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Islamabad POST

NATO appoints Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte as next chief

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Brunei HC assumes ACI chairmanship

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Jonathan calls WC semi-final a 'challenge'

Detailed News On Page-06



Omar demands Imran's release

PM Shehbaz offers talks to Imran Khan

"If their [PTI] founder is facing troubles [in jail], then I reiterate: come, let's sit down and talk," says PM

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday extended an olive branch to his political rival Imran Khan, offering him to sit and talk if he has any issues. "If their [PTI] founder is facing troubles [in jail], then I reiterate: come, let's sit down and talk," said the premier while speaking in National Assembly. The premier said that there was a time in this house when politicians would severely criticise one another, but they would also stand with their rivals during times of happiness and sorrow. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have been at loggerheads for years, particularly after the February 8 elections, which Imran's party claims it had won. Speaking about the 2018 elections, the prime minister said: "We joined the parliament despite the [rigged] polls. The sort of slogans that were raised during my first speech will always be remembered as a dark chapter in the history books." "If someone is facing any injustice, then I believe that the scales of justice should be in favour of those [being victimised], there is no difference over it - whether it be any politician or anyone from any walk of life." The PM lamented that he had once again, while he was in the opposition, proposed Imran to sit on the talking table but such slogans were raised again. "So who is responsible for this bitterness [between politicians]. We don't even shake hands now," he expressed. He also mentioned how Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and PML-N Punjab President Rana Sanaulah were treated during their time in jail. In response to the prime minister's comments, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub reiterated that the

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PTI urges CJP to fix May 9, polls fraud pleas

Raoof reminds chief justice PTI hold party polls thrice including one under SC guidelines

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Central Information Secretary Raoof Hasan urged the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) to fix the long-pending petitions of the party regarding May 9 false flag operation, review petition of the party's election symbol and February 8 mega polls fraud sans any further delay to bring the truth before the nation. Addressing a press conference along with former Gilgit-Baltistan chief minister Khalid Khurshid, PTI CIS said that it was mentioned nowhere in the constitution to put the most important petition under carpet and just focus on trivial matters and unnecessary petitions on his own choice. He urged that the chief justice to fix the party's pending

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif interacts with parliamentarians during a session of the National Assembly. - DNA

2 high-value TTP commanders arrested

Many missing persons hiding in Afghanistan: arrested TTP commander

DNA

QUETTA: In a major success on the anti-terror front, the Balochistan government Wednesday announced the arrest of two high-value commanders of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) namely Nasrullah alias "Maulvi Mansoor" and Idris alias "Irshad". "We have apprehended an important terrorist network. Terrorists Nasrullah [...] and Idris have been arrested after a difficult operation," Balochistan Home Minister

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Following irregularity claims US Congress calls for impartial probe into Pakistan's polls

Resolution will not have much impact on US policy towards Pakistan, says Michael Kugelman

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States House of Representatives Wednesday expressed its support for democracy and human rights in Pakistan by a massive majority, approving a resolution urging an impartial probe into the claims of irregularities during the February 8 general elections in the country. At least 368 members of the US house voted in favour of the resolution and called for a "full and independent investigation of claims of interference or irregularities in Pakistan's February 2024 election". Around seven members have voted against it. According to the House Resolution 901, representatives have voted to "express support for democracy and human rights in Pakistan". Through the resolution, the US lawmakers have emphasised on

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US resolution reflects ignorance, FO snaps back

"Such [US] resolution neither constructive nor objective", says FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: In response to a resolution passed by the United States House of Representatives on alleged poll irregularities in Pakistan's nationwide general election 2024, the Foreign Office (FO) has said that it "stems from an incomplete understanding of

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Briefs

Vawda tenders unconditional apology to SC

Says that he has left himself on the mercy of apex court

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Senator Faisal Vawda Wednesday tendered an unconditional apology to the Supreme Court in the contempt case, saying that he has left himself on the mercy of the apex court. "In light of Islamic teachings, I apologise sincerely and unconditionally [and] leave myself at the mercy of the court," Vawda said in his reply to the show-cause notice issued by SC. The development comes as the top court had taken suo-motu notice of the senator's hard-hitting press conference against Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges last month.

Yasmin Rashid flays govt PTI leaders are being subjected to oppression

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Yasmin Rashid has criticised the governance of the incumbent government, asserting Form-47 government is trying to make the poor poorer. Speaking to the media after her appearance in the anti-terrorism court (ATC), she said according to the State Bank of Pakistan, the debts have increased in the last two years. The revenue generated from the budget will be paid in interest on loans, she added. She criticised the loan from global lenders, stating Pakistan was going to more destruction. She insisted that her party leaders were being subjected to oppression, and new cases were being registered against them.

Achakzai threatens to go to ICJ

Military operations only lead to instability: Fazl JUI-F chief decries displacement and inadequate compensation in tribal areas

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has once again criticised the Azm-e-Istehkam Operation stating that military operations being conducted since 2010 have only led to instability. Speaking in the National Assembly (NA) on Wednesday, Fazl yet again condemned Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, stating, "We have been suffering under the guise of operations since 2010. This is not stability, we are doing this for China." "People were forced to vacate their areas for these operations. Tribal women were sent to deserts, and many places in tribal areas were cleared, forcing people to beg. Their dignity and traditions were harmed," he protested. Fazl highlighted the insufficient compensation provided to the displaced, saying, "Victims are given Rs400,000 to rebuild their homes. This amount is not enough to build even a bathroom. It's a joke." The JUI-F chief maintained that instead of cash, the victims are given tokens.

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US supports Pakistan's efforts to combat terrorism

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: A State Department spokesperson on Wednesday said the United States supports Pakistan's efforts to combat terrorism after the country announced the launching of an anti-militancy campaign - Operation Azm-e-Istehkam. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has assured that the civilian population would not be disturbed and under this initiative, intelligence-based operations would be intensified, instead of launching a new organised armed operation. State Department

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'PTI-SIC can't be permitted to use backdoor'

PTI moves top court to become a party in the reserved seats' case being heard by CJP-led full court

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Attorney General of Pakistan (AGP) on Wednesday submitted its written response to the Supreme Court in the reserved seats case, stating that the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) "cannot be permitted to make its way into assemblies via backdoor". The SIC's appeal, the AGP stated in its

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Campaign to combat child labour abuse launched

The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC), in collaboration with the Embassy of France, launched a comprehensive awareness campaign to address critical issues affecting children in Pakistan



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC), in collaboration with the Embassy of France, launched a comprehensive awareness campaign to address critical issues affecting children in Pakistan: child domestic labour, child sexual abuse and the enrollment of out-of-school children. The campaign's primary goal is to raise awareness about the pervasive issue of child domestic labour, targeting the demand side while promoting education as a key factor in eliminating child labour. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), one in four households in Pakistan employs a child for domestic work, often in

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Invigorating Corporate Retreats

Coming Soon



HUNZA SERENA HOTEL

Azerbaijan's experience to be used for beautifying capital: CDA chief

The first phase of this initiative will focus on introducing Baku-style landscaping along the Srinagar Highway

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, on Wednesday said that Azerbaijan's experience would be utilised for the beautification of Islamabad by adopting modern techniques and traditional architectural methods. During a meeting with a delegation from Baku, Azerbaijan, he said that Islamabad's beautification efforts would leverage Azerbaijan's expertise to meet contemporary needs while preserving traditional architectural

styles. The meeting was also attended by the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov, said a press release issued here. The delegation, comprised of experts in urban beautification and landscaping from Baku, will spend three days in the federal capital. The experts will visit various locations including parks, historical sites, Melody Food Street and other key areas to provide recommendations for enhancing the city's aesthetics. In collaboration with the CDA's technical team, the Baku delegation will offer proposals to improve Islamabad's maintenance and landscaping. They discussed

techniques for implementing small-scale, attractive landscaping along sidewalks and pedestrian pathways. The first phase of this initiative will focus on introducing Baku-style landscaping along the Srinagar Highway. The expertise of the delegation will be applied to enhance Islamabad's Food Street in the initial phase. A series of short-term, mid-term, and long-term projects will also be executed collaboratively to improve the city's overall appearance. The delegation expressed their gratitude for the exceptional hospitality provided by the CDA.



ISLAMABAD : Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif interacts with parliamentarians during a session of the National Assembly.—DNA

Meeting discusses progress on targets assigned to TEVTA

PESHAWAR : A meeting to review progress on targets assigned to the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) for bringing improvement in its performance was held in the Committee Room of the Department of Industries with Special Assistant to KP Chief Minister on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Tordhvir in the chair here on Wednesday. Besides, the Additional Secretary Industries Shama Nimat, Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Basit Khalil and Directors TEVTA Munir Gul, Khalid Usman, Haider Ali and Syed Sajjad Ali Shah, others also attended the meeting. The CM aide was briefed about progress on the achievement of the targets of digitization, sustainability, human resource, financial affairs, procurement, technical and vocational training, business and education and training, business production and other issues.—APP

IGP commits to achieving 'drug-free Punjab' vision

IGP Punjab highlighted that this year, more than 33,000 raids were conducted on drug dealers' hideouts across the province

LAHORE: On the occasion of the International Day Against Drug Abuse, IGP Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar reiterated his commitment to fulfilling Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz's vision of a 'Drug-Free Punjab'. He said that the day was commemorated to renew a pledge to eradicate the scourge of drugs from society and protect the young generation from its dangers. He said the Punjab Police would leave no stone unturned in uprooting the menace of drugs. The IGP Punjab highlighted that this year, more than 33,000 raids were conducted on drug dealers' hideouts across the province. Over 16,000 suspects involved in the illicit business were arrested, and more than 15,500 cases were registered. He mentioned that more than 9,200-kilogram charas, 160-kg heroin, 45-kg Ice, 269-kg opium, and over 1.674 million litres of liquor were seized from the

drug dealers. Usman Anwar said that within the past 24 hours, 281 raids were conducted across the province, including Lahore. During these raids, 146 suspects involved in the toxic trade were arrested, and 141 cases were registered. From the suspects' possession, 99 kilograms of charas and 1,747 litres of liquor were recovered. Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr. Usman Anwar encouraged police teams for successfully tracing serious crimes with cash rewards and commendation certificates on Wednesday. At a ceremony here, he rewarded 71 officers and personnel from Faisalabad and Sahiwal regions with commendation certificates and cash rewards. At the ceremony, held at the Central Police Office, he awarded cash prizes and commendation certificates to 17 teams from Okara, eight from Sahiwal, five from Pakpattan, seven from Faisalabad,

two from Toba Tek Singh, and one team from Jhang. These police teams had successfully solved cases of robbery, murder, kidnapping for ransom, and other heinous crimes, and arrested criminals and brought them to justice. The IGP said that the Police Department was spending Rs 10 million daily from its resources on the welfare of the constabulary. He said, "This year, we are providing educational scholarships worth 1 billion rupees to children of the police force." Dr. Usman Anwar mentioned that a new series of promotions based on merit had been started in the police force, and there would be 700 more promotions in the Punjab Highway Police (PHP) soon. Similarly, hundreds of merit-based promotions would be given in all wings, including Safe City Authority and the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD).—APP

Govt must play role of a regulator: President ICCI

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani has said that for country's sustainable and inclusive growth we have to enhance our exports and minimize our imports by paying attention on IT sector, promoting entrepreneurship and start-up culture. He said this while addressing the participants of two day All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conference organized by Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry here at a

local hotel on Wednesday attended by over 70 Presidents of different Chambers from all over the country. Ambassadors of friendly countries and business leaders in large number. He said that as per the right man right job principle, the government must play the role of a regulator instead of doing businesses and the businesses must be done by the businessmen. The Chairman Senate made the mention of country's economic difficulties in detail by saying that owing to government's efforts the economic indicators have started

showing positive signs. He also termed political stability as the basic necessity for ease of doing business in the country. Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has said that it is high time that all the stake holders have to work together to pull the country out of the existing economic mess by ensuring the continuity of policies and maintaining law and order. He disclosed that China is keen to start an upgraded version of the CPEC Phase-2 having five corridors, Corridor of Growth, Corridor

of livelihood, corridor of Information Technology, Corridor of Green economy and Corridor of Regional Development emphasizing that to materialize this golden opportunity the private sectors of both the countries have to work together. In address, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaisar A Sheikh asserted that business community also pay attention on the blue economy which has vast potential to explore for the well being of the country by assuring that all the problems of the community will be resolved for ease of doing business.



