ali, Divisional Officer Civil Defense, Sanjeeda Khanum and others attended the meeting. The meeting was briefed that a total of 8837.55 tonnes of entrails of sacrificial animals were shifted from Rawalpindi district in three days of Eid. On the first day of Eid, 3289.38 tonnes, on second day 3198.87 tonnes and on third day of Eid, 2349.3 tonnes offal and remains of the sacrificial animals were disposed of. Temporary transfer stations were set up at Tehsil level for Eid days, the Commissioner said. Round the clock monitoring of the cleanliness operation was being conducted and it was ensured that offal and solid waste were picked up from the temporary transfer stations and shifted immediately to the landfill site, he added. "100% resolution of the public complaints was ensured and the cleanliness campaign is getting good recognition at the public level," the Commissioner informed.—DNA

PML-N leader stresses collective wisdom

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League (N) leader Ch Jaffar Iqbal Thursday urged political parties in the Parliament to join hands for a common goal of bringing political and economic stability in the country and warned that nobody will be allowed to harm national interest at any costs. Talking to PTV news he said that there is need for certain legislation and reforms in state institutions to strengthen rule of law in the country, adding, our primary objective should be to attract foreign direct investment. He further elaborated that Pakistan has capacity to absorb all the foreign investments in different sectors to boost the economy and gradually the country will emerge as an economic power in the world. The country is in dire need of political and economic stability, he said, adding, all the political parties must have to develop a mutual consensus on national interests. The main focus of the incumbent government is only to revive the economy and bring it back on the right track.—APP

French Varsity awards PhD degree to Pak student

Syed Aqeel Hussain Shah, Press Attaché, French Embassy Islamabad, a proud father was among the audience at the University's auditorium witnessing his son to receive the degree

ISLAMABAD: The Sorbonne University of France has awarded the "PhD in Computer Networking" degree to Muhammad Imran Syed, a brilliant Pakistani student hailing from remote Nauranga village of Mianwali District. Syed Aqeel Hussain Shah, Press Attaché, French Embassy Islamabad, a proud father was among the audience at the University's auditorium witnessing his son to receive the degree. Imran Syed successfully defended his PhD thesis on September 5, 2023. After obtaining BSc in Telecom Engineering from Bahria University Islamabad with silver medal, he earned his first MSC in Mobile and Satellite Communications with distinction in his research paper on 4G, from the University of Glamorgan, Wales, United Kingdom, and the second in same field under a scholarship from the European Institute of Technology (EIT), spending one year in Berlin, Germany and the second one at Sorbonne, France. Soon after his second Masters, he was fortunately selected against only one post of PhD in Computer Networking at the Sorbonne University Paris on scholarship. During three years of PhD, his five research papers were approved, presented in conferences and published in different international journals. Imran Syed is the grandson of a well-known educationist of Mianwali District late Headmaster Atta Muhammad Shah.— DNA

Exporters damaging economy to make money

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Hanif Mughal, Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Shadbad, said on Thursday that politically connected exporters are causing irreparable damage to the country's economy and the people. He said that, after taking billions of dollars in concessions every year, exporters earn foreign exchange as much as Pakistani expatriates do, which does not cost the government anything. Exporters neither upgrade machinery nor add value to their products. They do not invest in employee training to enhance their skills, as they depend on incentives. In a statement issued here, Dr. Hanif Mughal said that some exporters use their influence to get currency devalued to fill their coffers. This practice is destroying the economy and making the lives of the commoners difficult, he observed. He said that even now, the dollar's value is at most 250 rupees, but no one in power dares to stabilize the exchange rate to give some relief to the people. If the dollar becomes cheaper at 28 rupees, inflation will fall drastically, which is unacceptable to the greedy exporters who are only concerned about profits. According to Dr. Hanif Mughal, the general industry receives billions of rupees in relief as hundreds of influential individuals have registered their industries as export industries. Many industrial units have nothing to do with exports, and they sell their produce in cash in the local market, so there is no record of sale. He explained that hundreds of mills earning billions of rupees show a profit of only a few million. He said that the tax authorities remain silent due to the political influence of such millers or mutually beneficial relations. The government can save billions of rupees if the export status given to the general industry is withdrawn. Still, it is only possible when rulers are ready to sacrifice some political interests.—APP

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Briefs

ICT admin disposes of over 0.2 mln offals

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration efficiently managed cleanup efforts, disposing of about 0.2 million offals and over 1,750 tons of waste during Eid ul Azha. Last year, about 94,000 offals were disposed of in the Federal Capital on Eid. This year, the administration worked tirelessly to ensure that offals and waste were collected from every household, said the spokesman for the ICT administration. Sharing the details, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, said that more than 150 citizen complaints were received via the 1334 helpline, prompting immediate response teams to address the issues. He said that on the first day of Eid, over 99,000 offals and over 1,750 tons of waste were disposed of, while more than 100 citizen complaints were received via the 1334 helpline, prompting immediate response teams to address the issues. Similarly, on the second day of Eid, the district administration resumed the cleanup operations and disposed of over 99,000 offals while receiving more than 50 citizen complaints via the 1334 helpline. The DC congratulated all Assistant Commissioners and the district administration teams for their dedication to restoring the city's cleanliness. He emphasized the importance of citizen cooperation in maintaining the city's cleanliness and beauty. He said that special attention was given to rural areas this year, with biodegradable bags distributed to citizens for waste collection. This model proved successful in urban areas, with residents placing the filled bags outside their homes for collection.—APP

ANF seizes 236 kg drugs in seven operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations across the country managed to recover 236 kg of drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 3.6 kg ice was recovered from a passenger going to Bahrain at Islamabad Airport. Several capsules containing 900 grams heroin were recovered from the stomach of a passenger going to Bahrain at Sialkot Airport. In another operation at Islamabad Airport, 254 grams heroin and 200 grams hashish were recovered from a Doha-bound passenger. 300 grams hashish was recovered from a parcel sent to Karachi from a cargo office at Lahore Airport. 146 kg hashish and 69 kg opium were recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Motorway Toll Plaza Nankana Sahib. 15 kg hashish and 800 grams ice were recovered from a parcel sent to Multan from a courier office in Quetta. 5 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of two accused arrested near Wahari in Multan. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Anti-Narcotics Act while further investigations are under process.—APP



KHANPUR: People enjoying Parasailing at Khanpur lake during the eid holidays.— ONLINE

Budget has disappointed public: Fmr ICCI chief

Important departments have become victims of politics and become a burden on the country despite investing billions of rupees in their revival, he lamented

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, on Thursday rejected the Federal Budget, terming it an effort that aims to support elites and squeeze the masses. The budget has nothing for the people but disappointments and added problems, while it is loaded with benefits to the in-

fluent, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that the budget will make the life of the people more difficult while the elite will continue to get benefits of four thousand billion rupees. The business leader said that this budget would lead to increased mistrust and distance between the government and the people, making it less likely to improve the country's economy. Shahid Rashid Butt said that endless elitism will never

help improve the economy, which is on the brink of default. He said that the government listens to the yes-men instead of the people, and every economic decision is made according to the will of criminal businesses. The people are disillusioned and their lives have become challenging with the passing of each day. Those who do not like the situation in Pakistan and have some resources run away from the country. Shahid Rashid Butt said that

those who come to power without the help of the people increase their problems instead of reducing them. Politicians cannot manage any institution but have all the skills to destroy important government institutions. Due to the destruction of government institutions, the private sector charges arbitrary prices for many of its products and services, and there is no system or will to control it. Important departments have

become victims of politics and become a burden on the country despite investing billions of rupees in their revival, he lamented. The government does not want to reduce its expenses, nor does it intend to reduce the privileges of the elite if the country goes bankrupt. He said there are solutions to the problems, but these solutions are not acceptable to certain influential circles which will keep country dependent on loans and masses poor.