Civil Defence Punjab meets RCCI members on safety measures

RAWALPINDI: Barak Ullah Khan, Director of Civil Defence Punjab along with his team visited Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) and called on President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Saqib Rafiq, along with Group Leader Mr. Sohail Altaf. The meeting focused on discussing safety measures, enhancing collaboration between RCCI and Civil Defence, and exploring initiatives to improve emergency response and preparedness in the region. Director, Barak Ullah Khan, assured the participants that his department will provide all kind of support and assistance for safety measures and compliance under inspection. Saqib Rafiq, in his address appreciated Civil Defence role and activities during national calamity like earthquakes. The meeting saw the presence of RCCI Vice President Mr. Faisal Shahzad, Former President/ Additional Chief Warden Raja Amer Iqbal, and executive committee members. President of Anjuman Tajraan Cantt Sheikh Hafeez, Mr. Zafar Qadri and distinguished RCCI members. Notable attendees included representing the Civil Defence were Chief Warden Mr. Ajaz Khushi, Assistant Director Ms. Sajida, Civil Defense Officer Mr. Talib Hussain, Deputy Chief Warden Dr. Ali Raza Advocate, and several divisional and group wardens, including Saeed ur Rehman, Mukhtar Shah, Mr. Nawaz, Syed Israr, and Mr. Kashif Pirzada.—DNA

PAKISTAN CRICKET BOARD

INVITATION FOR BID

(Single Stage Two Envelopes)

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) with its Head Office located at Gaddafi Stadium Lahore, Ferozpur Road Lahore invites sealed bids on single stage two envelope basis from the eligible firms/contractors registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments and who are on Active Taxpayers List of the Federal Board of Revenue and registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) C6 and above for the following work:-

Installation of Tube well and Repair & Maintenance Works at Bugti Cricket Stadium, Quetta

Bidding documents, containing detailed terms and conditions, etc. can be obtained from the Office of the Infrastructure & Project Department, Pakistan Cricket Board, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore on payment of Rs. 5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand Only) in the form of pay order or bank draft in the favour of Pakistan Cricket Board 10th July 2024 on working days from 9 am to 5 pm.

The Bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the bidding documents, must reach at to the office of the undersigned at or before 11:00 hours, on 12th July 2024. Bids will be opened the same day at 11:30 hours.

Pakistan Cricket Board reserves the right in its discretion to cancel or amend the entire bidding process at any stage and to reject any or all bids poor to acceptance.

This advertisement is also available on PPRA website at www.ppra.org.pk and Pakistan Cricket Board website at www.pcb.com.pk

Director
Infrastructure Department
Pakistan Cricket Board
Gaddafi Stadium Lahore
UAN: 111 22 7777
Tel: 042-35717231-4
Fax: 042-35711860
PID/L/4062



Sindh issues heatwave advisory for Hospitals, Citizens

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI :The Sindh Health Department has issued an advisory for hospitals and citizens in view of the heatwave. The advisory directs hospital administrations to provide instant emergency medical aid to heatstroke patients. Citizens have been advised to take various precautionary measures to protect themselves from the heatwave. According to the advisory, all health centers of the Sindh Health Department will operate 24-hour emergencies in view of the heatwave. The advisory directs hospital administrations to provide instant emergency medical aid to heatstroke patients. Citizens have been advised to take various precautionary measures to protect themselves from the heatwave. According to the advisory, all health centers of the Sindh Health Department will operate 24-hour emergencies in view of the heatwave. The advisory directs hospital administrations to provide instant emergency medical aid to heatstroke patients. Citizens have been advised to take various precautionary measures to protect themselves from the heatwave.

availability of all necessary medicines, including IV drips, ORS, and cannulas, for heatwave patients. The advisory further states that special wards should be established in hospitals for the treatment of heatstroke patients, and that these special wards should be equipped with air conditioning, ice, generators, and water, along with effective and timely administrative strategies. The Health Department's advisory also directs that awareness sessions be conducted according to SOPs to inform people about the severity of heat and the necessary precautions to take in the face of heatwave. The advisory also provides guidelines for providing initial medical aid to heatstroke patients while transporting them to the hospital. The patient should be immediately taken to a cool, shaded, or air-conditioned place to lower their body temperature. For children, remove excess clothing to cool the patient quickly. Sponge the patient with cold water, and if possible, seat them in a tub of cold water to cool down.

آئل اینڈ گیس
ریگولیٹری اتھارٹی
حکومت پاکستان



Oil & Gas
Regulatory Authority
Government of Pakistan

NOTICE FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS / HEARING

M/S GAP DISTRIBUTION & MARKETING (PVT) LIMITED - APPLICATION FOR GRANT OF LICENCE TO UNDERTAKE REGULATED ACTIVITY FOR SALE OF NATURAL GAS /FLARE GAS FROM HALINI GAS FIELD

M/s GAP Distribution & Marketing (Pvt) Limited filed an application before the Authority on 07-06-2022 under Rule 4 of the NGRA (Licensing) Rules, 2002 for grant of License for Sale of Flare Gas upto 01 MMCFD for a period of 10 years. The applicant stated that they intend to compress and fill Low Pressure gas in skid mounted tube trailers at its compression facility at Halini Gas Field, Karak Block from MOL Group to its prospective consumer Kohinoor Textile Mills and transport gas from its processing facilities to its above mentioned consumer using transportation service of M/s Shaheen Energy (Pvt.) Limited.

After completion of the requisite data / information by the applicant, the Authority admitted the instant application for Public Comments / Hearing under Rule 5 of the ibid Rules. Therefore, all persons and parties who are likely to be affected by grant of this license are hereby notified to file objections, written comments/suggestions and intervention requests addressed to Senior Registrar OGRA, describing the manner in which such persons/parties may be affected by the grant of this licence and may also appear on the below mentioned scheduled Public Hearing.

The intervention request shall be filed alongwith fee of Rs.500/- (Bank Draft) and affidavit verifying the contents of communication on or before the date of Public Hearing. Copies of the documents submitted by the applicant can be obtained on payment of prescribed charges of Rs.2/- per page from the office of Senior Registrar or can be downloaded from OGRA's website.

In sequel to all above, OGRA has decided to hold Public Hearing in the instant matter according to date, time and venue mentioned below:

Date : 10-07-2024 (Wednesday)
Time : 11:00 a.m
Venue : OGRA Office, Mauve Area, G-10/4, Islamabad

For any information required from the applicant please contact:

Muhammad Zaman,
Executive Manager,
GAP Distribution & Marketing (Pvt.) Limited,
Office No.2, 2nd Floor, Plot No. 92, UG Tower,
Sector G-8/1, Islamabad. Telephone: 051-8430112, gaparacha@gmail.com

Dr. Abdul Basit Qureshi
SENIOR REGISTRAR
Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority
Plot No.37 & 39, Mauve Area, Service Road South, G-10/4, Islamabad.
Phone: 051-9108890-98 (Ext-123),051-9108889, www.ogra.org.pk

Public Service Message

گیس کی جان بچانا اور ماحولیات کا سب سے بہتر طریقہ ہے۔ اس بات کو یقینی بنائیں کہ ماحولیات سے بچیں

National Days and Armed Forces Days

JUNE

June 02/Italy National/Independence Day

June 04/Finland Armed Forces Day

June 06/Sweden National Day

June 10/Portugal Portugal Day (National Day)

June 10/Jordan Arab Revolution & Army Day

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

June 12/Philippines Independence Day

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

June 13/Zambia Armed Forces day

June 17/Iceland National Day

June 18/Seychells National Day

June 25/Croatia National Day

June 25/Mozambique National Day

June 26/Azerbaijan Army Day

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

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



Hospitals

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



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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Naqvi urges combined efforts against drug abuse

Mohsin Naqvi said "Let us reaffirm our resolve to build a healthier, drug-free Pakistan. Together, we can make significant strides in safeguarding the well-being of our nation and future generations"

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday stated that the fight against drug abuse and trafficking cannot be fruitful unless we all as a nation put our combined efforts behind this noble cause to make Pakistan a healthy society free of drugs. "I must acknowledge that the fight against drug abuse and trafficking cannot be fruitful unless we all as

a nation put our combined efforts behind this noble cause to make Pakistan a healthy society, free of drugs", he said. Naqvi expressed these words in his message issued on the occasion of International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking day being observed today. Given the devastating effects of drug abuse on our society, it is imperative to make this fight against drugs a national priority, he said. This year's theme for the day is "The Evidence is Clear: invest in

Prevention," Narcotics Minister said, "I urge all citizens to join hands with us in this critical mission. Prevention lies at the heart of our strategy, and we must prioritize preventive education, community engagement, and robust law enforcement to stem the tide of drug abuse. Mohsin Naqvi said "Let us reaffirm our resolve to build a healthier, drug-free Pakistan. Together, we can make significant strides in safeguarding the well-being of our nation and future generations.

As we observe the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking today, it is a staunch reminder of the persistent danger posed by substance abuse within our society adding he said Pakistan has long been exposed to its wide-ranging negative consequences on the overall fabric of the society and the associated array of problems including crime, violence, health deterioration, and productivity loss. Recognizing the magnitude of this challenge, he said the Govern-

ment of Pakistan was undertaking comprehensive measures against drug abuse and illicit trafficking in alignment with its National Anti-Narcotics Policy of 2019. This policy encompasses a holistic approach, incorporating Drug Demand Reduction, Drug Supply Reduction, and International Cooperation, he added. These strategic pillars serve as the foundation of our endeavors to counter the spread of narcotics and controlled substances within our nation's borders, he maintained.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Dr. Riina Kionka, Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Pakistan called on the Federal Minister for Law and Justice and Human Rights Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar today.—DNA

PM for a special focus on promotion of alternative energy

ISLAMABAD :Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday called for a special focus on the promotion of alternative energy, particularly solar energy, besides directing the authorities concerned to formulate a strategy for Thar coal gasification. He, chairing a meeting to discuss the matters related to the Petroleum Division, said Thar coal was significant to cope

with Pakistan's energy needs and instructed taking measures to transport Thar coal to other parts of the country through rail network. During the briefing, it was highlighted that despite minimal carbon footprints, Pakistan was among the top five vulnerable countries and that measures were being taken to mitigate the climate change impacts by promoting products based on

alternative energy. It was noted that a strategy would be formulated to enhance production of tight gas and smart meters would be installed to curb gas and oil theft. The meeting was held that a policy was being formulated to promote electric bikes and vehicles, and domestic electric appliances. Moreover, the proposals for deregulating the petroleum sector would be worked out be-

sides digitizing the petrol and gas exploration. The Petroleum Division authorities said that steps were being taken to enhance competitiveness in the petroleum sector, promotion of bio-fuels, and enhancing the local production of oil and gas. Federal Petroleum Minister Dr Musaddik Malik, Power Minister Awais Ahmed Leghari, PM's Coordinator Rana Ehsas Afzal and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.—APP

US, China, and UAE top destinations for Pakistani exports during July-May

ISLAMABAD: The United States (US) remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the first eleven months of the current financial year 2023-24, followed by China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Total exports to the US during July-May 2023-24 were recorded at US \$ 4,989.140 million against the exports of US \$ 5,484.257 million during July-May 2022-23, showing a decline of 9.02 percent, according to the State Bank of Paki-

stan (SBP). This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth US \$2,553.481 million against the exports of US \$1,889.195 million last year, showing an increase of 35.16 percent. UAE was the third top export destination, where Pakistan exported products worth US \$1,880.820 million during the months under review against the exports of US \$1,341.804 million, SBP data revealed. Among other countries, Pakistani exports to

United Kingdom (UK) stood at US \$1,861.083 million against US \$1,808.288 million last year while the exports to Germany were recorded at US \$1,381.369 million against US \$1,488.714 million last year, data said. During July-May, the exports to Holland were recorded at \$1,273.035 million against \$1,323.770 million whereas the exports to Italy stood at \$1,032.475 million against \$1,052.640 million. Pakistan's exports

to Spain were recorded at \$1,333.875 million against the exports of US \$1,271.414 million while the exports to Afghanistan were recorded at \$507.935 million against \$478.614 million last year. The exports to Bangladesh stood at US \$605.744 million against US \$709.050 million. Similarly, the exports to France during the months under review were recorded at US \$464.060 million against US \$530.180 million while the exports to Belgium stood at US \$505.812 million against US \$642.282 million. Pakistan's exports to Saudi Arabia were recorded at US \$661.271 million during the current year compared to US \$457.551 million last year whereas the exports to Turkey stood at US \$311.011 million against US \$296.618 million.

PM greenlights Pak-China JV project for industry relocation

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday gave the green light to the joint ventures between Chinese and Pakistani companies for relocating the Chinese industries to Pakistan. Chairing a meeting to discuss the matters of the Board of Investment (BoI), he said that promoting both local and foreign investment in Pakistan was among the government's priorities. He said the government was taking all possible steps to create a business-friendly environment for traders and investors. The prime minister directed the concerned to submit a comprehensive report on the follow up of Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) signed between Pakistani and Chinese companies in Shenzhen during his recent visit to China. He also instructed a review of the draft law for the Special Economic Zones One Stop Shop in light of the developments following his China visit. Prime Minister, Shehbaz said there was significant potential for relocating China's textile, leather, footwear, and other industries to Pakistan. Meanwhile, during the briefing, the BoI Secretary said that the steps were being taken to relocate Chinese industry to Pakistan. It was told that the services of Chinese experts were being hired for establishing Business Facilitation Centre in the federal capital and the draft of "Easy Business Act" was being sent to Cabinet Committee for Legislative Cases. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Privatization and Investment Abdul Aleem Khan, Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Petroleum Dr. Musaddik Malik, Prime Minister's Coordinator, Rana Ehsas Afzal and relevant senior government officials.—APP

Crackdown continues against illegal LPG stations

ISLAMABAD: The Assistant Commissioner (AC) Saddar Zone accompanied by the Magistrate on Wednesday launched a relentless campaign against illegal Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and petrol filling agencies in various areas of Saddar sub-division here. On the directives of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, both officials accompanied by the district administrations teams raided at different areas and checked illegal activities, said the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration. During the operation, an LPG filling station was found in illegal activities and promptly sealed by the Assistant Commissioner. Additionally, four individuals implicated in illegal activities were apprehended and handed over to law enforcement authorities. The crackdown on price hikes, encroachments, and other violations is an ongoing effort, highlighting the commitment of authorities to uphold the rule of law and protect consumers from exploitation. On the occasion, AC warned that safety of citizens was the topmost priority of the district government and no one would be allowed to play with innocent lives.—APP

Hostel of H-8 college to be transformed into sub-campus of PFID

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has announced the revitalization of the formerly abandoned and dysfunctional hostel building of H-8 Degree College, transforming it into a vibrant sub-campus of the Pakistan Institute of Fashion Design (PIFD) in next three months. According to the Education Ministry, this transformation marks a significant milestone in government's commitment to providing world-class education and fostering creativity in the field of fashion design. The renovated sub-campus will offer state-of-the-art facilities, modern classrooms, and cutting-edge technology, creating an ideal environment for students to learn, grow, and thrive, it added. The ministry official said that the PIFD sub-campus will become a hub for fashion education, innovation, and entrepreneurship, nurturing talented individuals who will shape the future of the fashion industry. "We envision a dynamic and inclusive space that fosters collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking". This project not only revitalizes a neglected building but also contributes to the growth and development of the surrounding community, the official said and added "we aim to create a positive impact on the local economy, culture, and environment, making a difference in the lives of students, faculty, and the wider community".—APP

ICT admin continues crackdown against price hike

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration has launched a strict campaign against traders violating official price of essential commodities in the Federal Capital. In a recent operation directed by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, Magistrate Saddar Zone, Mir Yamin led a price inspection of essential goods in the area covered by Police Station Tarnol, said the spokesman of ICT's administration. During the inspection, Magistrate Saddar Zone visited fruit and vegetable shops, dairy stores, and grocery outlets from No. 26 Chung to Tarnol railway crossing. The focus was on ensuring that shopkeepers adhered to the official pricing of essential commodities. The magistrate arrested five shopkeepers while heavy fines were also imposed to the violators. These traders were found guilty of not displaying the official prices and were involved in wholesaling without proper authorization. They were handed over to Police Station Tarnol for further legal action. The district administration has made it clear that it will continue its rigorous checks and actions against any vendors found violating the established price norms. It is pertinent to mention here that operations are going on against price hike, professional beggars, illegal petrol filling agencies, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) filling stations and others on daily basis.—DNA

Three-day Theatre Extravaganza kicks off at PNCA

The tickets for attending the Theatre Extravaganza are available at the PNCA which can be purchased by the intending visitors

ISLAMABAD: Three-day Theatre Extravaganza to mark Ajoka Theatre's 40th anniversary kicked off at the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) late Tuesday to mesmerize the art enthusiasts with vibrant performances, thought provoking themes and touching messages. The festival is being arranged by PNCA in collaboration with the Ajoka Theatre with an objective of fostering healthy theatrical activities for the people belonging to the federal capital as well as surroundings. The play "Teesri Dastak", which is one of Shahid Nadeem's earlier plays, was presented on the first day of the festival on Tuesday evening and received overwhelming response from the audience. The story revolved around the story of residents of a rundown tenement who face imminent eviction and find an extraordinary and violent solution to ensure survival and leading to bizarre consequences. Ajoka's iconic play "Bulha" will also be presented during the festival. Based on the uplifting and dramatic story of Sufia poet Bulleh Shah, the play has been widely performed in Pakistan, India, Iran, UK, USA and Denmark and has been lauded as a significant example of Sufi Theatre. Shahid Nadeem's international masterpiece "Dara" will be presented on the final day of the festival. Based on the amazingly dramatic story of the conflict between Princes Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb, the play was adapted in English by the prestigious National Theatre London and was declared as "play of the decade" by the English press. The play has also been performed in India and USA. In May, Ajoka held a five-day theatre festival in Lahore as part of its 40th anniversary celebrations which will conclude in November with an eight-day international theatre festival in Lahore. Shahid Nadeem, Ajoka's Executive Director and playwright of all three plays, thanked PNCA's Director General and his team for hosting the festival and recognising Ajoka's four decades of sustained contribution to the cause of theatre for social change. The tickets for attending the Theatre Extravaganza are available at the PNCA which can be purchased by the intending visitors.—APP

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Briefs

Pharmaceutical enterprise to kickstart production at Rashakai pSEZ

ISLAMABAD: The Rashakai prioritized Special Economic Zone (pSEZ), a flagship project under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), has reached a significant milestone. Trucks loaded with materials from Uzbekistan have arrived at the site of a pharmaceutical company within the zone, paving the way for commercial production soon. According to an official statement from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KPEZDMC), fourteen trucks, consisting of 22 wheelers and other vehicles, traveled from Uzbekistan via Afghanistan have arrived at the project site. The materials are currently being unloaded at M/S Al-Chemist Private Limited. "This pioneering enterprise is nearing completion and is expected to commence commercial production soon," the statement reads which was released on Wednesday morning. It further highlights that the Rashakai pSEZ is poised to revitalize industrial activities in the province and the country, further strengthening the bond between Pakistan and China. Gwadar Pro reported.—APP

BISP chairperson meets Bill Gates

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid met with Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The discussion centered on key initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty through skill development and economic empowerment of women. During the meeting, Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized the critical role of skill development in lifting Benazir Income Support Programme beneficiaries out of poverty. She stated, "Economic empowerment is a prerequisite for the overall empowerment of women. Financial independence is the key to their freedom and success. Taking beneficiaries out of poverty is our top priority, and Benazir Income Support Programme is committed to various projects to achieve this goal." One of the major advancements discussed was the introduction of a digital system to enhance transparency in the disbursement of quarterly stipends. This system aims to ensure that beneficiaries receive their payments promptly and securely, thereby improving the overall efficiency of the programme.—APP