Chinese bus manufacturer and Master Motor entered a joint venture

ISLAMABAD: Chinese bus manufacturer Yutong and Master Motor have entered a joint venture for the local production of new energy city buses in Pakistan. According to an official statement issued by Master Motor, a memorandum of understanding was signed to locally manufacture and assemble the energy city buses in Pakistan. Under the agreement, Yutong Master will set up a new greenfield plant for the operation and will become the first and only company to produce city buses in the country. Yutong's new energy city buses are available in hybrid and electric powertrains and aim to meet the needs of public transport across Pakistan, supporting gov-

ernment efforts to upgrade transportation infrastructure. The MoU was signed by Dania Malik, Director of Master Motor, and Huang Yuanhao of Yutong at the Pakistan Shenzhen Business Conference on June 5, 2024. The conference aimed to foster new business opportunities and stimulate economic activity in Pakistan. Yutong, the world's largest bus manufacturer, has led the global market for nine years, holding over 15% global and 36.1% Chinese market share. Established in 2013, Yutong Master quickly became the leading bus manufacturer in Pakistan, serving as a trusted partner for public and private fleet users, Gwadar Pro reported.—DNA

1st unit of Suki Kinari Hydropower Station begins wet testing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The first unit of Pakistan Suki Kinari Hydropower Station, the largest hydropower power station invested and constructed by China Energy Construction Overseas Investment Co., Ltd, has successfully started and formally entered the wet testing phase. Unit 4, as the first unit is known, passed

a series of tests after starting-up, operating smoothly and meeting the design requirements. It will undergo further testing such as a temperature stability test and an overspeed test to ensure that all technical indicators meet the design standards before proceeding to trial operations. Addressing the start-up ceremony, Cheng Dan, General Manager of China Energy Construction

Overseas Investment Co., Ltd., noted that the commencement of wet testing for the first unit marks a major "final sprint" stage in project construction, moving closer to the goal of operation and power generation. Located on the Kunha River in the Mansehra area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in northwest Pakistan, the SK hydropower station is a key project in the first batch of priority.

Pakistan reaffirms commitment to peaceful space exploration

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), Muhammad Yousuf Khan has termed the outer space as a common heritage of humanity and said Pakistan is strongly committed to peaceful use of outer space. The Chairman Suparco said this while addressing the inaugural session of the 67th session of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). The session is held in Vienna and will continue till June 28. Highlighting outer space as a common heritage of humanity, he stressed its equitable and non-discriminatory accessibility, said a news release received here. Chairman SUPARCO proudly shared Pakistan's recent advancements, including the successful launches of the iCUBE-Qamar satellite and the Pakistan Multi-Mission Communication Satellite, PakSat-MM1, this May. He also revealed future plans for a rover mission to the lunar south pole in collaboration with China's Chang'E-8 Mission. Earlier, the Chairman attended the Lunar Conference organized by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) on June 18, where he discussed Pakistan's commitment to lunar exploration and international cooperation in space research.—DNA

Chinese peanut varieties to reach 2,000 acres in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Planting area of Chinese peanut varieties to reach 2,000 acres in Pakistan. Last month, farmers in Lahore received a special batch of peanut seeds. These seeds originated from Weifang in Shandong Province which is renowned for its high-quality agricultural products. This batch of seeds is one of the new varieties developed by China-Pakistan Peanut Breeding and Promotion Program. Pakistan's peanut sowing season falls in May. Chinese technicians utilize Internet technology to remotely monitor peanut growth for Pakistani farmers and provide guidance on field management. In 2016, Shandong Rainbow Agricul-

ture Polytron Technologies Inc began cultivating the Pakistani market. In 2023, they exported the first batch of original peanut seeds to Pakistan and planted about 1,000 mu (66.7 hectare) in Attock and Chakwal cities, Punjab province. "We have experimented and planted five new peanut varieties in Pakistan through the peanut breeding and promotion project, which grows and yields well.

The yields of these varieties in 2023 are twice as high as those of the local traditional varieties, which have been recognized by the local government and farmers," said Fan Changcheng, deputy general manager of the company. "This year, we'll expand the trial planting area to about 2,000 mu (133.4

hectare)," he added. Pakistan is a significant consumer of edible oil, with peanuts being one of the primary cash crops for oil production. Previously, Pakistan had low edible oil production, with some cultivation areas yielding approximately 1 ton of peanuts per hectare highlighting a significant disparity compared to China's high oleic peanut varieties. Mahmood, who studied in China for many years and is now a technician at Rainbow Agriculture, is responsible for coordinating the peanut breeding project with Pakistan.

Pakistan and China are close friends, and I aim to introduce China's advanced agricultural technology to Pakistan. This project will not only boost the income

of Pakistani farmers but also decrease Pakistan's reliance on imported edible oils," Imran stated. Since the establishment of China-Pakistan Agricultural Cooperation Center in Weifang in March 2023, more than 10 Pakistani agricultural companies have discussed cooperation with Chinese enterprises. They have launched a variety of cooperation projects, including peanut breeding and promotion, combined cultivation of potatoes and ginger, cotton pest control, and agricultural technology training. These initiatives aim to promote new crop varieties of peanuts, potatoes, ginger, and other crops in Pakistan. "China has obvious advantages in crop varieties, industrial chain, technical equipment, etc.

Tarar grieved over death of father of NPC President

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Thursday expressed grief and sorrow over the death of the father of National Press Club President Azhar Jatoti. In a condolence message, the minister while expressing his heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the bereaved family said he was saddened to hear the news of the death of the father of Azhar Jatoti and he shared his grief. Attaullah Tarar said that parents were a great blessing and father's death was a big tragedy for a son. The minister prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude.—APP

RWMC Chairman praises officials for 'good performance'

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) Saqib Rafiq Thursday praised officials for their good performance and said that RWMC had implemented a comprehensive strategy to effectively collect and dispose of more than 9,000 tons of animal waste during the three days of Eid-ul-Azha while resolving public complaints. Talking to the PTV news channel, he said that almost 43 transfer stations were being set up at the Union Council level with various zones, adding that trade bodies of the city and citizens had also appreciated the department's performance. He said that for the first time, the relevant authority distributed biodegradable bags among citizens so that the waste material could be safely collected and disposed of. Around 5000 sanitation staff took part in the 3-day clean-up operation, he mentioned. For the facilitation of citizens, a helpline and a wi-fi-based monitoring system were set up, he said, adding that round-the-clock administration and other staff were present to assist with public complaints. He said the Waste Management Authority and provincial and district administrations worked day and night on the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryum Nawaz to dispose of millions of tons of garbage. RWMC also launched an exhaustive campaign during Eid-ul-Azha, where we have involved Ulema and local government representatives to create awareness among citizens to fulfill their social responsibility of cleanliness on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.—APP



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US-India forging tenuous ties of convenience

THE joint statement of the United States and India and a series of technology cooperation agreements released during US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's visit to India earlier this week serve to elucidate that the only consensus, if any, that the two sides have is "the enemy of my enemy is my friend". A core mission of Sullivan as the first senior US official to visit the South Asian country since Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi started his third consecutive term earlier this month, and who met with not only his Indian counterpart, but also Modi and the Indian foreign minister, as well as business and industry leaders during his two-day visit, was to ensure that the Modi government does not drift away from its assigned role in Washington's China-targeted "Indo-Pacific" strategy. By taking the initiative to offer to remove some "long-standing barriers" that the US has intentionally maintained and which have hindered high-tech cooperation with India, Sullivan tried to show New Delhi that Washington is willing to up its ante to persuade India to not only sustain its in-spirit presence in its anti-China gang but also play a substantial part in it. By ignoring India's sizable and fast-growing trade with Russia and New Delhi's stable relations with Moscow, which suffice for Washington to smear Beijing as an accomplice of Moscow in the Ukraine crisis, as well as recent reports that Indian government agents conducted covert missions to commit extrajudicial killings in Canada and the US, Sullivan laid bare the special favor Washington is willing to show India in exchange for the latter's participation in the US administration's "Indo-Pacific" strategy.

As the potential of high-tech cooperation between India and China remains untapped, Sullivan's demand that India work together with the US to "prevent the leakage of sensitive and dual-use technologies to countries of concern" indicates Washington's condition for it to lower the "barriers" to bilateral high-tech collaboration. In other words, the US is urging India to surrender its long-term strategic autonomy in diplomacy in exchange for the promise of US high-tech cooperation. That explains the lukewarm response of New Delhi, as well as the Indian business community, to the US' bid to try and shackle India to its anti-China bandwagon, as India's losses will dwarf the rewards the US is offering while also making India a piece on its game board against both China and Russia. Those prospects undermine the nationalist and jingoist approach that is an essential prop for the Modi government. Washington should not forget that India pulled out of its "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity" two years ago after the US refused to open its market to it while demanding India to open its to the US, which is also why negotiations on a bilateral free trade deal have stalled for long. Nor that India's desire for multipolarity, in which it is a leading player, is fundamentally at odds with the US' goal of maintaining its pride of place in the international system. While there may appear to be grounds for a partnership of convenience between the US and India, those grounds are shaky and there are no sound foundations.



The view on the SNP manifesto

THE Scottish National party has been in government since 2007, but only in the past year has the weight of incumbency started to look like an unmanageable burden. At the party's election manifesto launch, John Swinney performed the role of a steady-handed veteran for which he was recruited just over a month ago. But voters have not forgotten the chaos that led to his appointment – the calamitous miscalculation that collapsed Humza Yousaf's coalition with the Scottish Greens and triggered his resignation after little more than a year as first minister. Also not forgotten are the financial scandals that have tarnished the legacy of Nicola Sturgeon, Mr Yousaf's predecessor. The period when Ms Sturgeon rose above the political fray, and opposition barbs bounced off the SNP without sticking, feels long gone. The party retains a reliable core of voters who are motivated by the demand for independence. But breaking up the union is not the most salient issue for most Scots. Many who voted yes in the 2014 referendum see the cost of living crisis and crumbling public services as issues to address ahead of separation from England. And even on that mission – the SNP's foundational purpose – progress has stalled. Mr Swinney's manifesto advances the independence policy agreed at the SNP's conference last year. Winning a majority of Scottish Westminster seats would be treated as licence to begin negotiations with the UK government "to give democratic effect to Scotland becoming an independent country". The first minister rejects the corollary view that failure to reach that target should mean the demand be dropped. He retrospectively configures the result of the 2021 Scottish parliament elections as a pro-independence mandate to trump the plebiscite seven years earlier.

The second prong of the SNP strategy is an attack on Labour from the left. There is ammunition in Sir Keir Starmer's cautious prospectus, drafted with an eye on ex-Tory voters in England, not the mood in Scotland. Labour's silence on Brexit, and the shadowing of Conservative fiscal plans that dictate painful spending cuts in the next parliament, make it easy for Scottish Nationalists to overlay patterns of grim continuity on to likely regime change at Westminster. But the SNP's proposed alternative links its radical constitutional and economic projects. The plan stirs UK-wide tax rises together with independence and re-joining the European single market. It heroically assumes no cost to Scotland from any Brexit-style rupture from the single market with England. SNP candidates are cast as agents of defiance to be sent to protect the national interest in a repressive alien parliament. Problems in areas of Holyrood competence – policing, education, health, transport – are, by rhetorical pivot to the terms of devolution, made to sound like someone else's fault. By this device, Mr Swinney hopes to deflect blame for his party's failures in office. This is a line that resonated when Downing Street was occupied by Boris Johnson and Liz Truss – prime ministers whom even Scottish Tories struggled to endorse. The prospect of the UK having a majority Labour government for the first time since 2010 changes the calculus. The SNP argument has worn thin from overuse.

Hot and cold "X" messages on Eid ul Adha

Qamar Bashir



The next critical message came from PTI founder Imran Khan. Although imprisoned, his X handle is operated by someone outside the country with his approval. His Eid ul Adha message reads: "Eid Mubarak to my nation. Eid ul Azha symbolizes the spirit of sacrifice shown by Prophet Ibrahim AS. Unfortunately, the ego-driven actions of a few have degraded our institutions and society. The state of Pakistani cricket reflects this, with nepotism pushing it towards disaster. Mohsin Naqvi, connected to Asif Zardari and COAS Asim Munir, used his position for political suppression rather than improving the team, leading to low morale

HERE were two streaks of messages on the occasion of Eid al-Adha. One was critical, led by former President Dr. Arif Alvi, PTI founder, and former Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid. The optimistic streak was headed by the prime minister and COAS. Dr. Arif Alvi's message was the most critical, dedicating Eid to those who suffered for their loyalty to the country, including the imprisoned, beaten, displaced, and threatened, as well as military and civilian martyrs, and the Muslims of Palestine and Kashmir. He prayed for Allah's mercy and justice for all. After his retirement as the President of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi has been increasingly vocal about the injustices he perceives. He criticizes the treatment of participants in a peaceful rally in Lahore on May 9, 2023, who he says were subjected to severe hardships, torture, illegal confinement, threats, and intimidation. In his Eid message, he dedicated the occasion to these incarcerated workers and political activists, acknowledging their loyalty to the country. Instead of inciting action, he called for divine intervention, seeking Allah's mercy and justice for all. Almost the same tone and tenor were reflected in an interview with Sheikh Rashid, the former Interior Minister, broadcast on several channels during Eid ul-Adha. He recounted being imprisoned for seven years during Benazir Bhutto's tenure and publicly lashed under Ayub Khan's martial law. He also endured incarceration during Yahya Khan's regime. Throughout his arduous political career, he faced imprisonment, torture, and humiliation. However, he stated that these past hardships were insignificant compared to the recent torture, both mental and physical, he endured after being abducted by the state. In one episode shared on social media, Sheikh Rashid was described as being threatened to be hung upside down from a crane to extract a statement against Imran Khan and his wife regarding Tosha Khana. When he refused, he was offered an expensive cigar. Upon being asked to read a defamatory statement, he again refused and was placed in a prison cell with loud, terrifying noisy three different movies running round the clock on the cell wall, causing sleepless nights. He resorted to taking sleeping pills