Seminar on late Ebrahim Raisi's vision on regional Coop

Ambassador Amiri stressed that President Raisi's visit to Pakistan was his most extensive visit in which he visited three cities and met with top leadership of the country including the President, Prime Minister, Speaker National Assembly, Chairman Senate and Army Chief

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Institute of Regional Studies in collaboration with Asian Institute of Eco-Civilization Research and Development (AIERD) held a seminar On President Raisi's vision of regional cooperation. Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam was the keynote speaker along with Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran, Mohammad Mudassir Tipu. Mr. Mr. Shakeel Ahmed Ramay acted as the moderator for the discussion. In his welcome address, President IRS Ambassador Jauhar Saleem hailed the 'Neighbourhood Policy' of President Ebrahim Raisi (late). He recalled that Ambassador Jauhar pointed out that IRS was the first institution that had arranged a seminar on this policy and highlighted Raisi's successful diplomacy for revival of ties with UAE and Egypt and rapprochement with Saudi Arabia in 2023. He also underscored that Iran's relations towards its east, especially with Pakistan have been always cordial and cooperative, which were further strengthened in the wake of late President Raisi's visit to Pakistan. Stressing upon the need



of a multilateral cooperative framework, Ambassador Saleem underlined the need for promoting intra regional and inter regional connectivity and cooperation. Ambassador Reza Amiri thanked IRS for organizing the seminar and noted that regional cooperation was the key agenda during the tenure of President Raisi and Foreign Minister Dr. Amir Abdollahian. That was very much reflected

by 28 foreign visits that President Raisi undertook. Ambassador Amiri stressed that President Raisi's visit to Pakistan was his most extensive visit in which he visited three cities and met with top leadership of the country including the President, Prime Minister, Speaker National Assembly, Chairman Senate and Army Chief. The MoUs signed during the visit in the areas of free trade agreement, economic

cooperation and promoting tourism were the attestation to the strong brotherly ties which both Pakistan and Iran share, Ambassador Amiri expressed. He also praised President Raisi's ambition of prioritizing regional cooperation through SCO, Caspian Sea Summit and BRICS. Ambassador Amiri assured that the new government in Iran would uphold the legacy of President Raisi and continue to promote cooperation

vis-à-vis regional states and Pakistan. Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran, Mr. Mohammad Mudassir Tipu highlighted President Raisi's dedicated efforts to bolster the enduring cultural and economic bonds with Pakistan. He explained that President Raisi and other Iranian officials shared the deep sense of respect for Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Iqbal. President Raisi's stance on increasing bilateral trade with Pakistan to \$10 billion annually and his interest in fostering the security cooperation with Afghanistan exemplified his commitment to economic cooperation and regional stability, Ambassador Tipu said. Major General Samrez Salik, former DG ISSRA at National Defence University, Islamabad paid rich tribute to President Ebrahim Raisi. While mentioning President Raisi's achievements, Major General Salik particularly highlighted his contribution to consolidating Pak-Iran relations through trade. In conclusion, Mr. Zahid Latif Khan, Chairman AIERD, detailed the internal and external policies of Iran under President Raisi. He also suggested that think tanks across Iran and Pakistan should elevate President Raisi's legacy by collaborating with each other in research.

NCSW to launch first phase of transformative consultation

ISLAMABAD: The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) has launched the first phase of its transformative consultation series, titled 'The Next Horizon', aiming to create a comprehensive National Agenda for Women and Girls in Pakistan. The series began with a conference on health 'Inclusive Healthcare for Women: Paving the Way Forward', organized in collaboration with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Pathfinder. Chairperson of NCSW, Nilofar Bakhtiar, opened the session by highlighting the urgent need to address the pressing health issues, facing women in Pakistan. Speaking at the conference, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal reiterated the government's dedication to advancing women's health. He stated, "Our commitment lies in implementing strong policies and investing in healthcare infrastructure to guarantee that every woman in Pakistan has access to quality healthcare." On this occasion, Special Secretary, Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, Waqar Ul Hassan and Lt. General (Rtd) Nigar Johar, also addressed the participants. Moreover, renowned actress and activist, Nadia Jamil shared her inspiring personal journey through breast cancer. The conference featured thematic working group sessions that delved into various aspects of women's health. The sessions included discussions on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), nutritional disparities, common communicable and non-communicable diseases, and emotional and mental health. The recommendations include: Advocate for increasing the health budget allocation to at least 10 percent of the development budget and 5 percent of GDP, non-politicized recruitment for healthcare professionals, access to mental health services at secondary and tertiary levels, inter-provincial health programs that can be monitored, improved and replicated, Enhancing coordination between women's health departments and the Provincial Disaster Management Authority to accommodate internally displaced expecting mothers to be given proper and urgent care, prioritize and invest in digital health solutions to enhance women's healthcare services across far flung areas, social protection, safety and security and life and health insurance schemes for primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare professionals.—APP

Korean Scientist meets Foreign Secretary

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Eminent scientist and Ambassador of the Republic of Korea for Science and Technology, Professor Dr. Sung-Chul Shin, met with Foreign

Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi. The discussion focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation in science and technology. The Foreign Secretary noted the significant advancements of the Republic of Korea in science, technology,

and innovation and the importance of bilateral scientific cooperation between the two countries. He also underlined the need for collaboration between Pakistani and Korean educational and research institutions and linkages between scientists

and researchers. Professor Dr. Sung-Chul Shin is visiting Pakistan from June 24 to 27 June 2024, at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to foster collaboration in science and technology between Pakistan and the Republic of Korea.



Pakistani doctor saves life of Chinese Engineer

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani doctor saved the life of a Chinese engineer at Suki Kinari Hydropower Station, located on the Kunha River in Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the largest hydropower station invested in and constructed by Energy China under CPEC. During the Eid Adha Festival in June 2024, a Chinese employee at the hydropower project fell seriously ill, requiring urgent medical attention. Despite it being a holiday and a time for family reunions, Pakistani doctor Dr. Firdous immediately rushed to the project site. Tragically, he was involved in a car accident en route but, despite his injuries, he still insisted on rushing to the site with his injured body and completing the treatment task, which deeply moved all the Chinese people in the SK project and made them truly feel the deep friendship from the "Pakistani Iron Brothers". In the recognition of his meritorious services, a ceremony was held on June 25 in which Chen Jiajia, Project Director of China Energy Overseas Investment Co., Ltd SK Hydro (Private) Limited, honored Dr. Saad Firdous with a medal of gratitude, according to Gwadar Pro. This accolade was given to Dr. Firdous' dedication to saving precious lives at the project site. His commitment was commended as an outstanding example of medical professionalism and humanitarian spirit. Dr. Saad Firdous is working at the Suki Kinari Hydropower Project to provide healthcare services to the project's workers. His contributions have made him a vital part of the collaborative efforts between China and Pakistan, symbolizing the bright future created by their joint endeavors. Suki Kinari Hydropower Station is a key priority project under CPEC. It boasts four impulse units with a total installed capacity of 884MW. Once completed, it will provide 3.212 billion kilowatt hours of clean electricity annually, addressing one-fifth of Pakistan's electricity shortfall.

Unveiling the global food crisis: Causes, consequences, and sustainable solutions

ALISHBA IFTIKHAR

The global food crisis is a complex issue that affects millions of people around the world. It refers to the widespread problem of hunger and malnutrition, where individuals and communities lack access to sufficient and nutritious food. This crisis has far-reaching consequences on both individuals and societies as a whole. One of the primary causes of hunger and malnutrition is poverty. Many individuals and families simply cannot afford to purchase or access nutritious food on a regular basis. Poverty often leads to food insecurity, where individuals have limited or uncertain access to food that meets their dietary needs. Poverty alleviation measures, such as income generation programs and social safety nets, can help address this issue. Conflict and political instability are also major contributors to the global food crisis. In regions affected by conflict, access to food becomes scarce due to disrupted agricultural systems, damaged infrastructure, and the displacement of populations. Conflict can also hinder humanitarian aid efforts, making it even more challenging to provide food assistance to those in need. Limited access to resources is another factor that contributes to the food crisis. Some regions lack the necessary resources for agriculture, such as arable land, water, and modern farming techniques. This can lead

to low agricultural productivity and insufficient food production to meet the needs of the population. Investments in agricultural infrastructure and technology, as well as sustainable farming practices, can help address this issue. Some examples that illustrate how various interventions and approaches are addressing the global food crisis: 1. Poverty Alleviation Programs: Brazil's Bolsa Familia Program: This conditional cash transfer program provides financial aid to poor families, requiring them to meet certain health and education criteria. It has significantly reduced poverty and improved food security among the poorest households. 2. Conflict and Political Instability: Syria Humanitarian Response: The World Food Program (WFP) and other humanitarian organizations have been providing food assistance to millions of displaced and conflict-affected Syrians. Despite the challenges, these efforts help prevent famine and malnutrition in war-torn areas. 3. Limited Access to Resources: Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA): This initiative focuses on improving agricultural productivity in Africa through access to better seeds, soil health programs, and small-scale irrigation. It aims to enhance food production and reduce hunger across the continent. 4. Supporting Vulnerable Populations: India's Midday Meal Scheme: This government program provides free lunches to schoolchildren in primary and upper primary classes. It not only improves nutrition among children

but also encourages school attendance and retention, particularly in disadvantaged communities. The impact of the food crisis is particularly severe on vulnerable populations, such as children, women, and marginalized communities. Malnutrition during childhood can have long-term effects on physical and cognitive development, leading to lifelong health issues. Women often face greater challenges in accessing food due to cultural and gender disparities, which can result in higher rates of malnutrition. Ethnic minorities, indigenous populations, and marginalized communities are also disproportionately affected by food insecurity, as they often face additional barriers to accessing nutritious food. Efforts to alleviate hunger and malnutrition involve a combination of interventions at the international, national, and local levels. International organizations like the United Nations World Food Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization play a crucial role in providing emergency food assistance, implementing long-term solutions, and advocating for policy changes. Governments have the responsibility to implement policies that promote agricultural development, improve access to nutritious food, and combat poverty. These policies can include investments in agriculture, social safety nets, and nutrition programs. Sustainable farming practices are also essential in addressing the food crisis. Adopting techniques such as agroforestry, organic farming, and precision agriculture can increase

food production while minimizing environmental impact. These practices promote soil health, water conservation, and biodiversity, ensuring the long-term sustainability of agricultural systems. In addition to conventional approaches, innovative solutions are emerging to tackle the food crisis. Urban farming, for example, involves growing food in urban areas through vertical farming or community gardens. This approach can help address food insecurity in densely populated regions and reduce the reliance on long-distance food transportation. Reducing food waste throughout the supply chain is another crucial step in addressing the food crisis. By minimizing waste, more food can be made available for consumption, reducing the strain on resources and increasing overall food availability. Furthermore, developing climate-resilient crops and implementing strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change on agriculture are vital for ensuring long-term food security. In conclusion, the global food crisis requires urgent attention and collaborative efforts from governments, organizations, and individuals. By understanding the causes and consequences of hunger and malnutrition, we can work towards implementing sustainable solutions that ensure food security for all. It is crucial to address the underlying issues of poverty, conflict, limited resources and inequality to create a world where no one goes hungry.