and endured significant mental torture, resulting in weight loss and memory issues. Sheikh Rashid described experiencing unprecedented brutality, recounting how a 70-year-old female cancer patient was dragged from her house and imprisoned. He listed other women and girls who faced similar harsh conditions to break their support for the PTI chairman. Rashid revealed that while the police and law enforcement agencies carried out these actions, they privately admitted they had no grounds for his arrest, claiming they were acting under state orders. He criticized the establishment for these atrocities, saying it tarnished the reputation of the country's most revered institution. The next critical message came from PTI founder Imran Khan. Although imprisoned, his X handle is operated by someone outside the country with his approval. His Eid ul Adha message reads: "Eid Mubarak to my nation. Eid ul Azha symbolizes the spirit of sacrifice shown by Prophet Ibrahim AS. Unfortunately, the ego-driven actions of a few have degraded our institutions and society. The state of Pakistani cricket reflects this, with nepotism pushing it towards disaster. Mohsin Naqvi, connected to Asif Zardari and COAS Asim Munir, used his position for political suppression rather than improving the team, leading to low morale. This misplaced focus extends to law and order, with state machinery enforcing brutality while terrorism rises and the economy falters. The key decision-makers must correct course to avoid further institutional destruction." Imran Khan's message targeted Mohsin Naqvi, accusing him of being a frontman and key figure first imposed as interim Chief Minister of Punjab. He allegedly orchestrated the May 9 incident or failed to stop rally participants from entering Jinnah House. Now, as the interior minister, Naqvi is accused of using state instruments to oppress the PTI and its activists. Additionally, he is blamed for damaging the Pakistani cricket team and misusing the position of PCB chairman. The message concludes by urging the powerful establishment to correct its course to prevent further deterioration of state institutions. The positive streak of messages, led by the Prime Minister, extended heartfelt felicitations to the countrymen and all Muslims on Eid-ul-

Azha, emphasizing unity and the spirit of sacrifice. Drawing from over 30 years of public relations experience, it appears that this message was crafted by the Prime Minister's competent press team, possibly without his review. Despite a separate, pragmatic press message, the X post lacked pragmatism, hope, and future-oriented prayers. Meanwhile, Asif Ali Zardari's last X post was on June 11, and his press message was a standard, politically neutral statement. The Pakistan armed forces' news handle posted on X that General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), visited the Line of Control (LOC) in the Haji Pir sector to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha with the troops, highlighting his leadership and commitment to boosting troop morale. Another message on the same handle declared General Syed Asim Munir as their "Red Line." This message was likely intended for adversaries across the border, emphasizing the COAS's significance and resolve, rather than for the Pakistani populace. The official X handles of Nawaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz, and Bilawal Bhutto posted customary Eid messages. However, Maryam Nawaz's posts focused on praising the cleanliness during the disposal of sacrificed animals' remains, a campaign also broadcast on major TV channels, costing billions of rupees. Similarly, the Sindh government ran an expensive campaign highlighting their efforts to provide tanker water in Karachi. These messages indicate post-Eid political strategies: PTI and its allies will focus on agitation and demand the restoration of their mandate, alleging it was stolen through the manipulation of Form 47. They will also press for the release of their leader, political activists, and workers, whom they claim are in politically motivated incarceration. Sheikh Rashid, in his recent interview, predicted that their release is unlikely in the near future. While the other faction, accused of forming the government based on a stolen mandate, struggles to achieve legitimacy and credibility. They are launching highly expensive media campaigns to project their performance and justify maintaining the status quo. Despite their efforts, there is a lack of commitment to addressing the allegations of a stolen mandate through due legal process.

Rise of security challenges on Pakistan's western border

Muhtasim Afridi



The security forces of Pakistan are always vigilant against terrorist acts; however, it takes two to tango – both neighbors have to play equal parts on their sides to counter this issue. It sounds absurd to criticize Afghanistan and Pakistan alone while neglecting the role of India which has been consistently trying to undermine the national security...

SECURITY issues are not a recent phenomenon that Pakistan is dealing with, they continuously reappear to panic the country. While Pakistan's greatest adversary remains India, the state's military is perhaps oblivious to the rising security issues on the Western front. Among other cases, a recent cross-border attack from Afghan soil resulted in four civilians and three military personnel injured, which is a huge question on Pakistan's security. These challenges remain a key concern for Pakistan – even after spending 20 years in the War on Terror, the terrorist elements continue to haunt the country today. Unfortunately, the geographical location of Pakistan has become a curse – on the Eastern side it is surrounded by India, and on the West, it shares a large border with Afghanistan which is an epicenter of terrorist groups. For a country like Afghanistan, the formation of the Taliban government is not the end, there is still a struggle for power in the country – given that it is home to several non-state actors among which the most active are Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Al-Qaeda, and Daish, with the addition of Jabhat Ansar al-Mahdi Khorasan (JAMK) which is a newly emerged militant group. Fortifying borders is crucial for the state's security. Weak border security only means vulnerability. According to a report, Pakistan has witnessed about 245 terrorist acts in the first three months of 2024 – specifically in areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, both adjoining Afghanistan on the Durand Line. The nuclear power has consistently asked the Afghan government to take stringent measures in order to halt the flow of terrorists across the border, which is the root cause of violent activities in Pakistan. Seem-

ingly, very little development has been made in this regard by the Afghan government, i.e., each year, numerous terrorists smuggle into Pakistan and carry out violence. In a recent effort to infiltrate the Pak-Afghan border, seven terrorists were killed by the Pakistan military in the North Waziristan district. In response to this, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) stated that Afghan government was supposed to deny misuse of Afghan soil by radical elements for any acts of terrorism against Pakistan's territory. The security forces of Pakistan are always vigilant against terrorist acts; however, it takes two to tango – both neighbors have to play equal parts on their sides to counter this issue. It sounds absurd to criticize Afghanistan and Pakistan alone while neglecting the role of India which has been consistently trying to undermine the national security of Pakistan by using proxy means – a tactic which is widely used today by many states to disorient the population of their enemy. The country has been alleged on multiple occasions for providing financial and political support to separatist forces such as the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), which recently claimed responsibility for the attack on a naval airbase in Turbat, Balochistan. India continuously supports such heinous acts to divide Pakistani society. Further, security matters have one bad aspect: they serve as a choking agent for the state's economic projects. A recent suicide bomb attack on the convoy of Chinese engineers near the Dasu dam project killed five Chinese nationals along with one Pakistani citizen – ultimately leading to a temporary suspension of the project by the Chinese government. In a statement, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi claimed that the attack was coordinated by the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan

(TTP) from Afghan soil, and the authorities have concrete evidence for it – adding that the intelligence agencies of Pakistan's enemy sponsored the attack. The energy sector in Pakistan is already fragile, and incidents like these make it worse. As expected, the major dam project has the potential to produce 4320 MW of electricity but has continuously been undermined by terrorist acts and hence delayed. Surely, the enemies of Pakistan do not want the country to stand on its feet. As Pakistan faces these challenges time and again, it must learn one crucial lesson: without combating terrorism the country is going nowhere in the future. Security remains one of the essential elements of national power – for this reason, the government of Pakistan must tighten checks and balances on its Western border, to cut off the aid that terrorists receive from external forces. Similarly, negotiations or mutual agreements with the Afghan government might serve fruitful for the best interests of both neighbors. Pakistan does have an existential threat from India; however, the character of war has changed now – states are more into proxy means to achieve their goals, rather than going into a direct confrontation. Terrorist organizations, private security groups, and intra-state wars mainly characterize contemporary conflicts such as in the case of Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Therefore, Pakistan's intelligence agencies must strengthen their grip on non-state actors and develop more sophisticated strategies to identify the perpetrators. Otherwise, Pakistan might take decades to recover from the security puzzle.