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The European mutiny

IN the European Parliament elections this month, voters in most of the European Union's 27 countries rallied to parties that hold the remote EU Establishment in contempt. In France, the once-taboo National Rally party outpolled the party of President Macron by more than 2 to 1; in Germany, the party of Scholtz, the SPD (a veteran German party) collapsed to 13% voter support, at the same time that the other components to the governing coalition collapsed. The Greens sank to 12% and the FDP were at borderline 5% of the popular vote (5% is the entry-level to Germany's parliament). Much has been written to argue that European Parliamentary Centre 'held', yet even that hangs in the balance until the newly-elected MEPs first assemble to approve the clutch of EU top jobs: i.e. the three 'Presidents' - Presidents of the Commission, the Council, and of Parliament; plus the High Representative (i.e. the EU's 'Foreign Minister'). For now, the composition of the European Parliament is the subject of intense internecine struggle. These were elections only to the European Parliament - a body that does not initiate legislation in the EU, but which is supposed to exercise a general surveillance. The real elections in Europe these days are the national elections. That in itself is a 'pointer': Decisive voting is taking place at the national level, and not at the supranational centre in Brussels. The 'real' elections are taking place in France and the UK, despite the latter being outside the EU. The UK vote nonetheless will be an important litmus of European opinion, precisely because its Ruling Strata has become known for its compliance with US policies. The anti-Establishment and anti-bureaucracy outpouring amongst voters has astonished and disconcerted the elites. The governing party - the venerable Conservative Party - is being routed, and might not survive as a meaningful political entity after 4 July. The Biden-faction within Brussels is wholly invested in the US project for escalation of the war in Ukraine against Russia (at least until November), and thereafter Europe is expected to prepare for a later full-scale confrontation with Russia - possibly mounted to mesh with US military action against China, for which the Pentagon is busy preparing. Of course, 'all' hangs on the US election outcome. The elephant in the 'planning room' is that Europeans do not want war with Russia - however hard it is pushed by the Ruling Strata. It is manifestly not in the European interest. The National Rally is opposed to support for Ukraine, and even Scholtz, the most faithful leader to a Washington 'lead' admitted in an interview on Sunday, that the SPD had as little as 7% support in some parts of eastern Germany, which traditionally has been more positively predisposed toward Russia. "Something is going on there; No way around it", Scholtz exclaimed. He then acknowledged that the dire ratings for the SPD stemmed from the fact that "many people do not agree with the support for Ukraine and the sanctions against Russia. This is also reflected in the [wider, poor] election results", Scholz stated. "There is no alternative [but] to changing that". And even in the UK which traditionally tries 'to be out, in front' of the US on security issues, the Establishment swooned when Nigel Farage whose Reform party is within a whisker of overtaking the governing Conservative Party in terms of popular esteem said the 'unsayable'



This is 'freedom' US advocates?

AFTER a years-long legal battle surrounding the founder of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange, a dramatic turn has finally arrived. He has obtained long-awaited "freedom," though at the cost of pleading guilty to a felony charge related to his alleged role in orchestrating one of the largest-ever breaches of US classified military and diplomatic documents. On Thursday, he landed back home in Australia, as a free man for the first time in 12 years. People who tell the truth have to confess in exchange for "freedom" - the fate of Assange demonstrates that the "free beacon" of the US has ultimately collapsed. Founded in 2006, WikiLeaks exposed US military war crimes four years after its inception. Assange, the founder of the website, quickly became embroiled in lawsuits, with the US charging him with 18 counts, including violations of the Espionage Act. Arrested and imprisoned in the UK, Assange spent 1,901 days in a three-meter long, two-meter-wide cell, isolated from the world for 23 hours a day. Simultaneously, the US requested his extradition. The 52-year-old man now appears much older than his real age. The US was determined to extradite Assange, ostensibly because he released what the US claimed was classified information related to national security and foreign affairs through WikiLeaks. However, in reality, it is a show to demonstrate that anyone who dares to challenge US hegemony and embarrass the US will be punished, Shen Yi, a professor at Fudan University, told the Global Times. By holding Assange accountable, the US government also hopes to set a strong precedent, demonstrating a zero-tolerance attitude toward leaking information that threatens its hegemonic status and reputation, and deterring other potential whistleblowers and leakers. The seemingly sudden release of Assange can be seen as the most "dignified" choice for the US. The "plea deal" not only demonstrates the US' emphasis on the so-called national security, but also reduces the uncertainty of further legal battles, seemingly giving the US a "sense of victory," said Li Xiang, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The US has displayed its double standard once again. Protecting human rights and freedom is something that US adversaries, not the US itself, should do. Speech that serves US interests, regardless of whether it is factual or logical, can get a free pass. But what the US does not like, especially the truths that would embarrass the US, are considered "guilty" or even a "crime." The narratives of freedom of speech swing with changes in US interests. Although the US can force Assange to "plead guilty" through various means, the atrocities exposed by WikiLeaks cannot be erased. WikiLeaks exposed a large number of US diplomatic cables and military confidential documents during the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, revealing US war crimes. The video of the US military "Apache" helicopter shooting civilians in Iraq will continue to be remembered by people. In order to cover up its crimes, laws can become tools of the US government. The chilling effect it hopes to achieve on "whistleblowers" not only brings personal harm to Assange but also deepens the world's profound doubts about the values that the US boasts.

Halt operation Azm-e-Istehkam until..

Qamar Bashir



The government of Pakistan had launched several other key military operations to counter terrorism with stunning success, including Operation Rah-e-Nijat (2009) in South Waziristan, and Operation Zarb-e-Azb (2014-2017) in North Waziristan, which significantly disrupted militant networks. Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad (2017-present) aims to consolidate previous gains through nationwide intelligence-based operations. Other notable operations include Operation Khyber (2014-2017) in the Khyber Agency, Operation Black Thunderstorm (2009)..

IN 2014, I was posted in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting as Director of Internal Publicity when Imran Khan's dharnas were in full swing. The entire ministries were cordoned off by PTI and PAT activists, who had established checkpoints and were controlling access points to all the ministries. I was assigned the task of assisting Mr. Irfan Siddiqui, who was tasked with countering the dharna narrative in the media. However, gathering for meetings was an uphill task due to the situation. The dharnas came to an abrupt halt following the tragic and heart-wrenching Army Public School incident, which shook the very foundation of the nation. This served as a wake-up call for all those at the helm of affairs. The Army Chief, taking a decisive role, brought together all politicians and stakeholders, including arch-rivals PTI, PML(N), PPP, and all religio-political parties, to secure their unconditional consent for the 14-point National Action Plan. The comprehensive plan addressed all aspects of extremism and violent terrorism and made surgical operations on all elements supporting abetting, facilitating execution of the act of terror. The results were stunning. On the part of the Ministry of Information I was tasked to recommend a counterterrorism narrative which was appreciated by NECTA. Before NAP, Pakistan experienced high levels of terrorism, with 1,717 incidents and 2,451 fatalities in 2013. Post-implementation, terrorist incidents dropped from 1,206 in 2014 to 319 in 2020, and fatalities decreased from 1,781 to 169 in the same period. The Karachi operation saw a 98% reduction in terrorist activities by 2019. Key measures included blocking 98.3 million unregistered SIMs, establishing special counter-terrorism units, and improving the regulation of religious seminaries, collectively enhancing national security. The National Action Plan was not the only program which was launched with consensus, but the government achieved consensus for launch of Operation Rah-e-Haq (2007-2009) in Swat Valley and Operation Rah-e-Rast (2009) to re-establish control in Swat against the Taliban after achieving unconditional and undivided public and political support. A media campaign highlighting Taliban atrocities, failed peace agreements underscoring the need for military action, and extensive political dialogue was launched

which prepared the entire nation for the operation. Success factors included a comprehensive military strategy, coordination with the civilian government, local support, and international assistance. The operation successfully restored government control, improved regional security, initiated rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts, and launched de-radicalization programs, significantly reducing Taliban influence and violence in the Swat Valley. The government of Pakistan had launched several other key military operations to counter terrorism with stunning success, including Operation Rah-e-Nijat (2009) in South Waziristan, and Operation Zarb-e-Azb (2014-2017) in North Waziristan, which significantly disrupted militant networks. Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad (2017-present) aims to consolidate previous gains through nationwide intelligence-based operations. Other notable operations include Operation Khyber (2014-2017) in the Khyber Agency, Operation Black Thunderstorm (2009) in Buner and Lower Dir, and Operation Sherdil (2008) in Bajaur Agency. Collectively, these operations have substantially reduced terrorism and improved security across Pakistan. In 2023, Pakistan faced a surge in terrorism, with nearly 1,000 fatalities, marking the highest toll in six years. Most incidents occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, primarily perpetrated by groups like TTP, ISKP, and BLA. By mid-2024, fatalities decreased to 810, indicating some improvement but highlighting persistent challenges due to evolving threats from cross-border attacks and militant regrouping. This situation underscores the need for continuous adaptation of counter-terrorism strategies to address the changing dynamics of terrorist threats. Unlike all other programs which were mostly welcomed by the entire nation, the recently launched Operation Azme-e-Istehkam has met with resistance from the very beginning. Mainstream political party Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is offering discreet opposition, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) with tacit opposition and PTI and JUI openly and forcefully have expressed skepticism, suggesting the operation might be politically motivated and used to suppress opposition. Whereas, religious political parties are concerned about potential targeting and discrimination against their members. Intellectuals and

civil society activists worry about human rights violations and the lack of a comprehensive strategy addressing the root causes of extremism and militancy. They call for a more inclusive approach that respects civil liberties while addressing security concerns. However, all political parties agree that there is an upsurge in acts of terrorism in 2023 and 2024 that needs to be countered, but the government has miserably failed to exploit and cultivate this realization to a level where they willingly agreed to unconditional support for the operation. The government should have followed the steps it applied before launching other such operations. Instead, without preparing the nation, the operation was announced, perhaps even without taking into confidence its closest allies in the government. In all impropriety, the government should halt the launch of the operation, until it achieves its complete buyout by all stakeholders. Meanwhile, the government should ensure transparent communication, engaging in dialogue with all political parties, both in government and opposition, religious leaders, and civil society organizations to achieve consensus. It should clearly define the operation's objectives and scope, targeting only militant groups confined to national borders and criminal networks. The government should specify what new legal instruments are required to achieve operational objectives and launch a public awareness campaign to educate citizens about the operation's importance and benefits. Above all, the government should clearly delineate the operation from curbing, ceasing, curtailing, and abrogating any fundamental human rights guaranteed by the Constitution to the people of Pakistan. These include the right to life and liberty (Article 9), equality before the law (Article 25), freedom of speech (Article 19), assembly (Article 16), association (Article 17), movement (Article 15), and religion (Article 20). It also prohibits slavery, forced labor, and trafficking (Article 11). Citizens are entitled to a fair trial and due process (Article 10A), access to information on matters of public importance (Article 19A), upholding dignity, protection from discrimination, and access to justice for all citizens of Pakistan.

— Former Press Secretary to the President
Former Press Minister to the Embassy
of Pakistan to France
Former MD, SRBC

US is dreaming if it thinks its allies in Asia crave another cold war

Alex Lo

"[T]he defeat of China [might] harm the well-being of the Chinese people, and of China's partners around the world, especially in the Global South," they predicted. "On the contrary, these populations would be among the biggest beneficiaries of a new China that is less repressive at home and more cooperative abroad." Writing in the same vein, Matt Pottinger, a former deputy national security adviser, and Mike Gallagher, ex-chairman of the US House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, have argued in Foreign Affairs that there is "no substitute for victory" against China. "

DURING the last cold war, historians and political scientists argued over which side started it. But with the new one against China, there won't be much of a debate. Foreign Affairs and Foreign Policy are two of America's premier journals on the subject. They are fast becoming a crime scene as an increasing number of influential contributors to the journals are openly declaring an intention to bring down the Chinese government, in a neo-imperial agenda to prop up America's declining hegemony. Those in East Asia who have enjoyed half a century of prosperity and peace can only shudder. Consider this in the latest Foreign Policy by Matthew Kroenig and Dan Negrea, of the Atlantic Council, an influential think tank, titled "Against China, the United States Must Play to Win". They wrote: "Regime change can help the United States not because it would necessarily bring democracy and human rights to the Chinese people ... but because ... it would undermine Beijing's capacity and intent to threaten the United States. The collapse of the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] would likely lead to a period of domestic instability and a decreased will to systematically challenge the US-led order. A new Chinese government would be weakened and inward-looking as it sought to consolidate power."

They certainly don't mince words. "[T]he defeat of China [might] harm the well-being of the Chinese people, and of China's partners around the world, especially in the Global South," they predicted. "On the contrary, these populations would be among the biggest beneficiaries of a new China that is less repressive at home and more cooperative abroad." Writing in the same vein, Matt Pottinger, a former deputy national security adviser, and Mike Gallagher, ex-chairman of the US House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, have argued in Foreign Affairs that there is "no substitute for victory" against China. "The United States shouldn't manage the competition with China; it should win it," they wrote. "What would winning look like? [T]he Chinese people - from ruling elites to everyday citizens - would find inspiration to explore new models of development and governance that don't rely on repression at home and compulsive hostility abroad." Really? Perhaps the Chinese would line the streets of Beijing to welcome their American liberators, too! With these people these days, it's always about rallying the allies who are, especially for those in the Pacific, no doubt dying to sacrifice their boys to defend America's interests. And so, Trump's last national security adviser, Robert O'Brien,

who is probably looking for another stint in the Trump 2.0 White House, counsels militarising Southeast Asia. In Foreign Affairs, he said Washington needed to "build up the armed forces of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam by extending to them the kinds of grants, loans, and weapons transfers that the United States has long offered Israel". Even many influential Americans now think Israel has become a major liability. I wonder if Vietnamese PM Pham Minh Chinh didn't read these articles. "Vietnam is pleased to witness China's strong development and rise," he told the World Economic Forum. "China is among few countries that increasingly takes on the leadership role in addressing regional and global challenges, promoting various cooperation initiatives." PrabowoSubianto, Indonesia's president-elect, made Beijing his first overseas visit after his poll victory in February. Recently, he has targeted an annual 7 per cent growth rate. That doesn't sound like a man rushing to militarise his nation. While Washington has Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr in its pocket, his cabinet has just been hit by the resignation of Vice-President Sara Duterte. Against the Marcoses, the Dutertes are the main power centre that is more aligned with the other Asean countries vis-a-vis China. Unlike the United States, much of Asia and the Global South have no stomach for confrontation, let alone war.

Briefs

Italian PM
vows to
challenge
EU car ban

ROME: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said on Wednesday the government would work to correct the European Union ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2035, saying the decision made no sense. Meloni was speaking in the lower house of parliament, the Chamber of Deputies, ahead of a EU summit in Brussels later this week.

Previously, expressing "strong dissatisfaction" after the EU Commission announced higher tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EV), Beijing called the move a "protectionist act."

"This is a naked protectionist act, creating and escalating trade frictions, and 'destroying fair competition' in the name of 'maintaining fair competition'," China's Commerce Ministry said in a statement. The commission said it will impose additional custom duties of as much as 38.1% on Chinese electric vehicles as of July 4.—APP

NGO
denounces
rising air
freight
pollution

PARIS : According to Stand Earth, a US-Canadian group, pollution from the air freight sector has increased by 25 percent since 2019. A report by the group found that market distortions caused by Covid-19 pandemic travel restrictions and supply chain disruptions boosted the air freight cargo sector.

PARIS: An environmental pressure group denounced Wednesday the rising emissions of the air freight industry, which has been boosted by global supply chain difficulties and rising online commerce. According to Stand Earth, a US-Canadian group, pollution from the air freight sector has increased by 25 percent since 2019. A report by the group found that market distortions caused by Covid-19 pandemic travel restrictions and supply chain disruptions boosted the air freight cargo sector.

"Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, air freight was dominated, logically, by perishable goods, time-sensitive deliveries, and luxury items," said the report.

The pandemic forced industries to shift to air freight to transport a greater variety of goods.

"What many assumed was a pandemic anomaly, however, is actually not only continuing, but in some cases growing," it said.

"While FedEx, UPS, and Amazon celebrate a new norm in the shipping industry, their success comes at a dire cost," the report said.

It said these "Big Three" players in the sector were responsible for 27 percent of global air freight greenhouse gas emissions — the equivalent of 4.45 million homes in the United States. Stand Earth reproached Amazon for its rapid delivery business strategy — with same-day or overnight delivery with its Prime membership — for driving growth in air freight emissions.—Agencies

AI firms lead
Chinese
shares higher

SHANGHAI: Chinese shares rebounded on Wednesday, led by gains in artificial intelligence stocks, but the benchmark CSI300 still hovered around four-month lows on concerns over subdued domestic economic data. China's CSI AI Index jumped 3.7%, as domestic AI companies moved swiftly to attract users of OpenAI's technology. The blue-chip CSI300 index hit a four-month low on Tuesday. US firm plans to restrict access in China and other countries to its application programming interface (API), a platform that allows developers of other products to integrate its AI models. China stocks lower as semiconductor shares drag. Among broader Asian markets, stocks stuttered in choppy trade, with risk sentiment being capped as hawkish comments from Federal Reserve officials kept near-term US rate cut expectations in check. Investors are now bracing for Friday's release of the US personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index — the Fed's preferred measure of inflation.—APP

Erdogan accuses Israel of 'spreading war' to Lebanon

Recep Tayyip Erdogan urges Islamic world, Mideast countries to react first to Netanyahu's 'bloody' plans

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday called on all regional countries to stand with Lebanon against Israel's invasion plan. In an address to the parliamentary group of his Justice and Development (AK) Party in the capital Ankara, Erdogan said: "Israel, which has devastated Gaza, is now setting its sights on Lebanon. We see that Western powers are supporting Israel behind the scenes." "Türkiye stands with brotherly Lebanese people and state and I invite other countries in the region to stand in solidarity with Lebanon as well," said Erdogan. "Netanyahu's plans to spread the war across the region will lead to a major catastrophe," he warned, adding: "Islamic world and Middle Eastern countries should be the first to react to these bloody plans." "It is extremely dire, pathetic that states, which talk about freedom, human rights, and justice, are held captive by a madman like Ne-

Baerbock warns of regional war during visit to Lebanon

BEIRUT: German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock warned Tuesday that a "miscalculation" could trigger a full-blown war between Israel and the Lebanese group Hezbollah and called for restraint. During her one-day visit to Beirut, Baerbock met with her Lebanese counterpart Abdallah Bou Habib, following visits to Israel and the Israeli-occupied West Bank. They discussed the situation in Lebanon and the broader escalation between Hezbollah and the Israeli army, according to a statement from the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The statement emphasized "the importance of exerting all necessary efforts to prevent an escalation and expansion of the scope of the conflict." Baerbock expressed "Germany's concern about the current tensions in the area and cautioned against reaching a deadlock, particularly if both Hezbollah and Israel reject a cease-fire. Bou Habib reaffirmed "Lebanon's commitment to peaceful solutions, especially given the challenges it currently faces." He called for international support and the strengthening of Lebanon's armed forces. Baerbock also expressed concern about the ongoing clashes in southern Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah. She warned that "failure to reach an agreement on a cease-fire would pose a danger to everyone, as it could escalate into a regional war, affecting not only Lebanon and Israel but the entire region." Baerbock's visit to Beirut comes amid heightened tensions between Israel and Hezbollah.—Agencies

tanyahu," the president added. Erdogan said that the photo of Gazan children with their skin clinging to their bones because they cannot find a bite to eat is inscribed in the book of shame of the modern world. "This photo will be remembered with sorrow, not only as a symbol of the bankruptcy of the global system but also as a symbol of the impotence of the Islamic world," said Erdogan. Recognition of Palestinian state Erdogan said that during his visits to Spain and Italy on the eve of Eid al-Adha, he brought up the Israeli oppression against Gazans. During his visits, Erdogan told his counterparts that "as long as the policies of occupation and massacre continue in Palestine, no place in the world will be safe." He underlined that the most effective response to Israel's arrogance and disregard for law is the recognition of the Palestinian state. Erdogan expressed hope that the conscientious stance exhibited by Norway, Ireland, and Slovenia would serve as an example for all of Europe. "We are pleased with Armenia's

decision to recognize the Palestinian state under Prime Minister Pashinyan's leadership," said Erdogan. "We will continue our efforts to ensure that many more countries recognize Palestine," the Turkish leader added. Israel, flouting a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate cease-fire, has faced international condemnation amid its continued brutal offensive on Gaza since the Oct. 7 Hamas attack. Nearly 37,700 Palestinians have since been killed in Gaza, most of them women and children, and more than 86,200 others injured, according to local health authorities. More than eight months into the Israeli war, vast tracts of Gaza lay in ruins amid a crippling blockade of food, clean water, and medicine. Israel is accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice, whose latest ruling ordered it to immediately halt its military operation in the southern city of Rafah, where more than 1 million Palestinians had sought refuge from the war before it was invaded on May 6.