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Briefs

Sunak faces call for election date betting probe

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak faced calls on Thursday to launch an inquiry after a member of his security detail was arrested for allegedly betting on the timing of the general election. London's Metropolitan Police said it was told by the Gambling Commission that a close protection officer was being investigated over the alleged bets. The regulator had already been looking into claims that Conservative party candidate Craig Williams, who served as Sunak's ministerial aide, placed a bet on when the election would be held. A second candidate from Sunak's party, Laura Saunders, is now also under investigation about an alleged bet on the date of the poll, the BBC reported on Wednesday evening. Saunders is married to the Tories' director of campaigns, the broadcaster added. The Conservative party confirmed that the commission had contacted it about "a small number of individuals," without commenting further. Senior minister Michael Gove told the BBC Thursday he could not comment on the specific allegations but said the "broad principle" of using inside information to place bets was "reprehensible." The deputy leader of the smaller opposition Liberal Democrats, Daisy Cooper, urged Sunak to order an inquiry. —APP

8.1 million perished due to air pollution in 2021

UNITED NATIONS : Air pollution is having an increasing impact on human health, becoming the second leading global risk factor for death, according to the fifth edition of the State of Global Air (SoGA) report published in partnership with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). The report, released Wednesday by the Health Effects Institute (HEI), an independent U.S.-based nonprofit research organization, found air pollution accounted for 8.1 million deaths globally in 2021. Beyond these deaths, many more millions of people are living with debilitating chronic diseases, putting tremendous strains on health care systems, economies, and societies. It warned that air pollution is increasingly impacting human health - and is now the second leading global risk factor for premature death, saying many millions are dealing with debilitating chronic diseases, leaving healthcare systems, economies, and societies. Further, it found that children under five are particularly vulnerable to air pollution, leaving over 700,000 in this age group dead in 2021. The SoGA report found that pollutants like outdoor fine particulate matter (PM2.5) - which comes from burning fossil fuels and biomass in sectors like transportation, residential homes, wildfires. —Agencies

Nigeria vaccinates 7M girls against cervical cancer

LAGOS : Nigeria has vaccinated seven million girls across the country against cervical cancer, a common disease among young women in the country. The two-week vaccination program is a major step toward the protection of girls and women against the life-threatening disease, according to the Gavi Vaccine Alliance, a global health partnership collaborating with Nigeria's Ministry of Health, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO). "It's a major breakthrough in girls' health in Nigeria. In just two weeks, an impressive 7 million girls have been vaccinated against the human papillomavirus (HPV)," said Sania Nishar, the chief executive officer of the vaccine alliance. HPV is a common infection spread through sex. High-risk forms of the virus can progress to cervical cancer. —Agencies



ISLAMABAD : Group photo of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar with Chinese engineers and Pakistani team during his visit to Jagran-2 Hydropower Plant under construction in Neelum district, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. —DNA

China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan plan new trade railway

Chinese President, President of Kyrgyzstan and President of Uzbekistan hailed the event as a sign of unity and shared progress

NEWS DESK

BEIJING : China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan will construct a new railway starting in China Kashgar and traversing Torugart, Kosh-Dobo, and Kazarman in Kyrgyzstan, culminating in Andijan in eastern Uzbekistan, to enhance trade and economic cooperation. A trilateral intergovernmental agreement on the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project was signed at a ceremony in Beijing last week. Chinese President Xi Jinping, President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Japarov, and President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev hailed the event as a sign of unity and shared progress. The governments of China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan agreed to embark on constructing the new railway at

a Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit held in the Uzbek city of Samarkand in September 2022. The project feasibility study was updated following the completion of field surveys by Chinese engineers in December last year. "All three countries have diligently prepared for the construction, which is expected to commence later this year," China news reported. The new railway, a beacon of hope and optimism, will start in China's Kashgar and traverse Torugart, Kosh-Dobo, and Kazarman in Kyrgyzstan, culminating in Andijan in eastern Uzbekistan. It is estimated that the railway will shorten the route between China and Europe by about 900 kilometers and reduce freight transit time by eight days. This transformative railway, with its potential to enhance trade and

economic cooperation between the countries along its path, holds the promise of a brighter future and instills optimism due to the potential economic benefits it will bring. According to an earlier announcement, the planned 523-km railway will be constructed through a joint venture involving three countries. The estimated total cost of the project is \$8 billion, with \$4.7 billion allocated for the Kyrgyz part. In a testament to the project's significance, Japarov emphasized that this project is crucial for Kyrgyzstan's global connectivity, allowing his landlocked country to connect with the rest of the world. The project was first proposed in the 1990s, and the three sides signed a memorandum of understanding on constructing the railway in 1997. Some experts believe political

and geopolitical problems have hindered the project's development. The rapidly growing rail traffic volume shows that developing an additional rail transport route between China and Europe, this time through Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, and the South Caucasus, will be economically feasible. The construction of this railway line will create the shortest land route between the two economic centers of the Eurasian continent along the Middle Corridor. At the same time, it will establish direct rail connections between China and Central Asia, the South Caucasus, Iran, Türkiye, and Europe, transforming Central Asia from a landlocked to a land-connected area. The new railway lines will intersect in Central Asia with

railway lines in the north-south direction from Russia and Central Asia through Afghanistan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, and Iran to the deep-water ports of the Indian Ocean. President of Uzbekistan Mirziyoyev specifically highlighted this potential during the signing ceremony on June 6 by saying that the railway will become the shortest land channel between China and the Central Asian countries and open the big markets of the South Asian and Middle Eastern countries. If this plan comes to fruition, the intersection of the East-West and North-South railway routes in Central Asia could transform the region into a major transport hub for the entire Eurasian continent. If this happens, the Great Silk Road revival could become a reality.

Biden voices concern over Palestinians' plight in Gaza

WASHINGTON: As Muslims across the United States celebrated Eid ul-Adha on Sunday, President Joe Biden acknowledged the grave situation of the Palestinians living under Israeli siege and unable to practice their religious obligations. "This year, Eid al-Adha comes at a difficult time for many Muslims around the world. In Gaza, innocent civilians are suffering the horrors of the war between Hamas and Israel," Biden said in a message released by the White House. "Too many innocent people have been killed, including thousands of children. Families have fled their homes and seen their communities destroyed. Their pain is immense," the US leader said. Since Oct 7, Israeli bombardments and ground operations in Gaza have killed more than 36,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and many thousand wounded. In his message, Biden said the US is doing "everything we can to bring an end to the war," adding that this includes increasing humanitarian aid deliveries into the Gaza Strip, working toward an eventual two-state solution and freeing the Israeli hostages held by Hamas. "I strongly believe that the three-phase ceasefire proposal Israel has made to Hamas and that the UN Security Council has endorsed is the best way to end the violence in Gaza and ultimately end the war," he said. According to political observers, President Biden's statement is aimed at addressing the serious concerns the American Muslims have about US strong support to Israel in its aggression against Gaza and, worse, even allowing arms supplies to the Jewish state. Ahead of the November presidential elections, polls have suggested a sharp drop in former Muslims' support to Biden, who is pitched against American President Donald Trump. Biden, in his message, also addressed Muslim communities impacted by the conflict in Sudan, as well as the Rohingya in Myanmar, stressing that "they, like all people, deserve to live free from violence and fear." —APP

Romania sends Patriot missiles to Ukraine

BUCHAREST: NATO member Romania announced Thursday that it would send a Patriot missile system to Ukraine, which Kyiv has requested to help its fight against Russia's invasion. "Considering the significant deterioration of the security situation in Ukraine... council members decided to donate a Patriot system to Ukraine in close coordination with allies," the Supreme Council of National Defense said in a statement. The donation was made "on the condition that our country continues negotiations with allies, in particular the US, with a view to obtaining a similar or equivalent system" to protect its own air space, it added. The country, which borders Ukraine, also needed "a temporary solution to cover the operational vulnerability thus created," it added. While Kyiv is calling for more Patriot missile systems, NATO countries have been reluctant to send them because they want to protect their own airspace. —APP