Haji preachers
provided
1.4m religious
services

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance provided more than 1.4 million religious services for over 2 million pilgrims and visitors during this year's Hajj season. More than 600 male and female preachers provided guidance at the holy sites, in several languages, on Islam and the value of moderation, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Wednesday. There were also staff deployed to guide pilgrims during the days of Tashreeq in Makkah and at the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah. Sheikh Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Ashkeik, the minister, thanked the preachers who participated this year. He added that pilgrims also benefitted from the ministry's free telephone helpline.—APP

French
parties hold
debate ahead
of snap polls

PARIS : The leaders of France's three biggest political groups clashed over several topics Tuesday in their first televised debate ahead of snap elections. French citizens will head to the polls on June 30 to elect new members of the lower chamber of parliament, the National Assembly, for a five-year term after President Emmanuel Macron on June 9 announced snap elections following the defeat of his centrist bloc and the victory of the far right in European Union parliamentary elections. Jordan Bardella, president of the far-right National Rally (RN) party, centrist Prime Minister Gabriel Attal and the national coordinator of the hard-left party La France Insoumise (LFI), Manuel Bompard, were invited for a live debate on broadcaster TF1. Migration was one of the hot topics, which also included the economy and the much-contested 2023 pension reform. "Migration is a major topic that turns our identity, security and our public finances upside down...I will drastically reduce the migration flows," Bardella said. He vowed to end birthright to citizenship in France and free health access for irregular migrants where "one retired person out of three gives up on receiving treatment." Bompard said that one worker out of 10 is an immigrant who should be "thanked" for filling jobs that are essential for the nation.—DNA

Childbirth
rate in S.
Korea rises
for 1st time

ANKARA: The childbirth rate has raised for the first time during the last 19 months in South Korea as the country recorded over 19,000 new babies born in April this year, local media reported on Wednesday. According to Statistics Korea, a total of 19,049 babies were born in April 2024, up 2.8% from a year earlier. "The growth came as the number of newly married couples rose over the past couple of years after the COVID-19 pandemic, though it remains to be seen if such an upturn could continue," Seoul-based Yonhap News reported citing the Statistics Korea report. It was the first time since September 2022 that the figure logged on-year growth, according to the news agency. Last week, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol declared a "demographic national emergency" to counter the low birth rate and an aging population in the East Asian country. He said that his government will make all efforts to tackle the country's ultralow birth rate. South Korea is facing low birth rates and aging populations. According to a report, South Korean couples avoid starting a family and having children for several reasons, including the high cost of housing, education, and long working hours. However, President Yoon promised to take concrete steps such as increasing parental leave allowances, extending leave for fathers, implementing flexible work hours, and easing the educational burden on parents.—APP

Albanese expresses
satisfaction over Assange
'saga' conclusion

Assange is on flight home to Australia after spending more than five years in London's high-security Belmarsh prison

WEB DESK

SYDNEY : Australia's prime minister said Wednesday he was "very pleased" by the plea deal that ended WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's long legal "saga". Assange is on a flight home to Australia after spending more than five years in London's high-security Belmarsh prison fighting extradition to the United States for revealing US state secrets. "I am very pleased that on this occasion, this has been a successful outcome that I believe overwhelmingly Australians did want

to see," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told parliament in Canberra. "They will have different views about the engagement and the activities of Mr Assange but they will be pleased that the saga has been brought to an end and that he will be able to reunite with his family." Under the plea agreement, the 52-year-old Australian citizen pleaded guilty to a single charge of conspiracy to obtain and disseminate defence information and was sentenced to time already served. The legal drama unfolded in a courtroom in the Northern Mariana Islands, a Pacific US territory. Albanese said the

resolution of Assange's case was the result of "careful, patient and determined work — work I am very proud of." "I have said repeatedly that there was nothing to be gained by his continued incarceration, and I am pleased that he is on his way home to Australia," he said. "Regardless of your views about his activities, and they will be varied, Mr Assange's case has dragged on for too long." The prime minister confirmed that the Australian ambassador to the United States, Kevin Rudd, and Australia's high commissioner to the UK, Stephen Smith, were both accompanying Assange on his flight home.

Sudan warring
sides using
starvation as
weapon

GENEVA : UN rights experts pointed out that more than 25 million civilians have been left hungry and in urgent need of aid, amid warnings of a looming famine "The extent of hunger and displacement we see in Sudan today is unprecedented," said the experts GENEVA: Both sides in Sudan's brutal civil war are using starvation as a weapon of war, UN experts said Wednesday, charging that foreign governments providing their military support were "complicit" in war crimes. War has raged for more than a year between the regular military (SAF) under army chief Abdel Fattah el-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. The conflict, which began in April 2023, has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and has provoked one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.—APP

Pope Francis warns
against legalising drugs

ROME :Pope Francis on Wednesday denounced drug traffickers as "murderers" and labeled drug liberalization laws a "fantasy" as he marked the U.N.'s day against drug use and illicit trafficking Francis devoted his entire weekly catechism lesson to a reflection on drug abuse. He called for increased prevention efforts and care for addicts, saying they are children of God who deserve to have their human dignity respected. Francis spent years ministering to people in the slums of Buenos Aires where "paco," a cheap drug made from cocaine residue, ravaged the community. The Argentine Jesuit has long made visiting recovering addicts a priority during his foreign visits. He deviated from his regular reflection on a Biblical theme Wednesday to single out countries and programs that he said were doing a good job getting the word out to young people about the dangers of drug use and the "scandal" of trafficking. "A reduction in drug addiction is not achieved by liberalizing drug use, as has been proposed, or already implemented, in some countries," he said. "This is a fantasy. You liberalize, they just consume more." Pope recreates the 2014 Mideast peace prayer in Vatican Gardens to beg for an end to Gaza conflict "I am convinced that it is a moral duty to end the production and trafficking of these dangerous substances," he said. He denounced traffickers as murderers and evil "traffickers of death," corrupted by a lust for power and money, and called for them to repent and change their ways. At the same time, he advocated care for addicts and legislation to back prevention efforts. "We too are called to act, to pause before situations of fragility and pain, to know how to listen to the cry of loneliness and anguish, to stoop to lift up and bring back to life those who fall into the slavery of drugs," he said.—APP

UK Conservatives
suffer fall in support
after betting scandal

LONDON : British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives suffered a further fall in support after five party officials, including two candidates, were being investigated over bets on the timing of an early election, according to a new poll. The scandal is undermining the Conservatives' efforts to close the gap on the opposition Labour Party's large poll lead eight days before the national election. The expanding number of Conservative officials under investigation has resulted in support for the party falling to 18%, down 2 percentage points, the poll Survation published on Wednesday showed. The Labour Party was on 41%. Since the betting allegations first emerged, the conduct of government has become the second most important issue for voters behind the cost of living crisis, the poll found. The betting scandal intensified further late on Tuesday after a cabinet minister said he had placed three bets on the date for the election, but that he was not being investigated by the gambling regulator. A Labour candidate also admitted placing a bet against himself. Both the Conservatives and Labour on Tuesday withdrew support for candidates under investigation. Sunak had faced days of criticism for initially failing to withdraw suspend the candidates being investigated by the regulator. While Sunak said he was "extremely angry" about the scandal, he previously stopped short of withdrawing support so the investigations could finish before any action was taken. Mel Stride, the work and pensions minister, said on Wednesday that more candidates could be involved in the scandal and there should be a debate about political betting. For the poll, Survation interviewed 1,022 adults in Britain by phone between June 21 and 25.—APP



ROME : Ambassador Khalid Hussain Khan Gudaro Met with H.E. Mr. Alberto Cutillo, Ambassador of Italy, and discussed matters of mutual interest.—DNA

Pakistan calls on UNSC to focus on Hindutva terrorism

Pakistani envoy said that the Council has also ignored terrorism by extremist and fascist organizations, including the Hindutva groups terrorizing Muslims

FOREIGN DESK

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has called on the UN Security Council to shift some of its focus on combating Al-Qaeda and ISIS/Da'esh to Hindutva groups in India terrorizing Muslims as well as on State terrorism brutalizing people under occupation, like those in Palestine and Kashmir. "The Security Council's work on Counter-Terrorism needs urgent reform," Ambassador Munir Akram, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the UN General Assembly, which discussed the annual report of the 15-member Council on its actions to maintain international peace and security. The

Council, he said, has focused on combating Al-Qaeda and ISIS and their associates, while terrorism proliferated across the world. "The (current) listing and sanctions processes are cumbersome and politicized," the Pakistani envoy said. "The Council has also ignored terrorism by extremist and fascist organizations, including the Hindutva groups terrorizing Muslims. It has also ignored state terrorism which is used for oppressing and brutalizing people under occupation, as in the case of Palestine and Kashmir. In this regard, Ambassador Akram said the Council also failed to distinguish between terrorism and the legitimate struggles of peoples under colonial and alien domina-

tion for self-determination. While awaiting agreement on the reform of the Security Council, the Pakistani envoy said several steps can be taken to improve transparency and accountability in its work, including open discussions allowing inputs by the concerned States and parties following the adoption of Council decisions. He said the selection and appointment of expert panels and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General should be made transparently with balanced representation from the North and South and various regions. The Council, the Pakistani envoy added, should set up a body to monitor and facilitate the implementation of its resolutions,

including those in abeyance for considerable time, such as those on Palestine and Kashmir. Expanding the number of non-permanent members is vital to enhancing its representativeness and reducing the dominance of its permanent members, Ambassador Akram said. "Adding new permanent members will erode the principles of sovereign equality and equity and further paralyze the Council," he insisted. Opening the debate, the President of the General Assembly, Dennis Francis said what emerges from the Security Council report is "a vivid picture of a world fraught with tension and conflict". The President reminded delegates that "the millions of peo-

ple mired in conflict, poverty and crises do not care about distinctions between the various bodies of the United Nations" — what they see is a single united Organization. While 2023 was a deadly year for civilians from Gaza to Sudan, geopolitical tensions have stymied the Council's ability to preserve peace, Francis noted, adding that five resolutions and one amendment were vetoed in 2023. The 193-member Assembly is the most representative organ of the United Nations, he stressed, as he called on delegates to view today's debate as an opportunity to exercise their right to assess "how the Council acts on behalf of you, the Member States".

Briefs

US overthrew democratic govts: Kh Asif

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Wednesday strongly criticised the resolution passed by United States (US) House of Representatives on Pakistan's February 8 general elections, saying that the country has a history of overthrowing democratic governments. In a statement, the minister pointed out that the US has a history of overthrowing democratic governments and supporting regimes that perpetuate human rights abuses, such as the oppression of Palestinians. Khawaja Asif said that both Democratic and Republican parties have accused each other of foreign interference and election rigging. He questioned why the international community, particularly the United Nations (UN), should not investigate allegations of election interference in the US, just as they do in other countries.