Global health has become 'geopolitical,' : French president

Emmanuel Macron stresses need for Africa to manufacture vaccines

WEB DESK

ANKARA : Global health has become "geopolitical," France's president said Thursday, stressing the importance of cooperation in this area. "Global health has become geopolitical and health cooperation is a proof of mutual trust," Emmanuel Macron told the Global Forum for Vaccine Sovereignty and Innovation in Paris. Macron noted that France's contributions to international solidarity had increased 50% in seven years, "with a sharp focus on health." Expressing pride in Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which helped vaccinate a billion children, Macron criticized those who consider aiding countries in need as "unnecessary," and emphasized that this partnership is important for Africa. He also

hailed international cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic, but said problems had emerged due to lacking vaccine production. "The core of priority is to be able to manufacture, Macron stressed. Africa manufactures only 2% of the vaccines that it uses and the goal that we have set for ourselves is that by 2040, 60% of vaccines are manufactured on the continent." Also attending the event, GAVI Board Chair Jose Manuel Barroso highlighted the need for international cooperation, and "global solutions" for global challenges. "There are still millions of children who have never been vaccinated against a single disease," he said. The forum in Paris was attended by several African leaders, including African Union Commission chair Moussa Faki Mahamat, President

Mokgweetsi Masisi of Botswana, President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, and President Bassirou Diomaye Faye of Senegal. Meanwhile, Many African leaders and advocacy groups say Africa was unfairly locked out of access to COVID-19 treatment tools, vaccines and testing equipment - that many richer countries bought up in huge quantities - after the pandemic was declared in 2020. WHO, advocacy groups and others want to help Africa get better prepared for the next pandemic, which many health experts say is inevitable. When the coronavirus pandemic began, South Africa was the only country in Africa with any ability to produce vaccines, officials say, and the continent produced a tiny fraction of all vaccines worldwide.

Masood underscores investment potential with Bahamas

Pakistan Ambassador Masood Khan thanks Bahamas for support for candidature for UNSC

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON : Ambassador Masood Khan today presented his credentials to Governor General of the Commonwealth of Bahamas, The Most Honorable Cynthia A. Pratt, as non-resident High Commissioner-Designate of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in a special ceremony held at Governor General's Office. "As the High Commissioner of Pakistan to the Bahamas, it would my priority and privilege to work towards enhancing our bilateral ties," said Pakistan's High Commissioner-designate to Bahamas in his remarks before formally presenting his credentials. "The Government of Pakistan is focused on enhancing its international relationships and we see Bahamas as a key partner in this endeavor," he continued. Governor General Cynthia A. Pratt, while accepting the letters

of credence of Pak envoy, said that Bahamas deeply admired Pakistan's rich cultural heritage, its diverse traditions and the remarkable resilience of the people. "Bahamas recognizes Pakistan significant contributions to regional stability, and global peace-keeping efforts," she added. "The Bahamas stands in solidarity with Pakistan in its pursuit of peace, stability, and prosperity," observed Governor General Cynthia A. Pratt. Outlining future roadmap for strengthening bilateral ties, Masood Khan said that two nations have immense potential to enhance trade and investment ties, particularly in sectors such as tourism, financial services and information technology. "By fostering collaborative ventures and leveraging our respective strengths, we can unlock significant economic opportunities that will benefit both our countries," he said. "We are committed to

facilitating cultural, educational, and social exchanges that will not only deepen our understanding of each other's rich heritage but also forge lasting bonds of friendship between our citizens," he added. Governor General Cynthia A. Pratt assured the Ambassador that her government was keen to explore avenues for enhanced cooperation with Pakistan across various sectors, including trade, tourism, education, and cultural exchange. "By leveraging our respective strengths and resources, I am confident that we can create a brighter and more prosperous future for our people," she said in her remarks. Thanking the Government of Bahamas for its support to Pakistan's candidature for the U.N. Security Council, Masood Khan pointed out that mutual collaboration in multilateral organizations presented an excellent opportunity for both the countries to advance common

goals and address global challenges such as climate change. Ms. Pratt appreciated Pakistan's efforts towards pressing issues such as climate change and sustainable development. Pakistan's High Commissioner-designate also pointed out that Bahamas active participation in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) positioned it as a vital link for Pakistan to enhance its engagement with the regional bloc. "Pakistan acknowledges the importance of CARICOM in promoting regional stability and economic integration and sees potential for collaboration in areas of mutual interest such as trade and technology," said the Ambassador. Masood Khan noted that Pakistan worked closely with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) group to combat climate change and to advocate for just economic and financial order for vulnerable countries. Reciprocating the

sentiments of the leadership of Pakistan, as conveyed by the Ambassador, Governor General Pratt conveyed her regards to President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and to the people of Pakistan. Earlier, Ambassador Masood Khan called on Hon. Grenys Margaret Elaine Hanna-Martin, Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Technical & Vocational Training of the Commonwealth of Bahamas. The Ambassador also called on Hon. Fredrick A. Mitchell M.P., the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of Bahamas, and presented the copy of his Letter of Credence. Permanent Secretary Melvin Seymour and Director General Jerusa Ali from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bahamas also joined the meeting. The Ambassador also met Mr. Sameer Bhatti, CEO of The Bahamas Telecommunications Company (BTC).

Heatwave kills 200 homeless in Indian capital

NEW DELHI: Around 200 homeless people have died in the Indian capital in the past week due to the prevailing heatwave in the country, said a group dedicated to helping homeless individuals. As many as 52 bodies were brought to hospitals in the past two days, the Times of India reported on Thursday, adding that most of them were poor people who lived and worked in the open. Centre for Holistic Development has said, according to government figures, a total of 192 homeless people died in New Delhi between June 11 and June 19 - a number higher than those reported in previous years. "The poorest bear the cost of such climate change. Most of these people live below flyovers and out in the open and have no protection against the heat. These are mostly heatwave deaths," Sunil Kumar Alodia, who runs CHD, told Reuters. India has recorded more than 40,000 suspected heatstroke cases this summer and at least 110 confirmed deaths between March 1 and June 18, when northwest and eastern India recorded more than twice the usual number of heatwave days. —APP

Bird flu spread raises globally pandemic alarm

PARIS : Surging cases of bird flu among mammals, including U.S. cattle, offer a stark warning that the world is not ready to fend off future pandemics, a report said, urging leaders to act quickly. More than four years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, politicians are "gambling through neglect" by not putting enough money or effort into avoiding a repeat of the disaster, the report said. The bird flu H5N1 has been increasingly spreading to mammals, including cattle in farms across the U.S. and a few humans, prompting fears the virus could spark a future pandemic. "If H5N1 began to spread from person to person, the world would likely again be overwhelmed," the report's co-author and former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark told a news conference.

It could even be "more disastrous, potentially, than COVID-19," Clark said. "We just aren't equipped enough to stop outbreaks before they spread further," she said, pointing to a deadlier strain of monkeypox particularly affecting children in the Democratic Republic of Congo. While wealthy countries have vaccines that could fight this monkeypox outbreak, they have not been made available to the central African country, she pointed out. Now, two people have died from the strain in South Africa, illustrating how neglect can lead to such pathogens spreading, she stressed. The report was led by Clark and Liberian ex-President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who previously served as co-chairs of an independent panel advising the World Health Organization (WHO) on pandemic preparedness. —DNA

Tear gas used as hundreds protest Kenya taxes

NAIROBI : Kenyan police fired tear gas as hundreds of protesters took to the streets in Nairobi on Thursday, vowing nationwide demonstrations against tax hikes that many fear will worsen a cost-of-living crisis. The cash-strapped government of President William Ruto agreed to make concessions on Tuesday after hundreds of mostly young protesters clashed with the police in the capital. But the government will still go ahead with some tax increases and has defended the proposed hikes as necessary for filling its coffers and cutting reliance on external borrowing. Protesters have vowed to stage demonstrations across the country, including in the Indian Ocean city of Mombasa and the lakeside city of Kisumu, both opposition bastions. —APP

Briefs

Rishi Sunak faces call for election date betting probe

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak faced calls on Thursday to launch an inquiry after a member of his security detail was arrested for allegedly betting on the timing of the general election. London's Metropolitan Police said it was told by the Gambling Commission that a close protection officer was being investigated over the alleged bets. The regulator had already been looking into claims that Conservative party candidate Craig Williams, who served as Sunak's ministerial aide, placed a bet on when the election would be held. A second candidate from Sunak's party, Laura Saunders, is now also under investigation about an alleged bet on the date of the poll, the BBC reported on Wednesday evening. Saunders is married to the Tories' director of campaigns, the broadcaster added. The Conservative party confirmed that the commission had contacted it about "a small number of individuals", without commenting further. Senior minister Michael Gove told the BBC Thursday he could not comment on the specific allegations but said the "broad principle" of using inside information to place bets was "reprehensible". - Agencies

'PML-N, PPP in contentious relationship'

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League (N) central leader Mohsin Shahnawaz Ranjha issued a strong warning in response to the PPP's threat to leave the government. In his statement, Ranjha accused the PPP of blackmailing and said that if power is lost, both parties will be in Adiala Jail. He blamed the PPP for making instigating statements to secure their future in politics. Ranjha likened the relationship between the Muslim League-N and the PPP to that of a contentious relationship. Earlier, in a press conference in Lahore, PPP leader Hasan Murtaza claimed that the Muslim League (N) owes its power to the PPP. Murtaza highlighted that the PPP's 45 members are crucial to the survival of the Muslim League (N), suggesting that without the PPP, the entire Muslim League (N) would be in jail. Murtaza insisted PML-N leader Hanif Abbasi stop inciting division and chaos in politics.

34 die in India after drinking toxic alcohol

NEW DELHI: At least 34 people have died after consuming toxic bootleg alcohol in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, officials said. The incident took place in Kallakuruchi district where several residents fell ill after consuming the liquor on Tuesday night. At least 80 people are being treated in hospitals for illnesses such as excessive diarrhoea and officials say the death toll could rise further. Two people have been arrested so far and a wider investigation is underway. Authorities have also suspended a senior police official and ten members of the state's prohibition enforcement wing - which oversees the smuggling of illicit alcohol in the state - for negligence. Dozens of people die in India each year after drinking bootleg alcohol from backstreet distilleries. Bootleggers often add methanol - a highly toxic form of alcohol sometimes used as an anti-freeze - to their mixture to increase its strength. If ingested in even small quantities, methanol can cause blindness, liver damage and death. In Kallakuruchi, the accused allegedly sold the concoction in packets through a local vendor, according to The News Minute website. - Agencies



GWADAR: President Asif Ali Zardari in a group photo with Minister for Interior Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, MNA Malik Shah Gorgaj, Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langov, MPA Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, senior civil and military officials during his visit to Gwadar. - DNA

Putin vows deeper ties with Vietnam in visit criticised by US

Vietnam still values the historic ties it has with Russia even as it works to improve its relationship with Europe and the US

NEWS DESK

HANOI: The leaders of Vietnam and Russia have said they want to boost ties as the pair met in the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi. Vietnamese President To Lam was full of praise for his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, congratulating him on his recent re-election. Mr Putin, in return, said strengthening a strategic partnership with the south-east Asian country was one of Russia's priorities. His trip to Vietnam, which comes on the heels of his lavish visit to North Korea, is being interpreted as a demonstration of the diplomatic support Russia still enjoys in the region. "Congratulations to our comrade for receiving overwhelming support during the recent presidential election, underlining the confidence of the Russian people," President Lam said after Mr Putin was given a red carpet welcome. The United States has criticised the visit for giving a platform for President Putin to promote his war of aggression in Ukraine. Vietnam still values the historic ties it has with Russia even as it works to improve its relationship with Europe and the US. Looming over a small park in Ba Dinh, Hanoi's political quarter, a five-meter high statue of Lenin depicts the Russian revolutionary in heroic pose. On his birthday every year a delegation of senior Vietnamese officials solemnly lay flowers and bow their heads before the statue, a gift from Russia when it was still the Soviet Union. Vietnam's ties to Russia are close and go back many decades, to the vital military, economic and diplomatic support given by the Soviet Union to the new communist state in North Vietnam in the 1950s.

Russia pounds Ukraine energy sites

KYIV: Russian attacks damaged a Ukrainian power plant and several energy facilities overnight, Kyiv said on Thursday, the latest in a series of strikes that have pushed its power grid to the brink. Targeted missile and drone attacks over recent months have crippled Ukrainian electricity generation capacity, and forced Kyiv to impose blackouts and import supplies from European Union states. "The enemy attacked a number of energy infrastructure facilities," the energy ministry said, adding that the Russian projectiles targeted sites in four regions, including near the city of Kyiv. AFP journalists in the capital heard air raid sirens ringing out over Kyiv in the early hours of Thursday. The largest private energy company in Ukraine, DTEK, said the attacks caused "serious damage" at one of its plants, without disclosing its location. "This is already the seventh mass attack on the company's thermal power plant in the last three months," the company said. President Volodymyr Zelensky has said that those barrages had halved generation capacity in the war-battered country compared to one year ago. He has urged Ukraine's allies to send more air defence systems to protect the country's vital infrastructure. DTEK's CEO Maxim Timchenko echoed the calls for more military aid, and said the power plant struck early on Thursday had already been damaged in a previous attack. "We urgently need to close our skies or Ukraine faces a serious crisis this winter. My plea to allies is to help us defend our energy system and rebuild in time," he said. There was no immediate comment from the Kremlin on the latest barrage but Moscow says its forces do not target civilian infrastructure. The Russian defence ministry has, however, acknowledged retaliatory attacks on energy sites in response to a wave of Ukrainian cross-border attacks on Russian oil facilities, mainly storage sites. In the latest Ukrainian attack on Russian territory, the governor of the Krasnodar region - near Ukraine's Russian-occupied Crimean peninsula - announced one woman had been killed in a drone attack targeting oil facilities. Among the areas struck was the city of Slavyansk-on-Kuban in Krasnodar region, where the woman was killed, governor Venyamin Kondratyev said. The Russian defence ministry said it had downed 15 Ukrainian drones that also targeted oil storage depots in the southern Adygea republic and in the Tambov region. A source in the Ukrainian security services told AFP drones deployed by the Security Services of Ukraine (SBU) were behind attacks in the two Russian regions. - Agencies