Bajwa's relatives fail to appear in corruption case

DNA

LAHORE: Relatives of former Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General (retd) QamarJavedBajwa failed to appear for an inquiry into allegations of money laundering and acquisition of illegal assets, in Lahore. Sabir Hamid Mithu, the father-in-law of the former army chief's son, along with Chaudhry Ashraf Ghark, and Hammad Mushtaq, had been summoned to appear before the Anti-Corruption Establishment's office on June 26. The FIA Anti-Corruption Cell had issued notices to all three individuals on charges of money laundering and illegal assets. According to sources, if all three individuals did not appear before the Anti-Corruption today, they would be sent two notices at intervals of three days. If they still do not appear, another case could be filed against them, the sources added. The FIA and Anti-Corruption Establishment Punjab had issued call-up notices to Sabir Hameed alias Sabir Mithu, and his two associates for allegedly acquiring illegal assets. Similarly, the FIA had also summoned Sabir and Ashraf on June 27. The agency has also called Mushtaq to appear before it on June 28.

NATO appoints Dutch PM as next chief

BRUSSELS: The outgoing Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, has been formally selected as the next NATO secretary general, the military alliance announced Wednesday, coming at a pivotal time as it grapples with boosting its own security while also supporting Ukraine in its grinding war against Russia. His appointment comes after Romanian President Klaus Iohannis - his only rival for the position - announced last week that he had withdrawn from the running. "It is a tremendous honour to be appointed Secretary-General of NATO. The Alliance is and will remain the cornerstone of our collective security," Rutte said in a post on X Wednesday. The Dutch leader, 57, said he was grateful to the NATO allies for placing their trust in him. "Leading this organization is a responsibility I do not take lightly," he said. Rutte is set to start his new position on October 1 when incumbent NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg's 10-year tenure comes to an end, according to a statement from the alliance. Stoltenberg said Wednesday that he "warmly welcomes" the appointment of his successor. "Mark is a true transatlanticist, a strong leader and a consensus-builder. I wish him every success as we continue to strengthen NATO," he posted on X. - Agencies

Brunei High Commissioner assumes ACI chairmanship

Ambassador Cervantes, in her closing remarks, thanked all members of the ACI for their cooperation in making her term successful by involving in activities that promote public and economic diplomacy



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the Philippines and Chair of the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad, H.E. Maria Agnes M. Cervantes, presided her concluding ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI) Heads of Mission meeting at the Faisalabad Meeting Room Serena Hotel. During the meeting, the ACI Chairmanship was also

turned over to H.E. Pg Kamal BashahPg Ahmad, High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam. Ambassador Cervantes, in her closing remarks, thanked all members of the ACI for their cooperation in making her term successful by involving in activities that promote public and economic diplomacy for all ASEAN members. She added that the increased visibility of ASEAN is attributed to the active participation of all ACI Members and looks forward to Brunei's Chairmanship.

The meeting also served as the sendoff meeting of the ACI to Ambassador Nguyen Tien Phong of Vietnam who is ending his more than three-year tour of duty in Islamabad. Also in the meeting were the High Commissioner of Malaysia H.E. Mohammad AzharMazlan, Charge d'Affaires of Myanmar Mr. Aung KyawThuya, Charge d'Affaires of Indonesia Mr. RahmatHindiartaKusuma, the Charge d'Affaires of Thailand Ms. KamolwanSripisil and representatives from various the diplomatic missions in Islamabad.

Govt authorises JVs to relocate Chinese industries to Pakistan

PM Shehbaz sees significant potential for relocating China's textile, leather, footwear, and other industries to Pakistan

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday permitted joint ventures (JVs) between the two nations to relocate Chinese industries to Pakistan, as part of its efforts to fire up the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) activities following his recent engagements with top officials from Beijing, state media reported. Presiding over a meeting centred on the matters of the Board of Investment (BoI), the premier underscored the government's commitment to fostering both local and foreign investment, which he said were among the government's priorities. During the meeting, he spotlighted the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led administration's contributions towards

creating a truly business-friendly environment for traders and investors. The prime minister, according to state-run APP, tasked the authorities to submit a detailed report on the follow-up actions related to the memoranda of understanding (MoUs) inked between Pakistani and Chinese companies during his recent visit to Shenzhen, China. China's President Xi Jinping in a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz in Beijing on June 7 had said that their two countries should focus on "promoting the joint construction of the CPEC," and Chinese and Pakistani firms 31 MoUs covering technology, agriculture, trade, energy, coal and gasification, according to the Ministry of Commerce. The premier also called for a review of the draft legislation for the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) One-Stop Shop, keeping in view the latest economic and business-related developments from his successful China trip.

Kenya's president withdraws tax plan after deadly protest

NAIROBI: Kenya's President William Ruto says he will withdraw a finance bill containing controversial tax hikes after deadly protests which saw parliament set ablaze on Tuesday. In an address to the nation, he said it was clear that Kenyans "want nothing" to do with the bill. "I concede," he said, adding that he will not sign the bill into law. At least 22 people were killed in Tuesday's protests, according to the state-funded Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNHRC). Mr Ruto said he would now enter into dialogue with the young people, who were at the forefront of the biggest protests to hit the country since he was elected in 2022. "Listening keenly to the people of Kenya who have said loudly that they want nothing to do with this Finance Bill 2024, I concede. And therefore, I will not sign the 2024 Finance Bill, and it shall subsequently be withdrawn. The people have spoken," he said in the televised address.

The bill was passed by parliament on Tuesday, despite nationwide demonstrations against it. Protesters broke into parliament, vandalising the interior and setting parts of the complex on fire. The ceremonial mace, symbolising the authority of the legislature, was stolen. Mr Ruto initially responded with defiance. He ordered the military to be deployed, saying "violence and anarchy" would not be tolerated. But he climbed down on Wednesday, as public anger grew over the killing of protesters. Wanjeri Nderu, head of the International Society For Human Rights, told the BBC what was experienced during the protest was "like we were at war", adding that police were using live ammunition even before parliament was breached. Catholic bishops also condemned the actions of the security forces and "earnestly appealed to the police not to shoot at the protesters", while also urging protesters to remain peaceful. The Law Society of Kenya called on international criminal investigators to help families' quest for justice, saying that it had reports that soldiers were engaging protesters in parliament. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he was "deeply saddened by the reports of deaths and injuries - including of journalists and medical personnel". He also urged the Kenyan authorities to "exercise restraint", and called for all demonstrations to be peaceful. - Agencies

UN warns of 'catastrophic' threat if Gaza war spreads

Tor Wennesland, the UN's special coordinator for the Middle East urged both sides to take urgent, immediate steps to deescalate the situation

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK CITY: The UN on Tuesday expressed serious concerns about the risk of an escalation in the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, warning that not only would it cause even more suffering and devastation to the people of Lebanon and Israel but also "more potentially catastrophic consequences for the region." Tor Wennesland, the UN's special coordinator for the Middle East urged both sides to take urgent, immediate steps to deescalate the situation. Tensions along the border between Israel and Lebanon continue to escalate. Cross-border exchanges of fire have increased in recent weeks, prompting UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to warn that the risk of the conflict spreading to the wider region "is real and must be avoided." Wennesland was speaking during a meeting of the Security Council to discuss the implementation of Resolution 2334, which was adopted in 2016 and demands an end to all Israeli settlement activity, immediate steps to prevent violence and acts of terror against civilians, and calls on both sides to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. Wennesland said he was "deeply troubled" by continuing Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and reiterated that all settlements "have no legal validity and are in flagrant violation of international law."

Israeli forces pound north and south Gaza

CAIRO: Israeli forces pounded several areas across Gaza on Wednesday, and residents reported fierce fighting overnight in Rafah, in the south of the Palestinian enclave. Residents said fighting intensified in the Tel Al-Sultan neighborhood in western Rafah, where tanks were also trying to force their way north amid heavy clashes. The armed wings of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said fighters attacked Israeli forces with anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs. Since early May, ground fighting has focused on Rafah, abutting Egypt on Gaza's southern edge, where around half of the enclave's 2.3 million people had been sheltering after fleeing other areas. Most have since had to flee again. Israel says that it is close to destroying the last remaining Hamas battalions in Rafah, after which it will move to smaller scale operations in the enclave. Medics said two Palestinians were killed in one Israeli missile strike in Rafah. The Israeli military said in a statement its forces killed a Hamas militant who had been involved in the smuggling of weapons through the border between Rafah and Egypt. It said jets struck dozens of militant targets in Rafah overnight, including fighters, military structures and tunnel shafts. Later on Wednesday, an Israeli strike killed three Palestinians and wounded others near the northern Jabalia camp, one of the Gaza Strip's eight historic refugee camps, medics said. - Agencies

No one above the law, says Memon

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader and provincial minister Sharjeel Memon stressed the need for accountability for those who consider themselves above the law. While speaking in the Sindh Assembly the minister noted that the public held the government accountable through their votes on Feb 8. There is a significant majority for the Pakistan People's Party in the house. The people are the ultimate judges, and they will make the final decisions, he added. Memon highlighted that the excise department was tasked with recovering Rs203 billion. He said that the cabinet decided to implement random drug tests starting July 1 to combat drug abuse. Drug tests will be conducted in schools, he maintained. He also announced that the Sindh government implemented AI software to quickly identify and address public issues. He said that the assembly passed legislation for the protection of journalists. Memon stated that the government launched a biometric system for vehicle registration and is taking action against fake number plates.

K-P Jirga opposes military operation

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) officially opposed Operation Azm-e-Istehkam during a tribal jirga in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) on Wednesday. It also passed a resolution calling for the release of Imran Khan from jail. According to Express News, PTI organised a jirga to deliberate on Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, attended by elders and dignitaries from various tribes in K-P. The central and provincial leadership of PTI were present on the occasion and speeches were made by various leaders, including head of TTAP Mahmood Khan Achakzai. The jirga approved a resolution addressing barriers to trade with Afghanistan and ongoing negotiations at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Another resolution opposing Operation Azm-e-Istehkam was presented, with participants demanding that the matter be debated in the national and provincial assemblies, involving all stakeholders.

PHC orders PTA to remove blasphemous content from TikTok

Peshawar High Court hears petition seeking ban on TikTok in Pakistan over objectionable content

COURT REPORTER

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Wednesday directed the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to ensure the removal of any blasphemous and objectionable material from the social media short-video sharing platform TikTok. A bench comprising Justice SM Atiq Shah and Justice Shakeel Ahmed presided over the critical hearing of the petition seeking to ban TikTok in Pakistan. The petition was filed by Advocate Imran Khan requesting the court to direct the respondents - PTA, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and Ministry of Information - to ban TikTok in Pakistan permanently for persistent breach of guidelines and violation of the Constitution. The court addressed concerns over the platform's content, specifically focusing on blasphemous and objectionable videos. JehanzaibMehsud, the lawyer representing PTA, informed the court, "We have submitted our comments today."

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