Vietnam has described their relationship as "filled with loyalty and gratitude". After Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978 to throw out the murderous Khmer Rouge regime, it was isolated and sanctioned by China and the West, and depended heavily on Soviet assistance. Many older Vietnamese, including the powerful communist party secretary-general Nguyen Phu Trong, studied in Russia and learned the language. Today Vietnam's economy has been transformed by its integration into global markets. Russia has fallen far behind China, Asia, the US and Europe as a trading partner. But Vietnam still uses mainly Russian-made military equipment, and relies on partnerships with Russian oil companies for oil exploration in the South China Sea. The invasion of Ukraine presented Vietnam with a diplomatic challenge, but one it has so far managed to meet. It has chosen to abstain on the various resolutions at the United Nations condemning Russia's actions, yet maintained good relations with Ukraine and even sent some aid to Kyiv. They also share a legacy from the Soviet era; thousands of Vietnamese have worked and studied in Ukraine. This is all in keeping with Vietnam's long-held foreign policy principles of being friends with everyone but avoiding all formal alliances - what the communist party leadership now calls 'bamboo diplomacy', bending with the buffeting winds of great power rivalry without being forced to take sides. It is why Vietnam has so readily upgraded its relations with the US, a country against which its older leaders fought a long and destructive war, in the interests of seeking lucrative markets for Vietnamese exports and balancing its close ties with its giant neighbour China.

Pesco initiates legal action against PTI MNA

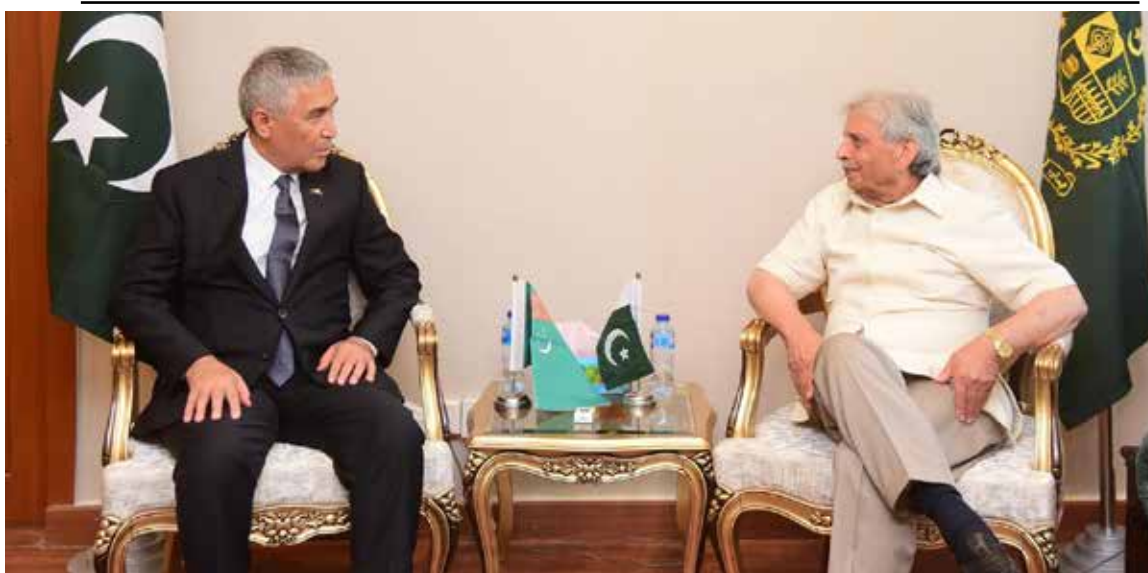
SHAMIM SHAHID

NOWSHERA: The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) Thursday initiated a legal action against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MNA Zulfiqar Khan for "forcibly restoring power supply" to 17 feeders in Nowshera. The PTI-affiliated MNA, accompanied by party workers, stormed Pabbi and Tarujaba grid stations and restored the electricity supply. In response, Pesco has sent a letter for lodging a case against the politician over his this act. This is not a one-off event as incidents of forcibly restoring power supply have taken place in Mardan, Charsadda, Tank, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan (DI Khan), and Peshawar as well. Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur himself Wednesday stormed a grid station, restoring power in some areas in DI Khan, and laid down his own outage plan as the loadshedding row worsened in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with lawmakers raiding the power controlling facilities and abusing their powers. On the occasion, CM Gandapur fixed the loadshedding duration at 12 hours.

Senators grill FBR chief over hike on cars' taxes

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Senators Thursday grilled Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Chairman Asim Ahmad over the hike in taxes imposed on hybrid and electric cars, among other items. The Senate Standing Committee on Finance, in a meeting chaired by PPP Senator Salim Mandviwala, in Islamabad raised an objection on the increased tax rate on electric and hybrid vehicles. During the meeting, independent Senator Faisal Vawda said that the use of electric vehicles is being encouraged all over the world. "A sales tax of 25% has been levied on vehicles priced above Rs15 million," said Vawda. The senator maintained that problems increase when a policy is made and revised. "No one sets up industry in this country because of changes in taxes and policies."



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Turkmenistan Attajan Mulamov met with the Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain. - DNA

Indian national accused of plotting to kill Sikh leader appears in US court

NEW YORK: An Indian man accused of plotting to kill a Sikh separatist leader in New York City Monday appeared in a federal court, where he pleaded guilty. It was the first appearance of accused Nikhil Gupta in the court after being extradited from the Czech Republic and landing in the United States on Friday. He is charged by US authorities with trying to hire a hit man to assassinate Sikh separatist leader Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, a U.S. citizen, who is the legal advisor to Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), an advocacy group, which is campaigning for an independent state of Khalistan. "This murder-for-hire plot - allegedly orchestrated by an Indian government employee to kill a U.S. citizen in New York City - was a brazen attempt to silence a political activist for exercising a quintessential American right: his freedom of speech," US Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said. "The extradition of the defendant is a vital step toward justice, and I am grateful to our Czech partners for their assistance in this matter. We will continue working relentlessly to identify, disrupt, and hold accountable those who seek to harm American citizens here or abroad." Gupta, 52, was arrested in the Czech Republic a year ago. The murder attempt, which played out against a backdrop of doubt about India's commitment to democracy, spanned several countries and mirrored the successful killing of another separatist in Canada, media reports quoting prosecutors say. He has been held at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn since landing in the United States on Friday afternoon. In a statement to reporters after the arraignment, his lawyer Jeffrey Chabrowe called the case a "complex matter" for India

and the United States. Gupta is charged with murder for hire and conspiracy to commit murder for hire. If convicted, he would face a maximum of 10 years in prison for each charge, the reports said. He was sent back to the detention center after Monday's arraignment and is set to appear in court again on June 28. In a statement Monday, Attorney General Merrick Garland said Gupta will "now face justice" in an American courtroom. "This extradition makes clear that the Justice Department will not tolerate attempts to silence or harm American citizens," he said. In an indictment unsealed in November, Manhattan federal prosecutors described an audacious plot that began around May 2023 when an Indian government employee enlisted Gupta to organize the killing of Pannun, who was living in New York at the time. Pannun is a vocal critic of the Indian government and has been banned from the country, prosecutors say. Gupta, who lived in India, had told the government official about "his involvement in international narcotics and weapons trafficking," according to the indictment. At the direction of the Indian government employee, Gupta contacted a man who he believed would help him hire a hit man in New York, but who was, in fact, an agent for the American government, the reports said. That agent introduced Gupta to an undercover Drug Enforcement Administration (D.E.A.) officer who pretended to be the hit man. In deals brokered by Gupta, the Indian government official agreed to pay the D.E.A. officer \$100,000 to kill Pannun, including a \$15,000 cash advance for the job, prosecutors said. - Agencies

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